

Change and Continuity in the Political Economy of the Ahousaht

by

Clifford Gordon Atleo

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Department of Political Science  
University of Alberta

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## Abstract

The intent of this dissertation is to understand the dilemmas of contemporary Ahousaht political economy in the context of settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism. Our history with settler colonialism is one of dispossession, resistance, re-structuring, assimilation, as well as *agency and adaptation*. Importantly, we have endured and *co-crafted* tremendous change in addition to fighting to maintain our cultural and political autonomy, integrity and continuity. Settler colonialism provides a broad framework for understanding Nuu-chah-nulth political, legal, economic and social engagements with European colonialists, the Canadian state, and the considerable consequent constraints. It represents an asymmetrical relationship that Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, like many Indigenous peoples, have struggled to survive and navigate. A key research question is: How have the Ahousaht co-crafted that change and fought for continuity? Along with our lands, waters, relatives and resources being assaulted via settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism, our identities and cultures remain targeted for erasure or irrelevance. Through my research, however, I have discovered an unexpected resilience, especially with respect to our traditional governance systems, which began a concerted revival at the end of the twentieth century. Understanding contemporary Ahousaht political economy requires a focus on the centrality of the ha'wiih (hereditary chiefs) and the ongoing resilience of traditional Nuu-chah-nulth governance systems. In my literature review I explore Aboriginal economic development generally as well as the specific notion of Aboriginalized capitalism, and consider it in the context of Nuu-chah-nulth political economic decision-making, both historically and contemporarily. I investigate whether our engagements with capitalism change us in unwanted ways, in addition to exploring efforts to mitigate the damage. Additionally, I examine the concept of

decolonization as an important aspect of Indigenous community resurgence, including related Indigenous and Nuuchahnulth specific concepts. I also ask: is decolonization actually possible in a settler state like Canada, and how is it manifest from both individual and collective contexts? I critically engage Nuuchahnulth traditions by identifying core principles that might be adapted and redeployed to meet our contemporary challenges, as well as the identification of undesirable or unjust traditional elements that *should* be discarded. The latter includes aspects of our contemporary cultures that are misogynistic and patriarchal.<sup>1</sup> Finally, I begin the process of trying to identify Nuuchahnulth alternatives to the neoliberal capitalist paradigm that currently dominates our lives and economic, political and cultural landscapes. I introduce several inspiring Nuuchahnulth-aht who work to re-centre Nuuchahnulth perspectives, re-connect with their homelands and waters, and do their (decolonial) best to *live* Nuuchahnulth-aht.

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<sup>1</sup> My gendered analysis is limited here, but I contend that one cannot engage in a contemporary discussion about Indigenous *traditions* without being critical of the ways in which Indigenous cultures, politics and economics are often deployed in misogynistic and patriarchal ways. More work is required in this area, both in our communities and in our scholarly efforts.

## Preface

### *Publications:*

A summary of the broad themes of this thesis has been published as:

Atleo, (Kam'ayaam/Chachim'multhnii) Clifford. "Aboriginal Economic Development and Living Nuu-chah-nulth-aht" in *More Will Sing Their Way to Freedom: Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence* edited by Elaine Coburn. Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2015.

A previous and much shorter version of the literature review in chapter three has been published as:

Atleo, Clifford Gordon. "Aboriginal Capitalism: Is Resistance Futile or Fertile?" *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 9, 2 (2015): 41-51.

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my family: My loving wife, Tuutiisqwisahltuk (Hilary) and my children, Nača'o'aht (Fisher) and Kiitkiš (Eleanor). I also dedicate this work to the children and future generations of the Nuu-chah-nulth, Tsimshian and Anishinaabe peoples. May you inherit the legitimacy of our struggle to *live* beautiful Indigenous lives.

## Acknowledgements

Kleco to my Nuu-chah-nulth relatives and the people of Ahous and T'oyaxsut 'nüün to my Tsimshian relatives and the people of Kitselas and Kitsumkalum, especially those who still hold dear the best of our traditions and are working hard to *live* them everyday. Heartfelt thanks are extended to my committee, as well as other supportive faculty members in the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta. Thanks also to the staff who have been wonderfully supportive of my PhD journey. Thanks to my comprehensive exam mentors, Janine Brodie and Robert Nichols.

Thanks to fellow critical Indigenous scholars who have been supportive of my scholarship and inspirational with their own research and writing: Audra Simpson, Johnny Mack, Leanne Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Vanessa Watts-Powless, Nick Claxton, Rachel Flowers and Joshua Reid. Special thanks to Renée McBeth, Madeline Whetung, Chaw-win-is, Adam Barker, Toby Rollo and my wife Hilary, for your invaluable feedback on my research and writing. Thanks to Nuu-chah-nulth academic trailblazers: *Umeek* (E. Richard Atleo) and Charlotte Coté. Gratitude to Jeff Corntassel, Ana Maria Peredo, James Tully, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, Karena Shaw, and James Rowe at the University of Victoria for your ongoing support and encouragement of my work.

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Of course, endless gratitude to my immediate and extended family for your love and support that made all of this possible.

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## Glossary of Nuu-chah-nulth Terms

The Nuu-chah-nulth language and its various dialects were originally spoken and not written. That being said, a lot of the Nuu-chah-nulth language has become known to later speakers in written form. There are a number of different writing systems, including some based on the International Phonetic Alphabet and others that simply use the English alphabet. I will use a combination of the most commonly used terms and spellings, and you will note that in the direct quotations that I cite there are numerous variations. When possible I will use the IPA because it offers the most accurate pronunciations, provided you are familiar with the sounds. I also want to add that direct translations are all too often simplified and robbed of context. What I include here are the commonly accepted translations, but in the thesis, I will try to expand on the various terms and add context to account for the shortcomings inherent in translation.

<b>Nuu-chah-nulth term</b>	<b>Alternate spelling(s)</b>	<b>English Meaning</b>
aiytstuula	ayts-tuu-thaa, ayts-tuu-thlaa	coming of age ceremony for young Nuu-chah-nulth women
ap-haystalth		kindness
ha'hopstalth		wisdom
ha'huulii	ha'houlthii, ha'hoolthee	chiefly territories, all encompassing
ha'wił (singular)	ha'wilth, haw'wilth	hereditary chief
ha'wiił (plural)	ha'wiih, haw'iih, hawiih	hereditary chiefs
hayuxšił		crazy <sup>2</sup>
hiišuukish čawaak	heeshookish tsawalk hishuukish tswalk	everything is one
hithmesaqin		where we want to be
hopiitstalth		helpfulness/caring
hoquotist		disoriented, as when one's canoe is overturned.
iihtuup		whale
iisaak	eesok	respect

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<sup>2</sup> I recognize that this definition is ableist.

Ko-išin		Raven
k <sup>w</sup> isaath	kwisaahṭ	stranger
mamałnii	mamulṭhnii	Literally “people who lived on floating houses,” but most commonly, “white people.”
musčim	muschim meschames	commoners, people
nanash aktl	nanašaḷ	healthy
Nuu-chah-nulth-aht	Nuučaanuḷaht	People from along the coast and mountains.
nuu-maak		an action that is taboo, forbidden
pachitle	pačil	to give, but Umeek believes it may have also morphed into present-day “potlatch”
Qua-ootz	qua’uuč	Grandchild, owner of all reality
quu’as’a	quu-as, kousa	the people, Indigenous people
t’iick’in	tiitskin	Thunderbird
ḷaakišpiil		whale fat – the “house” that the Atleo family is from
ḷlaakḷlaakq <sup>w</sup> aa	thlawk-thlawk-qua	humble petition/prayer
tyii	tyee	head, as in head chief
uu-a-thluk	uu-aḷuk	take care
ʔukḷaasiš		my name is...
uusimč	oo-simch	spiritual/ritual cold water bathing
wikiiš čaʔmiiḥta		things are out of balance
wiikhii		unfriendly or stingy

wii-uk (singular)	“warrior”, having no fear, brave
witwaak (plural)	
yaʔiih	greedy
ya’akstalth	lovingness
yaa-uk-mis	love (including pain)

### Nations and places

Ahous	Ahousaht, Ahousat	
Čitaapii	Chitaapi	Cat Face Mountain
Hešquii	Hesquiaht	Ahous’ immediate northern neighbour
Maaqtosiis	Marktosis	the main village site of present day “Ahousaht” (Ahous)
Mituunii		the Nuu-chah-nulth name for Victoria (WÁSANEĆ/ Lekwungen territories)
Otsoos	Otsoosaht, ʔuçuusʔath,	the once much larger northern neighbour to Ahous, defeated in a war
Qʷidiččaʔa·tš	Kwih-dich-chuh-ahtx	Makah, relatives of the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht located in Neah Bay, WA
Tla-o-qui	Tla-o-qui-aht	Ahous’ immediate southern neighbour
Wah-nuh-juss/hilth-hoo-is	Waanačas/Hilthuu-is	Meares Island

## Abbreviations

AED	Aboriginal Economic Development
AIRS	Alberni Indian Residential School
AIP	Agreement in Principle
AFN	Assembly of First Nations
BCTC	British Columbia Treaty Commission
BCTP	British Columbia Treaty Process
CIPE	Critical Indigenous Political Economy
CRB	Central Region Board
CSIS	Canadian Security and Intelligence Service
DTES	Downtown Eastside (traditionally the poorest neighbourhood in Vancouver)
ENGO	Environmental Non-Governmental Organization
FNAA	First Nations Agricultural Association
HPAIED	Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development
IMA	Interim Measures Agreement
IMEA	Interim Measures Extension Agreement
INAC	Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
INSET	Integrated National Security Enforcement Team
JAED	Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development
NAEDB	National Aboriginal Economic Development Board
NDP	New Democratic Party
NEDC	Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development Corporation
NIB	National Indian Brotherhood
NNI	Native Nations Institute
NRDC	Natural Resources Defense Council
NTC	Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council
OSR	Own Source Revenue
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SCC	Supreme Court of Canada
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UBCIC	Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
WCAMB	West Coast Aquatic Management Board
WCWS	West Coast Warrior Society
WGNRD	Working Group on Natural Resource Development

## Personal Introduction

Before I begin, allow me to properly situate myself as an Indigenous scholar within the context of my family, communities, and my research interests by means of “self-location.” This is a critical element of Indigenous inquiry identified by Cree/Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach, intended to reveal one’s unique perspective, privilege, accountabilities, biases, cultural grounding, and purpose.<sup>3</sup> Who I am and where I come from crucially inform how I choose my research interests, as well as how I engage them. I will provide greater detail on my methodology in chapter two, but here I begin by introducing myself and illuminating my connections to the research that follows. ʔUkłaasiš Čáčim’mułnii. My Nuuchah-nulth name is Čáčim’mułnii and it roughly means “One who does things properly.” I received it on the occasion of my son’s first birthday, when he was also given my previous name: Nača’o’aht. Nuuchah-nulth people often receive several names during their lifetimes, sometimes on the cusp of new life stages or to acknowledge accomplishments.<sup>4</sup> My wife, an Anishinaabe’kwe, also has a Nuuchah-nulth name, which is Tuutiisqwisahłuk, and our daughter received the name Kiitkiš on her first birthday. I am from the house of ʔaakišpiil of the Ahousaht whose homewaters and lands are located in Clayoquot Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The Ahousaht are connected culturally, linguistically, and in some cases politically, to all of the Nuuchah-nulth nations on Vancouver Island including the Ditidaht and Pacheedaht, as well as the Qʷidiččaʔa-tš in Washington State. I am the son of Wickaninnish, the third eldest sibling in our family, and I am also a first cousin to A-in-chut, the former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, the tyii of our house, and one of the top three principal ha’wiil of the Ahousaht. This is a brief summary of my Nuuchah-nulth

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<sup>3</sup> Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2009): 209-220.

<sup>4</sup> Names may also be “put away” for a time, often one year, out of respect for a tragedy or loss.

chah-nulth lineage, which also indicates to whom I have kinship responsibilities and relationships of accountability. What I do, for better or worse, directly reflects on my family, house, and nation.

I am Tsimshian on my mother's side. My mother's name is Gyemgm hup'i. My Tsimshian name is Kam'ayaam, a family name that has been passed down for many generations. It literally means, "Only imitating raven." We are from the House of Nishaywaaxs from Kitselas located on the Skeena River in north-central British Columbia.<sup>5</sup> I also have close relatives from Kitsumkalum and Lax Kwa'alaams. The Tsimshian peoples, along with many of their neighbours, are divided into four clans: Killerwhale, Raven, Eagle and Wolf. My family is of the Killerwhale clan, or "Gispwudwada" in the Sm'algyax language. I acknowledge both sides of my family and have obligations to both nations, but as it relates to the research for this thesis, my focus is the political economy of the Nuuchah-nulth-aht in general, and the Ahousaht in particular.

I am from Ahous, but like a lot of Nuuchah-nulth-aht, I do not live at home. In fact, between sixty and seventy percent of Nuuchah-nulth-aht live away from home. There are several reasons for this, but one of the major reasons is the fact that we are no longer a seafaring and fishing people. Historically, we were mostly a whaling people, but we also hunted other sea mammals like sea otters and seals, as well as being fishers, hunters, and gatherers of many foods. During the twentieth century, after the cessation of whaling, most Nuuchah-nulth people sustained their families through commercial fishing and as money became increasingly important and interest in settler-sourced goods increased. At the height of Nuuchah-nulth participation in the west coast commercial salmon fishery, during the mid to late

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<sup>5</sup> The Nishaywaaxs Wilp (House) was dormant for most of the twentieth century. We revived our house with a feast in 2009.

twentieth century, there were over two hundred fishing vessels in the Nuu-chah-nulth fleet. Given our population at the time, this meant that *every* Nuu-chah-nulth family was directly connected to fishing as a way of life. Recently, there have been as few as half a dozen fishers, although some hope that a recent Aboriginal fishing rights case will usher in a revival of Nuu-chah-nulth livelihoods at sea. The matter is still before the courts due to a government appeal to justify infringement of those rights. This issue was one of the main reasons I began researching Nuu-chah-nulth political economies. Another key reason was based on my observation that as commercial fishing declined as a Nuu-chah-nulth livelihood, more controversial economic projects and proposals emerged, such as fishfarming and mineral extraction. Economic development was increasingly prioritized by community members and leaders both out of necessity, but also encouraged by influential research and reports from the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, and many others since. How Indigenous peoples have and will continue to navigate settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism is a tremendous challenge both on community and individual levels. I have witnessed and experienced this firsthand. To quote Dwayne Donald, a descendent of the Papaschase Cree, “I experience this complex difficulty in deeply personal and embodied ways.”<sup>6</sup> I have embodied many Nuu-chah-nulth teachings in addition to many individual and inherited experiences of settler colonialism. This research is intimately personal to me.

My interest in these issues did not arise simply because I am a concerned citizen. I also worked as an employee for the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC). I was their

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<sup>6</sup> Dwayne Donald, “Indigenous Métissage: a decolonizing research sensibility,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 25, 5 (2012): 534.

Treaty Process Manager from February 2001 until January 2005, where I learned a lot about the bureaucratic and political workings of the NTC as well as our intergovernmental relations with the settler state. I was the lead administrator overseeing Nuuchahnulth comprehensive claims negotiations through the British Columbia Treaty Process, which began in the early 1990s. While conducting research for the NTC, I often came across academic papers and government/thinktank reports espousing Aboriginal economic development. Initially, I was disconcerted by their *tone* and it did not take long to determine that they all, to greater or lesser degrees, fed into a growing neoliberal capitalist discourse that was not just sweeping across Indigenous communities in Canada at the time, but had also begun to gain influence across the globe. By my estimation, Indigenous peoples were in the process of shifting from broad opposition to destructive capitalist development toward a neoliberal embrace of these once vilified projects as partners. I was alarmed by this revelation (assumption).

I was fired from my job in early 2005.<sup>7</sup> This was also shortly after my father suffered a mild heart attack in late 2004. The timing was auspicious, as I was then able to take a few months off, eat breakfasts at my favourite ‘greasy spoon,’ read lots of great literature, and spend more time with my father who was mending. Eventually, however, I had to start earning money again, and I began working for the Lyackson First Nation and Hul’qumi’num Treaty Group in an advisory and research capacity. I had returned to working in comprehensive claims negotiations, but this time my critical views of the process were welcome by my new employers. I worked for our Coast Salish neighbours for a year and a half before returning to school full time in the fall of 2006. I completed my Bachelor of

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<sup>7</sup> Although I was not present during the deliberations of the treaty negotiators that called for my dismissal, I understand that they were unhappy with my increasingly outspoken stance against our ongoing participation in the BC Treaty Process.



Arts in Political Science in 2008 and my Master of Arts in Indigenous Governance in 2010, both at the University of Victoria. It was during my MA studies that I first explored Nuuchahnulth political economy academically. My MA thesis, *Nuuchahnulth Economic Development and the Changing Nature of our Relationships Within the Ha'hoolthlii of our Ha'wiih*, chronicled the decline of our ways of living as sea-faring peoples and the rise of neoliberal economic development in Nuuchahnulth territories. This thesis builds upon that work. I delve deeper theoretically, engaging Aboriginalized capitalism and Nuuchahnulth traditions and identities. Here I offer a more nuanced analysis of Ahousaht agency, cultural and political continuity, as well as a consideration of the specific perils of neoliberal capitalism, and explore resistance efforts and potential alternatives.

It is an understatement to say that I have a keen interest in these areas of research. I am a Nuuchahnulth-aht investigating and researching other Nuuchahnulth-aht. This is often frowned upon in academia, with its pretensions of objectivity and emphasis on dispassionate detachment. Many would have thought that I would be *unable* to provide a fair accounting of these events and stories. Recently, many critical scholars acknowledge that objectivity is illusive, and can actually reinforce the status quo of hegemonic ideas.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Indigenous scholars Charlotte Côté, Margaret Kovach, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Shawn Wilson embrace and promote the value of Indigenous research being conducted and written by and for Indigenous people. More specifically, however, I am bringing my own Nuuchahnulth perspective to the questions of Nuuchahnulth and Ahousaht political economy. In chapter three, I will reveal specifically how even other Indigenous scholars can

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<sup>8</sup> See Leslie Brown and Susan Strega, eds. *Research as Resistance: Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-oppressive Approaches*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press/Women's Press, 2005.

misunderstand or willfully misrepresent certain aspects of other Indigenous cultures. In part, I deal with my own biases and subjectivity by declaring them here. I announce my affiliations and interests and leave it for you to judge the veracity and value of my contributions. But more importantly, I recognize that my community and my family will evaluate my research and analysis. It is to them that I am truly accountable and it is their opinions that matter most to me. I am providing my perspective, my story, and my opinions on these important issues by way of autoethnography and storytelling, which I explain in chapter two. I approach this research as an Indigenous scholar (now professor), former community governance bureaucrat, and as a member of a traditional leadership family. The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development scholars write in their definitive text, *The State of Native Nations*, “Professors and graduate students can get into interminable and angst-ridden debates about whether or not economic development is ‘good for’ or ‘alien to’ Native communities and lifeways. Few tribal leaders have much tolerance for these debates, charged as these leaders are with supporting community well-being and implementing their citizens’ collective goals and decisions.”<sup>9</sup> Despite what Begay, Cornell, Jorgensen, and Kalt believe, these things are not mutually exclusive. ‘Theoretical’ scholars and ‘real-world’ leaders do not have work at cross-purposes.

To be clear, I only provide *one* Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, *one* Ahousaht’s perspective, not *the* Nuu-chah-nulth or Ahous perspective. I hope to contribute to the internal community and public dialogues thoughtfully and positively. This does not mean that I shy away from critique, but that I offer it in the most respectful and constructive way possible. As my

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<sup>9</sup> Manley A. Begay, Jr., Stephen Cornell, Miriam Jorgensen, and Joseph P. Kalt, “Development, Governance, Culture: What Are They and What Do They Have to Do with Rebuilding Native Nations?” *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 36.

cousin A-in-chut likes to say, “we can be hard on the issues without being hard on each other.” I hope that this research project and thesis is accepted in the manner it is intended, to encourage critical dialogue and thoughtful deliberation about our economic, political, cultural, and social practices so that we may fulfill our responsibilities and leave our homewaters and lands better than we found them.

I wish to add two important points to this preface. I worked on several revisions of this thesis since the Fall of 2016 while enduring substantial pain from a condition known as adhesive capsulitis (commonly known as “frozen shoulder”) in both of my shoulders, which has made movement and sleep difficult and very painful. I am still trying to understand how this has impacted my writing, not only physically, but also psychologically and spiritually. Finally, this thesis has been revised in many ways that I did not agree with, but in accordance with my supervisory committee post-defense demands. While some of their recommendations have indeed been helpful, in many ways, this thesis has become less Nuuchah-nulth-centric as a result. I hope to rectify these issues in a forthcoming book manuscript.

## Chapter One – Introduction

*“There is a rising recognition of the importance of Aboriginal participation in Canada’s economic development, affirmed by recent court decisions and the growing alignment of economic interests between Aboriginal people and the non-Aboriginal business community.”<sup>10</sup>*

*“We have to get to the point where we stop talking in anger. We have to put ourselves in the position to tell stories about freedom, success, love, safety, and the kind of future we want to have.”<sup>11</sup>*

This research project began with the intention of accomplishing two main goals. The first was to develop a deeper understanding of the impacts of neoliberal capitalist development on Nuu-chah-nulth culture and identity. The second goal was to identify positive Indigenous alternatives to the industrial scale economic projects that have come to dominate in Nuu-chah-nulth territories. My primary research questions are: 1. How have Nuu-chah-nulth peoples coped with change throughout their history of settler colonialism in Canada? 2. Does neoliberal capitalism negatively impact Indigenous cultures and communities in unique and particularly dangerous ways? 3. Are there viable Indigenous alternatives? I began with the assumption that neoliberal capitalism does have negative and potentially transformative impacts on our communities, cultures, and identities. Upon deeper investigation, I have realized that change has been a constant condition for our people, both before and after colonial contact, and that change has not strictly been a one-way colonial dynamic. Throughout our history with colonialism, we exercised considerable agency and worked hard to dynamically *co-craft* the changes we were experiencing. I believe this to be the case for many colonized Indigenous peoples. Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark writes,

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<sup>10</sup> The National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, *The Aboriginal Economic Progress Report 2015* (Gatineau: NAEDB, 2015): 7.

<sup>11</sup> Satsan (Herb George), afterword to *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 322.

The Anishinaabe transformed themselves, adapting to their ever-changing environment. Importantly, the stories maintained about Nenabozho often conveyed the importance of change. Anishinaabe nationhood has never been static or fixed. Indeed, no nation can or has survived without undergoing constant change.<sup>12</sup>

I have come to the conclusion that Nuuchah-nulth history since contact has revealed both change *and continuity*. This is not meant to diminish the significance of destructive change wrought by settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism,<sup>13</sup> but I do have a stronger appreciation of Indigenous agency in these processes of change. Indigenous peoples generally and Ahousaht specifically simply seek to have *more control* over the nature of those changes. Historical and contemporary experiences have taught us that Canadian colonialism continually seeks to thwart Indigenous efforts at true autonomy.

With respect to my second goal, I was also similarly challenged, based upon my initial assumption that someone must be conducting business in an ethically sound and Nuuchah-nulth-centric way. I have discovered that this is incredibly hard to do within the context of capitalism and neoliberal governance, which are both very adaptable; one might refer to it as shape-shifting capitalism.<sup>14</sup> Building on the work of Peck, Theodore, and Brenner, Janine Brodie writes, “a key feature of neoliberal governance has been its capacity to change its complexion, formative discourses and policy commitments as it lurches from one crisis of its own creation to another.”<sup>15</sup> Neoliberalism, like capitalism, is adaptable and fluid. Some people believe that these changes are not inherently negative and even hopeful

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<sup>12</sup> Heidi Kiiwetinpinesik Stark, “Marked by Fire: Anishinaabe Articulations of Nationhood in Treaty Making with the United States of Canada,” *American Indian Quarterly* 36, 2 (2012), 124.

<sup>13</sup> I elaborate on my understandings of settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism in chapters two and three.

<sup>14</sup> A nod to the similar concept of a “shape-shifting colonialism” as introduced by Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, “Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism,” *Government and Opposition* 40, 4 (2005): 601-602.

<sup>15</sup> Janine Brodie, “Elusive equalities and the Great Recession: restoration, retrenchment and redistribution” *International Journal of Law in Context*, 10, 4 (2014): 430.

for the future despite the Great Recession, which began in 2008. Michael Jacobs and Mariana Mazzucato write, “Capitalism can be reshaped and redirected to *escape* its present failures.”<sup>16</sup> I delve deeper into neoliberal capitalism as it relates to Aboriginal peoples and Nuu-chah-nulth communities in chapter three.

I have also learned that there are key differences between surviving and working to feed one’s family in a capitalist economy on the one hand, and behaving *as an active capitalist* on the other. The former is where most of us find ourselves, while the latter is indicative of someone who actively perpetuates the core tenets of capitalism, although I acknowledge that this is likely more a spectrum rather than a binary. Active capitalist behaviours might include making money and profit for the purposes of making *more* money and profit, taking more than is needed, or actively and unfairly exploiting others for personal gain. This is an important distinction, because one group of people is simply trying to survive in an overwhelmingly capitalist world, while the other is actively perpetuating and benefitting from capitalist accumulation and relations of exploitation. I will provide examples of this distinction and elaborate on its significance more in chapter five, specifically in the context of Nuu-chah-nulth commercial fishing.

At its heart, this thesis examines the prospects of, and challenges to, *living* Nuu-chah-nulth-aht in contemporary times. That is, I seek to contribute to the discourse on how we might *live* our traditional values and principles and create more consistency within all aspects of our lives, including our communal and individual economic activities in the context of settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism. I contend that this is particularly difficult in contemporary times because certain behaviours are rewarded while others are

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Jacobs and Mariana Mazzucato, eds. “Rethinking Capitalism: An Introduction,” *Rethinking Capitalism: Economics and Policy for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016): 2.

discouraged (or punished). Most of the prominent Aboriginal fishing rights cases (*Sparrow*, *Van der Peet*, *NTC Smokehouse*, and *Gladstone* for example) in British Columbia have involved the state charging Indigenous people who believed they were simply exercising their Aboriginal rights.<sup>17</sup> I seek to understand how Nuu-chah-nulth people are struggling and striving to maintain their cultures, identities, and livelihoods in the context of prevailing neoliberal capital relations. How do we continue to live as Nuu-chah-nulth-aht today, given the history and reality of ongoing settler colonialism? Our identities have and continue to be under assault via government policies, contemporary Canadian culture, and affected by the intergenerational trauma of residential schools. In the recent Nuu-chah-nulth fishing rights case, federal government lawyers argued, “Canada has no knowledge of and does not admit any allegations with respect to the existence or character of the alleged Nuu-chah-nulth Nations, the alleged Nuu-chah-nulth Nation or of relationships between the alleged Nations or Nuu-chah-nulth Nation, or any of them, at or before Contact, and puts the Plaintiffs to the strict proof thereof.”<sup>18</sup> The Canadian government argued that we might not exist as *a people*. This is a typical response to perceived threats to their dominant political and economic order. Nuu-chah-nulth people and territories have endured generations of colonial occupation and economic exploitation, but of particular interest to me is the more recent challenges presented by the post-1970s neoliberal capitalist paradigm, which insists on government austerity, deregulation, privatization through broad market penetration and an emphasis on hyper-individuality and competitive self-reliance. There is nothing inherently wrong with concern for individuals or their capacity for self-reliance, but individual gain at

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<sup>17</sup> C. Rebecca Brown and James I. Reynolds, “Aboriginal Title to Sea Spaces: A Comparative Study,” *UBC Law Review* 37, 1 (2004), 454.

<sup>18</sup> *Ahousaht et al v. Canada and British Columbia*, (2015) Seventh Amended Statement of Defense BCSC court file no. S033335, para. 6.

the expense of the collective is problematic for many Indigenous and collectivist societies in general and Nuu-chah-nulth communities in particular. As Cree scholar, Shalene Jobin writes, “Discourses promoting Indigenous peoples’ success at capital markets have not exhaustively examined the consequences of the hegemonic individualizing powers of capitalism.”<sup>19</sup> Clearly, we are struggling with these conflicting dynamics. I have always been told that our cultures foster a *balance* between the individual and the community. Umeek writes, “the original inhabitants of Clayoquot Sound...had ways of life, the best of which, when practiced, could balance individual with group rights without violating the rights of either.”<sup>20</sup>

Importantly, neoliberalism also leads to changing conceptions of Indigeneity that Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez describes as a descent into “market citizenship,”<sup>21</sup> which I believe allows for *shallow* cultural recognition while subsuming core Indigenous values to market demands. Jeff Shantz and José Brendan McDonald express, “concern over the neoliberal constitution of subjectivity – the creation of neoliberal subjects for whom neoliberalism is regarded simply as a ‘way of life,’ the only possible world, as it has been recently, or, to use Margaret Thatcher’s slogan propagated a few decades ago, ‘TINA – there is no alternative.’”<sup>22</sup> Renowned universal private property advocate, Hernando De Soto,

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<sup>19</sup> Shalene Jobin, *Cree Economic Relationships, Governance, and Critical Indigenous Political Economy in Resistance to Settler-Colonial Logics* (PhD thesis, University of Alberta, 2014), 48.

<sup>20</sup> Umeek, (E. Richard Atleo), “Commentary. Discourses in and about Clayoquot Sound: A First Nations Perspective,” in *A Political Space: Reading the Global through Clayoquot Sound*, eds. Warren Magnusson and Karena Shaw (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002): 207.

<sup>21</sup> Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, “North American First Peoples: Slipping up into Market Citizenship?” in *Citizenship Studies* 8, 4 (Dec. 2004): 354.

<sup>22</sup> Jeff Shantz and José Brendan Macdonald, “Foreword” *Beyond Capitalism: Building Democratic Alternatives for Today and the Future*, eds. Jeff Shantz and José Brendan Macdonald (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013): xvi.



concurs stating that capitalism is, “the only game in town.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, “the production of neoliberal subjects is a key aspect of contemporary struggles over dispossession and exploitation,” conclude Shantz and Macdonald<sup>24</sup> With this new subjectivity, we also witness the acceptance and recognition of Indigenous cultures that are performative, palatable, and consumable rather than cultures that inform our lives and guide our daily activities. Recent examples of this include the display of First Nations “culture” at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver or the 2015 federal parliamentary swearing in ceremony. While Canada and the world were celebrating the former, Indigenous people (and others) from the downtown eastside were being displaced through gentrification.<sup>25</sup> And since the election of the new Liberal government under Trudeau (which included the election of a record number of Indigenous members of parliament, plus two appointed as cabinet ministers) many Indigenous people in Canada have been disappointed.<sup>26</sup> Jobin adds, “In a neoliberal framework, then, Indigenous rights and citizenship are commodified in a way that is profitable for the Canadian State.”<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, contemporary resource extraction occurring on Indigenous lands uses similar incentives, both rewards and punishment, to create more Indigenous participation and legitimation. Altamirano-Jiménez writes, “(Indigenous) people’s relationships with place are emptied of meaning and transformed into isolated cultural practices or quasi

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<sup>23</sup> Hernando De Soto, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else* (New York: Basic Books, 2000): 226.

<sup>24</sup> Shantz and Macdonald, xvi.

<sup>25</sup> Doug Ward, “Anti-Olympic protesters get their game on” *Vancouver Sun*, January 29, 2010, Accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.vancouversun.com/business/Anti+Olympic+protesters+their+game/2500164/story.html>.

<sup>26</sup> The Current, “Indigenous leaders give Trudeau government failing grade on delivering promises,” *CBC Radio* January 25, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-january-26-2017-1.3951896/indigenous-leaders-give-trudeau-government-failing-grade-on-delivering-promises-1.3951900>.

<sup>27</sup> Jobin, 50.

hobbies, and the nonhuman world is broken down into units of value within the economic realm.”<sup>28</sup> Anishinaabe/Haudenosaunee scholar Vanessa Watts describes this loss of cultural meaning and changing Indigenous connections to place and spirituality in the context of economic development as “boardroom smudging.”<sup>29</sup> She writes,

Boardroom smudging is emblematic of tolerance of Indigenous ceremony versus meaningful engagement in ceremony’s intentions. We know that ceremony is place-based, and is a method of exchange between humans, non-humans, and the spirit world. The act of ceremony outside of traditional places (for example, in colonial spaces such as boardrooms), can still be meaningful, but could also be a measure of disembodiment (the corruption of the spiritual life of place). This disembodiment is further intensified when it is used for purposes counter to spiritual processes. When the state engages in Indigenous ceremonies with Indigenous peoples to gain further concessions from place (e.g., extracting resources), both place and ceremony become increasingly damaged. This not only compromises meaningful communication with the spirit world (which is affected by the exercises of place), but also can authorize false notions of spirit-prompted engagement and subsequent blessings.<sup>30</sup>

This leads me to a pivotal question. Are we changing? If so, how? Are we adapting? If so, how? Andrew Haldane writes about mainstream “short-termism” and “quarterly capitalism” in a way that is relevant to my concerns and inquiries here. About our current era of mainstream capitalism and its impacts on people, he states, “Neurologically, our brains are adapting to increasing volumes and velocities of information by shortening attention spans.”<sup>31</sup> As some scholars are asking these questions about the potential impacts of

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<sup>28</sup> Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, *Indigenous Encounters with Neoliberalism: Place, Women, and the Environment in Canada and Mexico* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2013): 72.

<sup>29</sup> “Smudging is the “burning of various medicine plants to make a smudge or cleansing smoke is used by the majority of Native North American peoples. It is a ritual cleansing.” KiiskeeNtum. “Gifts from the Creator for man’s use...The smudging ceremony,” in *Windspeaker*. <http://www.ammsa.com/node/12407>.

<sup>30</sup> Vanessa Watts, “Smudge This: Assimilation, State-Favoured Communities and the Denial of Indigenous Spiritual Lives,” in *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies* 7, 1 (2016): 163.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew G. Haldane, “The Costs of Short-termism” *Rethinking Capitalism: Economics and Policy for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*, eds. Michael Jacobs and Mariana Mazzucato (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016): 66.

capitalism on all people, I am similarly concerned about the impacts on Indigenous people *and Indigenous peoples* as collectivities.

Nuu-chah-nulth people have deployed various adaptive strategies since our first encounters with colonial explorers and traders, but I remain concerned and interested in whether the recent turn toward neoliberal capitalism has the potential to fundamentally *transform* Nuu-chah-nulth ways of being and living that have endured for millennia in clearly undesirable ways. My concern is rooted in the fact that under neoliberal capitalism we have been *invited in* as partners. This changes the dynamic considerably. African American scholar, Lester K. Spence writes, “The neoliberal turn, the gradual embrace of the general idea that society (and every institution within it) works best when it works according to the principles of the market,” produces “a society that increasingly shirks its responsibilities to those perceived to be losers in an increasingly stark competition over material, social, and psychic resources.”<sup>32</sup> Under neoliberalism, social problems are individualized and deemed pathological. David Harvey writes, “If conditions among the lower classes deteriorated it was because, it is said, they failed, usually for personal or cultural reasons, to enhance their own human capital (through dedication to education, the Protestant work ethic, submission to labour discipline).”<sup>33</sup> Wendy Brown goes further, stating that neoliberalism renders, “us *as* human capital, not simply having it to deploy or to invest or to enhance.”<sup>34</sup> Consequently, some people are “credit-worthy” and others are

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<sup>32</sup> Lester K. Spence, *Knocking the Hustle: Against the Neoliberal Turn in Black Politics* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2016): xxiv.

<sup>33</sup> David Harvey, *The Limits of Capital: New and Fully Updated Edition* (New York: Verso, 2006): xiv.

<sup>34</sup> Katie Cruz and Wendy Brown, “Feminism, Law, and Neoliberalism: An Interview and Discussion with Wendy Brown,” *Feminist Legal Studies* 24 (2016): 80. *Emphasis* in original.

“disposable.”<sup>35</sup> Brown adds, “Contemporary neoliberal economization of political and social life is distinctive in its discursive production of *everyone as human capital* – for themselves, for a business, and for a national or postnational economic constellation...”<sup>36</sup> That we are rendered as human capital is an important distinction, because of the inevitable consequences that flow from an inherently unstable economic system. Neoliberal capitalism demands sacrifice. There are always winners and losers. Brown concludes that the effects of neoliberalism “generate intensely isolated and unprotected individuals, persistently in peril of deracination and deprivation of basic life support, wholly vulnerable to capital’s vicissitudes.”<sup>37</sup> To be clear, Brown is speaking of people in democratic societies. I argue that Indigenous people and peoples are especially vulnerable given the historical and contemporary dynamics of settler colonialism. Are Nuu-chah-nulth people (wittingly or unwittingly) sacrificing key political, economic, social, and cultural values through neoliberal subject transformation? Indigenous peoples the world over are struggling with these pressures and dilemmas. Sami Scholar, Rauna Kuokkanen writes,

Throughout history, Indigenous peoples have developed a vast array of systems to govern themselves in distinct societies and to make use of natural resources for their living and subsistence. These systems, however, have been seriously undermined as a result of colonization and today, the possibilities of practising these systems of governance and economies are very limited. The contemporary reality is that existing Indigenous self-government structures and models are largely grounded on principles of global capitalism, such as economic development based on large-scale resource extraction and privatization and commodification of the land.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Wendy Brown, “Sacrificial Citizenship: Neoliberalism, Human Capital, and Austerity Politics,” *Constellations* 23, 1 (2016): 3. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, “From Indigenous Economies to Market-Based Self-Governance: A Feminist Political Economy Analysis,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 44, 2 (June 2011a): 275.

This ongoing struggle is true in Nuu-chah-nulth territories as well. Today, it is not hard to feel overwhelmed by the global ubiquity of neoliberal capitalism and its local reach.

The Nuu-chah-nulth people are comprised of fifteen nations located on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. There are over nine thousand registered Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, living both at home and abroad. At present, the Nuu-chah-nulth diaspora makes up more than sixty percent of our total population. Our dispersion has greatly accelerated over the last half century as access to our traditional territories, foods, and livelihoods has diminished in the wake of colonial settlement, residential schools, political and legal constraints, and intensifying neoliberal economic pressures. These pressures are multifaceted and closely connected to our experiences with colonialism in Canada, including external and internal changes to political, economic, legal, and social norms. The Nuu-chah-nulth people are also closely related to the Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tḡ whose home is in Neah Bay, Washington.<sup>39</sup> Nuu-chah-nulth people share many commonalities with our Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish neighbours, but we are distinct in many ways as well, including being the only coastal peoples to have traditionally hunted for whales on the west coast.<sup>40</sup> Another feature of the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht that is shared with many of our coastal neighbours is our form of hereditary governance. Nuu-chah-nulth communities were historically led by ha'wiih (hereditary chiefs), and our societies were stratified with “noble,” “common,” and “slave” ranks. These traditional governance systems were complex and it would be incorrect to assume that they were simply dictatorial due to their hereditary nature. José Mariano Moziño observed that the behaviours of the “lower” ranks did, “not appear to preserve the

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<sup>39</sup> The Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tḡ (also spelled Kwih-dich-chuh-ahtx) are commonly known as Makah.

<sup>40</sup> Many Indigenous peoples in the Arctic (Alaska, Northwest Territories, Russia) also hunt whales.

marks of submission.”<sup>41</sup> I explore Nuuchah-nulth political and social dynamics in chapter five, but I have found that misunderstandings are often prone to arise when limiting our discussion of Nuuchah-nulth societies and terminology to English translations that include contentious historical and political significance. For example, John Jewitt’s account of Nuuchah-nulth (Mowachaht) society is full of references to “kings” and “queens.”<sup>42</sup> Even beloved Tseshaht storyteller, George Clutesi spoke of “the ‘king’ of each tribe” when speaking about hereditary leaders.<sup>43</sup> What I want to emphasize here is the changing roles (and interpretations of the roles) of hereditary leaders in Nuuchah-nulth societies. Over the years of settler colonialism in Canada, Nuuchah-nulth ha’wiih lost most of their influence, privileges, rights, and responsibilities, but they persisted and recently orchestrated a genuine revival, which I explore in greater detail in chapter five. Now I will provide some additional context with respect to the political economy of the Ahousaht in Nuuchah-nulth territories and the rise Aboriginal economic development and neoliberal capitalism in Canada.

### **Contemporary Economic Life in Nuuchah-nulth Territories**

Like many coastal areas at present, unemployment is high amongst Nuuchah-nulth people in Clayoquot Sound, home to the Hesquiaht, Ahousaht, and Tla-o-qui-aht. This was not always the case. The west coast of British Columbia has seen the rise and demise of many resource-based industries including whaling, sealing, the sea otter fur trade, logging and a multitude of commercial fisheries. Prior to resource extraction on an industrial scale, Nuuchah-nulth-aht thrived for thousands of years in our homewaters and lands, a testament to

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<sup>41</sup> José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka: An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792*. Trans. and Ed, Iris H. Wilson Engstrand (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991): 30

<sup>42</sup> John R. Jewitt, “Primary Forms of Material Culture: Living and Eating,” *Indians of the North Pacific Coast* (Toronto/Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1966): 8-16.

<sup>43</sup> George Clutesi, *Potlatch* (Sidney: Gray’s Publishing, 1973): 21. This is a common problem that I have encountered, that of Indigenous elders articulating their thoughts in English for others’ benefit, which unintentionally alters meanings and understandings.

ways of living and being that emphasized relationships, harmony, balance, reciprocity, and respect. As our ability to practice our traditional livelihoods was restricted, particularly whaling, we became dependent on commercialized industries and the emerging cash economy, and wage markets. A common name for coastal Indigenous peoples was “saltwater people.” Nuu-chah-nulth-aht practiced much of their livelihoods on our oceans and rivers. This remained true even through the adaptive practice of commercial fishing throughout most of the twentieth century.

After contact with European and American trading ships, my ancestors also traded whale oil, sea otters, and seals. These early trading activities had a tremendous impact on our economic practices that I argue became a part of larger cultural changes over time. Even though many traditional practices became adapted to commercial practices, it was only a few generations ago when *every family* was involved in a life on our traditional waters. In addition to the larger commercial vessels, many people used smaller boats to fish locally, comprising what was long known as the small-scale “mosquito fleet.”<sup>44</sup> In my youth, I worked summers as part of the Nuu-chah-nulth mosquito fleet, as well as on larger seine and trolling vessels. Sadly, Nuu-chah-nulth-aht can no longer accurately refer to themselves as saltwater people. Very few of us participate in fishing anymore, on any scale. Today’s reality, like that of many Indigenous communities in this country, is that we no longer have robust, direct relationships with our waters and lands for our sustenance. Instead, we mostly participate in the mainstream wage labour market and buy the majority of our food from grocery stores like other Canadians. This has had a profound effect on our relationships, responsibilities, health, and overall wellbeing. As Wet’suwet’en hereditary chief, and former

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<sup>44</sup> Percy Gladstone, “Native Indians and the Fishing Industry of British Columbia,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 19, 1 (1953): 20-34.

Assembly of First Nations British Columbia regional chief, succinctly puts it, “We were made dependent in so many aspects of our lives. It [Canadian settler colonialism] has done serious damage.”<sup>45</sup>

There are now vastly more Ahousaht working for fish farm companies in Clayoquot Sound than there are those still fishing for wild salmon. Finfish aquaculture has taken over as the primary employer in Ahous territories. The fish farm industry is controversial with myriad concerns over the health of ecosystems, employees, and many Indigenous wild salmon species. There are also serious concerns over escaped Atlantic salmon colonizing wild Pacific salmon and steelhead habitat.<sup>46</sup> The fish farm debate is both local and global as many of the aquaculture companies are headquartered in Japan, Norway, and Chile. Cermaq, the company operating fish farms in Ahous waters, was recently sold by Norwegian owners to Mitsubishi, a large Japanese conglomerate.<sup>47</sup> Farmed salmon, which are inherently carnivorous fish, are fed fish oil and ground up fishmeal derived from other wild fish, usually small forage fish from other parts of the world. It takes several pounds of mashed up forage fish to produce one pound of farmed salmon.<sup>48</sup> This delegitimizes industry proponents’ primary claims, which is that they are trying to meet a growing worldwide

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<sup>45</sup> Satsan (Herb George), 321.

<sup>46</sup> John P. Volpe, Eric B. Taylor, David W. Rimmer, and Barry W. Glickman, “Evidence of Natural Reproduction of Aquaculture-Escaped Atlantic Salmon in a Coastal British Columbia River,” *Conservation Biology* 14, 3 (2000): 899-903. John P. Volpe, Bradley R. Anholt, and Barry W. Glickman, “Competition among juvenile Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) and steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*): relevance to invasion potential in British Columbia,” *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 58, 1 (2001): 197-207.

<sup>47</sup> DealBook, “Mitsubishi to buy Salmon Producer for \$1.39 Billion,” *New York Times*, September 22, 2014, <https://dealbook.nytimes.com/2014/09/22/mitsubishi-to-buy-salmon-producer-for-1-39-billion/>.

<sup>48</sup> Albert G. J. Tacon and Marc Metian, “Fishing for Feed or Fishing for Feed: Increasing Global Competition for Small Pelagic Forage Fish,” *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment* 38, 6 (2009): 294-302. Rosamond L. Naylor, Ronald W. Hardy, Dominique P. Bureau, Alice Chu, Matthew Elliott, Anthony P. Farrell, Ian Forster, Delbert M. Gatlin, Rebecca J. Goldberg, Kathlene Hua and Peter D. Nichols, “Feeding aquaculture in an era of finite resources,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 106, 36 (2009): 15103-15110.



demand for affordable seafood. Fish farm companies provide a highly profitable product to a relatively affluent market, and are putting wild fish species at risk. And unfortunately in the space of one or two generations, many Nuuchah-nulth-aht have gone from being fishers to farmers of fish.

Fish farming is not the only controversial economic activity going on in Nuuchah-nulth territories. The logging of our west coast rain forests has long been a source of conflict with forestry corporations and supportive settler governments. Unsustainable logging practices and the government's failure to consult or consider the priorities of Nuuchah-nulth nations in Clayoquot Sound resulted in protests on Meares Island in the 1980s and "The War in the Woods" in 1993.<sup>49</sup> Nuuchah-nulth-aht and settler Canadians working with environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) peacefully confronted the British Columbia government, logging companies, and the police. Due in large part to Nuuchah-nulth political lobbying and legal maneuvers, as well as ENGO support and public protest, much of the old growth forests in Clayoquot Sound were protected from clear-cut logging. The protests and legal maneuvering *created space* in the public imagination for change, contributing to a focus on comprehensive claims negotiations via the British Columbia Treaty Process. That space contracted rather quickly, however, and while five Nuuchah-nulth communities - together called the Maa-nulth Treaty Society - concluded an agreement in 2009, the majority of the Nuuchah-nulth negotiations have stalled or ceased altogether. There were also significant tensions between Nuuchah-nulth communities and ENGOS involved in the Clayoquot Sound dispute. Strategic alliances were often short-lived, with

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<sup>49</sup> See: Warren Magnusson and Karena Shaw, eds. *A Political Space: Reading the Global Through Clayoquot Sound* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 2003 and Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 2002.

George Watts, the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council chairperson at the time, accusing environmentalists of neocolonialism in 1994 and Greenpeace being banned from Clayoquot Sound in 1996.<sup>50</sup> The Clayoquot Sound disputes, along with other protests and court cases related to Aboriginal rights and title across the country, ushered in a new era of negotiations, consultation, and attempts to include Indigenous communities in ecosystem management and economic projects. I look at these efforts in the Nuu-chah-nulth context in chapter five. At present, there are also several mining proposals for gold and copper that threaten the ecological and political peace, which I also examine.

Of particular interest to me is the fact that many recent economic development projects initiated by outside companies include more participation and involvement of Nuu-chah-nulth communities. This extends beyond the government duty to consult and into the realm of impact benefit agreements and economic partnerships. This is partially due to court cases like *Haida* and *Taku River Tlingit* that broadened the responsibility to “consult *and accommodate*” Aboriginal rights,<sup>51</sup> and the protestation and direct action in Clayoquot Sound and other places that threatened economic stability.<sup>52</sup> On the one hand, we might assume that in light of the changing legal environment with respect to the consultation and accommodation of Aboriginal rights, companies are simply being pro-active. Cynthia Chataway writes, “Corporate-Aboriginal partnerships have increased enormously over the last 10 years, primarily because business people believe that partnering with Aboriginal

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<sup>50</sup> Braun, 107-108.

<sup>51</sup> Lorne Sossin, “The Duty to Consult and Accommodate: Procedural Justice as Aboriginal Rights,” *Canadian Journal of Administrative Law & Practice* 23, 1 (March 2010): 93-113.

<sup>52</sup> Howard Ramos. “What Causes Canadian Aboriginal Protest? Examining Resources, Opportunities and Identity, 1951-2000,” *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 31, 2 (Spring 2006): 211-234.

people will improve their long-term profitability.”<sup>53</sup> What I have realized in the Ahous context, however, is that our ha’wiih have consistently and actively sought out this recognition, which has partially manifested in the form of these new economic partnerships. Both Ahous and Tla-o-qui have agreements with fish farm companies operating in their territories, which have proven controversial within those communities as well as with many of their Nuuchah-nulth and settler neighbours. Some leaders will tell you that they are simply looking out for the day-to-day needs of community members who must now participate in the mainstream wage economy to feed their families. They argue that these impact benefit/partnership agreements create jobs and allow for some Nuuchah-nulth input into the projects’ environmental standards. Ahous spokesperson, Wally Samuel, states, “We’re caught between a rock and a hard place. But right now, it’s our *livelihood*.”<sup>54</sup> Since these agreements are confidential, hidden even from most community members, I have no way of knowing exactly what was agreed to or how faithful the companies have been to their commitments in those agreements. What is true, and what I am most interested in, in the Ahous case is that protocol agreements have been signed between fish farm companies and Ahous ha’wiih, which was renewed since 2002, including a recent five-year agreement that was signed in 2015. In chapter five, I reveal in greater detail the revival of the Nuuchah-nulth ha’wiih and their critical role in our contemporary political economy, specifically as it relates to these fish farms and other economic projects.

Imperial Metals, a Vancouver-based company, is also looking at two potential mining projects in Clayoquot Sound, again with the hopes of First Nation participation and

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<sup>53</sup> Cynthia Chataway, “Successful Development in Aboriginal Communities: Does it Depend upon a Particulate Process?” *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 3, 1 (2002): 76.

<sup>54</sup> Stefania Seccia, “Ahousaht and aquaculture company celebrate protocol,” *Westerly News*, March 25, 2010, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://www.westerlynews.ca/local-news/ahousaht-and-aquaculture-company-celebrate-protocol-1.1885701>. *Emphasis* added.

endorsement. With respect to a copper mine proposal in Ahous territories, the community has been ambivalent, but the Tla-o-qui-aht have consistently resisted a proposed gold mine in their territories. The dominant economic history in Clayoquot Sound has been one of outsiders exploiting local resources, while leaving very little benefit and a lot of mess for Nuu-chah-nulth-aht. It is important to understand the long and complicated history that has brought us to our present precarious situation and the *need* for these collaborations in the first place. For example, during the colonial process of Indian reserve allocation, Nuu-chah-nulth nations, along with many of their coastal neighbours, were confined to very small parcels of land. The colonials argued that because Nuu-chah-nulth-aht relied so heavily on the ocean and rivers, we did not need large parcels of land.<sup>55</sup> The justification was that we would always have access to seafood and would not have to take up the more sedentary and agrarian ways of the newcomers. Harris writes, “the Dominion and provincial governments could justify these reserves...in part, on the grounds that Native peoples of the province were fishers and did not need a large agricultural land base.”<sup>56</sup> It is now clear that as colonial occupation has unfolded, Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have been denied access to our waters and traditional livelihoods resulting in the present situation where we are now nearly completely alienated from our lands and waters. This is not only true of the majority of Nuu-chah-nulth people who now live in cities away from their homelands, but also the reality of our people at home on small reserves who have been forced to adopt sedentary living and wage labour. Our compliance and cooperation with industrial scale economic development in our territories now *seems* inevitable given our loss of access to traditional and adaptive livelihoods, in a way that I would characterize as colonial dispossession and coercion. Here I

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<sup>55</sup> Douglas C. Harris, *Fish, Law, And Colonialism: The Legal Capture of Salmon in British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001): 45.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

am reminded of Robert Nichols' explanation of contract theory's "ratchet effect," that is, "the *more* successful European colonization of indigenous peoples has been and continues to be, the *less* recourse to a distinct and independent package of political and social forms of association, sovereignty and rights that indigenous peoples can appeal to legitimately from the standpoint of liberal settler-societies."<sup>57</sup> The game is fixed and nearly everyone seems to be betting on our inevitable acquiescence.

Historically, we never considered ourselves poor. My father remembers the first time Indian Agents brought canned meat (like Spam, Prem or Klik) to our village in the middle of the twentieth century. The settler government officials brought these cases of canned meat because they thought we were poor, by *their* standards. The initial Ahousaht response was laughter, but my father said that eventually some of our people began to take the meat, a point in time he marks as the beginning of our dependency on the state. Western conceptions of wealth and poverty, as well as political and economic pressures have all contributed to a loss of access to our traditional foods. Simply put, we have been starved into submission. And we must now compete in the neoliberal capitalist wage economy to feed our families. Former national chief, Ovide Mercredi states, "When I was sixteen – which was not *that* long ago, just over thirty years – not one single person on our reserve collected welfare. Our people were self-sufficient and the wage economy was virtually non-existent."<sup>58</sup> It would be simple to say that all of this was foisted upon us, and one cannot deny the Canadian state's involvement, but that would partially ignore the agency that Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have exercised throughout our history with the settlers. Mercredi and Mary Ellen Turpel accurately

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<sup>57</sup> Robert Nichols, "Indigeneity and the Settler Contract today," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 39, 2 (2013): 179-180. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>58</sup> Ovide Mercredi and Mary Ellen Turpel, *In the Rapids: Navigating the Future of First Nations* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1993): 146. *Emphasis* in original.

summarize our common problems thus: “This dominance in Canada continues to be the reality of our lives. Too often we define ourselves in relation to this dominance instead of relation to who we are as peoples, and this will be an ongoing challenge. Our oppression by Canada has taken over our lives and we now must find ways to resist.”<sup>59</sup>

The ongoing alienation from our lands and waters has also had another negative impact. Where we once saw the animals as relatives worthy of respect and all life and land as sacred, it has become easier to see them as resources for extraction and sale. Our relations within our territories have changed and continue to change, but I ask here whether they will be fundamentally transformed? We no longer live in direct connection with our lands and waters. Settler colonialism plays a big part, but we must also consider our own agency in this process. There has been considerable effort to maintain our Nuuchahnulth values and principles, but those values and principles must grapple with profoundly different and dominant colonial value systems. This is a common experience of many Indigenous communities across North America, and part of a paradigm shift that has laid the way for what I call Aboriginal economic development.

### **Aboriginal Economic Development<sup>60</sup>**

*“It is no longer acceptable to be just complainers about our social and economic conditions. It is no longer enough just to blame others for our pain and misery.”*

- Ovide Mercredi and Mary Ellen Turpel, 1993<sup>61</sup>

While I spend a significant portion of chapter three investigating Aboriginal capitalism, I begin here more broadly with Aboriginal economic development (AED). Both concepts

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<sup>59</sup> Mercredi and Turpel, 23.

<sup>60</sup> I recognize that AED also exists within the broader realm of development studies and literature. For a summary see: Jeffrey Haynes, *Development Studies*. Malden: Polity Books, 2008 and Uma Kothari, ed. *A Radical History of Development Studies: Individuals, Institutions and Ideologies*. London: Zed Books, 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Mercredi and Turpel, 145.

centralize our role as agents engaging in economic practices, but AED at least in theory, remains open to a wider range of economic activity that might not strictly be confined to capitalism. Nonetheless, as it has been widely discussed and practiced, AED leans heavily in a neoliberal capitalist direction. Jobin writes, “Currently, many scholars (Slowey 2008; Jorgensen 2007; T. Anderson, Benson and Flanagan 2006) advocate for neoliberal conceptions of capital accumulation and corresponding institutions of governance for Indigenous peoples.”<sup>62</sup> The terrain is difficult and fraught with challenges. Isobel Findlay and John Russell write, “those involved in Aboriginal economic development are challenged to evaluate options, to assess the opportunities and challenges of globalizing processes, and make decisions that meet multiple needs and aspirations while serving the long-term social, environmental, and economic health of communities.”<sup>63</sup> In British Columbia a number of people and institutions have come to champion AED. My use of the term Aboriginal is intentional. It is a legal term used by Canadian political, bureaucratic, and judicial institutions to identify status and non-status Indians, Inuit, and Métis peoples with rights identified in the Canadian constitution. It is also used in critical academic circles to indicate a more collaborative and acquiescent posture towards state and society recognition processes, and contrasted with the use of the term Indigenous.<sup>64</sup> Generally speaking, AED is less critical of Western forms of political and economic organization such as neoliberal governance and capitalism. Advocates do not seek drastic change, but rather seek to plug into mainstream Canadian political and economic frameworks. While some proponents of AED acknowledge the failings of mainstream politics and economics, there remain

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<sup>62</sup> Jobin, 44.

<sup>63</sup> Isobel M. Findlay and John D. Russell, “Aboriginal Economic Development and the Triple Bottom Line: Toward a Sustainable Future?” *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 4, 2 (2005), 85.

<sup>64</sup> Alfred and Corntassel, 2005.

significant aspects of Aboriginalism and AED in particular that warrant critical scrutiny. One of these aspects is the belief that we can adapt and deploy capitalism to be consistent with Indigenous worldviews and values.

Several Native academics believe that capitalism can be Aboriginalized. David Newhouse calls this “capitalism with a red face;” Duane Champagne calls it “tribal capitalism;” Robert Miller uses “reservation capitalism;” and Wanda Wuttunee offers us “community capitalism.” Newhouse claims that, “The process of modernization and the adoption of capitalism as the dominant political-economic system within aboriginal society is well underway. It would be sheer folly to attempt to reverse the process or to attempt dramatic shifts in direction.”<sup>65</sup> Pointing to the Japanese and Chinese (state) examples, Champagne believes that Indigenous “communities can take on capitalist elements and participate in capitalist markets and still retain core aspects of identity, tradition, institutional relations – the close interconnectedness of polity, culture, economy, and community – and cultural values.”<sup>66</sup> Miller believes that one of the key problems on Native American reservations is poverty and he sees no conflict in using capitalist means and markets to alleviate that poverty. He writes, “instead of injuring culture, private business ownership is an expression of Native American traditional values and supports tribal cultures.”<sup>67</sup> Wuttunee does not actively advocate for capitalism as much as she considers it an inevitable system that needs to be dealt with practically from Aboriginal perspectives. Two themes predominate with all of these scholars, however: The first is that capitalism is inevitable and

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<sup>65</sup> David Newhouse, “Modern Aboriginal Economies: Capitalism with a Red Face” *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 1, 2 (2000b): 60.

<sup>66</sup> Duane Champagne, *Social Change and Cultural Continuity Among Native Nations* (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2007): 46

<sup>67</sup> Robert J. Miller, *Reservation “Capitalism:” Economic Development in Indian Country* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013): 5.



unavoidable, and the second is that capitalism can either be sufficiently Aboriginalized, is already consistent with Aboriginal cultures, or navigated in such a way that it will have no adverse effects on Indigenous peoples or cultures.

### ***The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development***

By far the most influential academic initiative regarding AED is the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (HPAIED), founded by settler academics, Stephen Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 1987. Cornell and Kalt write, “Economic development on Indian reservations is first and foremost a political problem. At the heart of it lie sovereignty and the governing institutions through which sovereignty can be effectively exercised.”<sup>68</sup> After years of extensive community research, they have concluded and advocate for the “nation-building” approach, which prioritizes “de-facto sovereignty,” “cultural match,” and the establishment of stable governing institutions, as the keys to successful Native economic development.<sup>69</sup> They encourage Native American communities to, “build an environment that encourages investors to invest, that helps businesses last, and that allows investments to flourish and pay off.”<sup>70</sup> In the context of neoliberal capitalism, I believe this renders Indigenous cultures and values as secondary to stable and predictable governing institutions that encourage foreign direct investment, and *actively* shape and discipline our relationships and responsibilities.

The Harvard Project scholars come to their nation building approach after dismissing previous failed approaches to Indigenous community development. They write, “Past approaches to development by assimilation, by project-based job creation, or by pursuing

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<sup>68</sup> Stephen Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt, “Sovereignty and nation-building: The development challenge in Indian Country today,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 22, 3 (2003), 44.

<sup>69</sup> Cornell and Kalt, 10-20.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 8.

federal grants are on the wane, largely because of their repeated failure. Contemporary nation-building approaches are in the ascendancy, with tribes investing in their own capacities to govern and thereby improving local accountability and encouraging tribal and nontribal investments in human and other capital.”<sup>71</sup> They add, “assimilationist policies accomplished little except the hegemonic disruption of cultures, the dispossession of land and natural resources, and perpetual impoverishment.”<sup>72</sup> The HPAIED also criticizes the “one size fits all” government-driven initiatives that were often inappropriately applied uniformly throughout Native America.<sup>73</sup> Manley Begay et al also point out that, “Much of Indigenous politics in North America, from the 1960s on, has been a rights-based politics.”<sup>74</sup> While they don’t dismiss this approach, and they certainly consider Indigenous rights in the context of the de facto sovereignty that they argue for; economic development is central to their research findings.

What makes the Harvard Project so compelling is that most Indigenous leaders are also very critical of previous failed government initiatives. The scholars at the Harvard Project believe that there should be a healthy division between business and politics in the contemporary neoliberal capitalist sense. Governing institutions and organizations have a prominent role in the nation building approach. Cornell writes, “Native nation building is a governance challenge. It is about Native nations enhancing their own capacities for effective

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<sup>71</sup> The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, *The State of the Native Nations: Conditions Under U.S. Policies of Self-Determination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 111.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 112.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 113.

<sup>74</sup> Begay et al, 2007a, 44.

self-rule.”<sup>75</sup> Cornell and Kalt conclude that the Nation-building approach requires that “Native nations assert [strategic] decision-making power,” and “back up that power with effective governing institutions” that “match Indigenous political culture,” with Indigenous leaders acting as “nation builders and mobilizers,” to provide, “a fertile ground and healthy environment for sustained economic development.”<sup>76</sup> Begay et al write, “Economic development, then, is *the process by which a community of nation improves its economic ability to sustain its citizens, achieve its sociocultural goals, and support its sovereignty and governing processes.*”<sup>77</sup> While they emphasize institutions and effective bureaucracies, they do not ignore leadership, which in truth is inescapable in most Indigenous communities.

The scholars at the HPAIED have a complicated relationship with Indigenous leadership and politics. Kalt writes, “There is an underlying reason for the almost universal dislike people have for politics...Who or what prevents those who have the power of government from turning that power to the service of their own interests at the expense of the community as a whole?”<sup>78</sup> There is a certain conservative libertarian tone to much of their writing, but as I already noted, Indigenous leadership, which varies greatly from place to place, plays an unavoidably important role in community political and economic dynamics. Begay, Cornell, Jorgensen, and Pryor write, “Faced with the challenges of nation building – of rethinking governance structures, of rebuilding Indigenous economies, of

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<sup>75</sup> Stephen Cornell, “Remaking the Tools of Governance: Colonial Legacies, Indigenous Solutions,” *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 57.

<sup>76</sup> Stephen Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt, “Two Approaches to the Development of Native Nations: One Works, the Other Doesn’t,” *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 18-19.

<sup>77</sup> Begay et al, 2007a, 36. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>78</sup> Joseph P. Kalt, “The Role of Constitutions in Native Nation Building,” *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 95-96.

balancing cultural change and continuity, of addressing difficult social problems, of forming new relationships with other governments, and so forth – *effective leaders* appear to do several critical things.”<sup>79</sup> Within a business context, Keneth Grant and Jonathan Taylor write, “Exercising leadership in corporate governance entails inculcating professionalism, encouraging productive dissent, developing human capital, *motivating new behavior*, and maintaining stability in corporate governance itself.”<sup>80</sup> Despite the fact that the HPAIED people encourage an arms-length relationship between tribal leadership and day-to-day business decisions, they are aware that many business ventures in Indian Country are tribal initiatives. They thus recommend that tribal leaders adopt particular behaviours. Begay et al (2007b) state that effective Indigenous leaders:

- Change the Conversation about Governance, Development, and the Future;
- Adopt a Strategic Approach to Decision Making;
- Make Sober Assessment of the State of the Nation’s Governance;
- Lay the Institutional Foundations for Capable Governance;
- Make Themselves Disposable;
- Practice What They Preach<sup>81</sup>

With respect to their fifth point they write, “The task is not simply to find leaders who can make good decisions. It is to put in place a structure of governance – a set of rules and the organization to back them up – that will encourage citizens and leaders to make good decisions, time after time.”<sup>82</sup> The point that they are trying to make is that the establishment

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<sup>79</sup> Manley A. Begay, Jr. Stephen Cornell, Miriam Jorgensen, and Nathan Pryor, “Rebuilding Native Nations: What Do Leaders Do?” *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007b), 279. *Emphasis added*.

<sup>80</sup> Kenneth Grant and Jonathan Taylor, “Managing the Boundary between Business and Politics: Strategies for Improving the Chances for Success in Tribally Owned Enterprises,” *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 194. *Emphasis added*.

<sup>81</sup> Begay et al, 2007b, 279-294.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 294.

of systems and processes that outlive specific leaders are ideal.<sup>83</sup> The goal, over time, is to put in place stable institutions and create an environment that is hospitable to economic development. This is achieved through principles of *good governance*. Kalt states, “Nations should consider all four of the major branches of the tree of effective self-governance: lawmaking, administration, dispute resolution, and oversight.”<sup>84</sup> This includes *impartial* dispute resolution institutions, often in the form of tribal courts in the United States. Citing the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (1996), Flies-Away, Carrow and Jorgensen write, “An indispensable foundation [of successful business enterprises in Indian Country] is a capable, independent tribal judiciary that can uphold contracts, enforce stable business codes, settle disputes, and, in effect, protect *business from politics*.”<sup>85</sup> Here again, we see their emphasis on protecting business. And Grant and Taylor write, “Around the world, governments are getting out of the business of business.”<sup>86</sup> Despite the fact that principles of good governance *seem* universally sound, they are also consistent with neoliberal dogma that always prioritizes the market. I recognize that the HPAIED scholars present their findings within the context of overall Indigenous community development, but the global context of neoliberal capitalism cannot be ignored in our analyses of Indigenous community economic ‘success.’

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<sup>83</sup> While this may be true and sound advice, it is interesting to note that many of the elected leaders of economically successful Indigenous communities in British Columbia (such as Osoyoos, Westbank, and Squamish) have been in office for long periods of time, twenty-four years in the case of Robert Louie and over thirty in the case of Clarence Louie.

<sup>84</sup> Kalt, 86.

<sup>85</sup> Joseph Thomas Flies-Away, Carrie Carrow, and Miriam Jorgensen, “Native Nation Courts: Key Players in Nation Rebuilding,” *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 118. *Emphasis added*.

<sup>86</sup> Kenneth Grant and Jonathan Taylor, “Managing the Boundary between Business and Politics: Strategies for Improving the Chances for Success in Tribally Owned Enterprises,” *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 175.

Cornell and Kalt may have uncovered the *keys to success* in competitive capitalist economies, but this has largely unexamined implications for many Indigenous people and peoples. Cornell, Jorgensen, Kalt and Contreras write, “Our concern is with Native nations’ efforts to reclaim power over their own affairs, reorganize relationships with other governments, rebuild their institutional capacities for effective governance, and more vigorously toward improved and self-determined economic and community welfare.”<sup>87</sup> The HPAIED research and recommendations are compelling, especially when they are critical of previously failed government initiatives and emphasize (de facto) tribal sovereignty. Satsan, writes in the afterword for *Rebuilding Native Nations*, the way the HPAIED speaks to Aboriginal leaders in Canada as well: “our agenda has been to regain our place on our lands, to take back our laws, to take back our government, to take back responsibility for ourselves, and most of all, to reclaim the spirituality that is so important for us, and to fulfill our obligations to the land.”<sup>88</sup> Again, compelling rhetoric that can be hard to critique, but more time and effort needs to be spent deconstructing the Harvard Project and the way its approach thrives within neoliberal capitalism and at least understanding the implications for Indigenous community wellness and cultural integrity.

The findings coming out of the Harvard Project have been popular in Indigenous communities in the United States and Canada, and continue to be influential around the world.<sup>89</sup> But not everyone is on board. Granted, criticism of the HPAIED is surprisingly

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<sup>87</sup> Stephen Cornell, Miriam Jorgensen, Joseph P. Kalt, and Katherine Spilde Contreras, “Seizing the Future: Why some Native Nations Do and Others Don’t,” *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development*, ed. Miriam Jorgensen (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 297.

<sup>88</sup> Satsan, 321.

<sup>89</sup> Tonina Simeone, “The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development: Findings and Considerations,” *Library of Parliament* (Ottawa: Parliamentary Information and Research Service, 2007), 9.

uncommon, it does exist. Despite Cornell's testimony before Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, where he states, "there is no reason to believe, that the findings of our work in the United States are inapplicable or irrelevant to Canada," Tonina Simeone believes that there, "are important differences in the legal and political history of indigenous peoples within the two countries, as well as significant differences in geography and population size that must be taken into account in the application of these findings."<sup>90</sup> Interestingly, she also points out that, "The concern for some is that their (HPAIED) findings may be attractive to those who wish to transfer responsibility to Aboriginal governments, rather than broader rights to lands and resources."<sup>91</sup> This has implications in the context of neoliberalism and the BC Treaty Process, which I discuss later. Another Canadian critique is more pointed. Christina Dowling writes that the Harvard Project's "myopic view of the world that a society must take in order that these conditions ["good governance" etc.] take hold...is not congruent with [Indigenous] cultures."<sup>92</sup> She adds, "The Harvard model embraces western style economics, underpinned by an individualistic orientation and acceptance of authority based on self-interest. Cornell and Kalt tend to use uncritically concepts such as markets, enterprises, and Westernized notions of economic development (their writings are littered with words such as 'progress' and 'productivity' [Cornell & Kalt, 30]); they lament the lack of economic success of those tribes whose cultures do not easily welcome the business model."<sup>93</sup> Dowling raises a key question: What if there is no cultural match? She concludes, "First Nations people are enmeshed in forces which create cultural mis-matches, and which actually work to encourage 'ineffective'

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<sup>90</sup> Simeone, 10.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>92</sup> Christina Dowling, "The Applied Theory of First Nations Economic Development: A Critique," *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 4, 2 (2005), 125.

<sup>93</sup> Dowling, 120.

business institutional development.”<sup>94</sup> As many of the Indigenous sources in this thesis reveal, there are indeed many mis-matches between specific Indigenous worldviews and economic development rooted in neoliberal capitalist worldviews.

Criticism comes from as far as Australia, where the Harvard Project has also been influential. Notable critics on the Harvard Project’s application to the Australian Indigenous context have come from Martin Mowbray and Patrick Sullivan. Mowbray focuses on what the HPAIED misses and excludes. He writes, “Because the Harvard Project approach is linked to the fundamental precepts of economic fundamentalism, analytic concepts that followers of other schools of thought find important are excluded from the analysis. For example, the concepts of state, class and even race or racism are discounted. So is gender.”<sup>95</sup> Mowbray also writes,

Harvard Project researchers also overlook other major alternative or contrary positions. These include arguments concerning problems associated with economic growth. The issue of environmental sustainability is important and is particularly relevant to some activities on Indigenous people’s land, existing or projected. There is an important debate about the implications of economic development for Indigenous culture – pre-empted by the implicit assumption that growth is compatible with, even good for, cultural preservation.<sup>96</sup>

Most importantly, from my perspective, Mowbray addresses problems with the Harvard Project’s appeal. He writes, “The special appeal of the Cornell and Kalt paper is *political*. That is, it connects the precepts of economic rationalism with indigenous (economic) development.”<sup>97</sup> Mowbray makes important connections between the Harvard Project and neoliberalism. At a conference at the University of New South Wales he stated that the

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 126.

<sup>95</sup> Martin Mowbray, “Localising Responsibility: The Application of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development to Australia,” *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 41, 1 (2006), 100.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.



HPAIED “approach to the brand of neo classical economic policy known in Australia as ‘economic rationalism’, and more widely as ‘economic fundamentalism’, ‘economic liberalism’ or ‘market liberalism’.”<sup>98</sup> He cautions Indigenous leaders to be mindful of these connections and the underlying motivations.<sup>99</sup> I for one, take Mowbray’s caution to heart, in my analysis of the Harvard Project findings and Aboriginal economic development more generally, and neoliberal capitalism specifically.

Sullivan begins by pointing out some of the similarities in the experiences of Indigenous peoples in the United States and Australia, namely the crises in the wake of colonization.<sup>100</sup> He also adds that many people in Australia believe that the HPAIED, “appears to hold out the hope of a post-colonial indigenized governance attractive to both government and Indigenous interests.”<sup>101</sup> Sullivan is also quick to offer criticism of the Harvard Project, particularly its emphases on cultural match and stable governing institutions. He writes, “It is not adequate...to conceive of Aboriginal culture as a set of institutions that can be translated, in one way or another, into effective organisational structures for self-management or commerce.”<sup>102</sup> Specifically, on Aboriginal culture and the Harvard Project, Sullivan outlines his concerns:

First, Aboriginal culture is not constituted in such a way that it can be reflected in effective modern organisations in any deep sense (although congenial symbolism and toleration of an informal culture within the organization may be another matter). Second, to do so is an ill-considered act of modernisation that potentially does violence both to continuing cultural practice as well as to principles of good governance. Third, the important

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<sup>98</sup> Martin Mowbray, “What Matters? Policy driven evidence, Indigenous government and the Harvard Project,” (Australian Social Policy Conference, New South Wales, July 20-22, 2005).

<sup>99</sup> Mowbray, 2006, 101.

<sup>100</sup> Patrick Sullivan, *Indigenous Governance: The Harvard Project, Australian Aboriginal Organisations and Cultural Subsidiarity*, Working Paper 4, Desert Knowledge CRC, Alice Springs, 2007, 1.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

question of social justice within Aboriginal communities is neglected by concentrating only on the efficiency and cultural appropriateness of functional organisations.<sup>103</sup>

I will pick up on several of these themes throughout my examination of AED, the Aboriginal capitalisms presented in chapter three and my analysis of AED and neoliberal capitalism in the Nuuchah-nulth context in my concluding chapters. There is no doubt that the Harvard Project has been greatly influential in the United States, Canada and around the world, and oddly very little criticism exists in academic or mainstream circles. My focus here is on the growth of AED in Canada.

### ***Aboriginal Economic Development in Canada***

*“Indigenous peoples rank first in marginalization, unemployment, and lack of education, so government responses focus on economic development as if it were the ultimate solution to these problems.”<sup>104</sup>*

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) began in 1991 under the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney and published its final report in 1996. According to Anthony Reynolds, “one reason the Mulroney government created the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was to contain a rising tide of hostility among Aboriginal peoples against their place within Canadian society.”<sup>105</sup> There were many preceding conflicts, but Oka (1990) was fresh in everyone’s memory. The RCAP report was vast and comprehensive, and included several recommendations regarding Aboriginal

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>104</sup> Julian Castro-Rea and Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, “North American First Peoples: Self Determination or Economic Development?” *Politics in North America: Redefining Continental Relations*, Yasmeen Abu Laban, Radha Jhappan and Francois Rocher, eds. (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2008): 246.

<sup>105</sup> Anthony Reynolds, “Three Years On: What Has Happened to the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples?” *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 2, 1 (2001): 93.

economic development.<sup>106</sup> The government responded with *Gathering Strength* (including a *Statement on Reconciliation* and \$350 million for the healing foundation), which many questioned whether it was adequate or not.<sup>107</sup> It is important to note that certain aspects of the RCAP report were greatly influenced by the Harvard Project.<sup>108</sup> Reynolds also points out a critical aspect of the Canadian response to the RCAP report that is relevant to my overall analysis of Indigenous-settler relations with respect to land, politics and economics. He writes that RCAP “decried the assumed if unspoken outcome that most Canadians want, that Aboriginal peoples, through education and economic progress, ‘become like us’; that their societies become part of the Canadian cultural mosaic *without the awkwardness of exercising any real political or economic power.*”<sup>109</sup> This criticism also applies to Nuu-chah-nulth experiences with Supreme Court of Canada rulings and comprehensive claims negotiations. From the 1990s through to the twenty-first century, AED continued to dominate discourses on Indigenous community development.

Aboriginal economic development was front and centre in the 2007 Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples report, *Sharing Canada’s Prosperity: A Hand up Not a Hand Out*. The report states, “Where the seeds of economic action have taken root, they have blossomed. Guided by visionary leaders, these communities made the leap to the modern industrial economy, often in a single generation. These remarkable successes...have changed the future of communities and contributed to the economic well-being of entire

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<sup>106</sup> “Volume 2 – Restructuring the Relationship” from the final RCAP report: [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071124130434/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/shm5\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/webarchives/20071124130434/http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/shm5_e.html).

<sup>107</sup> Reynolds, 99. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 96 and Newhouse will also reference it later in chapter three.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. 94. *Emphasis* added.

regions.”<sup>110</sup> The Senate report is unabashedly pro-economic development and it certainly takes capitalism for granted in its analysis. Like Dowling’s criticism of the Harvard Project language, a rudimentary discourse analysis of the Senate report reveals that it is littered with words and phrases like, “take advantage,” “market forces,” “modernize,” “progress,” “exploit,” “education gap,” “realistic,” “economic integration,” and “catching up.”<sup>111</sup> I also want to highlight the way the Senate report’s pedigree firmly rooted in the Harvard Project. West Moberly First Nation Chief Roland Willson gave testimony highlighted and lauded by the Senate committee. He stated, “We allow business to be business. We try to keep politics out of business. Politics is the quickest way to wreck anything.”<sup>112</sup> The committee also stated, “There is a *cultural shift* towards integration taking place in many Aboriginal communities across Canada.”<sup>113</sup> This was and remains a concern for me about the prominent AED discourses in Canada.

With a particular emphasis on resource extraction, two other notable reports were released in 2015 representing a continuity of emphasis on AED and Indigenous peoples no longer as opponents, but now as partners in economic development. The first was published by an Assembly of First Nations (AFN) initiative, the Working Group on Natural Resource Development (WGNRD). It is titled, *First Nations and Natural Resource Development: Advancing Positive, Impactful Change*. In it, the WGNRD states,

Canada is at a pivotal moment in terms of the evolving role of First Nations in the future of this country, and significance of natural resource development to Canada’s economy. We need to prepare now to ensure that

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<sup>110</sup> Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, *Sharing Canada’s Prosperity – a Hand up, Not a Hand Out*, 2007, vii.

<sup>111</sup> Standing Senate Committee, vii-13.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 5. *Emphasis added*.

all of the benefits of natural resource development will be fully shared by First Nations and all Canadians.<sup>114</sup>

The AFN WGNRD report stresses the involvement of Aboriginal communities in resource extraction first and foremost, as well as language that is deferential to Canadians and their businesses. It also offers no criticism of the horrendous environmental reputation of most resource extraction companies, and instead focuses on Aboriginal people obtaining their “fair share” of resource revenues. This point is critical. Aboriginal leaders have been asking/demanding/begging to be granted “a seat at the table” of Canadian politics and economics for some time now, but it was not always so.

The second and most recent report is *The Aboriginal Economic Progress Report*, which was released in August 2015. It is a follow-up report to the 2012 *Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report* and is published by the (federally appointed and funded) National Aboriginal Economic Development Board (NAEDB). According to board chair, Chief Clarence Louie, “The NAEDB’s vision is for Aboriginal people to be healthy, well-educated, economically self-sufficient and *full participants in the Canadian economy*.”<sup>115</sup> While the NAEDB spends a lot of time looking at detailed Aboriginal demographic information and socio-economic indicators, it is the last part of Louie’s comments that I am truly interested in as it seems to represent a shift away from the familiar narrative of Indigenous people resisting intrusive and exploitative settler economic projects to promoting and participating in them. Many Aboriginal leaders address this issue from the perspective that settlers have been getting rich off of Indigenous lands and resources for generations, all the while excluding us, and that it is now time to share in the wealth. Current AFN National

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<sup>114</sup> Working Group on Natural Resource Development, *First Nations and Natural Resource Development: Advancing Positive, Impactful Change* (Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations, 2015): 37.

<sup>115</sup> National Aboriginal Economic Development Board. *The Aboriginal Economic Progress Report* (Gatineau: NAEDB, 2015): i. *Emphasis added*.

Chief Perry Bellgarde states, “We are tired of being poor, but development has to be done in a respectful way.”<sup>116</sup> Former National Chief Shawn Atleo, shortly after being elected in 2009 told guests at a Toronto Board of Trade event, “We’re here to stay and we’re looking for partners. *We’re open for business.*”<sup>117</sup> Recently, a group of Ontario First Nation communities banded together, “looking to benefit from resource development in their traditional territories.”<sup>118</sup> Russell Wesley, Communication Coordinator for the Windigo First Nations Council clarifies, “These communities have demonstrated, as far back as I remember in the early 1980s, that we’re not opposed to development. We want to be an active participant in it.”<sup>119</sup> The economic development era and current truth and reconciliation era have even merged to an extent with the concept of “economic reconciliation,” which involves a “*shared prosperity* approach,” according to Reconciliation Canada.<sup>120</sup> My concern is that without adequately addressing the inherently destructive aspects of capitalism - especially subjectivity transformation and large-scale resource extraction - Indigenous peoples risk violating their own laws and values and thus neglecting their own obligations to the land, water, and future generations. To date, capitalism does not reward the adequate addressing of environmental concerns vis-à-vis the priority of profit maximization.

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<sup>116</sup> Claudia Cattaneo, “Pro-oil First Nations seek end to pipeline gridlock: Some First Nations are growing uneasy that opposition to pipelines has gone too far, threatening a major source of future wealth for Canada’s indigenous people,” *The Financial Post*, October 3, 2016. <http://business.financialpost.com/commodities/energy/pro-oil-first-nations-seek-end-to-pipeline-gridlock>.

<sup>117</sup> Tristin Hopper, “Shawn Atleo was a different type of National Chief, and that’s what led to his ouster,” *The National Post*, May 2, 2014. <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/shawn-atleo-was-a-different-type-of-national-chief-and-thats-what-lead-to-his-outster>. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>118</sup> Ian Ross, “Ready to do business: Windigo communities unite to thrive on the land’s mineral wealth,” *Northern Ontario Business*, March 6, 2017. <https://www.northernontariobusiness.com/industry-news/aboriginal-business/open-to-do-business-552674>.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Reconciliation Canada, “Economic reconciliation.” <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/programs-initiatives/economic-reconciliation/>.

British Columbia is home to several prominent AED advocates, including Tsimshian lawyer and author, Calvin Helin and longtime Osoyoos Indian Band Chief, Clarence Louie. Helin has published two books about Aboriginal economic development. Although they are not scholars, their voices are influential in many Indigenous communities and must be considered important contributions to the dialogue on AED in BC. While Helin shares some widely held criticisms of First Nation governance and economic dependence, he does not apply the same level of critical scrutiny to capitalism. He believes that capitalism can be Aboriginalized in a way that offsets any potentially negative consequences. Helin adds that, “It is time for indigenous people to stop dwelling on the rancorous injustices of the past.”<sup>121</sup> This certainly plays into a lot of mainstream thinking about Indigenous peoples in Canada and the *injustices of the past*. Despite his critiques of First Nation dependency, Helin is optimistic. He states, “The good news is that Aboriginals are likely in the best position ever to integrate economically with the mainstream, to partner with industry, and create wealth and opportunities for all.”<sup>122</sup> Helin himself is leading a proposal to bring Alberta bitumen to global markets via a pipeline through British Columbia with the consent of Aboriginal chiefs. His proposal includes support of the Aquilini Group – owner of the Vancouver Canucks hockey team – and David Tuccaro, likely Canada’s wealthiest Aboriginal citizen who makes his fortune providing services for Alberta oil sand companies.<sup>123</sup> Helin epitomizes the turn toward neoliberalism. Aboriginal leaders are now willing to engage with the same settler corporations that their predecessors once opposed. He is not alone. A-in-chut has announced

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<sup>121</sup> Calvin Helin, *Dances with Dependency: Indigenous Success Through Self-Reliance* (Vancouver: Orca Spirit Publishing & Communications, 2006): 264.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>123</sup> Claudia Cattaneo, “Eagle Spirit pipeline plan obtains ‘licence’ as B.C. First Nations chiefs sign on to project,” *Financial Post*. Accessed August 28, 2015. <http://business.financialpost.com/news/energy/eagle-spirit-pipeline-plan-obtains-licence-as-b-c-first-nations-chiefs-sign-on-to-project>.

his own proposal for an Aboriginal-owned oil refinery, Pacific Future Energy.<sup>124</sup> Proposals such as this move forward despite significant Indigenous opposition to various pipeline proposals in Canada, including Enbridge's Northern Gateway (recently rejected) and Line 9 and Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain, and south of the border in the cases of the Keystone XL proposal and the Dakota Access Pipeline. I will examine the complexities of these approaches in a Nuuchahnulth context in chapter five, but I want to take a quick look at Clarence Louie, who has received a lot of attention for the impressive economic performance of his community as well as his inflammatory rhetoric.

Louie is known for saying, "If your life sucks it's because you suck" and "It's called the economy stupid." His blunt rhetoric is controversial, but he also intrigues many with statements like, "Economic development is how we hunt today. If you call yourself a leader, give all your people the chance at the dignity of a job, equal opportunity and the individual responsibility to earn a living."<sup>125</sup> People often hesitate to argue with these assertions and it is in this way I believe that AED has gained traction among Aboriginal leaders. Louie finds consistency between nationalistic and traditionalist rhetoric with neoliberal individual self-reliance. He is not an overt champion of capitalism but his economic assumptions certainly take it for granted. Louie views himself as a pragmatist and since this pragmatism includes the adoption of capitalism, he has also become a darling of rightwing groups in Canada like the Fraser Institute.<sup>126</sup> His vision of Aboriginal self-reliance through capitalist engagement

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<sup>124</sup> Brent Jang, "SNC-Lavalin teams with First Nations group on proposed B.C. oil refinery," *The Globe and Mail*. Accessed August 28, 2015. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/first-nations-group-partners-with-snc-lavalin-for-bc-refinery-project/article25800248/>.

<sup>125</sup> Helin, 235.

<sup>126</sup> Tom Flanagan, "Why First Nations Succeed in Canada," *The Fraser Institute*, November 2016. <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/why-first-nations-succeed.pdf>.



fits well within neoliberal principles of governance (austerity) and economics (market primacy).

My research indicates that most AED proponents believe that what they are doing is either consistent with their Aboriginal values or a pragmatic necessity, which I will demonstrate in chapter three. It is not my intent to vilify these leaders. My primary concern over AED is the implicit acceptance of a capitalist market framework, a lack of criticism of its inherently exploitative and destructive nature, and the negative impacts on Indigenous cultures and communities. At its most basic level, capitalism requires incessant growth. John Barry, a reader at Queen's University Belfast writes, "growth is not just 'good' for the capitalist economy, but indeed constitutes a functional imperative, that is, a system requirement."<sup>127</sup> According to Richard Heinberg, economic growth, averaging about three percent per annum has largely been enabled by access to abundant and relatively cheap fossil fuels during the past 150 years.<sup>128</sup> This might sound modest, but year after year, the necessity of never-ending economic growth takes its toll on our lands and waters. Fred Magdoff and John Foster write, "Capitalism thus recognizes no limits to its own self-expansion - there is no amount of profit, no amount of wealth, and no amount of consumption that is either 'enough' or 'too much.'"<sup>129</sup> But at some point, we will have extracted too much, polluted too much, and we will have not given enough back. Growth is natural; perpetual growth is not. This critique of mainstream economics and AED is entirely consistent with my understanding of the Nuuchah-nulth principles of oneness and respect,

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<sup>127</sup> John Barry, *The Politics of Actually Existing Unsustainability: Human Flourishing in a Climate-Changed, Carbon-Constrained World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 138.

<sup>128</sup> Richard Heinberg, *The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality* (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2011): 10.

<sup>129</sup> Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster, *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know about Capitalism: A Citizen's Guide to Capitalism and the Environment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011): 43.

but as we shall see in chapter five, surviving in a capitalist world seriously challenges ones principles.

At this point I want to acknowledge a few other Indigenous scholars that research and write about Aboriginal economic development in the Canadian context. There has been a lot written about economic development in Native communities south of the border, by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, through initiatives like the Harvard Project and the Native Nations Institute (Arizona). In Canada, less has been written about AED, and even fewer people have made it the primary research focus of their academic careers. The two that are most well known are David Newhouse and Wanda Wuttunee. I address Newhouse's "capitalism with a red face" in chapter three, but I also want to acknowledge his role in teaching and writing about AED in Canada. First, he helped found the Journal for Aboriginal Economic Development (JAED) and remains active there as an editor. He is also a teacher of Business at Trent University and Community Economic Development at Concordia University. He has written for the JAED extensively as well as edited books and written chapters regarding contemporary Indigeneity and AED. Finally, he is a member of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board. He is of the belief that capitalism is unavoidable and that Aboriginal people have no choice but to engage with it.

Wanda Wuttunee is the other senior Indigenous scholar who has written extensively about Aboriginal economic development in Canada. Like Newhouse, she is also a member of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board. She has written two books, several journal articles and reports, and is also on the editorial board of the JAED. She teaches Native Studies and is the Director of the Aboriginal Business Education Program in the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba. I also look at her work on

“community capitalism” in chapter three. It is safe to say that Wuttunee and Newhouse are the most senior Indigenous academics writing about AED in Canada, but a younger generation of scholars is also looking at these issues, from a decidedly more critical perspective. This is the canon that I seek to contribute to.

Shalene Jobin is one such Indigenous scholar from the younger generations that is engaging in critical research on Aboriginal economic development, specifically Cree political economy. She calls her theoretical approach critical Indigenous political economy (CIPE).<sup>130</sup> Jobin is critical of both capitalism and what she describes as “external social indicators.” She believes that capitalism helped pave the way for settler colonialism in Canada.<sup>131</sup> Jobin adds, “Although I see external social indicators as important to demonstrate the uneven development paths under capitalism, it is also important to critically analyse the impacts of external social indicators such as those related to quality of life.”<sup>132</sup> She believes that there are still important distinctions between Indigenous values and those of a capitalist settler society, and that this is evident in political and economic systems, as well as our tools of analysis. Mary Finley-Brook agrees, noting that displacing Indigenous perspectives in favour of neoliberal benchmarks promotes, “mainstreaming and integration.”<sup>133</sup> Jobin takes a very different approach. Most other scholars thinking and writing about AED in Canada and the United States tend to take capitalism for granted. She writes that most contemporary scholarship on AED, “often takes as a given the logics embedded in capitalism and, currently, neoliberalism.”<sup>134</sup> Jobin takes her scholarship beyond

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<sup>130</sup> Jobin, 2014, 8.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 2-3.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>133</sup> Mary Finley-Brook, “Inter-Indigenous Development Aid: Markets, Corporations, and Biases,” in *Canadian Geographer* 55, 3 (2011): 347.

<sup>134</sup> Jobin, 302.

critique however, and seeks to re-centre Cree perspectives, rooted in Cree history and teachings as well as highlighting contemporary Cree ceremonial practices that focus on reciprocity and relationships.<sup>135</sup> These are the types of contributions that I hope to make with my research on Nuu-chah-nulth political economy, with a particular emphasis on understanding traditional governance resurgence as well as the role of resistance in communities over controversial economic projects.

### **Nuu-chah-nulth Life**

Nuu-chah-nulth people have had a relationship with their territorial waters for millennia. This access to an abundance of seafood contributed to the rich cultural and artistic traditions, which the northwest coast is known for. Nuu-chah-nulth peoples moved with the seasons to gather food and our diets consisted primarily of fish, including salmon, halibut, cod, and herring. We feasted on herring and salmon eggs, as well as shellfish. A common expression amongst coastal peoples is, “When the tide is out, the table is set,” referring to our access to clams, mussels, sea urchins and other foods from the foreshore. We also gathered food on land, including berries, roots, and plants as well as game like deer and elk. Most noteworthy, however, was our hunting of whales.

It has been over one hundred years since our family captured and feasted on whale. Due to commercial whaling by foreigners and the consequent decimation of whale populations in the Pacific, Nuu-chah-nulth whalers voluntarily ceased their traditional hunts at the end of the nineteenth century.”<sup>136</sup> Our close relatives, the Q<sup>w</sup>idičča?a·tḥ recently captured two whales, first in 1999 in accordance with an 1855 treaty with the United States and with broad community support and celebration, and more controversially in 2007, while

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 305-306.

<sup>136</sup> Charlotte Coté, *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors Revitalizing Makah & Nuu-chah-nulth Traditions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010): 64-66.

under intensified legal and public pressure.<sup>137</sup> According to Snohomish historian, Joshua Reid, Caqa'wił, a Makah chief stated the following regarding the 1855 Treaty: "I want the sea. That is my country."<sup>138</sup> Despite the passage of time, whale hunting and whaling culture still play a prominent role in the imagination of Nuu-chah-nulth peoples. Nuu-chah-nulth scholars highlight the centrality of whaling to our peoples. Umeek (E. Richard Atleo) writes of the historical significance of whaling, including the preparatory traditions, protocols, and petitions as well as emphasizing our spiritual relationships with the whales.<sup>139</sup> Charlotte Côté emphasizes the contemporary relevance of whaling to the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht and Q'widičča?a·tǵ and a persistent whaling culture. Umeek reminds us that whales are, "great personages who require great respect and an appropriate ceremonial recognition for their important role in the mysteries of life."<sup>140</sup> Every family member played a role in these preparations and protocols. Q'widičča?a·tǵ leader Keith Johnson states, "Whaling has been part of our traditions for over 2,000 years" and that the Makah revival of whaling was part of a community effort at addressing health and diet concerns, as well as cultural pride and discipline.<sup>141</sup> Côté emphasizes the importance of oral traditions and storytelling in Nuu-chah-nulth cultural perpetuation. In her analysis, despite the cessation of whaling, rich whaling traditions have been kept alive today through songs, stories, dances, art, place-names, and family naming.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 115-192.

<sup>138</sup> Joshua L. Reid, *The Sea Is My Country: The Maritime World of the Makahs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015): 12.

<sup>139</sup> Umeek (E. Richard Atleo), *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. 114.

<sup>141</sup> Robert Sullivan, *A Whale Hunt: Two Years on the Olympic Peninsula with the Makah and Their Canoe* (Toronto: Scribner, 2000): 13-14.

<sup>142</sup> Côté, 69-114.

Nuu-chah-nulth people also participated in hunting for sea otter pelts for trade and seal hunting in the Pribilof islands in the Bering Sea although there has been no confirmation that any Nuu-chah-nulth people joined the industrial whaling fleets, likely because whaling was the sole privilege/responsibility of the ha'wiih. With the end of the traditional whale hunts, commercial fishing became more important for Nuu-chah-nulth villages. Over the latter part of the twentieth century, changes to fishing regulations and the fishing industry have negatively affected Nuu-chah-nulth participation. Today, there are about a dozen boats in the Nuu-chah-nulth fleet, despite a recent court victory in favour of an Aboriginal right to fish commercially. The practical application of the court ruling is still being worked out, but the provincial Court of Appeal judgment clearly states that Nuu-chah-nulth-aht possess an Aboriginal right to fish for food, social, ceremonial *as well as commercial purposes*. This is consistent with similar cases in Canada and the United States. The Sparrow, Gladstone and Marshall decisions all dealt with commercial Indigenous fisheries in Canada and the "Boldt decision" from Washington State also confirmed the validity and economic importance of Indigenous fishing rights. At present, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has allocated a specific number of fish that can be caught by Nuu-chah-nulth fishers under the new arrangement. It remains to be seen what the ultimate consequences will be of the policy, both legally and on the water, but for the time being there is a modest increase in Nuu-chah-nulth fishers.

After the events of Clayoquot Sound in 1993, and through the British Columbia Treaty Process, several Nuu-chah-nulth communities including Ahous negotiated with the settler governments for funding to co-manage natural resources and develop economic opportunities. One of the outcomes of these negotiations included the establishment of a

planning board with Indigenous and government representatives designed to give Nuu-chah-nulth-aht a meaningful voice in resource management and avert future confrontations. A scientific panel was also created, comprised of Canadian scientists and Nuu-chah-nulth representatives such as Dr. Umeek, as well as other elders. The scientific panel attempted to give equal weight to Western science as well as what has become known as Indigenous and/or traditional ecological knowledge. An example of their recommendations that I wish to highlight involves logging in old growth forest areas. They said that it should be conducted selectively and sustainably so that there would *always be old growth*. Previous models on Vancouver Island were shortsighted and unsustainable from Nuu-chah-nulth and mainstream ecological perspectives. The Nuu-chah-nulth nations of Clayoquot Sound were also invested in finding alternatives and leading by example. One economic outcome of the interim measures agreement negotiations was the creation of Iisaak Forest Resources, initially a joint venture with Weyerhaeuser, a large multinational forestry company. Since 2005, Iisaak has been wholly Nuu-chah-nulth owned. Iisaak claims to follow the recommendations of the Clayoquot Sound Scientific Panel, which include the promotion of biodiversity, watershed integrity, and overall ecosystem health. Potential conflict is looming, however, as Iisaak must now look to previously protected old growth areas in Clayoquot Sound to remain viable, ushering in potential conflict between certain ENGOs who seek total conservation and Nuu-chah-nulth proposals for sustainable resource development.

In addition to the larger First Nation-run projects, many individual Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have prospered as entrepreneurs, often with the support of the Central Region Board and the Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development Corporation (NEDC). These Nuu-chah-nulth initiatives are wide ranging; they include tourist operations, art galleries, construction

companies, law firms, health and wellness services, financial, and consulting services. While all these ventures are forms of economic development, I am particularly interested in the larger ventures that purport to uphold Nuu-chah-nulth values and beliefs. This is no easy task in today's neoliberal capitalist economy. Canadian society, along with much of the world has excelled at partitioning our lives into the separate arenas of political, economic, social, cultural, and spiritual.<sup>143</sup> Many Aboriginal people have come to accept that politics and business should not mix or that our personal lives are separate from our work lives. I argue that such partitioning goes against the principle of hiišuukish čawaak. While I acknowledge that traditional and contemporary Indigenous realities were and are complex, in a capitalist society that is hyper-segmented and individualized, power and economics tend to subsume other priorities. I am interested in Nuu-chah-nulth people who seek to re-integrate their traditional and revitalized values into all aspects of their lives. I refer to these people as those who are attempting to *live* Nuu-chah-nulth-aht. By highlighting their experiences in the contemporary context I hope to blur the lines of distinction between the spheres of our lives.

### **Scope, Limitations, and Chapter Outline**

While much of my contextual and supporting information here comes from other Nuu-chah-nulth and Makah communities, my focus ultimately narrows in on the historical and contemporary political economy of the Ahousaht. And as I have clearly stated, I am from Ahousaht. I offer a unique and valuable perspective based upon my ancestry and cultural connections, as well as my work and scholarly experience. That being said, I only offer *one*

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<sup>143</sup> This includes the separation of church and state, and perhaps most relevant here, the notion of “free market” capitalism and Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” of the market operating without interference from governments. This type of rhetoric is often used in debates over community development.



*perspective*. I do not claim to be *the* authoritative voice, but my perspective is infused with teachings and experiences that I have embodied as an Ahousaht. While I earnestly believe that my subjectivity makes this contribution valuable, especially for other Nuuchahnulth, I also recognize that it comes with limitations. While I certainly quote others – attempting to centre the voices and writings of Nuuchahnulth women and men – what you are reading is my interpretation of Nuuchahnulth/Ahousaht teachings and experiences. I also need to emphasize that while I have made a point to seek out the voices of Nuuchahnulth women and engage Indigenous feminist scholarship on the issues of political economy, culture, traditions and governance, *my feminist* analysis here is admittedly limited. More feminist research/gendered analysis needs to be conducted in this area. My main contribution is to understanding contemporary Ahousaht political economy, traditional governance, and the dynamics of change and continuity in the context of neoliberal capitalism from a Nuuchahnulth man’s perspective.<sup>144</sup>

With respect to the organization of this thesis, in chapter two I detail my methodological approach of autoethnography and storytelling, including a critical engagement with Nuuchahnulth traditions. Tradition is often a trigger word for those concerned with essentialism, strategic or otherwise. I take seriously concerns of essentialism and the false concept of a static Indigenous culture, as well as the potentially inhibiting effect on imagining Indigenous futurities. In a Nuuchahnulth context, however, traditions and our understandings of them play a strong role in our contemporary communities. I suggest that we critically engage our traditions, seek to understand them, keep what is useful and discard that which is not, especially with respect to traditions that we now understand as

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<sup>144</sup> Future research projects will specifically examine gender dynamics in Nuuchahnulth communities and economic development.

misogynistic or patriarchal. In chapter two I also address the complicated nature of contemporary Indigenous identities, which by necessity encompass Indigenous community versus state-centric perspectives, and demands for authenticity.

In chapter three, I define my understanding of neoliberal capitalism and conduct a focused literature review on the Aboriginalization of capitalism as posited by four Native scholars. I examine the notions of “Reservation capitalism” by Robert Miller, “Tribal capitalism” by Duane Champagne, “Capitalism with a red face” by David Newhouse and “Community capitalism” by Wanda Wuttunee. I discuss their underlying motivations and assumptions and provide analysis of their findings and recommendations. I then discuss them with the Nuuchahnulth context in mind. I also identify core tenets of capitalism proper to help determine if Indigenizing capitalism is even possible. Each of the authors provide me with helpful insight, not only into capitalism, but also into the challenges that Indigenous communities more generally have to deal with in a settler colonial capitalist context. Finally, I look at the concepts of colonization and decolonization as frames of analysis for my research, including Nuuchahnulth and other Indigenous conceptions of these notions in the context of settler colonialism.

In chapter four I look at who the Nuuchahnulth people are. I touch on both historical and contemporary events and issues relating to Nuuchahnulth people including our economic and political history, and interactions with and implications of settler colonialism. I examine Nuuchahnulth teachings and traditions through a critical lens with the goal of identifying key Nuuchahnulth principles that later inform my critique of our present-day political economy. This sets the stage for understanding our current economic and political challenges.

In chapter five I take a selective look at Nuu-chah-nulth economic history from the traditional whale hunts of pre-contact times, to the changing trade and subsistence patterns that came with contact, and then the various changes that occurred through the settler colonial period until the present. Here, I am primarily interested in key events and processes that challenged our ways and relations with our homelands as well as efforts Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have employed to maintain cultural and political continuity. I discuss commercial fishing past and present as well as forestry and the “War in the Woods.” I identify 1993 as a key year for Nuu-chah-nulth ha’wiih and discuss the consistent way in which they have engaged settler governments and corporations since contact. I discuss contentious economic activities like fish farms and mine proposals in Clayoquot Sound and the roles of ha’wiih, musčim, and local settlers in our political economy. Although I begin broadly, my work narrows on the political economy of the Ahousaht.

In chapter six I propose the idea of *living* Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, which resists the neoliberal compulsion to take shallow interpretations of our cultures and instead begins the process of deepening our cultural expressions into our everyday lives and communal decision-making processes. Key to all of this is a physical reconnection with our homelands and waters and I offer an example of young families and individuals that are doing just that. I also examine grassroots language revitalization and efforts to organize against internalized community violence. Some people might characterize these initiatives as decolonization, but I prefer to call it simply *living* Nuu-chah-nulth-aht. I also look at some small-scale economic innovations like community gardening, artistic entrepreneurialism and co-operative spaces. Finally, I return to where we began with a discussion of our reconnection to the sea and the priority of food sovereignty in Nuu-chah-nulth community revitalization. In chapter seven, I

conclude with a summary of my key research findings and contributions and some thoughts on future research directions for myself and other interested parties.

## Chapter Two – Methodology and Key Concepts

### Theoretical and Methodological Approach

This is a Nuu-chah-nulth-centric research project. Beyond just the subject matter and content, I have endeavoured to root my research methods and analysis in Nuu-chah-nulth teachings and ways of being. To a large extent, this is unavoidable. Most of what I have learned about Nuu-chah-nulth life, culture, politics, and economics comes from my own lived experiences. There are teachings I have *embodied*, unbeknownst to me in some cases only to be revealed later in life, sometimes under academic introspection and scrutiny. As a child I heard stories from my father who shared stories that he heard from his elder relations. I also recall that one of my favourite bedtime storybooks was *Son of Raven, Son of Deer*, written by Tseshaht author, George Clutesi, which certainly introduced a contemporary element into Nuu-chah-nulth knowledge transference. I also learned a great deal about inter and intra-government affairs working for the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council. This only provides a limited perspective of course, and I include in my research the perspectives of others through means such as, graduate theses, books, journal articles, news reports, government reports, and a fairly recent phenomenon: online video. The most prominent Nuu-chah-nulth scholars to date have been *Umeek* (Dr. E. Richard Atleo) and Dr. Charlotte Côté. Prior to their academic books and articles, nearly every other scholarly account of Nuu-chah-nulth people was written by non-Nuu-chah-nulth people. I am not implying that *all* non-Nuu-chah-nulth writings are problematic or inaccurate, but even Wuttunee (a Cree scholar) misunderstands a lot of Nuu-chah-nulth community dynamics in her research and

analysis.<sup>145</sup> There is clearly a need for more Nuuchahnulth research that is conducted and written by and for Nuuchahnulth people. I employ a method of autoethnography.

According to Cree/Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach, autoethnography is, “an approach, with its foundations in ethnographical research, bring(ing) together the study of the self (auto) in relation to culture (ethnography). Within this approach, self-reflection moves beyond field notes to having a more integral positioning within the research process and the construction of knowledge itself.”<sup>146</sup> It is a particular approach that offers a unique perspective on critical cultural understanding. Tami Spry writes, “Autoethnography can be defined as a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts. Autoethnography is both a method and a text of diverse interdisciplinary praxes.”<sup>147</sup> Further, she adds, “In autoethnographic methods, the researcher is the epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the research process turns.”<sup>148</sup> I take an autoethnographic approach because I have lived and embodied many of the experiences and “research data” described here. I also believe this approach is appropriate because, as Robin Boylorn and Mark Orbe describe it, “Autoethnography is a method that allows for both personal and cultural critique.”<sup>149</sup> I make an effort to lay bare, by detailed self-location in the preface, my experiences, perspective, biases, obligations, and limitations. I am uniquely situated to make the following observations, interpretations, criticisms, and recommendations. This is not to suggest that I am *the* expert on these matters, but that I

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<sup>145</sup> I am referring to her chapters on the Tla-o-qui-aht and Toquaht communities in: Wanda Wuttunee. *Living Rhythms: Lessons in Aboriginal Economic Resilience and Vision*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004.

<sup>146</sup> Kovach, 33.

<sup>147</sup> Tami Spry, “Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis” *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, 6 (2001), 710.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. 711.

<sup>149</sup> Robin M. Boylorn and Mark P. Orbe, eds. *Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2014): 17.

possess, via my family's cultural memory, my own life experiences and academic training, a tremendous opportunity to explore these research interests in an insightful, critical, and respectful manner. In part, I achieve this through storytelling. Chaw-win-is writes,

Storytelling is a means through which community identity and shared values are created and then relayed to educate new community members, including children. The regeneration of Indigenous communities must be based on the original teachings and orienting values of Indigenous peoples. Encompassing all forms of life, these teachings and values are a collective responsibility to maintain and are found in our haa-huu-hah and teachings.<sup>150</sup>

And like many Nuuchahnulth stories, the dots are not always connected and the conclusions are not always clear. Indigenous storytelling demands more of the listener/reader. That being said, I recognize that this is a PhD thesis, so I have sought to strike a balance between Indigenous and academic methodologies. I acknowledge people like Kwakwakawak'w scholar Sarah Hunt and settler scholar Cindy Holmes who have employed "autoethnography" and "storytelling," and created important academic space for the latter.<sup>151</sup>

While autoethnography has its roots in anthropology, my utilization of it here represents a continuum of Indigenous narratives and critical voices that seek to better represent Indigenous experiences and diverse knowledges in academia and society. Indigenous knowledges such as oral history, have long struggled for legitimacy in academia and in colonial courtrooms. Professors and lawyers question their objectivity and veracity, but legitimacy is not my only objective here. I want these stories and perspectives to stand on their own, but I also want to be in conversation with interested parties in my own Indigenous communities *and* settler society for the purposes of creating change. I am part of

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<sup>150</sup> Chiinuuk (Ruth Olgilvie), *Regenerating Haa-huu-pah as a Foundation for Quu'asminaa Governance* (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2007): 9.

<sup>151</sup> Sarah Hunt and Cindy Holmes, "Everyday Decolonization: Living a Decolonizing Queer Politics," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 19, 2 (2015): 156.

several communities and I want to be in dialogue with all of them. Heewon Chang writes, “Autoethnography benefits greatly from the thought that self is an extension of a community rather than that it is an independent, self-sufficient being, because the possibility of cultural self-analysis rests on an understanding that self is a part of a cultural community.”<sup>152</sup> This more complex notion of the self and community is critical to understanding Indigenous experiences and knowledges. As you will read throughout this thesis, hiišuukish čawaak, everything is one.

I also want to address the political nature of my inquiries here and the potential of autoethnography as a methodology to explore these research interests. Autoethnography can be a tool that helps create understanding and alternatives beyond the hegemonic neoliberal norms of academics, politics, and economics. Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams, and Arthur Brochner write, “For the most part, those who advocate and insist on canonical forms of doing and writing research are advocating for a White, masculine, heterosexual, middle/upper-classed, Christian, able-bodied perspective.”<sup>153</sup> This thesis, while attempting to do a number of things, also seeks to de-centre that canonical voice, and re-centre Nuuchah-nulth voices. This is an academic *and* a political act. Referencing Stacy Holman Jones (2005), Ellis et al write, “Autoethnographers view research and writing as socially-just acts; rather than a preoccupation with accuracy, the goal is to produce analytical, accessible texts that change us and the world we live in for the better.”<sup>154</sup> This is highly subjective and that is the point. In Nuuchah-nulth territories, as it relates to our people, relatives, waters, lands,

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<sup>152</sup> Heewon Chang, *Autoethnography as Method* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2008): 26.

<sup>153</sup> Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Brochner, “Autoethnography: An Overview” *Historical Social Research* 36, 5 (2011): 275.

<sup>154</sup> Ellis et al, 284.



politics and economies, Nuuchahnulth voices *should* be privileged. For Canada's one hundred and fifty years, this has too often not been the case.

My research method also includes some discourse analysis. I look at the words of fellow Nuuchahnulth-aht to understand our respective subject positions, and to try and detect examples of change and continuity over time. Additionally, I have been honoured to learn from and share some of the works of several junior Nuuchahnulth scholars, like Chawwinis, Johnny Mack, as well as the late Earl Maquinna George, who was the former tyii haw'it of Ahous, and also the holder of Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees from the University of Victoria, which he obtained as an elder. I have already mentioned George Clutesi who wrote a number of books about Nuuchahnulth people, culture and stories, and I cannot forget Peter Webster, who wrote about Ahousaht specifically. I also examine online video, various reports, press releases, news articles and websites. These are the voices that I have chosen to centre in my research. Of course, I augment their voices with the writings of non-Nuuchahnulth-aht, both historically and contemporarily, but it is safe to say that I privilege Nuuchahnulth voices and feel perfectly justified in doing so. My justification does not come from a simple sense of nationalism, but the conviction that Nuuchahnulth-aht are best able to research, discuss and understand matters of importance to them. We can also do so in a suitably critical manner that should ease any concerns over academic credibility.

One of the most important aspects of my research has been my ongoing learning of the Nuuchahnulth language. Hidden within many Nuuchahnulth words and phrases are clues to understanding our unique worldviews and principles. Living away from home has made language learning a challenge, but I have done my best with some limited immersion

efforts, written and online materials, as well as telephone and Skype conversations with my father. I am not a fluent speaker, but I know enough to get the gist of what elders are talking about and I have learned to examine written texts to identify links between words and concepts that often reveal a deeper meaning beyond the limits of simplified - and sometimes misleading - translations. In a section below, I examine my understanding of colonization as well as decolonization as an approach to community revitalization. I look at other Indigenous words and concepts that relate to colonization and decolonization. I follow this up with an emphasis on Nuu-chah-nulth words and concepts to conceptualize contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth economic and political circumstances and envisage a way out of our predicaments and into a healthy, just, and happy future.

I began this thesis to better understand Nuu-chah-nulth political economy and find some possible alternatives to the capitalist mainstream. In general, I feel I succeeded in my aims, but not without several surprises along the way. Some of my initial assumptions have been challenged and my understanding of Nuu-chah-nulth political and economic issues is now more complex and nuanced than before. I remain convinced that neoliberal capitalism represents an existential threat to Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, but I also appreciate that our story since colonization has been one of constant change *and* continuity. Needless to say, there is plenty of work to be done, both in revitalizing our communities and in conducting research to contribute to the ongoing discussions and debates over our individual and collective futures. My intent here is to present a respectful and critical contribution to these internal community discussions. That is my first priority. As such, the reader might find this thesis context-heavy and meandering in style. This is intentional. If I even dare utter the word ‘neoliberal’ I am likely to be met with blank stares at home. I have attempted to make my

writing more accessible to the layperson, especially my fellow community members. With respect to the style, I can only say that this thesis should be read and considered in its entirety. Every story and background detail is placed here on purpose. It might not be evident upon first reading, but the details and omissions are, as much as possible, calculated. At the same time, I know that Nuu-chah-nulth-aht do not live in isolation. We respect the interconnection of all things, including other people and communities. I engage outside perspectives in my work; but I centre Nuu-chah-nulth perspectives. I do this because I believe that academic research with Indigenous communities must be of use and accountable to those communities, first and foremost. It is my firm belief that scholars who are connected and accountable to those communities are best positioned to do this.

### **Critically Engaging Nuu-chah-nulth Traditions**

Canadian colonization, through laws and policies designed to dismantle Nuu-chah-nulth community governance and our cultural, economic, social and spiritual institutions, severely disrupted our traditional ways of living. Donald writes, “colonial logics and structures have oppressed Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems and continue to constrain their expression in the world today.”<sup>155</sup> That being said, many of our stories have survived, as do many of our traditional practices as well, despite the colonial constraints. With respect to political and economic organizing, Nuu-chah-nulth-aht still struggle to live in ways that respect our teachings. Although we recognize that times have changed, many of us still believe that our traditional teachings can instruct us through these ongoing processes of change. What I propose is a critical engagement with our traditions to identify principles that can guide a revitalization of our old ways as well as inform new ways that honour Nuu-

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<sup>155</sup> Dwayne Donald, Florence Glanfield and Gladys Sterenberg, “Living Ethically within Conflicts of Colonial Authority and Relationality,” *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* 10, 1 (2012): 64.

chah-nulth principles and values. This is already underway; I simply seek to add my support, voice, and perspective.

I suggest a critical approach to Indigenous traditions for a number of reasons. Lakota scholar, Vine Deloria, Jr. reminded us that the Native American experience of boarding schools, like that of residential schools in Canada, led to major disruptions in Indigenous cultural continuity.<sup>156</sup> In chapter four I critically examine the Nuu-chah-nulth residential school experience. In testimony before the TRC, Shirley Flowers states, “residential school was a part of a bigger scheme of colonization. There was intent; the schools were there with the intent to change people, to make them like others and to make them not fit.”<sup>157</sup> With residential schools operating in Nuu-chah-nulth territories for the better part of the twentieth century, it behooves us to take this into consideration, when considering our traditions. Ojibwe scholar Scott Lyons writes, “It is nearly impossible to speak with much accuracy of the times before or after colonization.”<sup>158</sup> While Deloria and Lyons make important points, it is not helpful to discard any of these experiences and stories entirely. Deloria felt that remnants of Indigenous cultures remained intact, including oral traditions and settler ethnographic and historical records. With regard to the latter, we must also be critical. Of the eighteenth century Spanish botanist, José Mariano Moziño’s observations and writings, the Mowachaht believe, “all these descriptions of their culture are views of *outsiders*, interesting

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<sup>156</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., “Philosophy and the Tribal Peoples” *American Indian Thought*, ed. Anne Waters (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004): 5.

<sup>157</sup> *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Toronto: Lorimer, 2015): 43.

<sup>158</sup> Scott Richard Lyons, preface to *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010): 13. I should also point out that Ojibwe encounters with colonialism preceded west coast encounters by several generations and this difference is significant.

but certainly not ‘the truth.’”<sup>159</sup> Europeans constantly referred to my ancestors as savages and heathens. In the words of Father Augustin Joseph Brabant, upon entering an Ahousaht Chief’s house, “A dead silence reigned in the house, but we could well notice that we were in the presence of real savages.”<sup>160</sup> Leroy Little Bear has described the present cultural predicament of colonialism in Canada as “jagged worldviews colliding” and that this was a result of government policies intended to eradicate Indigenous worldviews, but not entirely succeeding.<sup>161</sup> Again, what we are left with are oral histories and origin stories that have been passed down through the generations, some of which have been transcribed, as well as anthropological and historical accounts. According to Julie Cruickshank, “Indigenous people who grow up immersed in oral tradition frequently suggest that their narratives are better understood by absorbing the successive personal messages revealed to listeners in repeated tellings than by trying to analyse and publicly explain their meanings. This contrasts with scholarly approach which encourages close scrutiny of texts and which contends that, by openly addressing conflicting interpretations, we may illuminate subtle meanings and enrich our understandings.”<sup>162</sup> Here, I have had to struggle with both. Cruickshank adds, “Like oral tradition, written narratives about the past have to be understood as part of a social process. While the narratives emerging from oral traditions may not always sit easily side by side

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<sup>159</sup> Richard Inglis, foreword to the 1991 edition, *Noticias de Nutka: An Account of Nootka Sound ni 1792*, by José Mariano Moziño (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991): ix.

<sup>160</sup> Augustin Joseph Brabant, *Mission to Nootka: 1874-1900*, ed. Charles Lillard (Sidney: Gray’s Publishing, 1977): 17.

<sup>161</sup> Leroy Little Bear, “Jagged Worldviews Colliding,” in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000): 84.

<sup>162</sup> Julie Cruickshank, “Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 75, 3 (September 1994): 403-404.

those constructed from written documents, the ongoing resistance of indigenous peoples may be enacted precisely through their self-constructions.”<sup>163</sup>

My goal is not to identify mythically pure Nuu-chah-nulth practices, but to identify the core values and principles that have withstood the test of time and *remain relevant*. Some traditions are not desirable, such as patriarchal or exploitative relations and practices that are perpetuated in the name of culture. In order to identify these relations and practices, it is vital that we listen to the voices of Indigenous women, but this has not always been easy. Both historically, and contemporarily, Indigenous men’s voices have been prioritized as authentic. With respect to our understanding of Indigenous economies, Jobin writes, “the important roles Indigenous women play in hunting and hunting-related activities are often ignored...”<sup>164</sup> Despite the recent interest in, and research on Indigenous knowledge, Altamirano-Jiménez writes that, “less attention has been devoted to exploring *Indigenous women’s knowledge*.”<sup>165</sup> She adds, “Indigenous women’s experiences are integral to decolonizing knowledge production.”<sup>166</sup> I have made a concerted effort to seek out and *listen* to Indigenous women’s voices, especially Nuu-chah-nulth women’s voices. We must change many of our ways, traditional or not. Côté concurs and reminds us that Indigenous cultures are not static. They are dynamic and they can, and must adapt. Umeek encourages us to remember that change is a natural condition of life and that while our origin stories tell of the transformation of Son of Raven for example, we are also to understand that he always maintains his *core essence*.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Cruikshank, 418.

<sup>164</sup> Jobin, 2014, xviii.

<sup>165</sup> Nathalie Kermoal and Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, eds. *Living on the Land: Indigenous Women’s Understanding of Place* (Edmonton: AU Press, 2016): 13. *Emphasis added*.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>167</sup> *Umeek*, 2004, 59. *Emphasis added*.

Early anthropological records of Nuu-chah-nulth people and their alleged *traditional lives* also need to be examined critically. Richard Inglis and James Haggarty cite a number of anthropologists and historians that have purported to identify traditional Nuu-chah-nulth life based on the early recordings of people like Captain Cook and John Jewitt. Inglis and Haggarty warn, “By assuming that these early descriptions reflect traditional cultural patterns, anthropologists and historians have misinterpreted the magnitude and intensity of cultural change in the first decades of recorded (colonial) history in Nootka Sound.”<sup>168</sup> Our lives began to change *immediately* as imperial powers began to vie for control over colonial trade in our territories. And the changes continued with the emerging settler colonial states that followed. This does not mean that we dismiss all of these accounts entirely, but that we apply critical scrutiny and compare and compliment them with our own interpretations. Although, what I propose here is an individual intellectual exercise, broadly speaking, it represents an ongoing community effort.

Another approach that I take is to look at Nuu-chah-nulth principles that have a high degree of contemporary consensus and common usage. I take this approach because all cultures are dynamic and traditions often become so because they maintain some ongoing and contemporary relevance. The two most prominent concepts are hiišuukiš c̓awaak and iisaak. The first is often translated into “everything is one” and the second as “respect.” Hiišuukiš c̓awaak is an affirmation of the unity of everything being connected. Nothing we do takes place in a vacuum and there are consequences of our words and actions. I take this principle to urge caution and thorough deliberation prior to taking action. One might refer to

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<sup>168</sup> Richard Inglis and James C. Haggarty, “Cook to Jewitt: Three Decades of Change in Nootka Sound” *Nuu-chah-nulth Voices, Histories, Objects and Journeys*, ed. Alan L. Hoover (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 2000): 92.

this as a form of Indigenous conservatism. As individuals many of us have been taught to be careful of what we say. Once words leave our mouths, they travel far and wide yet we remain accountable, even for their unintended consequences. Clutesi wrote, “Indeed it was unpardonable to hurt or embarrass another person in public by careless talk or effrontery for it was a direct reflection of the lack or rejection of all teachings.”<sup>169</sup> This includes Nuuchahnulth acting as individuals and as collective polities. Elected leaders make many of the decisions today, but in some Nuuchahnulth communities the ha’wiih still carry influence and power. Community members - sometimes referred to as muscim - have also gained political and economic influence. These community dynamics will be examined closer in chapter five. Côté explains at great length the negative impacts on Nuuchahnulth and Qwidiččaḡaḡ political and economic systems as a result of the dismantling of our traditional governments, livelihoods, and economies.<sup>170</sup> I am interested in what has survived as well as what has been lost.

Iisaak has been described to me in a way that closely follows hiišuuikiš čawaak, in that we are to respect all things, including our relatives, strangers, leaders, children, elders, and all of creation. This includes our animal relatives as well as the plants and trees and the earth, sun and water that sustain them. Although Nuuchahnulth take plants and animals for sustenance it is in keeping with the principle of iisaak that we give thanks, not take more than we need, and not endanger entire species or ecosystems. This is contrasted with life (especially corporate) under neoliberal capitalism. Henry Mintzberg writes of capitalism in the late twentieth century: “Greed was raised to some sort of high calling; corporations were urged to ignore broader social responsibilities in favour of narrow shareholder value; chief

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<sup>169</sup> Clutesi, 1973, 85.

<sup>170</sup> Côté, 42-68.



executives were regarded as if they alone created economic performance.”<sup>171</sup> According to Nuuchahnulth worldviews, all life should be able to prosper and the health of our ecosystems and all its inhabitants are interrelated. As human beings we hold the responsibility to *live with* and care for our homewaters and lands. Umeek writes, “For the ancient Nuuchahnulth, their way of life provided them with a lens through which to view their place in creation.”<sup>172</sup> We are encouraged to be humble and fulfill our responsibilities as stewards of our lands and waters, but the suppression of our traditional governance systems has deeply and negatively impacted the economic practices in Nuuchahnulth territories, both by us, and others. To be Nuuchahnulth-aht, is to be *from* Nuuchahnulth territories, to have ancestral roots there. “Aht” at the end of a word means to be from that place, or the “people of,” thus Ahous is a place or nation, for example, and one *is* Ahousaht, to be from there or of there. But being Nuuchahnulth-aht, like many Indigenous identities, especially in a settler colonial context, is never simple or straightforward.

### **On the Complexity of Contemporary Indigenous Identities**

I am interested in Indigenous identities, because ultimately I am asking what it means to be an exemplary Nuuchahnulth-aht, a *good* citizen and leader making *sound* decisions. But who gets to define and determine who we are? One might assume that Nuuchahnulth people collectively get to define who they are and in some ways this is true, but it gets more complicated when we ask the question in slightly different ways. What if a small part of the collective - men for example - gets to define who is and who is not Nuuchahnulth-aht? As Altamirano-Jiménez has already reminded us, knowledge production fundamental to who

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<sup>171</sup> Henry Mintzberg, Robert Simons and Kunal Basu, “Beyond Selfishness,” *MIT Sloan Management Review* (Fall 2002): 67.

<sup>172</sup> Umeek (E. Richard Atleo), *Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011): 149.

we are largely ignores the experiences and stories of Indigenous women. She writes, “Indigenous women’s ways of knowing are shaped by their livelihoods and shared experiences of racism, colonialism, and by their experiences as leaders, mothers, sisters, and grandmothers.”<sup>173</sup> That being said, in many important ways, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada through the *Indian Act* determines who is a status Indian.<sup>174</sup> Canada has long used patriarchal and racist criteria to determine who is and who is not “Indian.” Even worse, some Indigenous communities have adopted the government’s approach to policing identity, including the use of blood quantum, internalizing these patriarchal and racist provisions into their own political and cultural institutions. One of the most notable historical examples of this is non-status women would gain Indian status when they married status Indian men, while status Indian women lost their status if they married non-status men. Attempts were made to (partially) rectify this with Bill C31 in 1985, but the blood quantum issue remains destructive and divisive for Indigenous people. Pamela Palmater has done some excellent research in this area<sup>175</sup> and others like Sharon McIvor have been fighting as Indigenous feminists for decades.<sup>176</sup>

The BC Treaty Process has also complicated local Indigenous identity issues. Johnny Mack’s community of Toquaht negotiated a comprehensive claims agreement in 2009, but he did not actively enroll in the newly created political entity as a form of protest against what he believed to be a corrupt process. As such, he is not a member of the “Toquaht

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<sup>173</sup> Kermoal and Altamirano-Jiménez, 10.

<sup>174</sup> Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has changed its name twice (Indian -> Aboriginal -> Indigenous) since I’ve been writing this thesis, but remains ostensibly the same.

<sup>175</sup> Pamela D. Palmater, *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2011.

<sup>176</sup> Steve Bonspiel, “Opinion: First Nations equality always comes down to ‘monumental David vs. Goliath epic struggle’,” *CBC News*, March 5, 2016, accessed April 20, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/first-nations-equality-monumental-david-versus-goliath-1.3476108>.

Nation” as identified in the Maa-nulth final agreement, but he remains a status Indian under the *Indian Act*. This is noteworthy, because under the provisions of the agreement, tribal members eventually cease to be status Indians and assume new identities with their rights, benefits, and responsibilities outlined in those agreements, including the loss of rights not identified or included. Does this mean that Johnny is no longer Toquaht? He was not formally expelled or banished from Toquaht; he simply refused to participate in a political process that he did not support. Mack remains in a state of legal Indigenous identity limbo. Some argue that culturally and *traditionally*, he will always be Toquaht, but that he is not part of the political and legal entity now known as the Toquaht Nation. I am inclined to agree with the first part of this statement. Such an interpretation re-centres Indigenous conceptions of identity, but this does not mean that there are not other negative implications.

Money and social programs that are only available through state-recognized political and bureaucratic institutions, exclude those not recognized. Some Indigenous families, however, have opted to live off the grid, outside the bureaucratic and legal confines of the state. One example of this is the “freedom babies” of Kanahus and Guateberi, who live in Secwepemc territory, and have not registered with the settler governments.<sup>177</sup> This is an example of Indigenous people choosing not to be dependent on the state for resources or recognition. Instead, they seek to live by Indigenous laws. It is compelling, but clearly the vast majority of our people are not willing and/or able to make a fulltime return to our homelands. To be fair, this may not even be what most Indigenous people are fighting for, however I do introduce the idea of a more substantive land reconnection in chapter six.

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<sup>177</sup> “Freedom Babies,” a film directed by Doreen Manuel. Accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.freedombabies2014.com/>.

Another area where Indigenous families are challenged is in the use of Indigenous names. Many of us have English *and* Indigenous names. I carry two Indigenous names, one Nuuchahnulth and one Tsimshian. Our names often change throughout our lifetimes. We have baby names, we have young adult names, and sometimes we receive names at various life stages or on the occasion of celebrations or achievements. My wife, an Anishinaabe woman was given a Nuuchahnulth name when we got married, and our children have both English and Nuuchahnulth names. Some of my friends and family members have given their children Indigenous names at birth. My wife and I decided on English names because their Indigenous names will likely change over time. Many people opt for the path with the least bureaucratic complications, despite cultural concerns. One of my cousins was given an English name at birth, but she changed it to Pawastqwachiitl Haiyupis and that is how it now appears on her government identification. Many people find this empowering, but others question the significance of state recognition. This same debate occurs regarding marriage. People decide whether to get married traditionally or legally, as if to suggest that Indigenous legal traditions are not real. Many do both, indicating the compromises that people make as well as the lines that they are willing or unwilling to cross. Clearly, Indigenous identity issues in Nuuchahnulth territories are complicated and I consider them carefully in my analysis.

In this thesis, I focus on the testimony of Nuuchahnulth people and their interpretations of what it means to be Nuuchahnulth-aht. I am interested in what it means to be a good Nuuchahnulth-aht; what makes an exemplary Nuuchahnulth citizen or family member. This is contentious territory, but I cannot explore answers to my research questions without wading into these issues and their attendant complications. The obvious

danger in asking what it means to be a good Indigenous person is that it is a double-edged question, which some might interpret as the negation of one's identity altogether. Despite this, Indigenous origin stories and teachings are full of examples of how we are meant to behave as well as being clear about the consequences when we stray from our original teachings. People often speak of the positive attributes of culture, especially in ways that do not challenge the state's political or economic legitimacy. I am interested in the deeper and daily manifestations of culture. This requires some considerable unpacking, to illuminate what it means to be an exemplary Nuu-chah-nulth-aht. Ella Cara Deloria beautifully wrote that to be a good Dakota was to be a good relative.<sup>178</sup> What is it about Indigenous cultures that encourage us to be good relatives, to respect the unity of creation, and to uphold our responsibilities as Quu'as'a? This depth of culture is what settler colonial leaders and administrators sought to erase through the enforced attendance at residential schools, the policies and laws that banned our cultural, spiritual, political, and economic institutions and ceremonies, and the control of our identities.

These inquiries into identity also highlight a key aspect of my theoretical approach: the colonization-decolonization spectrum.<sup>179</sup> In exploring and examining the history and contemporary reality of Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, we must also consider settler colonialism and neoliberalism. Our relations with settler governments shape a significant part of Nuu-chah-nulth modernity. I say this not to de-centre our ontologies and epistemologies, but rather to recognize the pervasive effects of settler colonialism. We understand ourselves through our stories, teachings and practices, which *also* include our experiences and colonial relations with mamulthnii. Generations of Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have sought to change these relations

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<sup>178</sup> Ella Cara Deloria, *Waterlily* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988): xxxiv.

<sup>179</sup> For reasons that will become apparent in the next section I refer to the phenomena of colonization-decolonization as a spectrum rather than as a strict dichotomy.

through various means, including litigation, negotiations, and various economic activities. Throughout it all, Nuuchah-nulth-aht have consistently attempted to assert their own agency. Our efforts to adapt to fluid conditions exhibit both change and continuity in the Nuuchah-nulth experience. Despite this, many Quw'as'a recognize the negative aspects of settler colonialism. Thus, individual and community resurgence is often expressed as decolonization. The concept of decolonization is not without its own complications, which I discuss below, but ultimately I find it to be a useful frame of analysis.

### **Colonization, Decolonization and Comparable Indigenous/Nuuchah-nulth Concepts**

*“Imperialism frames the indigenous experience. It is part of our story, our version of modernity.”<sup>180</sup>*

Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's perspective on Indigeneity and imperialism is at once sobering and valuable as we contemplate contemporary Indigenous identities, settler colonialism, and Nuuchah-nulth decolonization and community resurgence. Settler colonialism is not the totality of who we are, but it is an unavoidable aspect of modern Indigeneity in Canada. Nuuchah-nulth-aht, and their lands and waters have experienced and continue to endure asymmetrical and exploitative relations with Canada. These relations of domination influence our experiences and subjectivities. Mack writes, “For 150 years, great efforts have been taken to change the way we related to each other and the territory to which we belong. We would be wise to acknowledge that these efforts have been somewhat successful in their aims.”<sup>181</sup> Being honest and forthright about this, I argue, does not disparage our ancestors, but instead acknowledges their struggles. How these relationships

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<sup>180</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 2005): 19.

<sup>181</sup> Johnny Mack, “Hoquotist: Reorienting through Storied Practice,” *Storied Communities: Narratives of Contact and Arrival in Constituting Political Community*, eds. Hester Lessard, Rebecca Johnson and Jeremy Webber (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011): 293.

and experiences have played out will be examined throughout chapter four, but a dual theme that I highlight here is that of change and continuity. Despite the massive changes, there have also been many threads of continuity. Instrumental to this is how Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have expressed agency in coping with *and co-crafting* the change we experience. I am not suggesting simple dichotomies of colonized and decolonized, but nuanced degrees of experience and subjectivity. Here I want to highlight three key aspects of our colonial experience.

First, I want to address the ongoing nature of colonialism in Canada. Despite former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's claim that Canada has no history of colonialism,<sup>182</sup> most scholars and historians acknowledge the truth of a colonial *history* in Canada. But when people speak of post-coloniality in Canada they are usually referring to the relationship with the United Kingdom and the various legislative and constitutional changes that formalized the Canadian state.<sup>183</sup> For Indigenous peoples, colonial relations have remained relatively constant and there is no post-colonial reality. Settler colonialism is *our* post-apocalyptic reality.<sup>184</sup> Emma Battell Lowman and Adam Barker concede that, "Indigenous people confront the reality every single day that colonialism is far from a legacy."<sup>185</sup> Taiaiake Alfred writes, "Without a substantial change in the circumstances of colonization, there is no basis for considering the injustice *historical*. The crime of colonialism is present today, as

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<sup>182</sup> David Ljunggren, "Every G20 nations want to be Canada, insists PM" *Reuters*, Accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/09/26/columns-us-g20-canada-advantages-idUSTRE58P05Z20090926>.

<sup>183</sup> I refer to the *Constitution Act* 1867, the establishment of the Supreme Court of Canada, the *Statute of Westminster* 1931, and the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982.

<sup>184</sup> I acknowledge Mi'kmaq filmmaker Jeff Barnaby for this notion of the post-apocalyptic nature of current Indigenous realities, which he Tweeted April 3, 2016 via @tripgore.

<sup>185</sup> Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker. *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2015): 3.

are its perpetrators.”<sup>186</sup> Canada’s relationships with Indigenous peoples remain inherently colonial. Patrick Wolfe and others have described this as “settler colonialism,” ushering in a new academic discipline.<sup>187</sup> This is meant to distinguish it from other forms of historical colonialism, ongoing neocolonialism or strictly extractive colonialism. Unlike extractive colonialism, Altamirano-Jiménez writes, “Settler colonialism, on the other hand, focuses on claiming land and on creating permanent settlements that replicate the social, political, economic, legal, and cultural structures of settlers’ homeland over the new territories and the colonized.”<sup>188</sup> Battell Lowman and Barker add, “Canadian colonialism does not look like classical colonialism...because it is directed *internally* against an Indigenous population essentially captive within borders of the state.”<sup>189</sup> James Tully concurs, referring to the current colonial relationship in Canada as “internal colonialism.”<sup>190</sup> Theorists of settler colonialism have pointed to many unique facets that are important to my analysis here. Battell Lowman and Barker echo Wolfe, writing, “Land is at the root of any issue or conflict you could care to name involving Indigenous and Settler peoples in Canada. The land is what sustains Indigenous communities and identities. The land is what Settler people need in order to have a home and economic stability.”<sup>191</sup> This complicates the prospects of decolonization considerably, so much so that it seldom enters the public imaginary or

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<sup>186</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005): 157. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>187</sup> Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*. London: Cassell, 1999. Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Carol Elkins and Susan Pedersen, eds. *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

<sup>188</sup> Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, “Settler Colonialism, Human Rights and Indigenous Women,” *Prairie Forum* 36, 2 (Fall 2011): 107.

<sup>189</sup> Battell Lowman and Barker, 24. *Emphasis* in original

<sup>190</sup> James Tully, “The Struggles of Indigenous peoples for and of Freedom,” in Duncan Ivison, Paul Patton, and Will Sanders, eds. *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 36-59.

<sup>191</sup> Battell Lowman and Barker, 48.



discourse. On this, Lorenzo Veracini writes, “The discontinuation of a colonial regime always remains within colonialism’s cultural horizon; on the contrary, the discontinuation of a settler colonial circumstance remains *unthinkable*.”<sup>192</sup> Regarding the impossibility of settler decolonization introduced by Carol Pateman (2007), Veracini adds, “An emancipatory ameliorative paradigm is unavailable to indigenous struggles.”<sup>193</sup> He further states, “economic development that is premised on indigenous sovereignty ultimately undermines indigenous autonomy” and “Because of the specific characteristics of the settler colonial situation, indigenous emancipation is ultimately conditioned on some form of assimilation.”<sup>194</sup> This inevitably leads to the imperative of elimination or erasure of Indigenous presence, existence, and connections to land inherent to settler colonialism. These processes of elimination have manifested in many ways, including but not limited to: residential schools, government legislation and policies, and economic relations. Regarding settler colonialism in Australia, Wolfe writes, “the colonizing society remade indigenous life in its own likeness, imposing on Aboriginal societies a severance between economic and other social spheres that was characteristic of European capitalism. Following this severance (or disembedding) of economic life, ritual and kinship patterns of the conquered culture become residual, since they did not function to reproduce the dominant sphere.”<sup>195</sup> While Wolfe’s assessment is bleak, and I agree with the intent, we will see that Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have consistently resisted and adapted when possible in order to maintain relative degrees of autonomy and agency. I am not saying that we were/are always successful, but resistance and adaptation form a critical part of our story. Canadians and Aboriginal peoples have

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<sup>192</sup> Veracini, 2010, 104. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>193</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, “Isopolitics, Deep Colonizing, Settler Colonialism,” *Interventions* 13, 2 (2011): 184-185.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. 186.

<sup>195</sup> Wolfe, 1999, 178.

recently tried to address many of the negative aspects of the colonial relationship through various forms of state-endorsed recognition and reconciliation processes, but the relationship remains inherently colonial. Canada has not decolonized its relationship with Indigenous peoples.

Second, the Indigenous-settler relationship in Canada has developed a notable neoliberal character that is significant to my analysis of economic and political relations in Nuuchahnulth territories. Neoliberalism as a governing paradigm is often understood as specific economic policies and austerity measures originating during the post-Keynesian era, especially during the Ronald Reagan-Margaret Thatcher regimes of the 1980s. This includes government divestment from social programs and increased privatization that fundamentally placed greater responsibilities on individuals and families.<sup>196</sup> Specifically, Janine Brodie writes, “(Neoliberal) individualization effectively downloads responsibility for systemic changes, such as deteriorating job markets and the growth of women’s labor force participation, onto individuals and individuals within families.”<sup>197</sup> The market became supreme and neoliberal policies expanded on a global scale through organizations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. A tremendous amount of recent academic scrutiny has revealed that neoliberalism has become understood as much more than economic policies, however. Neoliberalism origins lie in classical liberalism, but its contemporary expression is distinguished for its amplified emphasis on individual self-sufficiency and the intrusion of the market into *every* facet of individual and community life. Brown states, “Everybody and every institution speak the same governance language now,

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<sup>196</sup> See Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton, eds. *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010.

<sup>197</sup> Janine Brodie, “Globalization, Canadian Family Policy, and the Omissions of Neoliberalism,” *North Carolina Law Review* 88, 5 (2009-2010): 1589.

and it is a profoundly neoliberal language.”<sup>198</sup> Brodie writes, “The neoliberal social imaginary strives to embed market logics into the everyday calculations of who we are and how we should live our lives.”<sup>199</sup> Mary Wrenn, building upon Howard Stein (2012) writes, “As capitalism unfolds and this neoliberal phase of capitalism escalates...the expanding economic sphere begins to pervade the everyday lives and thinking of the individual.”<sup>200</sup> She adds, “The deepening of the structures of neoliberalism and the market not only further disrupt social continuity and erode the cohesiveness of basic social units, but also results in individual psychoses and cultural dilution and disintegration.”<sup>201</sup> This is critical to my concerns over neoliberalism’s specific threats to Nuu-chah-nulth societies and cultures. It is not simply happening to us in straightforward oppressive forms, but instead, we are being “invited in,” to be full participants in the neoliberal politics and economics of Canada. On the 2017 National Aboriginal Day, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated,

No relationship is more important to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples. Our Government is working together with Indigenous Peoples to build a nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown, government-to-government relationship – one based on respect, partnership, and recognition of rights.

We are determined to make a real difference in the lives of Indigenous Peoples – by closing socio-economic gaps, supporting greater self-determination, and establishing opportunities to work together on shared priorities.<sup>202</sup>

The “us versus them” dynamic that has sustained us in some respects is eroding.

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<sup>198</sup> Cruz and Brown, 83.

<sup>199</sup> Janine Brodie, “Reforming Social Justice in Neoliberal Times” in *Studies in Social Justice*, vol. 1, no 2 (2007), 100.

<sup>200</sup> Mary Wrenn, “Identity, Identity Politics, and Neoliberalism,” *Panoeconomicus* 4 (2014): 506.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, “Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on National Aboriginal Day,” <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2017/06/21/statement-prime-minister-canada-national-aboriginal-day>.

The neoliberal capitalist paradigm creates significant cultural consequences for communities and individuals. Spence writes, “The neoliberal turn helps explain the rise of inequality, the increasing anxiety and insecurity we all feel (regardless of how much money we make or what type of job we have)...and how narrow our political imaginations have become.”<sup>203</sup> Neoliberalism frames economic issues as individual rather than as collective problems, consequently depoliticizing and pathologizing them. Individual self-sufficiency is not simply encouraged, but under a neoliberal logic the inability to be self-sufficient is understood as an individual failing. On this, Wrenn writes, “An individual is identified or labeled as defective if she specifically lacks the ambition or means of achieving financial success.”<sup>204</sup> Failure to lift oneself out of poverty is an individual or familial failing. This was exemplified in the remarks of Conservative Industry Minister James Moore, when he asked in the House of Commons, “Is it my government’s job - is it my job - to feed my neighbour’s child?”<sup>205</sup> In the case of neoliberal capitalism, rational individual self-interest *does not* seem to be making things better for the collective. Paul Mason states,

Neoliberalism is the doctrine of uncontrolled markets: it says that the best route to prosperity is individuals pursuing their own self-interest, and the market is the only way to express that self-interest. It says the state should be small (except for its riot squad and secret police); that financial speculation is good; that inequality is good; that the natural state of humankind is to be a bunch of ruthless individuals, competing with each other.<sup>206</sup>

This type of thinking has consequences for everyone, not just Indigenous peoples, whose societies *tend* to be more collectivist in orientation. I also want to note here that the *success*

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<sup>203</sup> Spence, xxiv.

<sup>204</sup> Wrenn, 503.

<sup>205</sup> Stephen Hume, “Is it my job to feed my neighbour’s child? Yes, it is,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 18, 2013, accessed April 21, 2017, <http://www.vancouversun.com/life/stephen+hume+feed+neighbor+child/9298332/story.html>.

<sup>206</sup> Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to our Future* (New York: Farrer, Straus & Giroux, 2015): xi.

of a handful of Indigenous people does not dampen my critique of neoliberal capitalism. It might be helpful to think of the concept of survivorship bias, or W.E.B. Dubois' notion of the "talented tenth."<sup>207</sup> Some of our people have succeeded, but the dominant neoliberal capitalist paradigm has not changed the circumstances of the vast majority of people. Brodie writes that neoliberalism has, "concentrated incomes and wealth among a few, squeezed the middle income strata, and fuelled unparalleled inequalities in income wealth, and life chances."<sup>208</sup> Additionally for Indigenous peoples, neoliberal subjectification is problematic in that it *allows for shallow expressions of culture and environmental preservation* while prioritizing markets and capital accumulation. Altamirano-Jiménez writes,

Articulating essentialized understandings of indigeneity and by defining the economic opportunities open to Indigenous communities, the state and multiple sites of articulation naturalize colonial spaces. Unlike in the past, current economic strategies shaping the spatial and social reconfiguration of place and indigeneity rest not only on the liberalization of the natural environment per se but also on schemes aimed at commodifying "saved" environments. The neoliberalization of the environment incorporates Indigenous peoples into the market and intensifies commodity production as a way to encourage Indigenous peoples to abandon their land-dependent livelihoods and practices. Moreover, although the emphasis is on preservation, the extraction of resources such as oil, gas, and minerals is concomitant with conservation.<sup>209</sup>

Minimizing the deeper implications on diverse cultures is critical to the functioning of neoliberalism because many cultures do not favour economic and market priorities over Indigenous values. These neoliberal moves to depoliticize economic policy and practice, however, have a profound effect on Indigenous communities. Arguably, settler societies

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<sup>207</sup> David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Dubois: Biography of a Race* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1993): 73.

<sup>208</sup> Brodie, 2007, 93.

<sup>209</sup> Altamirano-Jiménez, 2013, 68.

have much longer (albeit contested) histories of liberalism. The prospect of Indigenous societies in particular becoming, “simply a collection of individuals” is horrifying.<sup>210</sup>

Neoliberalism, despite its relatively recent formation (since the late 1970s) and ongoing fluid reformulations, has become hegemonic around most of the world and certainly in the state and market interactions with Indigenous peoples. I defer to political theorist Jakeet Singh with respect to my understanding of hegemony, which he describes as,

A system of power constituted by relatively complementary and compounded structures and subjectivities, a practical system comprised of macro-scale institutions and micro-scale practices of the self, as well as the languages of reflection and interpretation intertwined with each, that not only generates differential positions among dominant/elite and subordinate groups, but also discloses a characteristic range of consent and dissent, justification/affirmation and critique, problems and solutions, with which to understand, analyze and make judgements within the system (but which also functions to perpetuate the system).<sup>211</sup>

Geographer Jamie Peck asks us to acknowledge neoliberalism’s hegemonic character but not to consider it completely insurmountable. He writes, “Neoliberalization, even when it is dominant, never secures a monopoly.”<sup>212</sup> Peck adds, “Even hegemonies have their outsides; their construction is a continuing and contradictory process, not a fixed condition.”<sup>213</sup> Wendy Larner, Nick Lewis, and Richard Le Heron write, “Rather than assuming that new spaces of governance reflect coherent and unified political rationalities, and so are made manifest in singular and coherent and spatial imaginaries,” they instead believe, “that it is important to focus on multiple spatial imaginaries that are helping to constitute multiple

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<sup>210</sup> Wrenn, 506.

<sup>211</sup> Jakeet Singh. *Beyond Free and Equal: Subalternity and the Limits of Liberal-Democracy* (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2012), 5.

<sup>212</sup> Jamie Peck, “Explaining (with) Neoliberalism,” *Territory, Politics, Governance* 1, 2 (2013): 139.

<sup>213</sup> Peck, 153.

objects and subjects of governance.”<sup>214</sup> Not only is neoliberal capitalism not a unitary structure, but the challenges to it remain diverse as well.<sup>215</sup> Touching on “the theme of creativity” in Larnet et al’s “After-neoliberalism, Rianne Mahon and Roger Keil write, that it, “needs to be understood not as a coherent strategy but as *ex post facto* connections between discrete, even contradictory, projects.”<sup>216</sup> Gibson-Graham agree, writing that the neoliberal capitalist economy does, “not have to be thought as a bounded and unified space with a fixed capitalist identity. Perhaps the totality of the economic could be seen as a site of multiple forms of economy whose relations to each other are only ever partially and temporarily fixed and always under subversion.”<sup>217</sup> They add that contestation and subversion create, “domain(s) of difference and region(s) of possibility.”<sup>218</sup> Despite pervasive and penetrative neoliberal dogma, many Nuu-chah-nulth-aht struggle to maintain comprehensive and interconnected approaches to development, maintain our own domains of difference and regions of possibility. Neoliberal capitalism makes this tremendously difficult, but we persist.

Finally, I want to discuss how the effects of settler colonialism have led to calls for decolonization and community resurgence. Colonization is often understood as the theft of Indigenous lands and the maintenance of relations where colonials control the lives of Indigenous peoples. Settler colonization adds the complicating element of permanent settler

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<sup>214</sup> Wendy Larnet, Nick Lewis, and Richard Le Heron, “State Spaces of ‘After Neoliberalism’: Co-Constituting the New Zealand Designer Fashion Industry,” *Leviathan Undone?: Towards a Political Economy of Space*, Rianne Mahon and Roger Keil, eds. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009): 177.

<sup>215</sup> For more on the writings of Larnet, Peck’s assertions see: Noel Castree, “Commentary: From neoliberalism to neoliberalisation: consolations, confusions, and necessary illusions,” *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006): 1-6.

<sup>216</sup> Rianne Mahon and Roger Keil, eds., *Leviathan Undone?: Towards a Political Economy of Space* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009): 22.

<sup>217</sup> J.K. Gibson-Graham, “Identity and economic plurality: rethinking capitalism and ‘capitalist hegemony’,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13 (Spring 1995): 277.

<sup>218</sup> Gibson-Graham (1995): 281.

occupation. Wolfe famously writes that, “Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element.”<sup>219</sup> It’s about ownership, control and access to land and resources. The Harvard Project noted, “European, and then American, desire for access to the control of the natural resources of North America arguably was the driving force behind colonization, annexation, and the subjugation of the Native nations they encountered. Treaty after treaty, and broken treaty after broken treaty, is marked by non-Native interests in acquiring the natural resources of Native lands and waters.”<sup>220</sup> Decolonization in this sense might then be thought of as it has been in other parts of the world where invaders have been thrown out of their colonies. Two illustrative examples that come to mind are India and Algeria. With respect to the latter, Frantz Fanon pointed out that resisting and throwing out the colonizers was only part of the process of decolonization. Perhaps Fanon’s greatest contribution to the discourses on colonization and decolonization has been his understanding of the psychological effects on the colonized, especially in his less celebrated book, *Black Skin, White Masks*.<sup>221</sup> The prospect of decolonization has come to mean a number of things. The removal of colonizers, forceful or otherwise, from Indigenous lands is one option, but even this is not as straightforward as it might sound. Kwame Nkrumah, former leader of Ghana, coined the term neo-colonialism to capture the ongoing colonial and exploitative economic relations that endured *after* official decolonization.<sup>222</sup> Mohandas K. Gandhi shared similar concerns about the decolonization (and modernization) of India, which included the expulsion of British leaders, but not necessarily the expulsion of British-style governing

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<sup>219</sup> Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native” in *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8, 4, (December 2006): 388.

<sup>220</sup> The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, 160.

<sup>221</sup> Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Boston: Grove Press, 1969.

<sup>222</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1965): xi. *Emphasis added*.



norms, institutions, and economic priorities.<sup>223</sup> Despite the fact that rhetorical calls for decolonization are often straightforward, actual decolonization is much more complicated, especially in a settler colonial context as Veracini has already suggested. Having said this, I agree with Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang who remind us that, “Decolonization is not a metaphor.”<sup>224</sup> If we are to speak of decolonization as a real and tangible goal, we cannot allow it to be co-opted into something unremarkable and ineffective like the current push for reconciliation in Canada.

In the Nuuchah-nulth context, the colonization of land has manifested physically by the confinement of our people to reserves to make way for colonial settlement and resource extraction. The reserves on the west coast are notoriously small. Late Secwepemc leader, Arthur Manuel writes, “The coastal peoples were not even given basic reserve lands, only tiny parcels pushed against the sea. The colonial authorities decided that instead of land, they could live off the sea. These seashore communities were backed with only a few dozen acres and, as in so much of our history, desperation drives us.”<sup>225</sup> It was thought that we only needed modest fishing stations instead of large tracts of land, because it was believed that we were not historically, nor were we likely to become, agrarian peoples. At the time when the colonial reserve commissioners were active in British Columbia, Indigenous populations had also already suffered horrendous depopulation from the diseases that ravaged our communities. This problem is now compounded as Indigenous populations have rebounded and our home communities are literally running out of room for adequate

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<sup>223</sup> Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, Anthony J. Parel, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 28.

<sup>224</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor” in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, 1, (2012), 1-40.

<sup>225</sup> Arthur Manuel and Ronald Derrickson, *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call* (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2015): 105.

housing. And the BC Treaty Process has not helped with a government mandate that seeks to only return about five percent of Indigenous lands (and no waters). Although the west coast is sparsely populated in relative terms, resource extraction still has a big impact on our communities. Decolonization in a Nuu-chah-nulth context will be more about transforming the colonial relationship than it will be about expelling colonials. As Chief Justice Antonio Lamer reminded everyone in *Delgamuukw*, “Let us face it, we are all here to stay.”<sup>226</sup> Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have made substantial efforts in this area, but colonial opposition to fundamentally changing the relationship remains persistent, despite the rhetoric to the contrary. At the heart of decolonization for Nuu-chah-nulth-aht is a genuine respect for ha’wiih and their authority and jurisdiction within their ha’huulii; Respect Indigenous laws in Indigenous lands.

Decolonization has also come to be understood as a personal process undertaken by Indigenous people, as a response to the negative effects of colonization on Indigenous minds and bodies. Fanon has offered us tremendous insight into many of the psychological effects of colonization, and the potentially cathartic effects of decolonization.<sup>227</sup> Dene scholar Glen Coulthard agrees with Fanon that decolonization/liberation must include the self-affirmative element of struggle.<sup>228</sup> In this respect, decolonization is a deeply personal endeavor, but not one detached from kinship or community relations and responsibilities. The idea of personal decolonization is also contentious as it presumes that we are all colonized. Maori scholar

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<sup>226</sup> Michael Asch, *On Being Here to Stay: Treaties and Aboriginal Rights in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014): 3.

<sup>227</sup> Fanon actually uses the term, “*la violence desintoxique*,” which if understood as detoxifying or the ridding of a poison, carries with it less baggage than the more loaded notion of “cleansing.” This insight comes from: Nigel C. Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003): 105.

<sup>228</sup> Glen Sean Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire? Indigenous Peoples and the ‘Politics of Recognition in Canada’” (PhD dissertation, University of Victoria, 2009): 218.

Brendan Hokowhitu is critical of the “decolonisation movement” claiming that it is too focused on a mythical or pure past at the expense of more immediate needs. Instead, he advocates for “Indigenous existentialism,” which he believes is more forward oriented.<sup>229</sup> Lyons also rejects the “old ideas” of “assimilation” and “acculturation.”<sup>230</sup> In his book, *X-Marks Native Signatures of Assent*, he states,

I found myself increasingly dissatisfied with the ways in which terms like *identity*, *culture*, and *nation* are used, which is to say, “naturally,” ahistorically, and with a large measure of essentialism. While it may be true that Native essentialism has been politically expedient for the way it resists incorporation into the dominant culture and settler state, and while it may be equally true that essentialism is open to readings (by highly educated cosmopolitan intellectuals like me and probably you) as “strategic,” it is also the case that the conditions of life that essentialism tries to sustain are often retrograde and unjust.<sup>231</sup>

Lyons and Hokowhitu make valid criticisms over the notion of Indigenous cultures being frozen in time as mythical ideals. Decolonization and Indigenous existentialism are not mutually exclusive, however. Most of the pro-decolonization scholars and activists I know are very interested in Indigenous existentialism and futurities, which is why I take a critical approach as well.

And yet some of those scholars are very blunt about what they describe as a colonial mentality. Taiaiake Alfred writes,

Despite all the wisdom available within indigenous traditions, most Native lives continue to be lived in a world of ideas imposed on them by others. The same set of factors that creates internalized oppression, blinding people to the true source of their pain and hostility, also allows them to accept, even defend, the continuation of an unjust power relationship. The “colonial

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<sup>229</sup> Brendan Hokowhitu, “Indigenous Existentialism and the Body,” in *Cultural Studies Review* 15, 2 (September 2009): 103-108.

<sup>230</sup> Lyons, 33.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid. “*Emphasis*” in original.

mentality” is the intellectual dimension in the group of emotional and psychological pathologies associated with internalized oppression.<sup>232</sup>

In this sense, decolonization is as much about changing our own thought processes as it is about changing the colonial relationship with the settler state. Personal decolonization can be manifest in an everyday physical sense as well. The notion of “decolonizing your diet” is meant to encourage us to think about the food we eat, and how it impacts our health, our relations with our Indigenous homelands, and our interactions with settler food industries. Alfred writes, “Confronting huge forces like colonialism is a personal and, in some ways, a mundane process. This is not to say it is easy, but looking at it this way does give proper focus to the effort of decolonizing.”<sup>233</sup> In this regard, decolonization need not be a mega-constitutional endeavour, but rather something that can be undertaken in our homelands on a daily basis. When Indigenous people assert their own particular ways of living or dare to defend their homelands, however, conflict usually ensues.

Although, my primary focus here is on the decolonizing activities of Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, I would like to offer a few comments on the notion of settler decolonization. This is consistent with the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of *hiišuukish čawaak*, for while we might expend much of our time on our own decolonizing efforts, if we are to decolonize the *relationship* sustainably with settlers, they must also engage in their own reciprocal efforts. Anishinaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson writes, “Canada must engage in a decolonization project and a re-education project that would enable its government and its citizens to engage with Indigenous Peoples in a just and honourable way in the future.”<sup>234</sup> Alfred adds

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<sup>232</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, Second Edition (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2009): 94.

<sup>233</sup> Alfred, 2005, 25.

<sup>234</sup> Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011): 23.

that a decolonized alternative must include “inviting (settler society) to share our vision of respect and peaceful coexistence.”<sup>235</sup> In the fifth chapter I will look at efforts at cooperative engagement in Nuuchahnulth territories with settler Canadians, namely the West Coast Aquatic Management Board and the Clayoquot Sound Scientific Panel. I do not characterize these efforts as decolonization, but they do represent efforts at working together in a more cooperative and equitable manner. These initiatives remind us that we cannot do it alone. Battell Lowman and Barker write, “Decolonization as an ethic and guiding principle for collective struggle is both the ending of colonialism and also the act of *becoming something other than colonial*.”<sup>236</sup> Despite the many failed previous attempts at repairing the relationship, decolonization requires the creation of something new, decolonial and anti-capitalist.

Finally, I want to touch on some Indigenous-centric conceptions of colonization and decolonization. While understanding our predicaments in settler colonial terms and engaging in processes of decolonization has merit, rooting these efforts under, and in, Indigenous terms may be more fruitful. Decolonization is not simply a matter of shedding colonial ideas and practices. Most of the leading Indigenous scholars who write about decolonization call for a re-centering of Indigenous traditions. Alfred writes, “The sources and guiding beacons of indigenous governance remain the traditional teachings...we must be able to take wisdom from our own traditions and apply it to contemporary challenges in innovative ways, to develop self-reliance and autonomy...Orientation to traditional values is the key.”<sup>237</sup> Chawwin-is, a Nuuchahnulth scholar and activist states, “The regeneration of Indigenous communities must be based on the original teachings and orienting values of Indigenous

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<sup>235</sup> Alfred, 2005, 35.

<sup>236</sup> Battell Lowman and Barker, 111. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>237</sup> Alfred, 2009, 168-169.

peoples.”<sup>238</sup> Simpson provides two Ojibwe concepts in Anishinaabemowin that are helpful here: Biskaabiiyang,<sup>239</sup> which means “to look back” and mno-bimaadziwin, which means the “good life”<sup>240</sup> or “continuous rebirth.”<sup>241</sup> On the first concept, she elaborates,

Within Nishnaabeg theoretical foundations, Biskaabiiyang does not literally mean returning to the past, but rather re-creating the cultural and political flourishing of the past to support the well-being of our contemporary citizens. It means reclaiming the fluidity around our traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism; it means encouraging the self-determination of individuals within our national and community-based contexts; and it means re-creating an artistic and intellectual renaissance within a larger political and cultural resurgence.<sup>242</sup>

I find Simpson’s perspective on engagement with Nishnaabeg traditions helpful in my own engagement with Nuuchahnulth traditions. This might seem odd, but many traditionalists speak of revival, renewal and adaptation, and not a strict dogmatic adherence to unchanging traditional practices. I also find Simpson’s understanding of mno-bimaadziwin inspiring as a concept of decolonization that centres positivity and resurgence. As Tuhiwai Smith reminds us, “In a decolonizing framework, deconstruction is part of a much larger intent.”<sup>243</sup> In this respect, decolonization for many Indigenous people is the resistance to, and dismantling of oppressive structures, and the resurgence of contemporary Indigenous alternatives. To be absolutely clear, I am speaking of Indigenous-centric conceptions of decolonization and resurgence, not state co-optation as recently exhibited by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s

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<sup>238</sup> Chiinuks (Ruth Ogilvie), “Regenerating Haa-huupah as a Foundation for Quu’asminaa Governance” (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2007), 9. At the time of completing her MA thesis, Chaw-win-is was known as Chiinuks and is cited as such.

<sup>239</sup> Simpson, 2011, 49. “Anishinaabemowin” is the Ojibwe language.

<sup>240</sup> This concept is present in other Indigenous communities as well, for example, “sumac kawsay” in Quechua (Andean South America) as discussed in Hanne Veber and Pirio Kristina Virtanen, eds. *Creating Dialogues: Indigenous Perceptions and Changing Forms of Leadership in Amazonia*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2017.

<sup>241</sup> Leanne Simpson, ed. *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press, 2008): 73-74.

<sup>242</sup> L. Simpson, 2011, 51.

<sup>243</sup> Smith, 3.

announcement to conduct a review of Canadian laws and institutions for the purposes of decolonization.<sup>244</sup>

### ***Nuu-chah-nulth Colonization and Decolonization***

There are a number of Nuu-chah-nulth words that might be used to describe a colonized state of being. The first and perhaps most contentious is *mamaŋ'i*, which is usually used to describe, “white people.” Umeek writes that it, “can be translated as ‘people of houseboat,’ or simply as ‘boat people.’”<sup>245</sup> This was due to the fact that our first encounter with white people was when they arrived in their sailing ships. Today, we might understand it to describe most settler Canadians, although Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd makes a distinction between settlers and “arrivants,” the latter being other non-Indigenous people of colour.<sup>246</sup> *Mamaŋ'i* has also been used as a corrective/teasing term within our communities, which is why it is understandably contentious. People are said to, “act *mamaŋ'i*.” It is often said by an aunt or grandmother and can be hurtful for a person who might already feel self-conscious about their identity, although the intent is not likely malicious. In generations past, this might have been said to Nuu-chah-nulth-aht who went away to school, especially for post-secondary education. In my own experience this has changed to an extent, as many more students have now gone and come back from school. Along a spectrum, with teasing at one end and serious chastising at the other, this allegation is used to describe someone who might simply have a “city accent” or use big words or more seriously, exhibiting the worst

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<sup>244</sup> Mike De Souza, “Trudeau to proceed with a wide federal review to ‘decolonize’ Canada,” *National Observer*, December 12, 2016. <http://www.nationalobserver.com/2016/12/12/news/trudeau-proceed-wide-federal-review-decolonize-canada>.

<sup>245</sup> Umeek, 2011, 110.

<sup>246</sup> Jodi Byrd, *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

traits associated with *mamaŋ'i*, including selfishness, greed, and a disregard for one's community and familial obligations.

Another term that is often used to describe foreigners is *k<sup>w</sup>isaath*, which means stranger or someone from far away. I have not heard this used with reference to other Nuu-chah-nulth people, but it is often used to explain that a person is from another place with different teachings, which might seem strange to a Nuu-chah-nulth sensibility. This is usually said without the same sense of judgment, as other terms would indicate. There are several words that do imply judgment, however. *Hayuxšił* means “crazy” and is used to describe someone's erratic or incomprehensible behaviour.<sup>247</sup> It is sometimes used to describe an aspect of settler cultures or business practices that make little sense from a Nuu-chah-nulth worldview. Two other terms to consider are *wiikhii*, which means unfriendly or stingy and *yaʔiih*, which means greedy. These two terms can be directly applied to Nuu-chah-nulth-aht without necessarily implying an attack on their Indigeneity in the way “acting *mamaŋ'i*” is. *Wiikhii* and *yaʔiih* are appropriate for my analysis here, in that they speak directly to whether one is being a good Nuu-chah-nulth-aht or not. Umeek provides some insight in his book, *Tsawalk*, with respect to admirable Nuu-chah-nulth traits. High-ranking among them are friendly and generous. Other virtuous traits are, *ya'akstalth* (lovingness), *ha'hopstalth* (wisdom), *hopiitstalth* (helpfulness/ caring) and *ap-haystalth* (kindness), which also remind me of the seven Anishinaabe grandparent teachings of honesty, humility, courage, wisdom, respect, generosity, and love.

These are all helpful ways of thinking of exemplary Nuu-chah-nulth and Indigenous behaviour, but I need to dig a little deeper into the ways in which we understand our current settler colonial reality. In his book, *Principles of Tswalk*, Umeek writes about the broader

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<sup>247</sup> This is how this word was described to me, but I acknowledge that it can be interpreted as ableist.



state of global affairs as *wikiš čaʔmiihta*, which means, “things are out of balance” or “things are not in harmony.”<sup>248</sup> Perhaps the most accurate way of describing the condition of settler colonialism that I have come across is *hoquotist*. Johnny Mack writes,

*Hoquotist* is a Nuu-chah-nulth metaphor used to describe a disoriented person or people. It refers to a person whose canoe is overturned. It appropriately describes the disconnection that currently exists between the Nuu-chah-nulth people and their stories. By this, I mean to say that our stories are still with us, but they are not in working order...More specifically, we have become disconnected from the perceptual orientation and responsibilities that flowed from those stories.<sup>249</sup>

The additional context that Mack is writing about is the BC Treaty Process and the fact that imperial settler stories are prioritized over Nuu-chah-nulth stories in these negotiations. He asks, “*What would we as Nuu-chah-nulth* do differently if we took our stories seriously?”<sup>250</sup> Mack is suggesting a number of powerful things with his invocation of *hoquotist*. First, he is highlighting our colonized state of disorientation, but also that we have not perished and that many of our traditions have survived the ongoing colonial project. Second, he reminds us that serious responsibilities and obligations flow from our stories. This is particularly germane when we consider that the Aboriginal rights and title struggles in settler courts as well as treaty negotiations focused almost exclusively on *rights* and not our responsibilities. I like *hoquotist* as a term that best describes our Nuu-chah-nulth colonial reality because it is through interventions like Mack’s that we might begin to grasp our situation, and envision a way out, a way to reorient ourselves, and a way to decolonize.

As there is no exact term for colonization, there is also no exact Nuu-chah-nulth term for decolonization. Most relate to disharmony and imbalance and efforts to return to harmony and balance. Colonization is an entirely unique experience for Nuu-chah-nulth-aht

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<sup>248</sup> *Umeek*, 2011, 9-38.

<sup>249</sup> Mack, 2011, 289. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.* *Emphasis* in original.

as is the challenge of decolonization in a settler colonial state. To speak simply in terms of community revitalization and resurgence, would ignore the tremendously powerful effects of settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism. Decolonization is multidimensional and can occur at individual and collective levels among a great diversity of people, communities, and institutions. At the conclusion of her book, *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors*, Charlotte Côté writes of restoring nanash aktl (healthy) communities, particularly as it relates to physical health and the positive effects of reviving traditional whale hunts and consuming whale meat.<sup>251</sup> Another term is my Nuu-chah-nulth name, Čáčim'muľnii, which means “One who does things properly.” This is not very specific, but considering the traits mentioned above with emphases on respect, oneness, communal balance and reciprocity, we at least have the beginnings of how to evaluate our actions as individuals and communities.

Again, this is a Nuu-chah-nulth-Indigenous-centric research project and thesis. This comes with inherent limitations, but I feel that it also allows me greater depth and relevance, which is the ultimate goal of my investigations. A metaphor for this approach is to think of my research methodologies as fishing with a traditional net or weir. Indigenous fishing methods allowed us to be selective of the fish caught, unlike many modern commercial technologies, which can lead to a significant bycatch and irresponsible losses. Traditionally, smaller fish were released so that they could grow larger and contribute to the overall health of their nations. Sometimes this was integrated directly into the fishing technologies, which is illustrated by the reef-net fishery of our Coast Salish neighbours.<sup>252</sup> A hole was designed into the net to allow for escapement with the overall health of the fishery in mind. Similarly,

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<sup>251</sup> Côté, 193-207.

<sup>252</sup> Nicholas Xumthoult Claxton, “ISTÁ SĆIÁNEW, ISTÁ SXOLE ‘To Fish as Formerly’: The Douglas Treaties and the WSÁNEC Reef-Net Fisheries,” *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, Leanne Simpson, ed. (Winnipeg, ARP Books, 2008,): 47-58.

while my research may be broad in terms of time, I am selective about which details I focus on and seek to understand them in greater depth for the purposes of understanding my main research questions. I focus on contemporary Nuuchahnulth political economy. I want to understand how we have arrived at the present, including both external and internal factors, as well how we might critically understand our traditions and experiences so that we can make the best decisions for our future. This includes a careful examination of capitalism, especially as apprehended by Aboriginal people, which I explore in the next chapter.

### Chapter Three - Capitalism, Neoliberal Capitalism and Aboriginal Capitalism

Capitalism is one of many forms of economic organization in the world, but it is by far the most dominant at present, so it warrants special examination.<sup>253</sup> Capitalism's hegemony has even led some to not refer to it as capitalism. According to John Kenneth Galbraith, capitalism as a term lost favour among proponents who substituted it with the seemingly benign sounding "market system."<sup>254</sup> Capitalist economies overwhelmingly shape the environments within which we currently live. Arguably, all economic practices and theories due, but capitalism historically, and the current incarnation of neoliberal capitalism are of particular concern to me. As living Indigenously has become harder, we are forced to engage with capitalist markets more often, and what I am calling Aboriginal capitalism is the practice of Indigenous people engaging with capitalism as part of their community development, and in some cases, Indigenizing it somehow. Thus I seek to understand capitalism, specifically as it relates to Indigenous community resurgence within a settler colonial context. Cynthia Kaufman writes, "People who have been armed with a clear understanding of how capitalism works are better able to anticipate the consequences of their actions and understand who may be identified as likely allies, who needs to be pressured, and who should not be trusted. They are also better able to uncover lies and manipulations within the dominant stories told to justify harmful policies."<sup>255</sup> Capitalism is now ubiquitous, and not often an object of critique or debate in the mainstream political discourses. Put simply, capitalism is a means of economic organization that prioritizes

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<sup>253</sup> There are literally hundreds of thousands of articles and books written about capitalism. Here, I choose focus on contemporary neoliberal and Aboriginal capitalisms for the sake of brevity. I mostly interested in how these forms of economic organization and governance impact Indigenous peoples.

<sup>254</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Economics of Innocent Fraud: Truth for our Time* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004): 3.

<sup>255</sup> Cynthia Kaufman, *Getting Past Capitalism: History, Vision, Hope* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 2012): xv.

private ownership, competition on the “free” market and limited government involvement. Thus stated, capitalism might sound rather benign, but this is only one aspect of the picture. This is in part, due to how we understand economic and political systems conceptually, and how they function in real life. Thomas Piketty writes, “The history of the distribution of wealth has always been deeply political, and it cannot be reduced to purely economic mechanisms.”<sup>256</sup> Geoff Mann distinguishes between the former and the latter, using the concept of, “actually existing capitalism.”<sup>257</sup> Similarly, Noam Chomsky speaks of “really existing capitalism,” to differentiate the theoretical underpinnings and rationale of capitalism and what people actually experience on the ground.<sup>258</sup> Also, it will be helpful to remember that, “Capitalism is not a monolithic form of economic organization but rather that it takes many forms.”<sup>259</sup> Capitalism can be difficult to pin down. Harvey begins by asking, “Should capitalism be viewed as a process or as a thing?”<sup>260</sup> He thinks both. I find it helpful to engage capitalism in both theory and practice. Key to capitalism’s persistence is its fluidity, however people have long predicted its demise, perhaps Marx foremost among them. But Mason believes that, “Marxism underestimated capitalism’s capacity to adapt.”<sup>261</sup> Russian economist Nikolai Kondratieff states, “Capitalism’s tendency is not to collapse, but rather to *mutate*.”<sup>262</sup> Does mutation in this sense constitute transformation beyond recognition, or does capitalism always retain core tenets regardless of incarnation? And working our way

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<sup>256</sup> Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Arthur Goldhammer trans. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014): 20.

<sup>257</sup> Geoff Mann. *Disassembly Required: A Field Guide to Actually Existing Capitalism*. Edinburgh: AK Press, 2013.

<sup>258</sup> Noam Chomsky, “Can Civilization Survive Capitalism?” *Alternet*, March 5, 2013, Accessed April 22, 2017, <http://www.alternet.org/noam-chomsky-can-civilization-survive-capitalism>.

<sup>259</sup> William J. Baumol, Robert E. Litan, and Carl J. Schramm, eds. *Good Capitalism, Bad Capitalism, and the Economics of Growth and Prosperity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007): vii.

<sup>260</sup> David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 70.

<sup>261</sup> Mason, 50.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. 34. *Emphasis* added.

toward the present, many argue that there is something notably different about neoliberal capitalism. Gibson-Graham write, “in this latest frightening incarnation capitalism has become a leviathan that swallows its neighbors and cohabitants. Where we might stand to combat capitalism or to construct something ‘non-capitalist’ is not at all clear.”<sup>263</sup> I examine where four prominent Native scholars stand on capitalism below, and then I provide my perspective in a Nuuchahnulth context.

In the logic of neoliberal capitalism, the rational, self-interested individual is the primary subject of consideration. Considered as more important than the collective, or as some suggest, individuality that is thought to enhance the collective, it actually leads to massive inequality. The freedom of individuals to accumulate vast wealth is not simply protected; it is widely celebrated. Competition is favoured over collaboration. As Mason points out, under neoliberal capitalist logic, “the natural state of humankind is to be a bunch of ruthless individuals, competing with each other.”<sup>264</sup> Dada Maheshvarananda writes, “A clever trick of neoliberal economists has been to call the license of individuals and corporations to amass wealth beyond measure ‘economic freedom,’ as though it were equal to human rights. They claim the *right* to maximize one’s wealth...The idea of ‘economic freedom’ conflicts with the reality that the world’s resources are limited and that some actions limit the opportunities of others.”<sup>265</sup> Joseph Stiglitz writes, “In the middle of the twentieth century, it came to be believed that ‘a rising tide lifts all boats’: economic growth

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<sup>263</sup> J.K. Gibson-Graham. *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006): xxiv.

<sup>264</sup> Mason, xi.

<sup>265</sup> Dada Maheshvarananda, “Economic Democracy through Prout, Progressive Utilization Theory,” in *Beyond Capitalism: Building Democratic Alternatives for Today and the Future*, eds. Jeff Shantz and José Brendan Macdonald (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013): 45.

would bring increasing wealth and higher living standards to all sections of society.”<sup>266</sup> He adds that pro-capitalists argued that, “Resources given to the rich would inevitably ‘trickle down’ to the rest,” but this did not happen. In fact, Stiglitz writes, “Inequality is now rising rapidly.”<sup>267</sup> Closer to home, Craig Riddell at the University of British Columbia notes that, “Between the years 1982 and 2010, the bottom 90 per cent of Canadians counted a total growth in family income of 2 per cent. (That is not an annual increase, but a total of 2 per cent over 28 years.) For the top 10 per cent, family income increased during that span of time by 75 per cent.”<sup>268</sup> We must also consider the ubiquitous call for economic growth from a number of other perspectives.

Capitalist economies demand incessant growth<sup>269</sup>, which, common sense should tell us, depletes finite resources and jeopardizes ecosystem health. But I want to back up a bit, because growth is so fundamental to every incarnation of capitalism that it warrants further scrutiny, both in practical and theoretical contexts. The practical impacts of this conception of growth are straightforward. Michael Jacobs and Mariana Mazzucato write, “Throughout capitalism’s history economic growth has been accompanied by environmental damage, from the pollution of air, water and land to the loss of habitats and species.”<sup>270</sup> Heinberg reminds us, however that, “We have become so accustomed to growth that it’s hard to

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<sup>266</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz, “Inequality and Economic Growth” *Rethinking Capitalism: Economics and Policy for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*, eds. Michael Jacobs and Mariana Mazzucato (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016): 134.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Justine Hunter, “The wealth gap: It touches all,” *Globe and Mail* April 29, 2017, S3.

<sup>269</sup> I have been asked why I focus on “growth” as an object of critique and not something else, like capital accumulation. I do so because “growth” is often used by politicians and business leaders. It is something we hear on a daily basis, and often without question. It is also an aspect that many who are critical of neoliberalism and capitalism choose to attack.

<sup>270</sup> Michael Jacobs and Mariana Mazzucato, eds. “Rethinking Capitalism: An Introduction,” *Rethinking Capitalism: Economics and Policy for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016): 10.

remember that it is actually a fairly recent phenomenon.”<sup>271</sup> The demand for growth has intensified in modern times, especially since the Industrial Revolution, and the proliferation of capitalism. Sweezy writes that,

A system driven by capital accumulation is one that never stands still, one that is forever changing, adopting new and discarding old methods of production and distribution, opening up *new* territories, subjecting to its purposes societies too weak to protect themselves...As far as the natural environment is concerned, capitalism perceives it not as something to be cherished and enjoyed but as a means to the paramount ends of profit-making and still more capital accumulation.<sup>272</sup>

There are natural barriers to never-ending growth, however. Satyajit Das writes, “Essential resources *are* finite. New discoveries and improved methods of extraction (only) defer the date of exhaustion.”<sup>273</sup> Thus, while the neoliberal capitalist drive for growth remains a problem, insofar as it imperils health and life, most believe that it is simply not sustainable. A key question is whether we will realize this in time, or is there a point of no return? Das adds, “The central illusion of the age of capital - endless economic growth - is ending.”<sup>274</sup> There are a number of factors that are impeding economic growth, including the current debt crisis, an aging, population growth *and* changing demographics (younger in some areas and older in others), finite resources - especially water and oil.<sup>275</sup> And yet, the call for economic growth continuously remains on the lips of our most *reasonable* politicians. Not only is there an absence of people questioning the logic of incessant growth; to do so is considered blasphemous to political economic orthodoxy. Barry takes it even further, writing, “In fact, much more than being simply dismissed as crazy and utopian, criticizing economic growth

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<sup>271</sup> Heinberg, 7.

<sup>272</sup> Paul M. Sweezy, “Capitalism and the Environment” *Monthly Review* 41, 2 (June 1989), 8. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>273</sup> Satyajit Das, *The Age of Stagnation: Why Perpetual Growth is Unattainable and the Global Economy Is in Peril* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2016): 122.

<sup>274</sup> Das, 93.

<sup>275</sup> Das, 120-147.



is tantamount to a fundamental act of *betrayal* in modern societies, a public act of *disloyalty* to the modern political economic order.”<sup>276</sup> Why is this so? Greg Sharzar puts it rather succinctly: “capitalism *has to grow* or die.”<sup>277</sup> Capitalism cannot survive if it is not perpetually growing, and this is a problem.

Herman Daly believes that the roots of this problem precede capitalism, going back to the days of mercantilism, and certainly coinciding with the growth of global imperialism from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.<sup>278</sup> He writes, “in the days of mercantilism, economists urged nations to accumulate treasure through a favorable (surplus) balance of international trade.” Two noteworthy consequences of this are the exploitation of poor citizens and destructive international competition, “since one country’s surplus is some other country’s deficit.”<sup>279</sup> This dynamic continues today and we will see how this zero-sum game plays out in and amongst Indigenous communities in our exploration of Aboriginalized capitalisms below. This supposedly triumphant system is inherently unstable. While we might be led to believe that crises are anomalous, they are in fact part of the system, and this has ongoing negative consequences for underprivileged people. Magdoff and Foster write, “No-growth capitalism is an oxymoron: when accumulation ceases, the system is in a state of crisis, with considerable suffering for the working class.”<sup>280</sup> Again, people have been saying all along that the seeds of capitalism’s demise are structurally inherent, and yet it persists.

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<sup>276</sup> Barry, 124. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>277</sup> Greg Sharzar, *No Local: Why Small-Scale Alternatives Won’t Change the World* (Washington: Zero Books, 2012): 17. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>278</sup> Theodore H. Cohn, *Global Political Economy: Theory and Practice* (Toronto: Pearson Education, 2005): 24-25.

<sup>279</sup> Herman Daly. *Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996): 103.

<sup>280</sup> Magdoff and Foster, 42.

Let us briefly look at certain aspects of neoliberal capitalism that the current generation of critical economic scholars believes to be *different this time*. Even capitalism's detractors marvel at its growth and productivity when compared with the rest of human history. I would add that that growth came at great costs – human and inhuman – especially to Indigenous peoples and lands. In particular, I want to focus on the current neoliberal capitalist period. Baumol et al write, “The doomsayers who projected that economic growth would come to a standstill were wrong. Since 1975, total world economic output has increased more than sevenfold.”<sup>281</sup> It should be noted that their book, *Good Capitalism, Bad Capitalism, and the Economics of Growth and Prosperity*, was published in 2007, one year before the Great Recession began in 2008. But according to Minqi Li, while corporate profits have grown since 1975, US households have suffered from stagnant or *falling* household incomes.<sup>282</sup> This brings attention to the ways we measure economic output and growth. On a very basic level, we can see that the “growth” over the last forty years has not really benefited working-class and poor people in the way neoliberals would have us believe. And many consider the growth that has occurred to be rather dubious. According to Harvey, neoliberalism's economic growth record is very dismal and that its, “main substantive achievement has been to redistribute, rather than to generate, wealth and income,” which he considers “accumulation by dispossession.”<sup>283</sup> Ha-joon Chang writes,

The poor *growth* record of neo-liberal globalization since the 1980s is particularly embarrassing. Accelerating growth – if necessary at the cost of increasing inequality and possibly some increase in poverty – was the proclaimed goal of neo-liberal reform. We have been repeatedly told that we first have to ‘create more wealth’ before we can distribute it more widely and

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<sup>281</sup> Baumol et al, 16.

<sup>282</sup> Minqi Li, “An Age of Transition: The United States, China, Peak Oil, and the Demise of Neoliberalism,” *Monthly Review* 59, 11 (April 2008): 23-24.

<sup>283</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 154-165.

that neo-liberalism was the way to do that. As a result of neo-liberal policies, income inequality has increased in most countries as predicted, but growth has actually slowed down significantly.<sup>284</sup>

Alas, we have been fooled. Of these contradictions and how best to characterize our current understanding of neoliberal capitalism, Robert Albritton writes,

Many refer to the current phase of capitalism as ‘neo-liberalism’ because of its tendencies towards deregulation and privatization, and while there is some truth to this, it can be taken to mean that capitalism is becoming more capitalist or more successful as a phase of capitalist development. Contrary to such perspectives, I view neo-liberalism less as a new phase of capitalist development than as a desperate attempt to legitimize a dying capitalism by trying to enact ideals of its confident youth, ideals that were always filled with serious contradictions even at the height of the nineteenth-century liberalism, and that are totally inappropriate to the current state of the global economy.<sup>285</sup>

Albritton concludes, “the current phase of capitalism is most accurately seen as a phase of transition away from capitalism.”<sup>286</sup> I think Albritton is optimistic, but I appreciate his perspective on the nature of a contemporary neoliberal capitalism that may be fighting for its life. Whether this leads to a transition away from capitalism or toward a new incarnation of capitalism remains to be seen.

We also need to consider the ways in which neoliberal capitalism negatively impacts women. Kuokkanen writes, “Neoliberal policies and economic globalization operate in highly gender-specific ways, disproportionately affecting women by systemically dismantling the structures, services and institutional support in sectors such as health care, education and housing.”<sup>287</sup> Altamirano-Jiménez writes, “Capitalist expansion has depended

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<sup>284</sup> Ha-Joon Chang, *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008): 28. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>285</sup> Robert Albritton, “A phase of transition away from capitalism,” *The Future of Capitalism After the Financial Crisis: The Varieties of Capitalism debate in the age of austerity* edited by Richard Westra, Dennis Badeen, and Robert Albritton (New York: Routledge, 2015): 152.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Kuokkanen, 2011a, 288.

upon colonialism, patriarchy, and the naturalization of gender and racial hierarchies.”<sup>288</sup> And consistent with the findings of Altamirano-Jiménez and Jobin, Kuokkanen notes that Indigenous women’s economic contributions are underappreciated or completely ignored. She writes, “It is a well-established fact that women’s economic contributions have a tendency of ‘counting for nothing.’”<sup>289</sup> But Kuokkanen reminds us, “In Indigenous communities, women contribute to the family and community survival in many indispensable ways. Women have a crucial position in looking after resources and environment and ensuring access to food and other subsistence materials in addition to sustaining and taking care of (extended) families.”<sup>290</sup> Clearly, Indigenous women are important to traditional Indigenous economies, but, “it is unclear whether (neoliberal capitalist) economic development in Indigenous communities has had any fundamental impact on their well-being, and if so, what kind.”<sup>291</sup> I explore this more broadly from a theoretical perspective in the next section.

### **Aboriginal Capitalism**

*Today, “Aboriginal capitalism” means ensuring that control, revenues and profit are in the hands (of) First Nation communities but also the establishment of corporate alliances, involvement in the global economy and international markets and even sending trade missions to China. It also means enabling Indigenous elites (often male) to position themselves as the main beneficiaries of the profits derived from resources and businesses on Indigenous territories and in Indigenous communities while neglecting social issues affecting particularly women: domestic violence, lack of adequate housing and social services.*<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Altamirano-Jiménez, 2011, 109.

<sup>289</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, “Indigenous Economies, Theories of Subsistence, and Women,” *American Indian Quarterly* 35, 2 (Spring 2011b): 227.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Kuokkanen, 2011a, 278.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid. 276.

In this thesis I focus on four forms of Aboriginalized capitalism as written about by four Native scholars: Robert Miller's "Reservation capitalism," Duane Champagne's "Tribal capitalism," David Newhouse's "Capitalism with a red face," and Wanda Wuttunee's "Community capitalism." Although a number of people write about Aboriginal economic development, these four are the most explicit about their engagement with capitalism. I am interested in how Indigenous people and communities apprehend capitalist ideas and mechanisms and attempt to deploy them. I am also interested in how Indigenous people contend with or resist capitalist development to mitigate or stop its more harmful effects. This applies whether we are talking about both outsiders and Indigenous peoples engaging in economic development on or around Indigenous lands and waters. Put simply, I want to know whether capitalism can be Aboriginalized, especially in a Nuuchahnulth context.

I begin with how these scholars understand the unique challenges in Indigenous communities, because how they understand the issues provides important clues about the types of solutions that they recommend. I argue that when problems are understood through a neoliberal lens, the scope of solutions for and approaches to community development are consequently limited. Neoliberalism emphasizes the rational self-interested individual as the key unit of political and economic subjectivity. Neoliberal capitalism also demands the intrusion of markets into every facet of Indigenous life, lands, and waters. Consequently, Nuuchahnulth conceptions of collectivity are continually challenged by the demands of neoliberal hegemony. Is it possible to escape the state and the market, work with or mitigate their more harmful effects? Miller, Champagne, Newhouse, and Wuttunee provide their perspectives on capitalism.

Robert Miller is a professor at Arizona State University, a Court of Appeals judge for the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde in Oregon, and enrolled in the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma.<sup>293</sup> For my examination of Reservation capitalism, I consulted his 2013 book on the subject as well as an earlier article that he wrote for the *Oregon Law Review*. Duane Champagne is a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles and is a citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa from North Dakota.<sup>294</sup> I focus on several chapters from two books. The first is *Social Change and Culture Continuity Among Native Nations*, specifically chapter three, “Tribal Capitalism and Native Capitalists: Multiple Pathways of Native Economy,” and chapter sixteen, “Native Issues in the Twenty-First Century.”<sup>295</sup> Second, I look at a book that Champagne co-edited, *The Future of Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Survival and Development*, specifically the chapters, “Indigenous Strategies for Engaging Globalism” and “The Crisis for Native Governments in the Twenty-First Century.”<sup>296</sup> David Newhouse is an associate professor at Trent University as well as the Community Economic Development program at Concordia University. He is Onondaga from the Six Nations of the Grand River.<sup>297</sup> I consulted a number of articles he wrote for the journal that he co-founded, *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* as well as a book chapter titled, “Resistance is Futile: Aboriginal Peoples Meet the Borg of Capitalism,”

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<sup>293</sup> “Robert J. Miller,” Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law, Arizona State University. Accessed January 19, 2015. [http://apps.law.asu.edu/Apps/Faculty/Faculty.aspx?individual\\_id=118058](http://apps.law.asu.edu/Apps/Faculty/Faculty.aspx?individual_id=118058).

<sup>294</sup> “Faculty Profiles: Duane Champagne,” UCLA Law. Accessed January 19, 2015. <http://www.law.ucla.edu/faculty/faculty-profiles/duane-champagne>.

<sup>295</sup> Duane Champagne, *Social Change and Cultural Continuity Among Native Nations*. Lanham: Altamira Press, 2007.

<sup>296</sup> Duane Champagne and Ismael Abu-Saad, eds. *The Future of Indigenous Peoples: Strategies for Survival and Development*. Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center, 2003.

<sup>297</sup> “Faculty: David Roy Newhouse,” Business Administration, Trent University. Accessed January 19, 2015. <http://www.trentu.ca/businessadmin/newhouse.php>.

which he wrote for the edited volume, *Ethics and Capitalism*.<sup>298</sup> Wanda Wuttunee is a professor at the University of Manitoba.<sup>299</sup> She is Cree from the Red Pheasant First Nation in Saskatchewan. I focus on her first book, *Living Rhythms* and a paper that she co-authored, titled, “Creating Wealth and Employment in Aboriginal Communities.”

### ***The Indian Problem and Problems in Indian Country***

Indigenous-settler relations in North America have often been characterized as the “Indian problem” especially as exploration and trading gave way to permanent settler occupation. During what Robert Williams, Jr. refers to as the (rather innocuous sounding) “encounter era,” *some* Indigenous peoples and early settlers entered into treaties and agreements that reflected relations of mutual dependence and cooperation, however temporarily convenient or necessary.<sup>300</sup> But as settler populations multiplied and secured stronger footholds, and Indigenous populations rapidly declined, the latter became thought of as in the way of settlement and development. State solutions to the Indian problem manifested differently in different places, but ultimately the goal was the same: to remove Indigenous opposition to settler colonization. This included the removal of Indigenous presence in all its forms: physical, cultural, spiritual, social, legal, political, and economic. This attempted erasure of Indigeneity was carried out in many ways, which included but was not limited to: residential schools (known as Indian boarding schools in the US), broken treaty promises, land theft, forced relocations, laws prohibiting Indigenous organizing, litigation, ceremonies and

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<sup>298</sup> David R. Newhouse, “Resistance is Futile: Aboriginal Peoples Meet the Borg of Capitalism,” in *Ethics and Capitalism*, edited by John Douglas Bishop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000a): 141-155.

<sup>299</sup> “Dr. Wanda Wuttunee.” The Banff Centre. Accessed August 31, 2015.

[http://www.banffcentre.ca/indigenous-leadership/faculty/faculty\\_member.aspx?facId=4459](http://www.banffcentre.ca/indigenous-leadership/faculty/faculty_member.aspx?facId=4459).

<sup>300</sup> Robert Williams, *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 106-107.

spiritual practices, and the perpetuation of the mythology of the vanishing Indian.<sup>301</sup>

There is not enough room here to delve into all of this history in detail. My focus instead is on specifically understanding how the instruments of settler colonialism in North America contributed to the current challenges of Indigenous communities. State and church policies wanted to eliminate Indigeneity from future generations, especially through the residential school system. In 1920, Indian Affairs deputy superintendent Duncan Campbell Scott stated, “Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed in the body politic and there is no Indian question and no Indian Department. I want to get rid of the Indian problem.”<sup>302</sup> But at the same time settler society was historically unwilling to include Indigenous people, assimilated or not, into the mainstream. And today we still see disciplining forces – both from governments and the market - working to stamp out Indigenous identities or at the very least render Indigeneity as something shallow, consumable, and non-confrontational. Symbols of Indigenous culture are now welcome in the hallowed halls of settler government, business and education, but not when they are represented in opposition to certain economic projects deemed to be in the national interest. Today’s erasure is more nuanced and consistent with neoliberal modernity, multicultural nationalism, and capitalism.

Today, the “Indian Problem” costs Canadian taxpayers money, and the solution is rapid integration of Indigenous peoples economically and politically under the guise of reconciliation. James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson writes, “Consistent with colonial

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<sup>301</sup> See “The Vanishing Canadian,” in Daniel Francis. *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004): 16-43, and “The Christian Origins of the Vanishing Indian,” by Laura M. Stevens in Nancy Isenberg and Andres Burstein, eds. *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003): 28-45.

<sup>302</sup> E. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986): 50.



ideology, Canadians have viewed Indians as a burden on the national treasury and economy, understanding reserves as ‘pockets of poverty’ and blights on the economic landscape.”<sup>303</sup> Robert Anderson observed that in the RCAP final report, “The annual cost to all Canadians of the (‘Indian Problem’) status quo is projected to increase to \$11 billion by 2016.”<sup>304</sup> RBC Chief Economist (in 1999), John McCallum concurred, stating, “the costs of the status quo to the public purse are high and rising.”<sup>305</sup> He adds, “Without economic development the current dismal circumstances of Aboriginal people will continue and the *cost to the economy* increase tremendously. Aboriginal economic development is essential, and not just for Aboriginal people but for *all Canadians*.”<sup>306</sup> Under the current neoliberal capitalist paradigm, Indigenous peoples are being invited in as partners to reduce the cost and contribute to the Canadian mosaic. But Menno Boldt’s warning (originally published in 1993) is still pertinent: “Canada will not redesign its industrial society to make room for traditional ways of Indian life.”<sup>307</sup>

There is a long history of Indigenous resistance to capitalist exploitation, although I discourage an interpretation that suggests a strict and simple dichotomy between opposition and support. As we shall see in chapter five, the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have always tried to assert their authority and jurisdiction in their territories, sometimes in controversial ways. And while there are more Aboriginal communities working with settler governments and corporations these days, recent protests against pipelines and fracking suggest that there is

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<sup>303</sup> James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson, “The Constitutional Right of an Enriched Livelihood,” *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 4, 1 (2004): 49.

<sup>304</sup> Robert Brent Anderson, “Aboriginal People, Economic Development and Entrepreneurship,” *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 2, 1 (2001): 34.

<sup>305</sup> John McCallum, “Aboriginal Economic Development: An Overview,” *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 1, 1 (1999): 126.

<sup>306</sup> R. Anderson, 35. *Emphases added*.

<sup>307</sup> Menno Boldt, *Surviving and Indians: The Challenge of Self-Government* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993): 196.

still an Indian problem standing in the way of capitalist expansion.<sup>308</sup> Indigenous peoples are working to revitalize their communities from the crippling effects of settler colonialism. As Indigenous populations rebound, people are trying to feed their families *and* foster healthy individuals, communities and environments. Indigenous resurgence is a big task that is complicated and multifaceted. Certain approaches have dominated community and government discourses at different times. Some have seen the primary problem as political, others as legal, and still others as social, cultural, or spiritual. And all of these approaches require unique solutions, but at present, the economic development paradigm seems dominant. While comprehensive claims negotiations between Nuuchahnulth nations and the state have been complicated, they have certainly emphasized the primacy of economic development, which we will see in the following chapters.

Robert Miller believes that the main problem in Indian Country is one of “extreme poverty” noting that, “American Indians are today the poorest of the poor in the United States.”<sup>309</sup> He is not unique in focusing on the poverty and deplorable living conditions that many Indigenous people now endure, but he does draw some different conclusions that are noteworthy. Miller writes, “Reservation and urban Indians suffer from the social pathologies that accompany poverty. These problems need to be addressed and solved. American Indians and tribal governments have the right to enjoy the same prosperity and security as other Americans.”<sup>310</sup> Community members, academics, and politicians of every political stripe raise the issue of Indigenous poverty, but Miller takes for granted what has become a hegemonic neoliberal sense of wealth and poverty, which subsumes Indigenous worldviews

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<sup>308</sup> Hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” is a means of extracting fossil fuels, through deep drilling and use of high pressure water, sand, and chemicals to fracture the rock and release the oil and/or gas.

<sup>309</sup> Robert J. Miller, *Reservation “Capitalism:” Economic Development in Indian Country* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013): 1.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

and promotes individualistic capitalistic solutions. To be clear, I am not denying that Indigenous people experience poverty, but I am suggesting that Indigenous and settler peoples have often conceived of wealth and poverty in different ways and this has important governance and policy implications.

Miller's conception of Native American poverty is relative to the broader American population and I believe that when we uncritically accept settler averages as benchmarks, we risk overlooking our own unique Indigenous conceptions of wealth, poverty, and the good life. Neoliberal notions of wealth, poverty and the good life are not universal, despite their dominance. Not only this, but a tremendous amount of colonial riches were derived from the seizing of Indigenous lands and slave labour. I also need to address Miller's reference to social pathologies. Quoting a tribal chairman from Oregon he writes, "We need to make it *acceptable* in Indian country to be in business; it's not about rejecting culture, it builds sovereignty."<sup>311</sup> Miller and the tribal chairman are referring to the stigma that is sometimes attached to Native people engaged in economic development. Resistance to this stigma is common amongst Aboriginal proponents of economic development. I believe that this sentiment grew out of the activism of the twentieth century, especially the civil rights era of the latter half. Generations of Indigenous people were indoctrinated to believe that they were inferior and in response activists often proclaimed, "We are human beings too, and we can be just as good as you." Settler colonial laws that prohibited access to mainstream avenues of recourse, such as political organizing or the legal system have exacerbated this feeling. The problem as I see it, however, is that the recent politics of recognition have created an environment where Indigenous people are more inclined to accept these mainstream benchmarks of success. This sets up conditions of engagement that limit or ignore our own

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid. 5. *Emphasis* added.

Indigenous worldviews. Miller is not as concerned with these issues, however, and believes that reservation capitalism is the solution. He writes, “Expanding and creating new forms of economic development and activities in Indian Country is probably the most important political, social, community, and financial concern that Indian nations, tribal leaders, and Indian peoples face today.”<sup>312</sup> He conflates economic development and capitalism, using the terms interchangeably, affirming his assertion that capitalism is the *only* means of economic development.

From Duane Champagne’s perspective, “Cultural and political survival at all costs is, for Indigenous peoples, a strong motive throughout the world.”<sup>313</sup> For Champagne the key problem is one of Indigenous autonomy, and tribal engagement with capitalism is but one aspect, albeit in his opinion, an important and unavoidable one. He writes, “The common premise is that indigenous nations are seeking to preserve institutional order, political autonomy and community, land, and identity and culture within changing national and global environments.”<sup>314</sup> I believe that Nuuchah-nulth-aht would generally agree. Further, Champagne adds, “The indigenous self-determination movement is about maintaining land, culture, institutional relations, government, and self-sufficiency *under terms compatible with indigenous cultures and beliefs*.”<sup>315</sup> He later states that many traditional Indigenous beliefs and values are incompatible with capitalism, hence the need for damage mitigating form of collective capitalism. He references Max Weber’s Iron Cage argument and that Indigenous communities might be forced to engage in capitalist practices to survive, despite the fact that

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>313</sup> Champagne, 2003, xxxi.

<sup>314</sup> Champagne, 2007, 1.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid. 2, *Emphasis added*.

engagement may threaten Indigenous survival in its own way.<sup>316</sup> Indigenous engagement with capitalism has only gotten more complicated with globalization, which further demands that tribes gain a “foothold within the capitalist system,” according to Champagne.<sup>317</sup> He does not ignore the poverty issue entirely, but it is contained within the broader priority of Indigenous autonomy. Champagne writes, “Tribal leadership often argues that sovereignty is not possible without freedom from economic dependence on government programs and funding. High rates of poverty and unemployment on reservations, with their attendant problems and issues, are a major stimulus for tribal governments to promote economic development.”<sup>318</sup> Unfortunately, colonial circumstances tend to co-opt rightful tribal desires for autonomy through neoliberal political and economic means.

Champagne also tends to conflate economic development and capitalism, but is an optimist in a sense, not fully buying the Iron Cage argument. Champagne writes, “not all nations and communities will converge toward a common market-based institutional order.”<sup>319</sup> He adds, “Native peoples will survive into the future centuries through both change and strong and selective retention of Native views of religion, community, and political rights.”<sup>320</sup> He believes that this will be achieved, in part, through tribal capitalism, which he argues includes key distinctions to protect tribal autonomy and culture, but I fear Champagne underestimates the transformative powers of neoliberal capitalism. The question then arises with respect to the nature and quality of Indigenous cultural survival and political agency, something I examine in the Nuu-chah-nulth context.

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid. 46.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid. 61.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid. 57.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid. 46.

<sup>320</sup> Champagne, 2003, xxxi.

David Newhouse writes that, “One of the most persistent problems facing Aboriginal people throughout Canada has been low incomes and low participation in the labour force.”<sup>321</sup> For him, one of the major problems is Indigenous invisibility. From a book entitled, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, Newhouse writes,

This text emerged from our common experience of working within universities and in the public sector, where we continually encounter notions about Indigenous peoples as highly resistant to change and where the discourse is dominated by what has come to be called the ‘Indian Problem.’ We take a different view. It is our hope that this book will add a new dimension to the picture of Aboriginal peoples, one that shows them to be industrious, meritorious, and accomplished. We want to help create a place of respect and dignity for Aboriginal peoples in Canada.<sup>322</sup>

Again, we see an argument that centres the supremacy of settler colonial normativity, and the necessity of Indigenous peoples to catch-up, close the gap, and obtain recognition and ultimately, acceptance, from settler society. Unfortunately, what we end up seeing is the success of the “talented tenth”, while systemic limitations continue to condemn the vast majority of Indigenous people and communities to failure, in both settler and Indigenous terms.

Newhouse points to unemployment and low incomes as key challenges, and encourages Aboriginal participation in the mainstream economy. He acknowledges that capitalism is problematic, characterizing it as the “Borg of capitalism,” but he does not shun it. Instead, he argues for “capitalism with a red face.” Like other economic development proponents, Newhouse considers poor socio-economic indicators problematic, as well as dependence, and a lack of communal autonomy, and like others, he believes that economic development is an important part of the solution. Newhouse writes, “Economic development

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<sup>321</sup> Newhouse, 2000a, 145.

<sup>322</sup> David R. Newhouse, “Preface,” *Hidden in Plain Sight: Contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to Canadian Identity and Culture*, eds. David R. Newhouse, Cora Voyageur, and Dan Beavon, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): xi.

is seen as key to increased stewardship and key to self-government.”<sup>323</sup> He is certainly not alone. Economic development has emerged as the dominant approach to the Indian Problem, in Canada, the United States, and around the world. Settler government and academic institutions have played a prominent role in promoting economic development – and capitalism - in the Indigenous and public consciousness.

Newhouse indicates one more significant challenge. He believes that one of the biggest obstacles standing in the way of Aboriginal people’s economic success is their feelings and mentalities about mainstream economic development. Newhouse writes, “It is important to develop within the community a sense of *legitimacy* for economic development and its related activities.”<sup>324</sup> In this sense, both he and Miller agree on challenging the stigma of mainstream economic development in Indigenous communities. Newhouse tells the story of bringing in a guest - the chairman for Peace Hills Trust – to speak to his university students in 1993. Some of the students approached Newhouse after the talk expressing disappointment, stating that the banker “was not Indian” for exploiting his own people.<sup>325</sup> These issues need to be considered carefully, but the students’ concern over an Indigenous person exploiting his own people for individual profit was not entirely unfounded. The counter argument might suggest that it is better to deal with Indigenous banking institutions than settler banks. Capitalism has become hegemonic and financial institutions are normalized, to the extent that we seldom question their necessity in the first place or the role they play in upholding an exploitative economic system, especially during

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<sup>323</sup> David Newhouse, “The Development of the Aboriginal Economy over the Next 20 Years” *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 1, 1 (1999): 72.

<sup>324</sup> Newhouse, 1999, 75. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>325</sup> David Newhouse, “Modern Aboriginal Economies: Capitalism with a Red Face” in *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 1, 2 (2000b): 55.

the neoliberal capitalist era, which is alarming, as recent growth has largely been driven by financialization and debt.<sup>326</sup>

Newhouse firmly believes that capitalism is unavoidable and insurmountable, hence his Borg analogy. For him, like Margaret Thatcher, “there is no alternative.”<sup>327</sup> Newhouse does acknowledge that Indigenous engagements with capitalism are transformative, but he feels that we must make the best of it. It is not my intent to disparage anyone that tries to make the best of bad situations, but I hope to foster honest dialogue about the implications of Indigenous engagement with capitalism. I want to know the *cost* of our engagement. Newhouse also offers a warning that was common amongst Native scholars and political leaders leading up to the RCAP era: If Canada does not adequately address poverty, unemployment, and economic development for Aboriginal Canadians, the country can expect, “increased militancy and violence.”<sup>328</sup> RCAP came directly in the wake of tremendous conflict with Indigenous communities. Notable conflicts include the James Bay Great Whale hydroelectric project, the Restigouche fishing dispute, and the Oka Crisis along with many solidarity protests across the country.<sup>329</sup> These warnings were meant to enhance bargaining positions, but all too often, the alternative to violence in my view is a mild form of multicultural-friendly neoliberal assimilation that denies true Indigenous autonomy or independence.

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<sup>326</sup> Das, 3.

<sup>327</sup> Shantz and McDonald, xvi.

<sup>328</sup> Newhouse, 1999, 76.

<sup>329</sup> The Great Whale Project was proposed by Hydro-Québec and opposed by Cree communities in northern Québec in the 1980s and 1990s. It specifically was defeated, but it was only a part of a much larger Hydro-Québec project, which still impacts Cree lands and waters. Québec police carried out controversial raids in 1981 against the Listukuj Míkmaq who were struggling to retain control over their traditional fishery. The Oka Crisis began when Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawks) of Kanehsatà:ke blocked a road that ran through their territory to protest the expansion of a golf course on their lands. The Sûreté du Québec (SQ, provincial police) attacked the blockade and an SQ officer was killed. The Canadian military was called in and after 78 days, the crisis ended with no further loss of life, but the land remains in dispute.



Before diving into Wanda Wuttunee's community capitalism, I examine her writing in *Living Rhythms* for a sense of how she understands the challenges faced by Indigenous communities in Canada. Her scholarship is of particular interest to me because two of the case studies in *Living Rhythms* were drawn from Nuuchahnulth communities. Unlike the others, Wuttunee does not really begin with an urgent rationale for Aboriginal economic development. She writes, "This is not a story of dysfunction and despair. I do not ignore these aspects, for they are woven into the fabric of community life; they are also the subject of extensive debate elsewhere."<sup>330</sup> Wuttunee chooses to emphasize 'success stories.' Throughout the case studies in her book, her interviewees articulate the problems as they see them, which I get to shortly, but I want to examine her starting point because it is particularly illuminating of Wuttunee's perspective. She writes,

In observing Aboriginal economic development, business, and entrepreneurship growth, the issue of what choices will be made to meet community and individual goals is of paramount interest to me. Will we want communities where the environment is cherished and elders and traditions are honoured, or will we try to maximize returns on investment? Are these objectives mutually exclusive? What does it mean to us to participate meaningfully in the economy? What are the benefits, and what are the costs?<sup>331</sup>

Wuttunee takes a pragmatic approach that accepts that economic development is happening in Aboriginal communities and seeks to reveal 'best practices.' She acknowledges that Aboriginal people struggle with certain issues, however, when engaging with capitalism.

Wuttunee writes, "Capitalism is seductive in its all pervasiveness and in what it promises to deliver."<sup>332</sup> This is an interesting choice of words. Where as Newhouse regards capitalism as irresistible, and not in a good way, Wuttunee refers to the seductive allure of

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<sup>330</sup> Wuttunee, 2004, 16.

<sup>331</sup> Wuttunee, viii.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid. xiii.

capitalism. The rhetoric of capitalism can be seductive, but I am also concerned about its coercive and disciplining capabilities. Wuttunee begins with a clear understanding of Indigenous people's ambivalence toward capitalism. While her approach considers engagement with mainstream business a pragmatic necessity, she asserts, "As Aboriginal peoples, we may not want to mirror mainstream business choices."<sup>333</sup> Wuttunee believes that we can engage mainstream businesses without acting exactly as they do. She writes,

Some of us have chosen and more may choose to embrace capitalism wholeheartedly. We all have *choices*. That is the beauty of the society we live in. I make my choices with my children in mind. I bring my songs into the boardroom as reminders to listen to my heart. *If* business decision-makers included in every checklist of project efficiency and effectiveness a box to tick off that would minimize negative impacts on our children's quality of life and happiness, the world would be better and business would be better.<sup>334</sup>

That is a big "if." Wuttunee acknowledges that mainstream economic development does not necessarily take into consideration the quality of lives of future generations, that it is short-sighted and at times, insatiable. But is she correct in assuming that we all have choices? My short answer is 'yes,' but I fear she may also be underestimating the degree of coercion that limits our agency and choice. It isn't really a choice if we must choose either Coke or Pepsi. She also infers that mainstream business practices do not make the world a better place, and that seeking out Aboriginal alternatives might help. Wuttunee states that her culture acts as a check and balance to the harms of mainstream economic development. In the following chapters, we will see how Nuuchah-nulth "culture" can, at times, intermingle quite nicely with mainstream economic development and that this does not automatically mitigate the more harmful or destructive aspects capitalism. A closer look reveals that, both our cultures and capitalism are more complicated and fluid, and not always for the better.

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid. xiii-xiv. *Emphasis* added.

With respect to Wuttunee's understanding of capitalism, she and Stelios Loizides begin with the standard basic definition: "Capitalism is an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods. Investment decisions are made by individuals or businesses rather than the state. The production and distribution of goods are determined mainly by competition in a free market."<sup>335</sup> This is a pretty standard, somewhat benign definition of capitalism, but Wuttunee acknowledges the destructive potential of unrestrained capitalism. Quoting Paul Hawken, she states bluntly, "business is destroying the world."<sup>336</sup> She agrees that contemporary corporate practices and the global market economy both present existential threats to our ecosystems and Indigenous cultures.<sup>337</sup> These are fairly straightforward and a lot to overcome, but Wuttunee believes that Aboriginal people can mitigate the threats with community capitalism.

Wuttunee believes that one of the major problems encountered by Indigenous communities and people is our growing alienation from our homelands. She writes, "In today's world, many influences and experiences mean that only a proportion of Aboriginal peoples live with the land and maintain [a] sacred connection."<sup>338</sup> These influences and experiences can be easily interpreted as Indigenous dispossession and alienation under settler colonialism. This is certainly true in the case of the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, not only with those who "live away from home," but those who do live at home have been alienated from lives on the land and sea as well. This ultimately impacts the decisions we make.

Wuttunee writes, "Common challenges face the Aboriginal communities in this study: high unemployment, poor technical and training skills, health and social dysfunction,

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<sup>335</sup> Stelios Loizides and Wanda Wuttunee, *Creating Wealth and Employment in Aboriginal Communities* (Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 2005): i.

<sup>336</sup> Wuttunee, 6-7.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid. 16.

and for some, restrictions on control of their land and resources.”<sup>339</sup> She points out that one community in Manitoba has been struggling with seventy-five to eighty per cent unemployment. It is noteworthy that Wuttunee is less explicit about making direct connections between Indigenous poverty and the necessity for economic development. She is also less prescriptive than the others. She writes later in her book, “Each community must walk its own path and live its own truth.”<sup>340</sup> As such, she is less critical of her subjects. She approaches the communities with a certain humility that is both admirable and frustrating. Perhaps it is because many of the communities she studies are not her own and she feels that it is not her place to be overly critical. Nonetheless, Wuttunee only makes brief reference to the challenges faced by Indigenous communities and leaders. She takes for granted that economic development is happening and focuses on how it is happening with an emphasis on positive and hopeful stories. This approach has its limitations, but I respect Wuttunee’s choice and perspective. Her case studies provide more detail with respect to how those First Nation communities understand their problems and how they believe economic development will help address them.

Tla-o-qui-aht leader, Francis Frank shared this with Wuttunee regarding their comprehensive claims negotiations and economic development activities:

I believe it is going to provide our people with the ability to have more control of our own lives, to develop more economic opportunities, and to make the community feel better about who we are compared to where we are today. Right now we still have high unemployment, with many people in social service programs like welfare. I don’t feel good about the suffering my members endure today.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid. 186.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid. 102.

Frank's comments accurately reflect the specific way "treaty" negotiations have been framed in British Columbia and speak to key concerns in many Indigenous communities. In the last generation this has been increasingly expressed in terms of economic development. This has been articulated in a number of ways that are relevant here. First, Aboriginal communities have expressed a strong desire to be politically autonomous again. This has grown out of years of living under colonial control and the suffocating confines of the *Indian Act*. Of the Tsuu T'ina Nation, Wuttunee writes, "the goal...was to move away from dependence on government. The main strategy was to heal community members and develop economically viable projects that earned revenue and provided employment."<sup>342</sup> Since the government has consistently blocked political independence, both legally and through policy, perhaps economic development became the next logical option. Chief Roy Whitney states, "Our main goal is to be self-sustaining. We want to rely solely on ourselves and as a First Nation to meet the needs of this community."<sup>343</sup> These are compelling words and desires. This has been a key argument of the comprehensive claims process as well as the promise of economic development that has been very hard to resist and/or critique. To be clear, it is not that I do not want these things; I just believe that the route our desires and efforts have been *channeled* towards is fraught with existential dangers. We can also see how the way in which we have come to articulate our community and individual goals are consistent with the rhetoric of neoliberalism. Again, we come back to choice.

There is another way that the aspiration of Aboriginal independence is expressed that I want to examine. Aboriginal people often compare themselves to other Canadians and this has a number of consequences. Aboriginal politicians constantly talk about "closing the

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid. 33.

gap,” citing the disparity in key socio-economic indicators like suicide, incarceration rates, education attainment, employment income and life expectancy. The term closing the gap was widely used during the negotiations of the Kelowna Accord between the Liberal government and the Assembly of First Nations under the leadership of Phil Fontaine.<sup>344</sup> This approach would remain consistent with subsequent national chiefs, Shawn Atleo<sup>345</sup> and Perry Bellegarde.<sup>346</sup> I agree that the vast disparity in health and wellbeing indicators is reprehensible and largely due to the asymmetrical relations of settler colonialism, but the numbers and implications require deeper scrutiny. Put simply, we need space for our own Indigenous expressions of health and wellbeing that differ from contemporary neoliberal capitalist conceptions, which are thought to be triumphant and *universal*. Here, I am thinking of socio-economic indicators like the Human Development Index. I don’t oppose HDI metrics entirely, but literacy/education attainment and gross domestic product/gross national income per capita come to mind that do not necessarily consider other important factors and certainly take for granted economic growth. Carol Gottfriedson states, “We will succeed and compete with the non-Indian population.”<sup>347</sup> The political, legal and economic terrain in Canada is dominated by settler political, legal and economic systems, and many Aboriginal people and communities feel that they have no choice but to compete *in* those systems.

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<sup>344</sup> Lisa L. Patterson, “PRB 06-04E: Aboriginal Roundtable to Kelowna Accord: Aboriginal Policy Negotiations, 2004-2005,” *Parliament of Canada*, May 4, 2006. Accessed March 16, 2016. <http://www.lop.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/prb0604-e.htm>.

<sup>345</sup> Shawn Atleo, “A demand for quality first nations education,” *Globe and Mail*, October 4, 2012. Accessed March 16, 2016. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/shawn-atleo-a-demand-for-quality-first-nations-education/article4587378/>.

<sup>346</sup> Assembly of First Nations, “2015 Federal Election Priorities for First Nations and Canada: Closing the Gap,” n.d. Accessed March 16, 2016. <http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/closing-the-gap.pdf>.

<sup>347</sup> Wuttunee, 36.

Related to this is the way in which Aboriginal participation in the mainstream economy is sold to settler Canadians. Economic development in Aboriginal communities, and Indigenous youth in particular, are portrayed as *untapped economic and labour potential*.<sup>348</sup> We are selling ourselves as positive contributors to the mainstream Canadian economy, and removing ourselves as *burdens* on Canadian taxpayers. Wuttunee writes, “Aboriginal peoples will impact the country positively as their potential is developed. They will be a drain on resources if social and economic issues are not dealt with effectively.”<sup>349</sup> I cannot overstate how despicable I find the characterization of Indigenous youth as simply economic labour pool potential. Wuttunee is not alone with this characterization. Neoliberal rhetoric grips nearly every notable sphere of political and economic influence in Canada.

Wayne Helgason, Executive Director of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg states, “Aboriginal peoples want a pleasurable life style like everyone and the freedom to be Aboriginal in the way they want, including practicing cultural beliefs and associating with who they want and in the manner they want. I don’t think it means being absorbed into the mainstream society, but I think it means being involved and setting their own definitions and boundaries on their terms.”<sup>350</sup> My concern is whether we are actually able to do this under the hegemony of mainstream economics, politics, and culture. I am not saying that it is impossible. I do not know for certain, but I have concerns about the way capitalism is being sold to our communities, and consequently, the way Aboriginal people – especially the youth - are *being sold* to Canada. Add to this the many environmental concerns that a lot of Indigenous people have, especially with respect to intensive resource extraction. Wuttunee

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<sup>348</sup> “Unlocking the Potential of Marginalized Youth,” *Policy Horizons Canada*, n.d. Accessed April 23, 2017, <http://www.horizons.gc.ca/eng/content/unlocking-potential-marginalized-youth>.

<sup>349</sup> Wuttunee, 54.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid. 57.

concludes that, “The leadership must balance environmental protection concerns of the community with the need for jobs, and weigh the push to develop resources by industry against all the attendant negative environmental impacts. It is a quandary without easy answers.”<sup>351</sup> I believe that these difficult dilemmas are not natural, but rather that they spring from conditions brought about by neoliberal capitalism. Again, I am aware that certain pressures have always been present, and certainly under other economic forms and earlier incarnations of capitalism. My specific concerns with neoliberal capitalism relate to our greater involvement in these activities as Indigenous peoples, its subject transformation potentiality and excessive market penetration. Now we will look at how each of these Native scholars articulate their respective positions on Aboriginal capitalism.

### ***Reservation Capitalism***

*“There is nothing traditional about having the federal government take care of us. There is nothing cultural about that...My idea of tribal economic development is that sovereignty is economic independence. Until we get there, we are not independent.”*

– Clifford Lyle Marshall, Chairman, Hoopa Valley Tribe.<sup>352</sup>

It is important to understand where Robert Miller is coming from when he talks about reservation capitalism. In an earlier work, he goes to great lengths to compare and contrast socialism and capitalism on Native American reservations. He writes that for, “over two hundred years...Federal Indian law and policy” have conspired to promote tribal-centric or “socialistic” economies for Native Americans and that it has been a dismal failure.<sup>353</sup> He contrasts this with what exists in the rest of America: “capitalism and private free market enterprise.”<sup>354</sup> These arguments carry over into his later work on reservation capitalism, and

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid. 143.

<sup>352</sup> Miller, 2013, 157.

<sup>353</sup> Robert J. Miller, “Economic Development in Indian Country: Will Capitalism or Socialism Succeed?” *Oregon Law Review* 80, 3 (Fall 2001): 759-762.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid. 763-764.



while he cannot entirely escape the roles of tribal, state, or federal governments (like most other capitalists), he strongly believes that their roles should be limited to startup funding, support, training, the creation of business-friendly environments, but essentially, “get out of the way of private entrepreneurship in Indian Country.”<sup>355</sup> To an extent, this is consistent with the Harvard Project nation-building model. Miller recommends that, “Tribes must do everything they can to develop the entrepreneurial, capitalist spirit in reservation residents and ensure that more private businesses are started and operated in Indian country.”<sup>356</sup> Miller is an unapologetic capitalist. Thus, when he speaks of reservation capitalism, it is without the same concerns or ambivalence of the other Native scholars I review.

Miller makes the case that contrary to popular belief, Native Americans are not culturally opposed to capitalist principles. He believes that capitalism is consistent with Indigenous worldviews, writing, “Native peoples understood, appreciated, and lived by principles that today we call private property rights, entrepreneurship, and free market economics in which individuals voluntarily participate in the manufacture of excess crops and goods and engage in trade mostly without governmental direction or control.”<sup>357</sup> Miller does not believe that Native American societies were “socialistic societies where everything was jointly owned and shared by the community,” but rather that the land was, “owned by the tribal government and by the citizens in common.”<sup>358</sup> De Soto also argues for formal private property systems that are universally accessible, which he believes will give everyone a stake in capitalism.<sup>359</sup> In line with Mann and Chomsky’s actually and really existing capitalism, however, Vandana Shiva’s perspective on private property differs

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid. 857-858.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid. 858.

<sup>357</sup> Miller, 2013, 11.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid. 11-12.

<sup>359</sup> De Soto, 207-218.

substantially. She writes, “The transformation of common property rights into private property rights implicitly denies the right to survival for large sections of society.”<sup>360</sup> Miller believes that historically, individuals and families possessed usufructuary rights, that is, the right to use communal lands for private gain. Strictly speaking, I do not believe that Indigenous societies were socialist, capitalist, or exactly like any other Eurocentric political system. Each Indigenous community functioned within its own worldview, rooted in place, and unique cultural, political, spiritual, and economic systems. Miller makes direct connections between a pan-Indigenous past and modern capitalism that is an oversimplification of both historical understandings of Indigenous life and contemporary settler colonial life.

Miller is guilty of this again when he refers to Pacific Northwest potlatch as an example of wealth accumulation for the purposes of redistribution as well as increased status for the hosting chiefs. On these points I generally agree, although as we will see in chapter four, the status of Nuuchah-nulth chiefs must be understood within the context of the communally cherished value of humility. Miller states, “This is no different than how U.S. society today chooses to spend money on activities we desire, which includes giving extra wealth to social and charitable organizations for tax deductions and because our (American) society values that kind of generosity.”<sup>361</sup> This is an inexcusably simplistic understanding of the potlatch and his equivocation of it with contemporary capitalism is utterly wrong. One of the problems with Miller’s approach is that he cherry picks examples from all over Native America to make the case that Indigenous societies are capitalist at heart, when clearly this

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<sup>360</sup> Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005): 21.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid. 17-18.

is not true in every case.<sup>362</sup> Even the Harvard Project points out that diversity of Indigenous cultures factors significantly in whether adaptations to neoliberal political and economic institutions and practices are possible. The most notable examples they provided for this were the Sioux and White Mountain Apache.<sup>363</sup>

Despite the title of the book, Miller does not offer a succinct definition of reservation capitalism. This is because unlike Wuttunee, Newhouse and Champagne, Miller does not offer a tweaked version of capitalism designed to suit Native American values. When he says reservation capitalism, he simply means bringing more mainstream capitalism to Native American reservations. Miller is aware of others' concerns over negative cultural impacts of capitalism, but counters these concerns with the notion that Indigenous cultural integrity is in greater danger when Native communities are in poverty.<sup>364</sup> He further suggests that with the resources from economic development, communities are actually able to strengthen their cultures.<sup>365</sup> I want to unpack what is meant by the word culture. Miller is speaking about tribes allocating money for things like cultural gatherings and language programs. While these are indeed worthy recipients of financial resources, I urge caution when considering culture in shallow and simplistic terms. What I mean by this is that there is a spectrum of cultural depth that few people speak about. In my opinion, at their shallowest, Aboriginal cultures are performative, consumable, and largely non-threatening to mainstream society. At their deepest, Indigenous cultures are *lived*, informing all of our individual and collective decisions. Altamirano-Jiménez writes, "In contrast to *lived tradition* that is place-specific,

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<sup>362</sup> I have not studied *every* Indigenous community in North America, but I am willing to concede that some Indigenous societies *may* be more amenable to capitalist values and neoliberal capitalism and others may not be.

<sup>363</sup> Stephen Cornell and Joseph P. Kalt, "Where does economic development really come from? Constitutional rule among the Sioux and Apache," *Economic Inquiry* 33, 3 (1995): 402-426.

<sup>364</sup> Chief Clarence Louie of Osoyoos has expressed similar opinions in Canada.

<sup>365</sup> Miller, 2013, 133.

the abstract conception of tradition celebrated in the nationalist narrative is generalized and distant from its diverse local footing so that it can conform to rigid definitions of Aboriginal peoples and historical continuity.”<sup>366</sup> Miller is guilty of this to a certain extent in his analysis of pan-Indigeneity (read: nationalist). He writes, “Indian cultures, like all cultures, change over time and in reaction to many different stimuli, both good and bad.”<sup>367</sup> I agree. Cultures are living and complex and they change over time, but I do not agree that they have to change at a foundational level in ways that violate core Indigenous principles and values. Proponents of economic development constantly bring up the theme of cultural change. What I want to understand is the level of community agency through the processes of change, the degrees of change, and when change threatens or upholds the core values of a people.

In his introduction, Miller writes, “A central premise of this book is that tribal governments and Indians can greatly benefit their communities and help alleviate poverty and its problems by working to create functioning economies composed of a mix of tribally owned and privately owned businesses.”<sup>368</sup> I agree that functioning economies are an important part of any Indigenous revitalization, but must these economies plug into the neoliberal capitalist system that might very well do more harm than good? Miller adds, “They need to use whatever tools and advantages (that) are at their disposal.”<sup>369</sup> He believes that diverse economies are best, writing, “Tribal governments need to think about creating, to some extent, business-friendly environments where, other tribes, Indian and non-Indian

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<sup>366</sup> Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, “Nunavut: Whose Homeland, Whose Voices?,” *Canadian Woman Studies* 26, 3/4 (Winter/Spring 2008): 128. *Emphasis added.*

<sup>367</sup> Miller, 2013, 29.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid. 70.

companies, and individuals will invest money and human capital in economic endeavors.”<sup>370</sup>

I have several concerns with this approach. What Miller is calling for is also known in the “developing world” as foreign direct investment (FDI). It is assumed that underdeveloped countries will benefit from the investment from developed countries. This is problematic for so many reasons, not the least of which is the term, “developed,” which privileges Western worldviews and economies. Even setting aside the developed/underdeveloped dichotomy, developing countries often struggle with poverty that is a direct result of historical and ongoing colonialism and exploitation. The contemporary reality of neo-colonialism, as Nkrumah put it, is that many countries around the world - mostly in the south - remain beholden to powerful actors - mostly in the north - and markets that care little for local concerns or priorities. As it relates to Indigenous North America, I fear that when tribal communities have freed themselves from government dependency, they then burden themselves with a new dependency and a new master: the neoliberal capitalist market. Poverty is never truly defeated, but instead remains a perpetually precarious possibility in a neoliberal age where outsiders dictate comparative advantage and Indigenous nations find themselves vulnerable to the unforgiving whims of the market. Although I have no specific empirical evidence for this, it seems that women lead the way in critiquing neoliberalism. This is certainly true among Indigenous scholars.<sup>371</sup> Again, Brown reminds us that, “as

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid. 93.

<sup>371</sup> For example see: Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez’ *Indigenous Encounters with Neoliberalism: Place, Women, and the Environment in Canada and Mexico*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013, Makere Stewart-Harawira, *The New Imperial Order: Indigenous Responses to Globalization*, New York: Zed Books, 2005, Maria Bargh, ed., *Resistance: An Indigenous Response to Neoliberalism*, Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2007, Maria Bargh and Jacob Otter, “Progressive spaces of neoliberalism in Aotearoa: A genealogy and critique,” *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 50, 2 (2009): 154-165, Shalene Jobin, “Cree Economic Relationships, Governance, and Critical Indigenous Political Economy in Resistance to Settler-Colonial Logics, PhD thesis, University of Alberta, 2014, Rauna Kuokkanen, “From Indigenous Economies to Market-Based Self-Governance: A Feminist Political Economy

neoliberal citizenship sets loose the individual to take care of itself, it also discursively binds the individual to the well-being of the whole – demanding fealty and potential sacrifice to national health or economic growth. This is the paradoxical inversion of neoliberal freedom...”<sup>372</sup> Indigenous peoples and people in Canada know well their place as sacrificial lambs at the alter of capitalism, the greater good, and the national interest.

Miller also calls for increases in “Indian entrepreneurship,” stating that Native Americans own private businesses at the lowest rate per capita for any racial or ethnic group in the United States.<sup>373</sup> Miller acknowledges that many Native Americans have an aversion to capitalism due, in part, to the long history of exploitation at the hands of colonial and settler capitalists. But he again offers his interpretation of traditional Native culture, which he feels is consistent with modern conceptions of business, private-property rights, and individual self-sufficiency.<sup>374</sup> According to Miller, one of the primary justifications for boosting Indian entrepreneurship is that it would give more options for Native Americans to spend their money on their own reservations. He says that this has a multiplier effect and retains tribal wealth, where as now most money leaves reservations and does not circulate to create more jobs and wealth.<sup>375</sup> This makes sense if our only concerns are for the proliferation of jobs and money, which I do not dismiss entirely, but must they be our main concerns? What of our other responsibilities and obligations?

Miller responds with the argument that capitalism should not be considered non-traditional. He actually goes further writing,

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Analysis,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 44, 2 (June 2011a): 275-297, and Rauna Kuokkanen, “Indigenous Economies, Theories of Subsistence, and Women,” *American Indian Quarterly* 35, 2 (Spring 2011b): 215-240.

<sup>372</sup> Brown, 4.

<sup>373</sup> Miller, 2013, 113.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid. 113-117.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid. 132.

Culture is not an obstacle to Indian entrepreneurship. In fact, the opposite is true. The histories and traditions of all American tribal cultures support the individual right and obligation of Indians to support themselves and their families. Increasing entrepreneurship and economic development on reservations in a careful and respectful manner will support tribal cultures, not injure them.<sup>376</sup>

I do not dispute this quote as it is written, but what I am most interested in is whether entrepreneurship *must* be practiced within a capitalist framework, and what do we mean exactly by careful and respectful manner? At this point, I should say that scale matters. I understand that most entrepreneurial activities are on the smaller side and undertaken by people simply trying to pursue a passion, talent, and/or feed their families. Of course, at present, Indigenous entrepreneurship *must* be practiced within a capitalist environment. Indigenous people can still engage in entrepreneurialism, however, and *not be* voracious capitalists. I will pick up on this again in the next section with Champagne and in chapter five in the Nuuchah-nulth context. As for development in a careful and respectful manner, we have a long way to go, and much further than our contemporary understandings of sustainable economic development, corporate social responsibility, or triple bottom lines if we are to respect genuine Indigenous conceptions of care, respect, and reciprocity. The latter are based on our own epistemologies, ontologies, stories, worldviews, values and principles. The former are well-meaning responses to the most egregious forms of exploitative capitalism that struggle to gain meaningful traction in the real world. On this, Findlay and Russell write, “The triple bottom line extends the perspective of the corporations stakeholders beyond investors and creditors and their narrow interest in bottom line financial performance by introducing the notion of economic, environmental and societal

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid. 133.

performance.”<sup>377</sup> However, they add, “The term appears to have been expropriated and colonized by business.”<sup>378</sup> Wayne Norman and Chris McDonald concur, writing that the Triple bottom line turns out to be, “Good old fashioned Single (bottom) Line plus (often unfulfilled) Vague Commitments to Social and Environmental Concerns.”<sup>379</sup> But not everyone is concerned about capitalism or disingenuous attempts to mitigate its more egregious and harmful aspects.

It is evident that Miller does not share my concerns over the core tenets of capitalism as he does not discuss any of them from a critical perspective, other than to acknowledge that some people have unfounded concerns. He concludes his book with,

Developing a reservation economy is only a means to an end. In no sense is it just about making money or making any particular individual rich. It is about developing a holistic approach to community development that can also help raise peoples and societies out of poverty...We are talking about tribal governments and their citizens working together to make their reservations more viable places to live and raise families, and to better preserve their governments, homelands, traditions, and cultures.<sup>380</sup>

I agree. What I disagree with is when he uses economy and capitalism or economic development and capitalism interchangeably and uncritically. Miller attempts to make the case that traditional tribal cultures are entirely consistent with contemporary capitalism, and that it has only been since colonization and federal government domination that Native Americans have taken on the baggage that would preclude them from freely engaging in capitalist behaviours. Miller does not overly concern himself with the exploitation of lands, waters, and bodies that is inherent in capitalism. Other Native writers, like Champagne, Newhouse and Wuttunee, at least struggle with these ugly truths before espousing

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<sup>377</sup> Findlay and Russell, 91.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>379</sup> Wayne Norman and Chris MacDonald, “Getting to the Bottom of ‘Triple Bottom Line’,” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 14, 2 (2004): 256.

<sup>380</sup> Miller, 2013, 155-156.



pragmatism. The Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, as we shall see, also struggle with the destructive imbalances inherent to capitalism.

Miller is correct, however, in pointing out that a majority of Native Americans are mired in poverty. I suggest that we broaden our conceptions of wealth and poverty to include Indigenous perspectives on wealth and the good life. This does not mean that I do not see the abject poverty that many of our people endure, or that that I deny that it needs to be addressed, but I think it crucial to Indigenous resurgence to recapture and utilize each of our own place-based conceptions of Indigeneity and the good life. These do not always sync with mainstream human development index-like indicators. Miller writes, however, that his, “main point on whether economic development can possibly injure tribal cultures is that this question raises a false conflict...You do not have to be poor to be Indian or to be a cultural person, you do not stop being an Indian or a cultural person if you become materially well off.”<sup>381</sup> It is important, however, to understand what is meant by materially well off. I agree that the material poverty that many Indigenous peoples endure today is something that must be addressed, but I do not believe that this can be done in culturally appropriate ways through reservation capitalism.

### ***Tribal Capitalism***

Duane Champagne expresses a much broader understanding of the complexities of Indigenous cultures and communities and his take on capitalism is different than Miller's. He gives more weight to the value and role of tribal governments. His use of the term tribal capitalism is intended to express its “predominantly collective” nature, which differs significantly from Miller.<sup>382</sup> Champagne believes that the primary goal for tribal

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<sup>381</sup> Ibid. 161.

<sup>382</sup> Champagne, 2007, 6.

communities is the preservation and perpetuation of Native American political and cultural autonomy, and that economic self-sufficiency is but *one aspect* of that larger picture. He writes, “Despite five hundred years of colonialism, Native people are loath to give up the primary aspects of Native life and community.”<sup>383</sup> Although Champagne recognizes that there is no single monolithic Native community, he does believe that there are similarities amongst Native communities that differ from colonial settler ideologies and beliefs. One of these differences is a Native American understanding of humanity’s place in creation. Champagne writes, “Cosmic harmony and order were preserved by maintaining respectful relations with all spirit beings.”<sup>384</sup> This is very different than placing humanity at the apex of creation with the God-given right to rule over the earth.

Champagne believes that, “colonial relations had deep and significant impacts on Native communities.”<sup>385</sup> But he also points out that even though Native people engaged with European markets, “few if any Natives became entrepreneurs in the fur trade and the Native worldview remained intact.”<sup>386</sup> This is contentious for it suggests that entrepreneurialism would make one less Indigenous or at the very least, alter one’s Indigenous worldviews. Champagne states, “American Indians did not become capitalists by engaging in the fur trade; rather, they were responding to need rather than seeking to accumulate individual wealth.”<sup>387</sup> These are important distinctions for him, where as Miller would understand the same history much differently. According to Champagne, the individual accumulation of excessive wealth would cross the line. I consider this in the example of Nuu-chah-nulth

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<sup>383</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

commercial fishing in chapter five. Feeding your family through engagement with capitalist markets does not necessarily make you an *active wealth hoarding capitalist*.

An important and often overlooked change that Champagne identifies is how economic and political engagement with the early colonials impacted Indigenous gender relations. Citing Edmund Atkins (1954), William Steele (1977), and Nancy Bonvillain (1989), Champagne writes,

Colonial officials did not recognize women in political councils and preferred to conduct economic trade relations with young, economically productive men. Women and elders were often pushed to the side as young men captured the economic and political attention of colonial officials. With the fur trade and diplomatic relations in their hands, the young men wielded more economic and political power than they had previously.<sup>388</sup>

New trade relations with colonials did not appreciate Indigenous women's economic roles and contributions. Additionally, men's voices are privileged in the academic research on Indigenous political economies producing what Altamirano-Jiménez describes as, "an incomplete picture."<sup>389</sup> Challenges to traditional Indigenous gender relations have not been limited to economic matters. Canada has a long history of discriminating against Indigenous women, especially with respect to identity in ways that have proven greatly disruptive to communities and families. Indigenous women have been marginalized in ways that persist to the present day and not simply by the state. The way in which Indigenous leaders have advocated for self-determination in Canada have been very gendered. Drawing on the work of Jennifer Nedelsky (1989) who advocates for the understanding of individual autonomy that recognizes the inherently social nature of human beings, Val Napoleon writes, "an individual perspective on self-determination (within the context of Indigenous community relationships) could perhaps shift collective self-determination beyond rhetoric to a

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<sup>388</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>389</sup> Altamirano-Jiménez, 2013, 80.

meaningful and effective political project that engages aboriginal peoples and is truly inclusive of aboriginal women.”<sup>390</sup> Jobin concurs writing that there is a tendency for “Indigenous communities to ignore how gender discrimination is a communal issue” and that this is ultimately “detrimental to Indigenous women collectively, and therefore detrimental to Indigenous self-determination.”<sup>391</sup> Despite years of external and internal patriarchal oppression, women are ascending to prominent roles in both elected and traditional Nuuchahnulth governance institutions, an issue that is not without contention, but a welcome one in my opinion. We still have a long way to go.

Despite the many impacts of settler colonialism, Champagne still believes that Native American communities have maintained strong traditions and worldviews. He writes of the task ahead for Indigenous communities, “the combined goals of maintaining cultural philosophies with institutions capable of political and economic competition may be considered contradictory.”<sup>392</sup> And while he is aware of the need to address poverty and increasing economic globalization, his perspective on change and adaptation acknowledges the gravity of these challenges for Native communities. Unlike Miller, Champagne believes that Native American engagement with capitalist values is difficult. In Champagne’s view, the best way to engage capitalism is through the tribe as a collectivity. This view is widespread, with many tribal economic activities being undertaken collectively, especially in Canada. Champagne believes that this is the best way to avoid some of the more toxic pitfalls of capitalism and retain Indigenous political and cultural autonomy.

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<sup>390</sup> Val Napoleon, “Aboriginal Self Determination: Individual Self and Collective Selves,” *Atlantis* 29, 2 (Spring/Summer 2005): 31.

<sup>391</sup> Jobin, 2014, 27.

<sup>392</sup> Champagne, 2007, 21.

Champagne asks, “Will Native communities survive incorporation into the world capitalist market system? Will Native communities and individuals accept change? Will they still be Indians if they are capitalists?”<sup>393</sup> He understands that the prospect of a Native capitalism is fraught with problems and complications. The first of these complications is Weber’s Iron Cage, and that once the forces of capitalism, “are unleashed, other economic actors must follow suit or be forced out of business.”<sup>394</sup> This is a fairly straightforward argument. It is not just simply a matter of a business having to make adjustments to maintain competitiveness in a manner that some have called a “race to the bottom.”<sup>395</sup> When you commit time and resources toward capitalist enterprises, you are potentially moving them away from other priorities and activities. If those activities were also a part of how your community sustained itself, then several consequences are possible. First, you may forget how to survive by other traditional means. Subsistence living needs to be passed from one generation to the next for it to remain viable. In forgoing gathering, hunting, trapping, and fishing opportunities for wage labour or entrepreneurship, Indigenous people risk potentially losing vital connections with those activities that kept them close to the earth and water and sustained their communities for millennia. Second, when new business ventures fail or run their course, as is often the case with intensive resource extraction, the companies typically pick up and move elsewhere, while Indigenous communities are left to clean up the mess. This has occurred in Nuu-chah-nulth territories since contact and remains persistent today.

I am not saying that choosing one economic activity over another always has these outcomes or that it is even a choice. Many Indigenous peoples have been forced out of their traditional ways of living by settler colonial encroachment. Despite this, Champagne is not

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid. 45.

<sup>394</sup> Champagne, 2007, 46.

<sup>395</sup> This concept has been credited to US Justice Louis Brandeis.

entirely pessimistic. He writes, “Communities can take on capitalist elements and participate in capitalist markets and still retain core aspects of identity, tradition, institutional relations – the close interconnectedness of polity, culture, economy, and community – and cultural values.”<sup>396</sup> What Champagne is saying is different than what Miller is saying, however. Champagne acknowledges the toxic effects of capitalism, whereas Miller sees nothing inherently wrong with capitalism. The difference is that Champagne believes that Native nations, as collectives, are resilient enough to survive the engagement intact. He believes that tribal communities can retain core aspects of their cultures. I am not entirely convinced, but I do acknowledge that in many cases, Indigenous peoples have had limited choices on whether to engage with capitalist markets as our traditional ways of living and sustenance have been decimated.

Champagne writes, “For most Native communities, economic development is a means to an end. Even the most strongly market-oriented tribal economic planners see economic development as a way to support the reservation community, retain tribal members on reservations, and promote self-supporting Native communities.”<sup>397</sup> While I believe that these are admirable goals, part of my investigation seeks to determine if we risk losing vital aspects of our culture based on the collective decisions we make about economic development. I know that we can engage in all kinds of destructive economic activity and still call ourselves Ahousaht or Nuuchah-nulth-aht, but what will that mean? If our cultures are dynamic and lived, what new story are we telling and how is it changing us? Bear in mind, I am not opposed to change, but I fear change when it compels us to violate our sacred responsibilities. I am not convinced that we can have our capitalist cake and eat it too.

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<sup>396</sup> Champagne, 2007, 46.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid. 47.

Despite my contention that Champagne underestimates the toxic and transformative effects of capitalism, he believes that traditional values can ward off the more harmful effects. He writes,

The values of Native communities also mitigated against capitalist activity. Generosity and redistribution of gifts to kin and strategic allies were the rule. Those who were materially well-off through trade, farming, hunting, or warfare were expected to share their assets. Those who did not were bitterly criticized as stingy. Wealth was a means to consolidate social and political relations through redistribution, not a means to create more wealth by investment in greater production.<sup>398</sup>

On “required generosity,” Henderson writes, “Aboriginal worldviews, laws, and economies were highly articulated systems of *required generosity*. The modern challenge is how to relate such teaching and wisdom to today’s issues in economic development.”<sup>399</sup> Similarly, on her “gift paradigm,” Kuokkanen writes, “The main purpose of reciprocity is to affirm the myriad relationships in the world. And from these relationships arises an acknowledged collective and individual requirement to act responsibly towards other forms of life...a responsibility to remain attuned to the world beyond oneself.”<sup>400</sup> Miller argues that Native generosity can be expressed through the charity that we have come to understand as part of capitalist societies, but Champagne believes that for most Native communities that does not go far enough. Champagne still sees significant differences between capitalist and Indigenous worldviews, writing, “Most Native nations believe in maintaining respectful relations among humans and other entities of the universe such as places, water, air, fire, earth, animals, birds, heavenly bodies, and the rest of the cosmos.”<sup>401</sup> In contrast, Champagne states that, “Capitalist philosophies see the earth as a natural resource, where

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid. 48.

<sup>399</sup> Henderson, 52. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>400</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, “The Gift as Economic and Environmental Justice” (keynote address, Redistribution of Wealth conference, Vancouver, March 7, 2010).

<sup>401</sup> Champagne, 2007, 48.

exploitation of raw materials through labor transforms raw materials into useful objects for further economic production or consumption and the creation of additional wealth.”<sup>402</sup> If he believes that Indigenous worldviews are so resistant to capitalism, then how does he explain the move of Native communities towards capitalism?

Champagne states that the first Native capitalists emerged among the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickisaw, and Creek who owned plantations and slaves in the early nineteenth century.<sup>403</sup> He believes that there were very few Native American capitalists throughout the twentieth century, but that many moved to cities to become wage labourers. According to the 2000 US census, over seventy percent of Native Americans now live in cities.<sup>404</sup> From the 1970s onwards, Indian Country saw an increase in Native American entrepreneurship. In 1997, there were 197,300 Native-owned businesses in the United States with a per capita growth rate three times higher than for other Americans.<sup>405</sup> Despite this growth in entrepreneurship, Champagne writes,

Business ownership has not obliterated Native identity, but most Native businesses are not located on reservations, and this reflects the relative poor business opportunities present on Indian reservations. It also reflects the continuity of Native cultural values, political relations, and values, which tend to remain less conducive to capitalist market values.<sup>406</sup>

Champagne maintains that Native reservation communities do not support individual capitalist behavior, but instead favour, “generosity, redistribution, and egalitarianism.”<sup>407</sup> And differing from Miller and the Harvard Project in key ways, Champagne writes that, “Most reservation communities prefer relatively holistic institutional relations among

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid. 49.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid. 53-54.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid. 55.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid. 56.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.



economy, community, polity, and culture.<sup>408</sup> He believes that reservation communities still maintain many core traditional Indigenous values. As time passes and the relatively recent exodus of Indigenous people from their homelands increases, cultural continuity becomes increasingly imperiled.

Champagne writes that, “Natives are opting for a collective capitalism rather than individual capitalism.”<sup>409</sup> Tribal governments maintain control over economic development. Champagne reemphasizes,

Throughout Indian country, the preferred way of proceeding with economic development is to apply political, community, and cultural values to economic decision making and institutions. Native communities are greatly concerned about economic issues, but they do not want to sacrifice culture, preferred institutional relations, and their internal social relations in favor of economic development. Native communities want economic development, but on their own terms and, to the largest extent possible, within their cultural and institutional arrangements. If there is a choice between economic gain and the sacrifice of central cultural and institutional relations, many Native communities prefer to refrain from economic development projects they believe will *endanger* or *change* their communities in unwanted ways.<sup>410</sup>

In this respect, he believes that tribal capitalism is different than American capitalism in key ways, but I am not so certain. One of the examples that Champagne uses for an expression of Tribal capitalism is that of the Mississippi Choctaw. He writes that, “The tribal government accumulates profits not for private purposes, but for the good and future investment of the tribal community.”<sup>411</sup> On their website, the Choctaw proclaim that they employ nearly six thousand people, with an annual payroll that exceeds one hundred million dollars.<sup>412</sup> This includes manufacturing plants in Mexico. These Maquiladoras employ many

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid. 57.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid. 58.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>411</sup> Champagne, 2007, 59.

<sup>412</sup> “Businesses.” *Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians*. Accessed January 30, 2015. <http://www.choctaw.org/businesses/index.html>.

local Indigenous women, and are notorious for worker's rights violations and negative environmental impacts.<sup>413</sup> Despite this, the Mississippi Choctaw appear to have no problem taking advantage of the situation and portraying it as proof of their economic success. This touches on my deeper criticisms of Native communities engaging in capitalism, particularly the worldviews that are supposed to recognize the interconnectivity of all things, respect and reciprocity. In this regard, Champagne limits his analysis to the economic performance and cultural integrity of local Native American communities only. Evidently, tribal capitalism can still engage in excessively exploitative behaviours.

Regarding the Iron Cage argument, Champagne concedes that the outcomes are mixed. I quote him at length here and he writes,

Tribal capitalism is the result of market competition, which forces Native people to engage in the market for economic sufficiency. Nevertheless, the motivations for tribal capitalism are not based solely on maximization of profits on the market but rather preservation of community, culture, and tribal sovereignty. Market competition forces the Indian communities to consider and engage in market enterprise, but they wish to do so under their own terms, which means subordinating capitalist accumulation to collective goals of community and cultural and political enhancement and preservation. Tribal capitalism makes concessions to market competition, but only as a means to further its noneconomic goals of collective community values...Native community and identity has survived and will most likely...continue to meet the challenges of the globalized economy in diverse ways.<sup>414</sup>

He acknowledges the power of capitalism to dominate and discipline, but he believes that Native American communities have survived intact and he remains optimistic that they will

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<sup>413</sup> Elvia R. Arriola, "Voices from the Barbed wires of Despair: Women in the *Maquiladoras*, Latina Critical Legal Theory, and Gender at the U.S.-Mexico Border," *DePaul Legal Review* 49 (1999-2000): 729-825.

<sup>414</sup> Champagne, 2007, 62.

continue to survive. Champagne considers the inevitable changes in Native communities and culture to be evidence of “social change” rather than outright assimilation.<sup>415</sup>

### ***The Borg and Capitalism with a Red Face***

*“We have participated at the edges of capitalism, as labourers, as small business people, as debtors. Now we seek to enter its heart. We will be transformed by it...capitalism will absorb Aboriginal cultures. And the moral order of Aboriginal societies will be changed.”<sup>416</sup>*

David Newhouse barely mentioned capitalism when he first started writing about Aboriginal economic development in the late 1990s. He alludes to the desire of Native communities in Canada to maintain some of their traditional economic practices, calling for an openness to, “many development paths.”<sup>417</sup> Newhouse writes, “The next generation will enter adolescence and early adulthood with a more positive sense of identity and a sense that it is possible to be Aboriginal in *many different ways*.”<sup>418</sup> He touches on common tensions about Indigenous identities and cultures, and concerns over change, adaptation, assimilation and essentialism. As I have already argued, a common response to the notion of stereotypical and frozen in time Indigenous identities has been the adoption of mainstream conceptions of health, wealth, and the good life. Aboriginal leaders point to HDI indicators to prove that there are gaps between Indigenous people and Canadians. Many Aboriginal people have gravitated toward Western education and professions, in part, to prove that we could be just as *good* as settlers, but also because we have had little other choice. I will unpack this and expand on it further when discussing the Nuuchah-nulth context.

Newhouse states that the RCAP report, “reflected the *conventional and accepted wisdom* that a major part of the solution to the problems facing Aboriginal peoples is

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid. 144-166.

<sup>416</sup> Newhouse, 2000a, 153-154.

<sup>417</sup> Newhouse, 1999, 69.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid. 72. *Emphasis* added.

economic development.”<sup>419</sup> He states further that they (Newhouse and his RCAP colleagues) “argued very strongly for the *centrality* of economic development to the future of Aboriginal peoples’ communities.”<sup>420</sup> The 4,000-page final report included five volumes, of which, economic development comprised one section of the second volume. Despite the broad approach with many comprehensive recommendations, economic development *did* play a central role - at least in the dominant discourses - in Aboriginal community development in the years since. I want to comment on certain aspects of the commission and its final report before moving on. Anishinaabe scholar, Dale Turner believes that RCAP was “doomed to failure,” in part, “because of the very nature of the commission as a Canadian political institution.”<sup>421</sup> Turner believes that hegemony of liberal values in Canadian political institutions *may* inhibit genuine, respectful engagement with diverse Indigenous values. Of the contemporary era, he writes, “Although the White Paper was eventually rescinded as official policy, White Paper liberalism continues to capture many of the attitudes Canadians have about Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society.”<sup>422</sup> Even though the RCAP recommendations for many might be understood as a good starting point, It’s ultimate failure to be adopted and implemented in a meaningful way indicates vast ongoing differences between Indigenous and settler societies. Turner concludes, “Many Canadians see the commission’s recommendations as unreasonable and untenable in practice; many Aboriginal peoples think the commission’s vision does not go far enough.”<sup>423</sup> I argue that, at least in spirit, Canada has been more than willing to adopt the economic development

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<sup>419</sup> Newhouse, 2000a, 145. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid. 146. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>421</sup> Dale Turner, *This is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006): 72.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid, 78.

recommendations, especially when implemented within the neoliberal rationale of individual self-sufficiency, government austerity, and capitalist market dominance.

What is clear is that Aboriginal economic development, no matter what form it may take, must work within a capitalist context. Newhouse writes, “In the search for a better life within the context of contemporary North America, we encounter capitalism. We simply have no choice.”<sup>424</sup> And thus, Newhouse’s Thatcher-esque concession leads him to his rather appropriate Borg analogy. For the uninitiated to Star Trek folklore, “The Borg is a collection of species that have been turned into cybernetic organisms functioning as drones of the collective, or the hive.”<sup>425</sup> They travel through the universe assimilating other species and technologies into their collective. Newhouse writes, “I think of our encounter as Aboriginal peoples meeting the Borg of capitalism...They absorb peoples at will...they broadcast the following message: ‘Your existence as you know it has come to an end. Resistance is futile.’ That’s how I see our encounter with capitalism.”<sup>426</sup> Like Champagne, Newhouse believes that traditional Indigenous values are distinct from capitalist values. Thus if we take Newhouse’s analogy seriously, the integrity of Indigenous cultures is at risk. He writes gravely, “We have participated at the edges of capitalism, as labourers, as small business people, as debtors. Now we seek to enter its heart. We will be transformed by it...capitalism will absorb Aboriginal cultures. And the moral order of Aboriginal societies will be changed.”<sup>427</sup> Newhouse’s blunt assessment differs from Champagne’s optimism. Newhouse writes, “The idea that we can somehow participate in capitalism without being changed by it

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<sup>424</sup> Ibid. 147.

<sup>425</sup> “Borg (Star Trek)” *Wikipedia*. Accessed February 1, 2015. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borg\\_\(Star\\_Trek\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borg_(Star_Trek)).

<sup>426</sup> Newhouse, 2000a, 152.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid. 153-154.

is in my view wrongheaded.”<sup>428</sup> This does not incline him to shy away from engaging with capitalism or resist it outright, however. He clarifies, “I can describe much of my own work as making capitalism work better for Aboriginal communities, developing, as it were, capitalism with a red face.”<sup>429</sup> Newhouse states further, “Few Aboriginal people that I have met want to move back to a subsistence economy. Most want the material goods that capitalism brings.”<sup>430</sup> He is probably correct on both counts, but is Newhouse correct in assuming that gaining access to material goods necessitates our participation *as capitalists*? Champagne argues that Native Americans engaged with colonial markets for generations without *becoming* capitalists. So how does capitalism with a red face work today?

Newhouse begins by asking, “What unique perspectives do aboriginal people bring to the ongoing debate about the practice of capitalism? How will aboriginal peoples adapt themselves to capitalism? Can aboriginal peoples find a way to adapt capitalism to their own particular world views?”<sup>431</sup> He recognizes that these questions are complicated and that the process of cross-cultural influence has been going on for a long time. In Newhouse’s view, Aboriginal peoples are developing, “new identities, and new social, political, cultural and economic institutions,” and that these institutions, “will be primarily western in nature and will be adapted to operate in accordance with aboriginal traditions, customs and values.”<sup>432</sup> I argue that this has been true through a complicated history of both forced assimilation and active adaptation, but it remains difficult if not impossible to measure the degrees of change.

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<sup>428</sup> Ibid. 152.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid. 149.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid. 153.

<sup>431</sup> Newhouse, 2000b, 56.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid.

Newhouse believes the challenge is to develop, “contemporary interpretations of traditional ideas.”<sup>433</sup> But what are those traditional ideas? Although it is difficult to answer this question from a pan-Indigenous perspective, Newhouse draws on his experience with RCAP, in particular the testimony of James Dumont who outlined seven primary traditional values. They are as follows: kindness, honesty, sharing, strength, bravery, wisdom, and humility.<sup>434</sup> I would venture to say that capitalism as it exists today does not necessarily reward the first three values, and definitely not the last value. Of course, this is highly context-dependent, but here I am thinking of how capitalist enterprises compete with each other in the marketplace with the first priority being profit maximization. An example of this is the commonly held notion that publically traded companies are bound by law to maximize profit for shareholders.<sup>435</sup> They may or may not be bound by law, but capitalist social convention certainly prioritizes profit maximization in ways that inhibit mitigating efforts like corporate social responsibility. Newhouse adds that Aboriginal societies are collectivist in orientation, and thus efforts to “re-traditionalize” or “reinterpret traditional values within a contemporary context...offer some hope for the development of aboriginal economies.”<sup>436</sup> This is ironic because in 1969, Pierre Trudeau introduced the White Paper on Indian policy that proposed to abolish collective rights, reserves, and Indian status, in favour of full individual liberal enfranchisement into Canadian society. Native communities and leaders resisted, organized and ushered in the contemporary era of Aboriginal rights and political

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid. 58.

<sup>435</sup> Robert C. Hinkley, “How Corporate Law Inhibits Social Responsibility: A Corporate Attorney Proposes a ‘Code for Corporate Citizenship’ in State Law,” *Business Ethics: Corporate Social Responsibility Report*, January 19, 2002, Accessed April 28, 2015, <http://www.commondreams.org/views02/0119-04.htm>.

<sup>436</sup> Newhouse, 2000b, 56.

struggle. Before getting into a more detailed understanding of Newhouse's red capitalism, I want to touch on his understanding of capitalism proper.

Newhouse writes, "Capitalism is a way of life first and foremost."<sup>437</sup> Going further, but consistent I believe, with Newhouse's perspective, Heiko Feldner and Fabio Vighi state, "Capitalism is not only a mode of production. It is also a religion."<sup>438</sup> Newhouse believes that at the heart of capitalism, is the notion of progress and the individual aspiration to improve one's material position.<sup>439</sup> Newhouse adds, "This notion of individual effort and social competition is important for it is what drives capitalism. Without it, much of the gains would not be possible."<sup>440</sup> This is a common capitalist trope; that without competition, people would not innovate and 'progress' would not be made. Unfortunately, competition is most influential at the highest levels and 'gains' come from the exploitation of people and finite resources. Like others, Newhouse points to the diversity of states engaged in capitalist economics, such as Japan, the United States, India and the former USSR, as proof of widespread acceptance. He acknowledges that capitalism has the difficult problem of inequity to overcome, especially if it is to be adapted by Aboriginal societies.<sup>441</sup> Despite this concern, Newhouse states, "There is no fear that capitalism cannot be adapted to aboriginal realities."<sup>442</sup> Newhouse refers to a long history of trade and economic activity among Indigenous peoples, although he does not make the direct correlations with capitalist values the way Miller does. Newhouse sees opportunities for adaptation rather than inherent

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Heiko Feldner and Fabio Vighi, *Critical Theory and the Crisis of Contemporary Capitalism* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015): 1.

<sup>439</sup> Newhouse, 2000b, 56-57.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid. 57.

<sup>441</sup> The problems of inequity are gaining more attention in mainstream society as well. See Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>442</sup> Newhouse 2000b, 57.



congruency like Miller. As for contemporary examples, Newhouse suggests that one need only look as far as the powwow circuit or cigarette sales on Indian reserves to see the rapid increase in Natives working for profit.<sup>443</sup> I agree with Champagne on this point, however. Being a capitalist requires more than participating in markets, which predate capitalism. To be an active capitalist, one must seek growth for growth's sake, and accumulate wealth to simply accumulate more wealth. I argue that it is this extremism that is harmful to societies and ecosystems.

Newhouse provides ten points that distinguish capitalism with a red face, which I summarize here:

1. Development will take a holistic approach including four dimensions similar to the Cree Medicine Wheel: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.
2. Development will be a process or a journey and not a product, with an emphasis on long-term over short-term results.
3. Development will be collaborative rather than competitive and a joint effort between individuals and the collective.
4. Individual actions will respect the interconnectivity of the world and affirm that humanity is but one small part.
5. Development will prioritize "human capital investment rather than individual capital accumulation" and respect quality of life, including the environment.
6. Traditional knowledge, with elder guidance, will inform planning and decision-making.
7. Aboriginal values of kindness and sharing will guide how communities deal with wealth distribution and individuals with a lot of the wealth accumulated sharing will be expected.
8. Native economic institutions will be "primarily western in nature with adaptations to ensure that they operate in a manner which is appropriate to the local aboriginal community."
9. Decisions will be made by consensus and in particular, large development projects will require broad community consensus.
10. "The notions of honesty and respect will result in a heightened sense of accountability for economic institutions and decision makers."<sup>444</sup>

This is consistent with the tone of the RCAP report and interesting in so far as it also seems improbable given Newhouse's Borg analogy. This list represents many ideals that Native

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

<sup>444</sup> Newhouse, 2000b, 59-60.

communities genuinely aspire to, but I also recognize the significant challenges of actual implementation, not unlike RCAP. Newhouse concludes with a rather ominous warning: “The process of modernization and the adoption of capitalism as a dominant political-economic system within aboriginal society is well underway. It would be sheer folly to attempt to reverse the process or to attempt dramatic shifts in direction. I would argue that the forces of modernization are much too great to resist.”<sup>445</sup> And yet, people do resist.

Newhouse wrote two more articles on the Borg of capitalism, but he shifts his position slightly. In 2002, he wrote, “Over the last 50 years, Canadians, and I would dare say Aboriginal people, have come to see market society and capitalism as offering the best option for improving human welfare.”<sup>446</sup> But Newhouse also sees resistance to capitalism in Native communities. He writes, “I believe that we resist through stating and restating our own objectives as Aboriginal peoples for cultural distinctiveness, for societies based upon traditional ideas, values and customs, for sustainable development, for equitable distribution of wealth, for the idea of progress that is broad and multi-faceted, for communities that are more than markets, among other things.”<sup>447</sup> In 2004, he shifted even further, challenging Indigenous communities and scholars to think critically, and ask the right questions, “so that we begin to be able to engage the Borg in a way that will allow us to come out of it with our own selves intact.”<sup>448</sup> I have to wonder if he still believes that his Borg analogy remains accurate. Ultimately, Newhouse does not think that capitalism can be replaced. It has too much inertia to be stopped, but he does think there is room to develop a “compassionate

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid. 60.

<sup>446</sup> David Newhouse, “Aboriginal Economic Development in the Shadow of the Borg” *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 3, 2 (2002): 110.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid. 112.

<sup>448</sup> David Newhouse, “The Challenges of Aboriginal Economic Development in the Shadow of the Borg” *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 4, 1 (2004): 40.

capitalism...that begins to operate under a set of values that balances market and community.”<sup>449</sup> On the other hand, Shiva writes, “While unbridled capitalist greed has been referred to as ‘compassionate capitalism’ in the US, compassionate economics of sustenance and nature are precisely what is destroyed by corporate rule and the rule of capital. Protection of nature and people’s rights are defined as protectionism, as trade barriers, and as barriers to investment. Trade rules and neoliberal reform institutionalize laws which render compassion itself illegal.”<sup>450</sup> Is neoliberal capitalism capable of balance and compassion? Its history proves that its instability is anything but. At the very least, I am encouraged to see Newhouse acknowledge the possibility of resisting capitalism and asserting traditional Indigenous values and principles. A compassionate Borg though? Next, Wuttunee will take us through her notion of community capitalism.

### ***Community Capitalism***

Wuttunee’s co-authored (with Stelios Loizides) paper, “Creating Wealth and Employment in Aboriginal Communities,” was published in 2005, one year after *Living Rhythms* came out.<sup>451</sup> In this paper she explicitly introduces the idea of community capitalism, but before getting into it, I want to back up to *Living Rhythms* to engage some of her theoretical groundwork, including her critiques of capitalism. Wuttunee is not automatically sold on the charms of mainstream capitalism, writing, “The statistics regarding stress, addiction, failing families, and youth at risk in western society indicate that we (are) not happier and healthier

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<sup>449</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>450</sup> Shiva, 31.

<sup>451</sup> This paper was written for the Conference Board of Canada with funding from the government of Canada as well as a number of energy companies including BC Hydro, Syncrude, Suncor, Petro-Canada and Transcanada Pipelines.

as a result of this philosophy of maximum growth for maximum profits.”<sup>452</sup> Wuttunee instead suggests a shift:

In my view, a shift must occur away from an approach to economic development that is secular in nature (what the Harvard Project basically recommends), that is, considers a limited number of issues such as readily quantifiable costs in reaching decisions. We must move instead towards an economic development approach that includes these costs but also attempts to quantify all the costs of development decisions on environment, people, communities, and future generations.<sup>453</sup>

I see a number of red flags. First, this approach might require that we apply mainstream measurements to Indigenous understandings of our environments, people, communities and commitments to future generations. I am not convinced that this can be done without losing context in the process. Second, we are still dealing with an “add Aboriginal and stir” approach that does *not centre* Indigenous perspectives but rather attempts to make them fit within a capitalist framework. I appreciate the practicality of this approach, but I still believe that caution is warranted. Wuttunee calls for “reasonable profit” instead of maximum profit.<sup>454</sup> She elaborates,

Basic elements of earning a reasonable return on investment may be learned and practiced by anyone regardless of ethnicity. The way in which Aboriginal society defines ‘good business practices and standards,’ for example, is a function of currently held values and traditions. These may be *any* blend on a spectrum of traditional and capitalist values.<sup>455</sup>

Wuttunee’s conception of an Aboriginalized community capitalism rests upon her understanding of values as a blending process, existing on a spectrum, rather than as a collision of incompatibility. Admittedly, this is something that is very difficult to measure and determine, but we can examine it carefully and attempt to tease out underlying

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<sup>452</sup> Wuttunee, 2004, 7.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid. 12. *Emphasis* added.

assumptions and principles. Wuttunee acknowledges that these are complex matters, however, and in a constant state of flux. She recognizes that in many cases, First Nation communities are forced to make difficult decisions for short-term survival at the expense of long-term responsibilities.<sup>456</sup> Throughout Wuttunee's writings she indicates that unrestrained capitalism is dangerous, but she remains optimistic that it can *be* restrained through Aboriginal input. She writes,

In the mainstream business world, traditions such as ceremonies or honouring the collective nature of Aboriginal communities oftentimes are seen as burdensome or meaningless. Acknowledging that the single-minded focus on profit as the norm, to the exclusion of balance and respect, has significantly marred the quality of life for future generations is a giant step towards realizing that capitalism in its present form does not have all the answers.<sup>457</sup>

What she proposes is community capitalism, which according to my analysis shares certain traits with Champagne's tribal capitalism as well as the Harvard Project.

Wuttunee and Stelios Loizides write, "There is a general consensus among leaders in traditional Aboriginal communities that economic self-sufficiency must come about through the establishment and growth of business enterprises within the communities."<sup>458</sup> I take exception to how they use the words, "traditional Aboriginal communities," but I concede that this may be at least partially true. Quoting the National Aboriginal Financing Task Force, they write, "The most effective way (and probably the only way) for Aboriginal communities to address their current socio-economic challenges is to create wealth through business activity."<sup>459</sup> They also cite Stephen Kakfwi, the former Premier of the Northwest Territories, who states, "We have two choices. We can hide away in our communities and

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<sup>456</sup> Ibid. 13-14.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid. 187.

<sup>458</sup> Loizides and Wuttunee, i.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid. 2. Original quote from: National Aboriginal Financing Task Force. *The Promise of the Future: Achieving Economic Self-Sufficiency through Access to Capital* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1996): 14. (Brackets) in original.

live simple little lives, but there will still be huge social problems. Or we can embrace development and build a better future. It's a double-edged sword – but that's true of anything. So you focus on the good and deal with the bad.”<sup>460</sup> If we take Wuttunee's original assertion that Western society is not healthier or happier, then social problems are likely to persist after development as well. A number of prominent AED advocates have taken similar positions including Clarence Louie, Calvin Helin and Ray Halbritter.<sup>461</sup> The rhetoric of economic self-reliance is compelling, but it is often simplified as an either/or proposition, lacking nuance necessary to consider our complex realities.

Wuttunee and Loizides write, “Aboriginal people want to become self-sufficient while preserving their traditional values in the process...The values of respect, pride, dignity, sharing, hospitality and mutual aid are at the root of Aboriginal culture in all its expressions.”<sup>462</sup> Wuttunee has written at length on many of the problems with capitalism, but not enough to compel her to disregard it entirely. She clarifies, “Differences exist between the key tenets of capitalism – such as individualism, profit maximization, accumulation of wealth and the market economy – and the Aboriginal values of harmony, balance and reciprocity.”<sup>463</sup> According to Loizides and Wuttunee, the concept of community capitalism originated with Ted DeJong, the CEO of the Prince Albert Development Corporation. They write, “Inherent in the concept of community capitalism is the nurturing of a business culture that incorporates the best of capitalism *and* Aboriginal values. It incorporates effective business principles and focuses on profits and jobs while giving

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<sup>460</sup> Andrea Mandel-Campbell, “Rough Trade: How Canada's diamond bonanza is turning a secretive industry inside out,” *The Walrus*. Accessed August 28, 2015. <http://thewalrus.ca/2004-04-society/>.

<sup>461</sup> For details on economic positions of Oneida leader Ray Halbritter see Alfred, 2005, 212-217.

<sup>462</sup> Loizides and Wuttunee, 2.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

weight to socio-cultural factors in the business planning and implementation phases.”<sup>464</sup> It is not hard to see in this statement that the “focus” is on profits and jobs, while “weight” is given to Aboriginal socio-cultural factors. Again, this is far from centering Indigenous values, but instead tries to augment the relatively unchallenged tenets of capitalism with Aboriginal perspectives. I do not believe that this goes far enough to actually mitigate the toxicity of capitalism.

Loizides and Wuttunee offer six factors that “contribute to the success of Aboriginal community-owned enterprises” and community capitalism. They are:

1. Strong leadership and vision;
2. A strategic community economic development plan;
3. Access to capital, markets and management expertise;
4. Good governance and management;
5. Transparency and accountability; and
6. The positive interplay of business and politics.<sup>465</sup>

Interestingly, there is nothing explicitly *Indigenous* about these factors. They are also quite consistent with the findings of the Harvard Project. It is not that I do not appreciate these studies; it is that the conclusions too often lack a critical analysis of how mainstream markets and business protocols dominate. And I appreciate the practicality of making the best of challenging circumstances, but not the rhetoric that obfuscates the specific aspects of those capitalist challenges that represent existential threats to Indigenous peoples, waters, lands and ways of living.

Wuttunee and Loizides write, “All of the Aboriginal communities documented in this study had dedicated leaders who were committed to economic self-reliance. These leaders are searching for business opportunities to create wealth, and are determined to join

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<sup>464</sup> Ibid. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid. 4.

forces with corporations and governments to build better futures for their communities.”<sup>466</sup> Strong leadership and vision in this context is understood to be displayed by those who would join forces with corporations, even when those corporations lack the respect that should be afforded to Indigenous territories and people. In general, I do not oppose any of these key factors as they are written, but I cannot ignore that they necessarily operate within the straightjacket of neoliberal capitalism.

Before moving on I want to address the final factor regarding the positive interplay between business and politics. Citing the work of Miriam Jorgensen and Jonathan B. Taylor, Loizides and Wuttunee write, “American research has found that Aboriginal community-owned business enterprises in the United States that are subject to undue political influence frequently fail to thrive. This finding suggests that separating business and politics leads to more effective business operations.”<sup>467</sup> This is consistent with the Harvard Project and neoliberal dogma. I as well have seen how political interference has hampered business operations first hand, but that may not always be a bad thing. I am not talking about corruption, but about the need for political and cultural safeguards that ensure Indigenous priorities are respected and not automatically subsumed to market efficiencies. None of this is simple or straightforward. Granted, community, tribal, or compassionate capitalism may be better than unrestrained neoliberal capitalism, but I maintain that we should not limit ourselves to economic solutions that must fit within the strict confines of foreign economic systems. Increasing numbers of people around the world, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, are looking for alternatives to capitalism.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>468</sup> See Altamirano-Jiménez and Rauna Kuokkanen, both of whom I cite here extensively, as well as Maria Bargh, “A Blue Economy for Aotearoa New Zealand?” *Environment, Development and*



## Conclusion

*“The underlying question thus is if the global market economy historically played a significant role in the loss of political and economic autonomy of Indigenous societies (as collectivities) and women (as individuals), how meaningful or sustainable is it to seek to (re)build contemporary Indigenous governance on the very economic model that was largely responsible for undermining it in the first place.”<sup>469</sup> – Rauna Kuokkanen*

Can capitalism be Aboriginalized? Specific to my research, can it be apprehended and adapted in ways that are consistent with Nuu-chah-nulth values and principles? Are there alternatives? I will address these questions in the following chapters in greater detail, but here are my initial thoughts. First, capitalism happened to Indigenous peoples. Manifested initially as European imperial competition and ambitions for advantageous riches, the transformation of Indigenous lands into private property and all life into commodities, capitalism is one of the primary means by which the early colonists assaulted North America. I agree with Champagne and Newhouse and disagree with Miller in understanding these as foreign and at times, incomprehensible values and systems that are incompatible with Indigenous worldviews. Throughout the centuries of settler occupation and encroachment, Indigenous peoples and worldviews were thought to be *in the way of development*.<sup>470</sup> As Indigenous populations rapidly decreased, the idea of the vanishing Indian began to take hold and in some ways I would argue, provided an out for the conundrum of colonial guilt. The remaining Indigenous peoples were herded onto reservations and the settler governments of Canada and the United States awkwardly and shamefully struggled with the persistent Indian Problem. Indigenous people and

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*Sustainability* 16, 3 (2014): 459-470 and Maria Bargh, Sarsha-Leigh Douglas and Annie Te One, “Fostering sustainable tribal economies in a time of climate change,” *New Zealand Geographer* 70, 2 (2014): 103-115.

<sup>469</sup> Kuokkanen, 2011a, 277.

<sup>470</sup> A nod to the book: Mario Blaser, Harvey A. Feit and Glenn McRae. *In the Way of Development: Indigenous Peoples, Life Projects and Globalization*. New York: Zed Books, 2004.

communities did not vanish, however, and continue to survive and revive politically, economically and culturally.

Settler governments still try to manage their political, legal, and economic relations with Indigenous peoples, but what are Indigenous peoples doing? Our lands and waters remain under assault by settler governments and corporations. Poverty, as it is commonly understood, remains rampant in Indigenous communities. We cannot ignore the acute needs of the present, but we must not act in ways that disregard the neocolonial context or threaten the viability of long-term solutions that respect Indigenous worldviews and values. I believe that we need to re-centre Nuu-chah-nulth values and principles. In a revival and assertion of our values and principles, we might begin to see *if* the dominant economic system can be adapted or where it should be vigorously resisted, or very likely, find ourselves somewhere in between, but with a persistent emphasis on our Indigenous autonomy. I know that what I am calling for is considered radical and impractical, but the negative impacts of unrestrained neoliberal capitalism are evident and require immediate attention and action.<sup>471</sup> It is noteworthy that none of the four Native authors - at least in the articles, books and chapters I reviewed – wrote about neoliberalism. Not one. This is despite their researching and writing within the height of neoliberalism, and both before and after the 2008 global economic crisis.

What *are* the alternatives? Some people are attempting to live alternatively, amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. It is perhaps too strongly worded to say that there are any true alternatives, when neoliberal capitalism is so dominant, but I think there are people who work hard to not let it be their dominant paradigm. Those among the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht who are *living* alternatively, will be the focus of my penultimate chapter. I also

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<sup>471</sup> Bargh, 2007, 1.

want to acknowledge the struggle and efforts of previous generations to survive and make the best of difficult circumstances. Indigenous stories, cultures and ways of being have adapted and survived. The challenges remain considerable, but I do not believe that they are insurmountable. We can still access our time-tested traditional teachings, critically interpret them, and apply them to our contemporary problems.

With respect to the Nuuchah-nulth-aht and capitalist engagement, chapter five addresses various aspects of our economic history with the intent of understanding our struggles to maintain political and cultural autonomy. What I discover is unexpected early change, as well as surprising continuity. I have also learned in detail, the centrality of the ha'wiih to understanding Nuuchah-nulth political economy. I have always appreciated the importance of their role in our traditional governance systems, but I did not fully anticipate their place in understanding our contemporary economic circumstances and challenges. At times, Nuuchah-nulth-aht have been challenged by the conflicting values of their traditions and those of the capitalist market, but throughout these conflicts we have witnessed the continual assertion of authority and jurisdiction of the ha'wiih, especially in Ahous. Recognition has been sought from state authorities in the courts and at the negotiation tables, but it has been the corporations who have responded to Nuuchah-nulth calls for recognition, for better or worse. In conclusion, while capitalist values and settler corporate exploitation have certainly challenged Nuuchah-nulth-aht, the key to understanding our contemporary economic practices is to understand the centrality of the ha'wiih. In the next chapter I explore key characteristics of Nuuchah-nulth culture and communities that will lay the groundwork for my analysis of contemporary Nuuchah-nulth political economies in chapter

five. My goal is to understand key events and experiences that helped to shape our contemporary landscapes and realms of possibility.

## Chapter Four – The Nuuchah-nulth-aht

*“My father’s generation was a happy, singing people. They were a proud people. They were a strong and healthy people. They knew what they wanted and what was good for their own.” – George Clutesi, 1967<sup>472</sup>*

The purpose of this chapter is to lay a foundation of knowledge about the Nuuchah-nulth-aht, so that my examination of contemporary political economy on the west coast is contextualized. I identify key historical events and characteristics, of Nuuchah-nulth-aht and our encounters with settler colonialism. We cannot understand the present without understanding our past and our paths that have weaved their way here. This examination has led me to a richer understanding of our present predicaments and as well as our future dilemmas. I begin with a snapshot of contemporary Nuuchah-nulth-aht and then contextualize this with a selective look at our history.

### Contemporary Nuuchah-nulth-aht

There are nearly ten thousand Nuuchah-nulth people in the world. In settler state terms, there are just over nine thousand three hundred *status Indians* from the fourteen Nuuchah-nulth First Nations that make up the Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council. This includes the Ahousaht, Ditidaht, Ehattesaht, Hesquiaht, Hupačasath, Huu-ay-aht, Kyuquot/Cheklesah, Mowachaht/Muchalaht, Nuchatlaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Toquaht, Tseshah, Uchucklesah, and Yuu-clulth-aht. The overall numbers are higher if we include the Pacheedaht, located just south of the Ditidaht and our Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tḥ relatives in Neah Bay, Washington.<sup>473</sup> Although our homewaters and lands are on the west coast of Vancouver Island, more than sixty-five percent of our people live in nearby towns and cities like Tofino, Port Alberni, Nanaimo,

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<sup>472</sup> George Clutesi, *Son of Raven, Son of Deer: Fables of the Tse-Shah People* (Vancouver: Evergreen Press, 1968): 9.

<sup>473</sup> Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tḥ also known as Makah, are located on the northwestern tip of the Olympic peninsula in Washington State and are closely related to the Nuuchah-nulth on Vancouver Island.

Victoria, and Vancouver, but some are even farther away. Over the years, there have been different ways of describing the Nuuchahnulth diaspora, including “off-reserve” or “urban,” but in recent years the term, “away from home” has become more commonly used. I prefer away from home because it recognizes an ongoing connection to our homewaters and lands. We acknowledge that a lot of our people have left home for many different reasons, but maintaining a connection, however small, remains important to our sense of Nuuchahnulth nationhood and identities.

The political make up of Nuuchahnulth peoples is complicated. As indicated, the Qʷidiččaʔa·t̓x are located in Washington State, although a lot of Nuuchahnulth families in Canada maintain close ties with their American relatives. Many make the trek south for Makah Days, an annual summer cultural celebration that has been held in Neah Bay for over ninety years.<sup>474</sup> And the Pacheedaht, while closely related to the Nuuchahnulth-aht, as far as I know, have never been members of the Tribal Council. The Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council (NTC) began in 1958 as the West Coast Allied Tribes, which came shortly after the lifting of the potlatch ban and the end of prohibitions on political gatherings and legal organizing for the purposes of pursuing land claims. In 1973, the West Coast District Society of Indian Chiefs incorporated as a non-profit society, and in 1979 they changed their name to the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council.<sup>475</sup> In addition to political advocacy and legal organizing, the NTC oversees various social, community and health services. Its governance structure includes directors’ meetings, which are attended by the ha’wi̓h or chief councilors of each First Nation who give direction to the president and vice-president of the NTC. Each

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<sup>474</sup> “Welcome to the Annual Makah Days Fair” *Makah Tribal Council*. Accessed February 9, 2015. <http://makah.com/activities/makah-days/>.

<sup>475</sup> “Welcome” *Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council*. Accessed February 9, 2015. <http://www.nuuchahnulth.org/tribal-council/welcome.html>.

community is also rather complicated. What are now known as Indian bands or First Nations were often amalgamations of several distinct nations, houses, and families. Sometimes this is reflected in their current names such as Kyuquot/Cheklesah and Mowachah/Muchalah, but other times it is not. For example, Ahousah, as it is known today is an amalgamation of Ahous, Manhous, Kelthsm, Piniit-thl, Qwaacwi, and O-inmitis. Ehatesah has also recently started informally identifying as Ehatesah/Chinehkint. Finally, governance models for each nation vary considerably. Most nations have the standard *Indian Act* band council system with elections every two years, while others have custom systems that recognize their ha'wiih. And in some cases, band council elections are open to on-reserve members only and in other cases, members who live away from home are permitted to vote and hold elected office. Chataway writes, "The band councils were not initially designed for self-governance, but rather to administer the laws of the Canadian state. Greater authority and control has been acquired by band councils over time, but in a way that has sometimes created deep internal power struggles, and a sense of ambivalence toward the band council system that is neither well-designed nor culturally appropriate."<sup>476</sup>

*Indian Act* governance systems in Nuuchahnulth communities have always been somewhat controversial. There are tensions with respect to legitimacy in addition to the ongoing dependence on federal government funding and strict colonial policies. Like most other First Nation in Canada, the *Indian Act* and its liberal-democratic band council systems were imposed on Nuuchahnulth nations. Prior to Canadian colonization, we had our own political institutions and systems of communal accountability. We did not need new systems, but intent on its civilizing mission, the federal government sought to control our political, economic, and cultural lives. A contemporary political analysis of our traditional

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<sup>476</sup> Chataway, 77.

systems would likely describe them as illiberal, and that would be correct in some respects, but the reality is also more nuanced. Umeek states that traditional Nuuchahnulth governance systems exhibited unique ways of *balancing* individual and collective interests.<sup>477</sup> The key here is balance, which indicates an approach that does not necessarily favour one or the other, but considers both fluidly. That being said, what Umeek is describing is historical Nuuchahnulth society. At present, we not only have the imposed liberal-democratic systems, but also several generations of people that only know these systems and political orientations. The complexity of our current political structures and community dynamics is important as we consider the issues of economic development in our territories.

I want to introduce one more wrinkle into our understanding of the contemporary Nuuchahnulth political reality before delving into the history. I focus on economic development in Nuuchahnulth territories in chapter five, so this examination here is limited to our present political context. Specifically, I am interested in our engagement with the British Columbia Treaty Process (BCTP), which began in the early 1990s. Much of what is now known as Canada and the United States of America was settled through treaty agreements between Indigenous peoples and colonial and state governments. Of course, there is a long history of broken treaty promises, misunderstandings, and conflicting interpretations of these agreements with many, if not all, contemporary Indigenous peoples asserting grievances. With a few exceptions, however, most of what is now known as British Columbia was not settled by historical treaty agreements.<sup>478</sup> By the time settlers reached the

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<sup>477</sup> Umeek, 2004, 55-58. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>478</sup> The Douglas Treaties were negotiated on the southern portion of Vancouver Island between 1850 and 1854, between several Coast Salish communities and James Douglas, on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company. You can find the full text of the Douglas treaties here: <http://www.aadnc->



west coast in significant numbers, settler colonialism had gathered so much inertia that the emerging governments no longer felt that treaties were necessary to secure territory for settlement. The logical consequence of this is that a vast majority of British Columbia is *still Indigenous* land.<sup>479</sup> Wickaninnish writes, “In general there were no treaties in British Columbia...Our lands were simply declared crown land without regard to the Native people who lived on them and cared for them for eons.”<sup>480</sup> The BCTP arose in part, out of this colonial oversight, as well as the preceding era of mega-constitutional politics in Canada, several Aboriginal rights and title court cases, and the social and political upheaval that surrounded the 1990 Oka Crisis. Both Canada and British Columbia were struggling with legal and political challenges from Indigenous peoples that threatened Canadian economic stability. Destabilizing conflict appears to be the most successful motivating factor in forcing settler Canadians to deal with Indigenous claims and grievances, a fact that many contemporary Aboriginal leaders seem to have forgotten.

Several prominent Aboriginal leaders, their lawyers, along with representatives from the colonial governments formed the BC Claims Task Force, which released a report in 1991, putting forward nineteen recommendations, including the establishment of the British Columbia Treaty Commission and a framework - the BC Treaty Process - for the negotiation

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aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100029052/1100100029053. Treaty 8 was negotiated in 1899 between representatives of Queen Victoria and several Indigenous communities located in what is now known as Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, and a small portion of northeastern British Columbia. The full text of Treaty 8 can be viewed here: <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100028813/1100100028853>.

<sup>479</sup> In saying this, I am not suggesting that other territories in North America that were included in treaty agreements are no longer Indigenous lands. Historical treaties vary widely in content and intent, but in the case of British Columbia it is abundantly clear that the settler governments lack legitimacy in their claims to Indigenous territories and jurisdiction. Also, it needs to be pointed out that the few modern “treaties” that have been signed do represent large tracts of Indigenous land that have been ceded to the Crown, as in the cases of the Nisga’a, Tsawwassen, and Maa-nulth.

<sup>480</sup> Wickaninnish, 2001, 155.

of comprehensive claims agreements.<sup>481</sup> The Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council's road to comprehensive claims negotiations formally began with the release of the Nuuchah-nulth Declaration and Claim in 1980 and the more detailed Ha'wiih Declaration in 1994, although confrontation and disruption in Clayoquot Sound with logging companies and the provincial government also precipitated our arrival at the negotiation table. I want to focus on the Ha'wiih Declaration for a moment, because it clearly outlines our original intent at the beginning of negotiations, and indicates how far off the mark actual negotiations strayed. The full text of the Ha'wiih Declaration of 1994 is as follows:

Since time immemorial, we the Nuuchah-nulth Ha'wiih are the rightful owners and carry the full authority and responsibility to manage and control all that is contained within each of our Ha'houlthee. Strict traditional laws and teachings dictate that it is our responsibility to govern our territories by managing and protecting all lands, waters and resources within our Ha'houlthee to sustain our muschim and our traditional way of life.

Our authority and ownership have never been extinguished, given up, signed away by Treaty or any other means or superseded by any law. We continue to seek a just and honourable settlement of the land and sea question within all of our respective territories.

Through our governing laws and powers, the Ha'wiih endorse, support and direct our respective Nations to enter negotiations with the governments of Canada and British Columbia to reach agreements and/or treaties which will recognize and re-affirm our ownership and governing authorities over our respective Ha'houlthee.

This endorsement and support is provided on the basis and understanding that the Ha'wiih are and will continue to direct negotiations as decision-makers and active participants, consultants and/or advisors throughout negotiations

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<sup>481</sup> "The Report of British Columbia Claims Task Force," June 28, 1991. Accessed April 24, 2017. [http://www.fns.bc.ca/pdf/BC\\_Claims\\_Task\\_Force\\_Report\\_1991.pdf](http://www.fns.bc.ca/pdf/BC_Claims_Task_Force_Report_1991.pdf). These agreements are more accurately characterized as "comprehensive claims agreements." None of the agreements that have been completed contain the word "treaty" in them, as this would indicate that they exist within the realm of international law, which they do not, despite the popular rhetoric to the contrary. They are domestic agreements that do not carry the same status or weight as actual treaties between nations and states. Hence, when I use the term "treaty" in this context, I usually use scare quotes.

and discussions regarding all of the lands, waters, resources and governance issues within our respective Ha'houlthee.<sup>482</sup>

Like a lot of other Indigenous nations in British Columbia at the time, the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht began their negotiations optimistically and from a seemingly strong starting position. The Ha'wiih Declaration is evidence of those feelings and opinions. Richard Inglis concurs, writing, "Although there have been profound changes in their use and occupation of this landscape since the arrival of the first foreigners in 'floating houses' over 200 years ago, the Nuu-chah-nulth have never ceased to believe in their ownership of the land, the sea, and the resources."<sup>483</sup> Many of its themes recur later when examining the contemporary discourse of Nuu-chah-nulth governance and economics. For now it will suffice as a reflection on how we began the negotiation of our comprehensive claims.

The Nuu-chah-nulth Declaration and Claim of 1980 included all fifteen Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations, including Pacheedaht. The 1994 Ha'wiih Declaration did not include Pacheedaht or Ditidaht. The latter decided to remain in the NTC but chose to negotiate its comprehensive claim alongside Pacheedaht and separate from the tribal council. Not long after the negotiations began, one of the signatories to the Ha'wiih Declaration, Hupačasath, also decided to pull out of the main NTC group. And shortly after I began as Treaty Process Manager in early 2001, the remaining twelve First Nations would reach a critical juncture in the process. For the majority of the tri-partite negotiations, the New Democratic Party (NDP) had been in power in Victoria, but with waning popularity it was widely predicted that the BC Liberal Party would gain control in the 2001 election. Strategists at the tribal council believed that the Liberals would be more hostile in treaty negotiations and that it

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<sup>482</sup> Both 1980 Nuu-chah-nulth Declaration and Claim, and the 1994 Ha'wiih Declaration, as far as I know were not published widely, but were produced by the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal council as part of their ongoing land claims efforts and are on file with the author.

<sup>483</sup> Inglis, vii.

would be better to secure an Agreement in Principle (AIP) before the NDP lost.<sup>484</sup> This led to the abandonment of the NTCs previous negotiating mandate and a frenzied three-day session that involved the adoption of clauses from the agreements of two other BC First Nations: The Nisga'a Final Agreement and the Sliammon AIP.

In early 2001, the twelve NTC nations put their new hybridized AIP to a vote. Each community was responsible for conducting their own approval processes. These ranged from chief and council approval, to open community meetings where members voted by a public show of hands, to secret ballots where members both at home and away were able to vote. Half the nations approved the AIP and half voted against it. After much deliberation, seven nations – the six who voted against and one that voted in favour but decided to stick with the larger group – rejected the AIP. Five of the nations that approved the AIP broke away and continued on with Final Agreement negotiations. For all intents and purposes there is no longer an NTC treaty negotiation process. Some nations continue to meet with government officials; some have withdrawn from the process, and the five nations that broke away, formed the Maa-nulth Treaty Society completing their Final Agreement on April 9, 2009.<sup>485</sup> The Maa-nulth nations: Huu-ay-aht, Kyuquot/Checklesah, Toquaht, Uchucklesah, and Yuu-clulth-aht remain members of the NTC but are able to opt in or out of various tribal council programs and services. The divisiveness of the treaty process was not limited to the Nuuchah-nulth-aht. Similar experiences occurred among Tsimshian, Sto:lo, and Kwakwaka'wakw speaking peoples. The comprehensive claims process remains contentious in British

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<sup>484</sup> Upon reflection, the BC Liberals were not more hostile than the BC NDP, at least within the context of the BC Treaty Process. Additionally, it was the BC Liberals under the leadership of Gordon Campbell who gave 100 million dollars to BC First Nations to establish the New Relationship Fund.

<sup>485</sup> "Maa-nulth First Nations" *BC Treaty Commission*. Accessed February 9, 2015. <http://www.bctreaty.net/nations/maanulth.php>.

Columbia and across the country.

I want to offer some criticism of the economics of these agreements that is directly pertinent to the topic of this thesis; first, is the funding of these negotiations. Each year that a nation is involved in negotiations, they typically borrow money from the two settler governments, with a combination of grants and loans administered by the BCTC. Of the money that a nation receives each year, eighty percent is a loan and twenty percent is a grant. By the time I left the NTC in early 2005, the twelve remaining First Nations had accumulated over twenty million dollars in debt. And while the Nisga'a negotiation process predated the BCTP and was conducted outside of its framework, it is noteworthy that by the time they completed their final agreement they were eighty-four million dollars in debt.<sup>486</sup> Some have suggested that the weight of this debt contributed to the Nisga'a ultimately approving their final agreement. This argument has further merit when you consider that the Sechelt First Nation, which was the first community to complete an AIP under the BCTP, did not borrow money to fund its negotiations and was also the first to reject their AIP, although they had already agreed to a less comprehensive, albeit controversial self-government agreement in 1986. This issue is important because it speaks to a community's autonomy and ability to make actual choices. Indigenous communities often find themselves coerced into accepting previously unacceptable terms and conditions because of the debt or despair of poverty hanging over their heads. This dynamic plays out around the world in many previously decolonized countries. As already noted, Nkrumah characterized this continuity in colonial exploitation as neo-colonialism, which is consistent with how I feel

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<sup>486</sup> Mark Hume and Marsha Lederman, "Nisga'a people reach final milestone with debt-payback," *The Globe and Mail* May 10, 2014, Accessed April 24, 2017. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/nisgaa-people-reach-financial-debt-payback-milestone/article18595185/>.

about the current comprehensive claims process.<sup>487</sup>

A second major issue relates directly to the text in these agreements. Specifically, I am referring to the Own Source Revenue (OSR) clauses in these agreements that reflect neoliberal policies. OSR was based upon the idea that as a First Nation's economic capacity increases over time, it would eventually be able to wean itself off government funding. This sounds good in theory. Comprehensive claims agreements under the BCTP involve an increase in recognized First Nation land, a cash settlement, and jurisdiction and law making authority over various agreed upon areas. It was never envisioned that upon implementation of a final agreement that all government funding would cease immediately. It is meant to occur gradually. The problem arises when the federal government, which supplies most of the money, has the final say on a community's OSR *capacity*. This has massive political and environmental implications, which many First Nation communities consistently raised in their individual and collective negotiations.<sup>488</sup> The federal government can tell a nation that its OSR capacity should be X amount, and therefore their government fiscal transfer will be reduced by Y amount. What if the government and a First Nation have different views on environmental sustainability, economic development and the rate at which a community should exploit its natural resources? A concrete example can be found in the forest industry. Logging practices were greatly curtailed after the implementation of the Clayoquot Sound Scientific Panel recommendations, which introduced many other considerations over and above market demands and resource extraction efficiencies. A First Nation could find itself forced to alter its harvesting rate, and thus violate its valuation of old growth forests to make up for a shortfall of government funding. This problem is compounded by the fact that these

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<sup>487</sup> Nkrumah.

<sup>488</sup> British Columbia Treaty Commission, "Common Table Report," unpublished report, August 1, 2008

comprehensive claims agreements often involve the transfer of social, health and education services responsibilities to First Nations.<sup>489</sup> This is a consequence of neoliberalism, placing nations in tremendously difficult circumstances.

Throughout the BC Treaty Process the influence of neoliberal policies is evident as is the demand to change Nuu-chah-nulth worldviews and values. One of the most dangerous aspects of these negotiations is that our people are now *willingly*, at least in the eyes of settler governments, signing away up to ninety-five percent of their territories and indemnifying those governments from any future claims or grievances. In the past, we could point to the injustice of colonial usurpation, but with these negotiations there is at least the appearance of free and willing participation, which to many, would finally grant legitimacy to settler governments. Even so, I argue that our participation now is not that free or willing, however, not only because of the debt issue, but also due to the longstanding economic alienation experienced by our peoples. I will expand on this in the next chapter, but I now want to shift attention to a selective look at the history of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. This will provide some important insight into the worldviews, values, and principles of Nuu-chah-nulth peoples.

### **The Nuu-chah-nulth-aht: A Selective History**

In this section I provide a history of key Nuu-chah-nulth events, experiences and institutions to identify important factors and influences on contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth political economy. This is not an exhaustive recounting of Nuu-chah-nulth history, but understanding these aspects of our collective past in my opinion is vital to understanding our current challenges and decision-making processes.

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<sup>489</sup> Alfred, 2000, 10 & 17.

### ***Whaling and the Spiritual Orientation of the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht***

*“The most spectacular sea hunting on the whole coast was the whaling of the Nootka and their neighbors of the Olympic Peninsula.”<sup>490</sup>*

Nuu-chah-nulth homewaters and lands are located along the western shores of Vancouver Island. I say homewaters because our lives and histories are intimately linked with life on and around our territorial waters. The name Nuu-chah-nulth is commonly understood to mean people from along the mountains and sea, but I prefer another interpretation. Chuuchkamaltnii, a Hupačasath historian instead offers, “People from the arc of mountains jutting out of the sea.”<sup>491</sup> This dynamic understanding of our name provides the visualization of approaching our territories from the sea. Nuu-chah-nulth-aht were great sea-faring people. Whaling played a central role in Nuu-chah-nulth community life and it begins with our origin stories. One such story tells of how T’iick’in (Thunderbird) and lightening serpent captured an iih̓tuup (whale) and saved the Nuu-chah-nulth people from starvation when fishing was bad.<sup>492</sup> Coté has also noted that, “Whalebones found in archeological sites in Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth territories show that whales were significant to Native cultures as far back as 4,000 years.”<sup>493</sup> She also makes the case that whaling played a central role in our economic and political structures, which I will explore in greater depth in chapter five, but here I want to focus on the cultural and spiritual significance of whaling.

Paddling in canoes in the Pacific Ocean, finding and ultimately capturing the great whales and towing them to shore was a tremendous undertaking. Successful whale hunts required extensive physical, mental, and spiritual preparations. Coté writes, “We have

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<sup>490</sup> Philip Drucker, *Indians of the Northwest Coast* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1955): 34.

<sup>491</sup> Atleo, Clifford Gordon, “Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Develop and the Changing Nature of our Relationships Within the Ha’hoolthlii of our Ha’wiih.” (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2008): 32.

<sup>492</sup> Coté, 16.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid. 20.



stories about great Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth whaling *ha'wiih* who spent years physically, mentally, and spiritually preparing for a whale hunt.”<sup>494</sup> I focus on the spiritual aspect, as I believe this has ongoing ramifications with respect to our engagement with and understanding of settler colonial economies. Coté further adds, “It was believed that a chief’s ability to catch a whale was derived from the spiritual world that provided him with power or medicine that members of the tribe did not possess.”<sup>495</sup> She also indicates another point that has important political and economic implications, and that is that whale hunting was the sole prerogative of the *ha'wiih*. Only *ha'wiih* could harpoon whales. Drucker wrote, “The whale harpooner was always a person of high rank, for the tricks of the trade – practical and *magical* – that contributed to the success of the hunt were cherished family secrets, handed down in noble lines only.”<sup>496</sup> As traditional whaling ceased, the status and wealth of the *ha'wiih* also declined. Finally, with a critical insight into the practice of whaling and Nuu-chah-nulth spirituality, Coté writes,

My ancestors believed that a whale was not caught, but, with the proper rituals and utmost respect shown to the whale, it would give itself up to the whaler and to the people who had shown it the most esteem. This is why the rituals had to be conducted with great care and commitment before, during, and after the hunt. Songs and prayers were sung by the whaling crew during the hunt to demonstrate to the whale their appreciation for its gift of itself.<sup>497</sup>

Nuu-chah-nulth believed that an agreement was made with the spirit of the whale and that this was not possible without the extensive spiritual preparations and protocols that were enacted by the whaling chief, his crew, and his family. According to Huu-ay-aht Elder Willie Sport,

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<sup>494</sup> Ibid. 6. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid. 23.

<sup>496</sup> Drucker, 1955, 34-35. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid. 32.

A whaler believed that a specific whale gave itself to him, through a mysterious power. Prayer and cleansing the mind and body made the whaler worthy of the great whale's life. When the whaler went out to sea and reached the place where thousands of whales were migrating up the coast, when he got there he didn't harpoon the first whale he saw, he identified the one that he was intended to kill. That one was looking for him, too. They recognized each other. The whale gives himself to the hunter who has been praying and who is clean.<sup>498</sup>

Some believed that the utmost proof of this agreement could be observed when captured whales would swim – as opposed to being towed - to shore before dying to give themselves to the ha'wiih and their community.<sup>499</sup>

One form of physical and spiritual preparation is oo-simch, which is the practice of ritual cold-water bathing and prayer undertaken by members of the whaling crew. Typically, it would be conducted in the early morning hours before sunrise in a secret place and include scrubbing oneself with tree branches. The exact nature of oo-simch is unique to individuals and families, so I cannot go into more detail here that would be relevant. Bathing locations and ritual details are closely guarded family secrets. They involve prayer and sacrifice, in a manner that Umeek describes as “Thlawk-thlawk-qua” or a “humble petition.”<sup>500</sup> Humility plays a central role in the Nuu-chah-nulth spiritual worldview, practices, and community dynamics. Bathing naked in frigid coastal waters is one way to reinforce humility in Nuu-chah-nulth-aht who ask for spiritual assistance. My ancestors respected spiritual power, and humbly sought it out when preparing to hunt for whales or go to war.<sup>501</sup> It is this reverence

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<sup>498</sup> Martha Black, *HuupuK'anum Tupaat: Out of the Mist: Treasures of the Nuu-chah-nulth Chiefs* (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1999): 33.

<sup>499</sup> Philip Drucker, “Nootka Whaling,” *Indians of the North Pacific Coast*, Tom McFeat, ed. (Toronto/Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1966): 27.

<sup>500</sup> Umeek (E. Richard Atleo), *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 71.

<sup>501</sup> It should be noted that thanks and respect were rendered for all of our subsistence activities, great and small, including fishing for salmon, gathering shellfish, or stripping cedar bark. Greater feats just required more sacrifice and extensive preparations.

for the spirit world and spiritual powers that also factors critically into understanding our encounter with the first European explorers in ways still resonate.

According to Umeek, “The problem for the Nuu-chah-nulth in particular...was that every demonstration of achievement, great or small, was taken as a sure sign of spiritual power.”<sup>502</sup> He states further, “Consequently, when the great European ships sailed into the sovereign waters of the Nuu-chah-nulth territories, the people in these ships *were assumed to have access to spiritual powers.*”<sup>503</sup> Despite the technological advantages, it did not take long to learn that not all the newcomers were good or humble people, however. Nuu-chah-nulth-aht engaged in early trade *and* conflict with English, Spanish, and American explorers. Drucker noted that the seafaring European traders had less incentive than their land-based colonial brethren to maintain harmonious relationships with the Indigenous peoples of the coast. He wrote, “They did not hesitate to cheat or to rob them when they could obtain furs no other way. The warlike nature of the Northwest Coast Indians was their only deterrent from outright piracy.”<sup>504</sup> Nuu-chah-nulth-aht were impressed with many of the colonial tools and integrated them into their daily lives, but lingering in the background was this reverence for spiritual strength and the connection to subsistence success that I am most interested in. Although Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have historically shown a lack of *undue* deference to anyone, this has changed over time. In combination with several other factors, such as the trauma of depopulation and military disadvantages, the Nuu-chah-nulth spiritual orientation also made us vulnerable to the predation of Christian missionaries, especially through the residential school system.

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<sup>502</sup> Umeek, 2011, 110.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>504</sup> Drucker, 1955, 21.

### *Nuu-chah-nulth Experiences at Indian Residential Schools*

We cannot understand the complexities of contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth identity or community dynamics (and dysfunctions) without exploring our experiences in Canadian residential schools. The recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) broadly characterized the impact of Canadian residential schools as “cultural genocide.”<sup>505</sup> According to the TRC final report, “For over a century, the central goals of Canada’s Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada.”<sup>506</sup> By any measure, this is a damning assessment, but I also want to focus on the impacts of the residential school experience on communities *and* individuals. On communities, (dis)connections and individual identities, Native American scholar, Donald Fixico writes,

It is important to be “connected” to community, for this links one to the present, the past, and the future. Connectedness is a part of the Indian way of life. The worst that could happen to a native person is to become disconnected from one’s family and community. It is membership in these kinship groups that renders identity to each person, providing a sense of place, role, and responsibility. Therefore, belonging and kinship are pertinent to the Indian way of life.<sup>507</sup>

Umeek pointedly asks, “How is it that a whole continent of Aboriginal peoples could allow their children to be educated in foreign residential schools?”<sup>508</sup> He replies, “From the outset, it appears that Aboriginals in general were impressed with the superior technology of

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<sup>505</sup> David MacDonald, “Five reasons the TRC chose ‘cultural genocide,’” *The Globe and Mail*, July 6, 2015. Accessed February 21, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/five-reasons-the-trc-chose-cultural-genocide/article25311423/>.

<sup>506</sup> *Honouring the Truth*, 1

<sup>507</sup> Donald L. Fixico, *American Indians in a Modern World* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2008): 2.

<sup>508</sup> Umeek, 2011, 109.

the newcomers.”<sup>509</sup> This in combination with other coercive measures contributed to the loss of entire generations of children to Christian indoctrination, subpar education, labour camp-like conditions, and myriad abuses. The TRC and the preceding Indian Residential Schools Settlement have revealed that horrendous abuses took place in those institutions. But it is not just overt abuses that have traumatized Indigenous people. The simple act of removal was sufficient to disrupt families and communities, and disconnect young people from their traditional cultures, teachings, roles, and responsibilities. The Indian Residential school legacy is multi-generational and ongoing.<sup>510</sup> According to the NTC, approximately five thousand Nuuchah-nulth children attended residential schools in Ahousaht, Alert Bay, Chilliwack, Kamloops, Mission, Port Alberni, and Tofino.<sup>511</sup> In an NTC-commissioned book that details the experience of Nuuchah-nulth residential school students, the researchers identify ten key issues: Separation from family and home, harsh physical conditions, loss of language, abuse, child labour, loss of culture, loss of self-respect, colonial indoctrination, difficulty returning home, and subsequent substance abuse.<sup>512</sup>

All of these issues are significant, but I wish to frame them in a manner that highlights their impacts on the contemporary political economy of the Nuuchah-nulth-aht. I consider Indian residential schools as tools for colonizing Indigenous lands, waters, bodies, and minds. The first issue is the separation from family and home. Even if no abuse ever took place, the alienation of Indigenous children from their families, communities, and

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid. 109-110.

<sup>510</sup> It should also be noted that there are currently more Indigenous children in state custody now than there ever were at any one time in Indian residential schools. See for example: Brian Humphreys, “‘A lost tribe’: Child welfare system accused of repeating residential school history,” *National Post*, December 15, 2014.

<sup>511</sup> Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council, *Indian Residential Schools: The Nuuchah-nulth Experience* (Port Alberni: Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council, 1996): ix-x.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid. 10-12.

homelands and waters alone has had profoundly damaging effects. The act of removal was the first abuse and traumatic event. Imagine if you will, an entire village absent of school aged children. This is on top of the fact that diseases had already wiped out a majority of village populations. School aged children would be learning how to fish and hunt and they would be observing and participating in cultural and spiritual practices. Instead, they spent the majority of each year away from home and their traditional teachings, learning settler ways. Blackfoot scholar, Leroy Little Bear refers to the residential school attempts at acculturation as, “cultural pollution.”<sup>513</sup> Presumably, some kinds of pollution can dissipate or be cleaned up.

Nuu-chah-nulth-aht recalling their experiences at school remember being frightened, lonely, and tearful. Nelson Keitlah described his thoughts and feelings as, “Total despair! Lonely. Away from my Grandparents. My world had come down! My independence was taken away...I learned to live without the protection of two sets of Grandparents.”<sup>514</sup> It is interesting that Keitlah would equate the loss of protection of his grandparents with a loss of independence as well. Students found every aspect of their lives structured in these new schools. Even though priests and police would often pick up Nuuchah-nulth children and bring them to school and some parents were arrested for not bringing their children, many of the students harboured resentment for having to attend. They simultaneously missed *and* resented their parents. Not every Nuuchah-nulth child attended residential school. Some parents hid their children from church authorities and the police. Chaw-win-is shares a particularly poignant story, of an encounter that her great-grandfather had when the priest came looking for his sons. The priest admonished Kaynaiya, telling him that his sons needed

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<sup>513</sup> Leroy Little Bear, foreward to *Wasáse: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom* by Taiaiake Alfred (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2005): 11.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid. 17.

an education, but Kaynaiya just sat there sharpening his hatchet, not even bothering to offer the priest tea or food.<sup>515</sup> Chaw-win-is writes,

Kaynaiya continued to sharpen the hatchet, pausing to let the priest's words sit for a moment in the salty air. For an instant, all the two men could hear was the sound of the hatchet sharpening. Without pausing, Kaynaiya's eyes met the priest's, each reflecting the other in their determination. In an even, calculated voice, Kaynaiya spoke, "If you come near my family again, I will chop your penis off."<sup>516</sup>

Obviously, this did not happen in all cases. Many parents who resisted were often arrested and jailed. Sending Indian children to residential schools was the law in Canada for many years. I share this example of defiance because I feel it is consistent with our history of change and continuity and a fighting spirit that has existed in many of our people despite colonialism. That being said, the childhood experiences of most Nuuchah-nulth-aht in the late nineteenth and most of the twentieth century involved residential school, which was alienating and traumatic.

This alienation would be further complicated by the fact that when students came back home, they no longer felt fully accepted there either. Tsquwasupp states,

When I first started at the residential school, I had two languages – my father's, Ditidaht, and my mother's, Coast Salish, *Cowichan*. I didn't fit into white society because I spoke these two languages. And then I was rejected at home because the languages were beaten out of me in the residential school. Those people beat our culture and language out of us. I went home a tormented boy, a fractured, fragmented kid displaced from my people.<sup>517</sup>

My father, Wickaninnish remembers that he initially *wanted* to go to school because his two older brothers had gone and there was always a lot of excitement during the winter and

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<sup>515</sup> This is an important aspect of the story, because Nuuchah-nulth-aht are strongly encouraged to be hospitable. To not be hospitable is a serious violation of Nuuchah-nulth protocol, unless the relationship has already been severely damaged through disrespect or violence, which is what Chaw-win-is is trying to indicate here.

<sup>516</sup> Chiinuks, 71.

<sup>517</sup> Alfred, 2005, 166. *Emphasis* in original.

summer holidays when they returned. He believes that at such a young age, he was only able to identify with the excitement of their return home and he wanted to experience that too.

But not every homecoming was as warm. According to the NTC research,

Going back home presented young Nuu-chah-nulth people with numerous problems, most of which, they had no idea of how to deal with. In a sense, they had been taught at residential school to loathe everything about themselves and their culture, everything at least that was distinctly Nuu-chah-nulth. Upon returning home, they suddenly found themselves once again, surrounded by their own culture.<sup>518</sup>

Many residential school survivors recall feeling strange and unsure how to cope with freedom, after having lived in such a strict, institutional environment for so long.

Students came home expecting to be woken up at a certain time, expecting someone to provide clothing for them, expecting meals to be on the table at certain times of the day, expecting those meals to be certain kinds of food, expecting many, many things that they had been conditioned to another way of life that had no relationship whatsoever to lives of, the lifestyle, the culture, that they found at home.<sup>519</sup>

Students also reported no longer liking fish or wild game, having been taught that it was degrading to eat traditional Indigenous foods. The residential school experience impacted every aspect of Nuu-chah-nulth life, including how it was to be organized:

In all cases, no village on the coast operated on school time, or operated around the kinds of time tables that students were used to in Residential school. So, often times, they thought that things were un-organized, disorganized, not really very well plotted out, or that the lack of minute-to-minute plan represented the fact that people were stupid, were dumb, and not able to plan their days well. That someone could sit around and leisurely work on a canoe when they pleased, go hunting when they pleased, sleep when they pleased, eat when they pleased, and visit family when they pleased...seemed un-organized, disorganized, or, at least, disturbing, different, other, foreign, to them, in relation to the *conditioning* that they received in Residential schools.<sup>520</sup>

The strangeness that students felt was due to the fact that they were being taught to be

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<sup>518</sup> Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, 158-159.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid. 160.

<sup>520</sup> Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, 160-161. *Emphasis added.*



strangers to their own cultures and community rhythms. Both students and family members back home had a difficult time dealing with the strangeness and cultural disconnection. I would argue that we are still trying to deal with it, especially now that so many of our people live away from home, including children in state custody. The 60s Scoop has been well documented, and the issue of Indigenous youth in care is ongoing today. In fact, Holly McKenzie et al estimate that three times as many Indigenous children are currently in the care of the state when compared with the peak attendance of Canada's residential schools.<sup>521</sup> The issues associated with residential school deserve much more attention, but I limit my analysis here to aspects that I feel resonate through time to impact our contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth political economy, namely: acculturation, intergenerational trauma, attempted assimilation, and the general idea and *feeling* that Nuu-chah-nulth ways and traditions were bad and Eurocanadian ways are good.

### ***Generosity, Reciprocity and Nuu-chah-nulth Potlatching Through History***

An enormous part of settler colonialism in the Nuu-chah-nulth context is change, much of it unwelcome, but I have also uncovered resistance and cultural continuity. In order to understand this, one needs learn of the practice of potlatching, and how it has both changed and remained consistent through time. According to Umeek, the word potlatch is derived from the Nuu-chah-nulth term, pachitle. George Clutesi believes this was because the word, pachitle was often heard during these events.<sup>522</sup> Umeek states further,

In English the word “potlatch” has been ascribed meanings associated with various institutions – social, economic, political – of the Western world. There is no generic equivalent to the English word “potlatch” in Nuu-chah-

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<sup>521</sup> Holly A. McKenzie, Colleen Varcoe, Annette J. Browne and Linda Day, “Disrupting the Continuities Among Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, and Child Welfare: An Analysis of Colonial and Neocolonial Discourses” *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 7, 2 (April 2016): 1.

<sup>522</sup> Clutesi, 1973, 9.

nulth. Not only is “potlatch” not a Nuu-chah-nulth word; it also has become a general classification that refers to every ceremonial form of feasting. Therefore, if it is said that someone gave a potlatch, it cannot be deduced from this statement whether the ceremony was a *tloo-qua-nah*, a *yax-ma-thlit*, a memorial, a rite of passage, a celebration of life, a marriage, an adoption, or a transfer of a chieftainship seat. During precontact times each ceremonial occasion had a very specific name that left no doubt about its purpose and meaning.<sup>523</sup>

Keeping this in mind, I am not going to detail each of our ceremonies that have come to be known under the English umbrella term, except to point out that they were all banned by the Canadian government in 1885.<sup>524</sup> This ban was not lifted until 1951. Over that time, church officials, government Indian agents, and police worked hard to enforce the ban by shutting down ceremonies, jailing participants, and confiscating ceremonial regalia, drums, masks, headdresses, and family screens. Despite the ban, the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, like many other coastal peoples, kept potlatching. Côté says that one adaptation and resistance strategy that Nuu-chah-nulth-aht employed was to make family screens, which depicted a family’s history and were publically displayed at potlatches, from cloth instead of wood. This made them easier to hide from the prying eyes of the Indian agents.<sup>525</sup> Umeek also tells of how his great-grandfather Kiista held ceremonies in secret, using guards to warn them if residential school officials or Indian agents got too close. According to Umeek, these were not isolated incidents, but examples of how we practiced our ceremonies underground in order to keep them alive.<sup>526</sup> Despite all the settler colonial suppression of our ceremonies, we were still able to maintain some cultural continuity through practices that honoured our core beliefs.

One element of this continuity that deserves special attention here is Nuu-chah-nulth

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<sup>523</sup> Umeek, 2004, 3.

<sup>524</sup> Union of BC Indian Chiefs, *Stolen Lands, Broken Promises: Researching the Indian Land Question in British Columbia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vancouver: Union of BC Indian Chiefs, 2005): 21.

<sup>525</sup> Côté, 105.

<sup>526</sup> Umeek, 2004, 79.

generosity. Nuu-chah-nulth-aht are encouraged to be generous and are often chastised when they are not. I am not suggesting that this trait is unique to Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, but Umeek points out that there is a particular aspect of it that is important. He believes that generosity is only half of the picture. Generosity with relatives and strangers is critical to forming strong reciprocal relationships. Umeek writes,

The Western dictum that “it is better to give than to receive” is potentially misleading from a Nuu-chah-nulth perspective because an emphasis upon giving may lead one to consider receiving irrelevant or unimportant. In the traditional Nuu-chah-nulth view, both are of equal importance. Giving is completely dependent upon receiving, and receiving is completely dependent upon giving. There is balance and harmony here. Neither is generosity simply a romantic notion disconnected from the “bottom line” of harsh reality. Giving as a general community practice over millennia has proven pragmatic. It is an economically feasible principle.<sup>527</sup>

Colonial administrators banned our ceremonies because our values were deemed to be inconsistent with their Eurocentric values. Unlike Miller’s misunderstanding of the potlatch, individuals were not encouraged to accumulate massive amounts of wealth and then give some to charity. Giving and receiving was and remains a part of daily life and ceremony. Although the following example pointed out by Thomas King is a reference to the allotment era in the United States, it is indicative of the broader civilizing approach undertaken by settlers in Canada as well. Merrill E. Gates speaking on behalf of the (settler) “Friends of the Indian” stated,

We have, to begin with, the absolute need of awakening in the savage Indian broader desires and ampler wants. To bring him out of savagery into citizenship we must make the Indian more intelligently selfish before we can make him unselfishly intelligent. We need to awaken in him wants. In his dull savagery he must be touched by the wings of the divine angel of discontent. The desire for property of his own may become an intense educating force. The wish for a home of his own awakens him to new efforts. Discontent with the teepee and the starving rations of the Indian camp in winter is needed to get the Indian out of the blanket and into trousers – and

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<sup>527</sup> Ibid. 39.

trousers with pockets in them, and with a pocket that aches to be filled with dollars.<sup>528</sup>

Of the many reasons that the Canadian government banned Indigenous ceremonial practices, one of them was that they felt the giving away of gifts was wasteful and encouraged laziness. To be clear, it is not that the settlers misunderstood necessarily, although I am sure there was an element of that; it is that they disagreed with our approach to political and economic organizing. It stood in contrast to their way of doing things. This is a critical point, because for generations, Aboriginal activists and allies have expressed the desire and necessity of educating settlers, in hopes of overcoming misunderstandings and encouraging more humane interactions. While I believe that this approach has its merits, it also has limitations, which we cannot ignore. We see the results of this continually in stalemated comprehensive claims negotiations and ongoing Aboriginal rights and title litigation.<sup>529</sup> In many cases, settlers know; they just think they know better.

Going back to Umeek's understanding of reciprocal relations and the equal importance of giving *and* receiving, I want to address one of the ways in which our changing colonial reality has negatively impacted the potlatching of the ha'wiih. Of particular interest to me is the increasing neoliberal influence on our communities and the emphasis on individual achievement and status. To be clear, I do not believe that pre-contact Nuu-chah-

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<sup>528</sup> Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2003): 131.

<sup>529</sup> See: Staff, "10 Years Gone: Nuu-chah-nulth Nations Still Wait for Court-Ordered Accommodation of Fishing Rights," *Ha-Shilth-Sa* April 25, 2016. <https://www.hashilthsa.com/news/2016-04-25/10-years-gone-nuu-chah-nulth-nations-still-wait-court-ordered-accommodation-fishing->, Ken Coates and Gordon Gibson, "The *Tsilhqot'in* decision and the future of British Columbia," *Inroads* 36 (Winter/Spring 2015): 24-38, Vaughn Palmer, "BC First Nations summit a reminder of stalled treaty process," *The Vancouver Sun*, September 10, 2015. <http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/vaughn+palmer+first+nations+summit+reminder+stalled+treaty+process/11351661/story.html>, Jeffrey Simpson, "Two decades of 'Made in B.C.' treaty flop," *The Globe and Mail*, November 16, 2013, F2.

nulth-aht did not value achievement and self-sufficiency, of either the individual or the community, but neoliberalism places such a strong emphasis on individualism in a way that displaces collective priorities and responsibilities. Additionally, the neoliberal paradigm pathologizes individual failure. If an individual is struggling, it is understood as a personal failing and not the responsibility of the collectivity or the result of systemic settler colonial conditions. Building upon the insights of Couze Venn (2010), Barry writes, “For neoliberalism, then, it is not the system that fails; failure has become individualized...”<sup>530</sup> We no longer live in longhouses with extended family. Instead, we live as nuclear families. Mercredi and Turpel write, “Individualism is, by its very nature in a capitalistic society, nothing more than survival of those who are most competitive.”<sup>531</sup> I am not suggesting that we have completely abandoned our sense of collective responsibility, but it would be wrong to say that our families have not been impacted by the hegemony of settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism.

One aspect of our intensified neoliberal existence is that ha’wiih can no longer afford to “potlatch until they are broke.” In the past, ha’wiih, with the help of their families and houses, would give away all that they could, in many cases *all* of their wealth. With generosity being a key communal value, it was incumbent upon ha’wiih to lead by example. This only works in a society where reciprocity is also valued and practiced. Traditionally, Ha’wiih could *afford* to give away everything, because at some point in time, others would share and the reciprocal nature of our communities would ensure that no one went hungry. This is not the case in contemporary capitalistic times. I once overheard the non-Indigenous spouse of a ḥaw’iḥ say that she did not want her husband to host one of our more extensive

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<sup>530</sup> Barry, 123.

<sup>531</sup> Mercredi and Turpel, 114.

and sacred ceremonies, the *łluukwaanaa*, because it was *too expensive*. This example is not meant to disparage the *haw'ił*, or his wife, but simply to point out that the reality of settler colonialism has deeply impacted our values (changing priorities) *and* material capacity (poverty) to enact our traditional governing systems of reciprocity. Another one of these adjustments can be observed by the fact that most potlatches now take place on weekends to accommodate guests with Monday to Friday jobs. According to Clutesi, the Tloo-qwah-nah could last from fourteen to twenty-eight days, and during that time all the guests had to be housed and fed.<sup>532</sup> It is a small point perhaps, but a good example of how our sense of time and work have changed and contributed to the alternation of cultural practices to accommodate changing economic necessity. At the same time, many coastal potlatching traditions remain vibrant. We have adapted, but at a price.

### ***Nuu-chah-nulth Haw'iłh***

Chaw-win-is states, "Hawiih are the foundation of our governance systems...Leadership encapsulated many things, including a sense of interdependence. The hawiih could not operate alone, nor move forward without consulting with and obtaining, finally, the consent from the muschim."<sup>533</sup> Chaw-win-is highlights two key points that I wish to expand on, in this chapter as well as in later chapters directly relating to economic development and community dynamics. First, *haw'iłh* were, and in some cases still are, central to Nuu-chah-nulth governance and economics. Historically this was understood without question. Since the advent of colonial laws, policies and cultural norms, however, the authority and respect for *haw'iłh* has been greatly diminished. Second, Chaw-win-is reminds us that despite the positions of the *haw'iłh* being hereditary, they maintained interdependent and reciprocal

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<sup>532</sup> Clutesi, 1973, 11.

<sup>533</sup> Chiinuuks, 25.

relationships with communities as a whole that has often been misunderstood by colonial historians and has not always been understood in contemporary times even by many of our own people. Being ḥaw'ił is a tremendous responsibility. For the most part, this goes without saying, but contemporary pretensions of prestige and entitlement have at times overshadowed those responsibilities. This is due to the mechanisms of settler colonialism that have rendered the contemporary role of the ḥaw'iiḥ to a largely symbolic or ceremonial status. Aware of the potential for misunderstanding, Umeek also adds, "In a hierarchical system of governance, the greatest danger is the potential for dictatorial abuse."<sup>534</sup> Historically, there were a number of checks and balances to the authority of the ḥaw'iiḥ.

The first of these checks and balances was the value of humility. Referencing an Ahous origin story, Umeek, speaks of Tlawk-thlawk-qwa and the "tiny insignificant leaf" approach to oosimch as central to the orientation of Nuuchahnulth in general and the proper conduct of ḥaw'iiḥ in particular.<sup>535</sup> Great achievements were acknowledged, but by others, not oneself. Humility and honesty were also respected and encouraged in Nuuchahnulth leaders. Stories were also told depicting failures. Côté writes of one chief, "The point of his theatrical performance is to show how he overslept, which led to his not being successful in his whale hunting pursuits. This demonstrated the hunter's humility to the other whalers, and he was respected for his honesty."<sup>536</sup> Another interesting way in which the humility of the ḥaw'iiḥ was reinforced was through a person that elders have described as similar to a "court jester." This person would openly tease the chiefs and use humour to maintain a sense of humility in a position that was otherwise held in high esteem. Another example of humble ḥaw'iiḥ that I have witnessed was at an aiytstuuła, a coming of age

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<sup>534</sup> Umeek, 2011, 160.

<sup>535</sup> Umeek, 2004, 71.

<sup>536</sup> Côté, 38-39.

ceremony for young Nuu-chah-nulth women that was hosted at the main Ahous village of Maaqatosiis. During part of the ceremony, four young women wearing shawls and cedar headbands, escorted by female relatives, were seated and had their feet washed by four ha'wiih. Please do not misunderstand. Nuu-chah-nulth humility is not simply self-deprecation or meant to be misconstrued as ridicule or debasement. A key element of the aiytstuula is to remind the community of the high esteem of Nuu-chah-nulth women. As it relates to the position of the ha'wiih, it is understood that they are not *above* others, despite their important office and vast responsibilities; humility is still reinforced through ceremonies like the aiytstuula. Ha'wiih were also not above the rule of Nuu-chah-nulth law.

A story that my father has told many times is that of Kaanikum. According to some accounts, Kaanikum was musčim and he killed a number of ha'wiih in an attempt to be the undisputed ruler of his community. As my father tells it, Kaanikum *was a* haw'ił who strayed from the teachings and had to be dealt with severely to restore community harmony and balance. It was said that Kaanikum was a bad person, greedy and acquisitive. He was not humble and his wife was said to have similar attributes. They took what did not belong to them and they treated people abusively. The other ha'wiih met and it was decided that Kaanikum and his wife could not be reformed so they had to be removed. The witwaak, who were in charge of enforcing our laws captured Kaanikum and his wife and beheaded both of them. Whether Kaanikum was legitimately a haw'ił or he attempted to usurp the position, what is critical here is that he was disrespecting the seat.<sup>537</sup> In Nuu-chah-nulth society, the position or 'seat' is more important than the person. In order to protect the sanctity and honour of the seat and the wellbeing of the community, Kaanikum had to be removed.

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<sup>537</sup> It is not my intent to discover the one true story here, but instead to identify what is consistent amongst the different stories. Many stories and traditional practices in Nuu-chah-nulth communities varied from family to family, but investigation usually reveals consistency in themes and lessons.



Ronald Trosper writes, “Among the Kwakwaka’wakw and the Nuu-chah-nulth, it was possible to kill titleholders (hereditary chiefs) who failed to carry out their duties.”<sup>538</sup> This measure was also practiced preemptively. Clutesi wrote, “(Chiefs) were known to disown an heir and revoke all pretensions, rights and claims that would normally have been his inheritance. However, this occurred only when such heir consistently showed weakness of morality or a total rejection of inter-tribal laws.”<sup>539</sup> He added, “The good of the tribe was considered above the rights of heirs.”<sup>540</sup> This practice is carried out today, at least in principle. Of course, chiefs are no longer killed, but when a haw’it acts in a manner unbecoming, especially for serious violations of the law, they are often removed from office and sometimes banished from the community. I know of several examples of this from my community as well as other Nuu-chah-nulth communities. A recent example of this also occurred amongst the Haida. Two hereditary chiefs were stripped of their titles because they signed letters of support for the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline against the will of their communities.<sup>541</sup> But this is not always enforced and perpetrators, while sometimes dealt with via settler law concerning criminal matters, are not always dealt with culturally. Chawwin-is writes,

The hawiih system has been infected with a colonial mentality, which is enforced through state-sponsored violence. These colonial or colonized ways continue to play out internally within communities through rage, hatred, oppression and violence. Some hawiih are getting away with rape, domestic abuse, verbal, mental and emotional abuse because of their ‘seat’ or position within the hereditary traditional system. Even if they are punished through colonial laws and imprisoned, they are often set free of that system after a

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<sup>538</sup> Ronald L. Trosper, *Resilience, Reciprocity and Ecological Economics: Northwest Coast Sustainability* (New York: Routledge, 2009): 75-76.

<sup>539</sup> Clutesi, 1973, 32.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid. 33.

<sup>541</sup> Jeff Lee, “Haida strip two hereditary chiefs of titles for supporting Enbridge,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 17, 2016. Accessed January 27, 2017. <http://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/haida-strip-two-hereditary-chiefs-of-titles-for-supporting-enbridge>.

short period and communities open their doors to them upon their return, perhaps out of loyalty to this traditional system and the fear of contradicting it. It is not that violence never occurred before colonization; rather it is that our ways of dealing with injustices, with violations of Quu'asminaa laws have been de-legitimized and silenced through colonial institutions and policy, and through outright military and police force."<sup>542</sup>

Chaw-win-is raises a critical complication about traditional Nuu-chah-nulth governance and colonization that cannot be ignored. Just because something is identified as traditional that does not automatically make it consistent with traditional values, and even if something is considered *authentically* traditional, that does not necessarily imply consistency with current Indigenous community values either. Several Indigenous feminists have made important contributions on this point. Altamirano-Jiménez writes, "Dominant discourses of tradition are aimed at concealing the conflicting power relationship between gender and tradition and at legitimizing the status quo, which generally excludes Aboriginal women and their concerns."<sup>543</sup> She adds, "Although Indigenous women may embrace culture and tradition, and thereby support a nationalist project, they do not necessarily embrace the same vision of nationalism as men do – especially when doing so would mean perpetuating women's subordination."<sup>544</sup> Kim Anderson writes, "Feminism of all stripes can help us to tease out patriarchy from what is purportedly traditional and to avoid essentialist identities and systems that are not to our advantage as women."<sup>545</sup> Settler colonialism has made traditional governance and systems of accountability difficult to implement, but Nuu-chah-nulth communities are still trying hard to uphold the integrity of those governance systems and positions *and* create environments that are equitable for all.

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<sup>542</sup> Chiinuks, 91-92.

<sup>543</sup> Altamirano-Jiménez, 2008, 129.

<sup>544</sup> Altamirano-Jiménez, 2013, 59.

<sup>545</sup> Kim Anderson, "Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist," in *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, eds. Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010): 86.

Another means by which Ha'wiih are held accountable is through the necessity of maintaining good relations with their musčim. Côté points out that musčim could always leave the house of their haw'ił and join the house of another; if they did not feel that they were being treated fairly.<sup>546</sup> This meant that ha'wiih *had* to be generous, act fairly, and provide opportunities for their musčim. This may have been true historically, but present-day Indigenous identity issues complicate this option considerably. Today, the Canadian state determines who is and who is not a status Indian and moving camp is more complicated. This is not to say that people do not transfer bands. I know of an entire family who transferred from Ahous to Tla-o-qui recently. I have also heard of individuals whose nation signed a comprehensive claim agreement under the Maa-nulth Treaty Society, talk of transferring to a non-treaty nation. This is made possible by the extensive inter-marriage between individuals of different nations and the ability to prove ancestry in neighbouring nations. Thus, it is complicated, but not impossible. Current affiliations are exchanged between officially recognized legal entities under the *Indian Act*, and not necessarily the ha'wiih; but intertribal mobility is still possible.

I want to introduce one more means of maintaining just and harmonious community relations and ha'wiih accountability: The hay-in. The hay-in was a formalized debate between community members that was conducted publically. Chaw-win-is writes, "Anything was fair game in a hay-in, you could call the other person anything, tell them everything that bothers you at the moment about that person, as well as the particular event or events which one felt precipitated this hay-in."<sup>547</sup> She states further,

When it was done, everyone went home and left the men and the issues raised in the hay-in alone – this was to say that gossiping was not permitted during

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<sup>546</sup> Côté, 23.

<sup>547</sup> Chiinuuks, 33.

or after the hay-in. The two men knew not to carry on their argument outside of the hay-in and were friendly towards each other when it was over. Hay-in permitted issues to be aired freely within communities, and the guidelines were understood and agreed to by the muschim were effective in keeping harmony within families and communities, and, in this way, did not permit the debilitating poison of gossip, which unfortunately today, affects harmony within Quu'asminaa communities. Another important aspect of this hay-in is that it could involve a muschim and a hawiih, or hereditary chief. During the hay-in, the muschim could say whatever they wanted to the hawiih and the hawiih had to listen first, and then respond. This was an act of humility for hawiih – an important characteristic of good leadership that currently is not emphasized within modern day band council systems.<sup>548</sup>

I have not heard of any other accounts of this process, but it strikes me as one worth reviving. In particular, I like that it allows people to briefly and formally set aside rank, to ensure a more thorough airing of grievances in a way that is communally acceptable. I also wonder whether this form of dispute resolution was also employed between women and men. If not, I would argue that contemporary forms of dispute resolution must be crafted to specifically address current issues of patriarchy, sexism and misogyny in our communities.

I began this section with a statement from Chaw-win-is speaking to the foundational role of Nuu-chah-nulth ha'wiih. More than a description, it's an apt metaphor. Being the foundation requires ha'wiih to be humble and strong, and work to provide opportunities for their communities. Being the foundation means that ha'wiih are not above others, but others benefit from their strength. Reid writes that muschim had, "access to hunting and fishing grounds because chiefs extended these rights to people who respected their authority."<sup>549</sup> Despite the numerous checks and balances, Reid reminds us that Nuu-chah-nulth and Makah societies were still hereditary and stratified, but he writes, "Chiefs exercised authority through influence rather than coercion. Although titles, rights, and privileges passed from one generation to the next through kinship networks, an individual had to

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid. 34.

<sup>549</sup> Reid, 10.

maintain his – and sometimes her – noble status by providing for the people.”<sup>550</sup> Reid also reminds us that these positions of authority were not exclusively male-dominated, even historically.<sup>551</sup> There are more and more women filling hereditary and other important roles in Nuuchah-nulth society that have been *traditionally thought* of as exclusively male domains. At a potlatch a number of years ago, I and Chaw-win-is (and several others) were asked to fulfill the ceremonial role of wit-waak (warriors). The move raised a lot of eyebrows, but it was a positive move in my opinion. On this dynamic in her community, Pamela Palmater writes,

While traditionally this role has been primarily exercised by our Mi’kmaw men, the devastating effects of colonization have left some (not all) of our men dispossessed of their strength. Thus, some of our Indigenous women must assume this additional responsibility alongside our men. This is not to say that any role is exclusively male or female or that Indigenous men are not fulfilling their roles, but instead it is a recognition that the impact of colonization on our peoples requires us to adapt in order to resist.<sup>552</sup>

Chaw-win-is concurs and has shared that her grandfather Cha-chin-sun-up, whose potlatch we were attending has stated as much. The initial motivations may be practical, but in the long run, I believe that they will be beneficial and create more space for gender equity and fluidity in our communities.

### ***The Ahous-Otsoos War***

I have heard many times from Nuuchah-nulth-aht that conflicts arise when traditional protocols and dispute resolution mechanisms break down. Nuuchah-nulth-aht were not strangers to conflict and warfare. Drucker wrote, “Among the Nootka, bitter, long-drawn-out wars were carried on by various local groups and tribes for the express purpose of capturing

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<sup>550</sup> Reid, 10-11.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>552</sup> Pamela D. Palmater, “Matnm tel-Mi’kmawi: I’m Fighting for my Mi’kmaw Identity.” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 33, 1 (2013): 150.

the territory of their neighbors.”<sup>553</sup> The story of the Ahous-Otsoos war is a crucial example of a breakdown in protocol that escalated into a long and destructive war. Sometime during the early part of the nineteenth century, the Ahousaht and Otsoosaht engaged in a war that lasted several years resulting in the near extermination of all Otsoos people, and most certainly the destruction of Otsoos as a nation. There are many accounts of the war, including the books of descendants: Earl Maquinna George and Peter Webster, as well as the writings of several historical and contemporary anthropologists and historians such as Boas, Drucker, and Sapir. I have also heard oral renditions of the war from my father and other elders at community gatherings. The accounts of the war vary from others, but I will summarize the key events and discuss the implications for my interest in contemporary Ahous political economy. Peter Webster believes that the war took place in the 1840s or 1850s, but most other accounts say it occurred earlier. The duration of the war also varies between eleven and fourteen years. What I have been told is that the year the war began, the wife of the head Ahous war chief, H̓aiyuupinuł gave birth to a daughter. The war ended the same year of her aiytstuuła. There are a number of different accounts on how it began as well, some saying that the Otsoosaht started it and some saying that the Ahousaht started it. What everyone does seem to agree on is that by defeating and vanquishing the Otsoosaht, the Ahousaht, secured for their growing nation, much needed salmon streams and rivers.<sup>554</sup> Prior to the war, the Ahousaht only controlled one salmon-bearing river, and the Otsoosaht owned eighteen.<sup>555</sup> As previously mentioned, the Ahous-Otsoos war represents a breakdown

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<sup>553</sup> Drucker, 1955, 136.

<sup>554</sup> The eradication of the Otsoosaht is not lost on me as an important topic worthy of further investigation, which I will endeavor to explore elsewhere. My focus here is on the experiences and lessons from the war on contemporary Ahousaht.

<sup>555</sup> Peter S. Webster, *As Far As I Know: Reminiscences of an Ahousaht Elder* (Campbell River: Campbell River Museum and Archives, 1983): 60.

in traditional Nuu-chah-nulth protocols and peaceful means of dispute resolution. I also believe that it represents the lengths to which the Ahousaht have been willing to go to survive.

Of the Otsoosaht and their territorial boundaries, Earl Maquinna George wrote, “They would not allow any other tribe to come past that boundary. If anybody did pass without permission, they killed them or chased them away. They were not a friendly tribe.”<sup>556</sup> I do not know if Chief Maquinna’s assessment is true about the unfriendliness of the Otsoosaht, but it is well understood in Nuu-chah-nulth territories that boundaries are closely guarded and usually respected. Clutesi wrote, “Complete rights to these areas were sustained tenaciously and any infringements of hunting laws were severely dealt with.”<sup>557</sup> I have not been able to find reliable numbers, but oral accounts describe the Otsoosaht as being large and powerful, much more so than the Ahousaht. The oral stories say that the Ahousaht attempted to secure fishing rights to some Otsoos salmon streams through an alliance of marriage. Eugene Arima and Alan Hoover corroborate this in their book, *The Whaling People of the West Coast of Vancouver Island and Cape Flattery*.<sup>558</sup> As it turned out fishing rights were not extended to the Ahousaht, the marriage failed and the bride returned to Otsoos. An Ahous delegation was sent to bring her back but the Otsoos refused. Embarrassed, the Ahous group broke the tips of their paddles and claimed that the Otsoosaht had treated them roughly. Angered, the Ahous war chief killed two Otsoosaht. In retaliation, the Otsoosaht killed some Ahous fishermen and thus began the war. I should add that there

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<sup>556</sup> Earl Maquinna George, *Living on the Edge: Nuu-chah-nulth History from an Ahousaht Chief’s Perspective* (Winlaw, Sonis Press, 2003): 43-44.

<sup>557</sup> Clutesi, 1973, 31.

<sup>558</sup> Eugene Arima and Alan Hoover, *The Whaling People of the West Coast of Vancouver Island and Cape Flattery* (Victoria: Royal BC Museum, 2011): 148-149.

were lengthy deliberations about going to war with the Otsoosaht. War was not taken lightly, but their ultimate decision to go to war was deemed necessary for Ahous survival.

Tyii ɥaw'ıl Maquinna initially refused to participate in the war because his mother was Otsoosaht. ɥaiyuupinuul led the Ahous along with a confederacy that had been formed with the Quatswiiht, O-inmitisaht, and Keltsomaht. Qami'na, one of the most prolific witwaak of the war, came from Keltsomaht. Modern Nuu-chah-nulth-aht still speak of Qami'na's bravery and ferocity in battle. ɥaiyuupinuul and forty witwaak made their plans and preparations atop Chitaapi, now known to settlers as Catface Mountain. Again, my intent here is not a thorough historical accounting of the war, but I do wish to identify key events and background that will help us better understand our current political and economic context, especially with respect to communal memory and inter-tribal relations. Maquinna did eventually join the war effort two years in, after his younger brother was killed. Upon burying his brother Maquinna said, "I'm going to step over your body, your dead boy, my brother, because I'm going to now enter this conflict, this war. You're gone, I'll be here. I'll fight until the last person is killed on our enemy side. And I vow vengeance for your death."<sup>559</sup> Maquinna would go on to fight and be as prolific a wiiuk as Qami'na many would argue, but as in the case of all wars, this would not come without unintended consequences. Near the end of the war, the surviving Otsoosaht had retreated from much of their former territories, and Maquinna was living near Atleo River with his wife, a prominent woman from Tla-o-qui. A war party of Otsoosaht attacked, intending to kill Maquinna, but he escaped. They did kill his wife and the third chief, K<sup>w</sup>atyiiçmałni, however, which would bring about the end of the war once and for all. Upon hearing of the death of their "queen," the Tla-o-qui-aht "finished the Otsosaht Nation off, hunting them down all through their

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<sup>559</sup> George, 49.



hiding places.”<sup>560</sup> Late Ahous elder Peter Webster wrote, “A people, the Oo-tsus-aht (ʔuʔuusʔaṭh) were driven from Clayoquot Sound. Others, the Ahousaht and their allies, won a victory. But, what is there now to show? The territory lost and won, at such cost, is no longer owned by any Indian people.”<sup>561</sup> I appreciate Webster’s poignant sobriety on the issue. I believe that we should be critical of any account of a conflict, especially those on the victors’ side. In chapter five, I draw upon some of the lessons and dynamics of the Ahous-Otsoos war in the context of contemporary economic tensions in Clayoquot Sound.

### **Key Nuu-chah-nulth Values and Principles**

If war is the result of a break down of traditional Nuu-chah-nulth protocols, then what are those protocols and what are the guiding principles? Two of the most commonly quoted and talked about Nuu-chah-nulth principles are *iisaak* and *hiišuukish čawaak*. They are worth looking at with respect to our political and economic decisions. In simple terms, *iisaak* means, respect but it is widely open to interpretation and requires some unpacking. What does it truly mean to conduct oneself with respect, to establish respectful relations with others, including all life and our environment? Umeek distinguishes *iisaak* from the English understanding of respect, which he feels is ultimately exclusionary. He writes, “By comparison, the Nuu-chah-nulth word *iisaak* (respect) necessitates a consciousness that all creation has a common origin, and for this reason *iisaak* is extended to all life forms. The mystery of creation has created a network of relationships characterized by *iisaak*.”<sup>562</sup> According to Umeek, *iisaak* was shown through proper recognition and thanksgiving. He provides an example of our relations with the salmon writing, “Thus the traditional Nuu-chah-nulth paid respect to the arrival of the first salmon of the season by conducting a

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<sup>560</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>561</sup> Webster, 60.

<sup>562</sup> Umeek, 2004, 15-16. *Emphasis* in original.

welcoming ceremony of recognition and thanksgiving.”<sup>563</sup> I also believe that these ceremonies were important for *us*; they helped remind our people to always act with respect and reverence to the life that sustained us. Continual reinforcement of this fact is necessary for the ongoing health of our communities and our non-human relatives. Iisaak is closely related to the next principle, hiišuukish čawaak.

Hiišuukish čawaak means, Everything is one. Most people interpret this to mean that everything is connected, but Umeek prefers the literal translation, which means everything *is* one, and that there is a unity rooted in a common origin of all things. He writes, “*Heshookish tsawalk* is a Nuuchahnulth perspective that is inclusive of all reality, both physical and metaphysical...*Heshookish tsawalk* means more than the unity of the physical universe. It means more than the empirically based meaning attached to the world ‘holism.’”<sup>564</sup> This is an important distinction, for it includes spiritual and metaphysical unity that is often ignored in secular Western perspectives. From hiišuukish čawaak, Umeek has derived a “theory of Tsawalk,” that, “assumes that any variable must be affected by a multitude of additional variables that can be found in a variety of contexts across different dimensions of experience.”<sup>565</sup> He believes that his theory of Tsawalk has applications for both the natural and social sciences. With respect to scientific methodologies and the typical consideration of a small number of variables, Umeek says that the (Clayoquot) “Scientific Panel went much further stating that the ‘world is interconnected at all levels.’”<sup>566</sup> With respect to the social sciences and the relevance of the immaterial he writes, “the reality of the spiritual dimension also includes a moral, or value, dimension. It is the *value* dimension of existence that poses

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<sup>563</sup> Ibid. 20-21.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid. xi. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid. 118.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid. 126.

the most serious implications for Western culture.”<sup>567</sup> Umeek then refers to the Nuu-chah-nulth values of generosity, iisaak, the intrinsic value of all life forms, and the consequent violation of natural laws that is represented by the existence of poor people in wealthy societies.<sup>568</sup> Together, iisaak and hiišuukiš čawaak, provide important guidelines for *living* Nuu-chah-nulth-aht.

At this point I want to suggest some further nuances in understanding iisaak that relate to our contemporary political and economic contexts. Umeek writes, “Iis?ak’ can have two applications: (1) respect for other life forms and (2) respect for oneself.”<sup>569</sup> It is the latter point that I want emphasize with respect to critique and community decisions. Often, when people are critical of Nuu-chah-nulth leaders over political or economic matters, the typical response of late is to accuse the critics of being disrespectful. As we shall see in chapter five, this is also applied to legitimate criticisms that come from other Nuu-chah-nulth nations. It is often intended to discredit or deflect genuine concern over a political process or an economic project. On this Mack writes,

An important point to keep in mind is that *eesok* also entails a respect for self. For this reason, the principles of generosity cannot be said to legitimate a calm waters complex, where someone withholds their critical views for the sake of tranquility. Relations of respect do not equate a calm waters rationalization of relations of peace at all costs.<sup>570</sup>

The absence of conflict is not the same as a peace representative of balance and harmony. And being respectful does not mean biting our tongues when we genuinely disagree with the direction of community politics or an economic project. There are plenty of examples of Nuu-chah-nulth-based decision-making and dispute resolution that allow for a wide

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid. 126-130.

<sup>569</sup> Umeek, 2011, 160.

<sup>570</sup> Johnny Camille Mack, “Thickening Totems and Thinning Imperialism,” (LLM thesis, University of Victoria, 2009): 24.

spectrum of opinions *and* afford respect and patience to everyone involved.

Unfortunately, modern bureaucratic and business practices do not usually allow for this approach. Mack also believes that our interactions with the state should also reflect relations of respect whenever possible. He writes,

We also have a responsibility to ensure that the institutions we act within and through are themselves embedded in principles of respect. Thus, for example, the modern principles of practical efficiency and the cold, detached objectivity of the bureaucratic state work against *eesok*, even if we, ourselves, approach state institutions (whether they be educational/judicial/political) from a posture of respect. Otherwise, our respectful conduct becomes co-opted by the entrenched normative framework of those institutions.<sup>571</sup>

Mack is speaking primarily of his nation's interactions with the state during comprehensive claims negotiations, but I believe it has broad application to all of our state-centric engagements. In my examination of Nuuchahnulth political economy, I measure our decisions and practices against the guiding principles of *hiišuukish čawaak* and *iisaak*. It will also be fruitful to consider a Nuuchahnulth perspective on change as well, considering our extensive history with it and the challenges we are bound to face in the future.

### ***A Nuuchahnulth Perspective on Change***

*Umeek* writes, "Change seems to be an ongoing characteristic of reality."<sup>572</sup> There are plenty of Nuuchahnulth stories about change and adaptation. *Umeek* writes that the,

Historical process (of change) is neither evolutionary nor developmental in the linear sense. Changes are not from simple to complex, as a more modern worldview would have it, but from complex to complex, from equal to equal...Biodiversity is produced from common origins; all life-forms are from the same family. In this discourse, which remained unchanged for millennia, Nuuchahnulth were encouraged to see other species, as well as

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<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> *Umeek* (E. Richard Atleo), "Commentary, Discourses in and about Clayoquot Sound: A First Nations Perspective," in *A Political Space: Reading the Global Through Clayoquot Sound*, eds. Warren Magnusson and Karena Shaw (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002): 205.

other peoples, as equals.<sup>573</sup>

Understanding other humans and life forms as equals demands that we treat all of creation with iisaak. So while traditional Nuu-chah-nulth-aht anticipated change, this reinforced rather than displaced our values and principles. With settler colonialism, we also came to understand that change could be destructive for our people and places. Umeek acknowledges that settler colonialism ushered in, “modernity, which meant for the Nuu-chah-nulth, oppression, dispossession, inequality, poverty, strange sicknesses, decimation, and enforced conformity to European ways of life.”<sup>574</sup> He concludes,

Civilization, among traditional aboriginals, requires mutual recognition, mutual respect, mutual responsibility, and mutual accountability. The references are not to humans only but to all life-forms, for it is believed that we all derive from the same source, our lives are bound together inextricably, making us all relations.<sup>575</sup>

Umeek offers us a powerful perspective on Nuu-chah-nulth worldviews and values, which are helpful in our examination of present and future economic development activities, but I fear they will be difficult to live up to in the pervasive environment of neoliberal capitalism, which does not favour or reward mutual respect, responsibility, or accountability as we understand them.

### **Critical Traditionalism**

I believe we need to engage Nuu-chah-nulth traditions carefully and critically. I have learned enough to know that we still possess within our collective memory, beautiful, helpful, respectful, loving teachings. In reference to resurgence in his own community of Kahnawake, Alfred introduces the notion of “self-conscious traditionalism.” He writes, “By bringing forward core values and principles from the vast store of our traditional teachings,

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<sup>573</sup> Umeek, 2002, 200.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid. 203.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid. 207.

and selectively employing these aspects of their tradition that are appropriate to the present social, political, and economic realities, the community has begun to construct a framework for government that represents a viable alternative to colonialism and that respects Native traditions.”<sup>576</sup> I also know that our lived individual and collective experiences have not always reflected those teachings. This is not unusual. Every society and culture has *aspirational* values and principles. Fulfilling our teachings and obligations is further complicated by settler colonialism. Our colonial history is messy and complicated. Like Indigenous peoples everywhere, colonization compelled us to protect and preserve our cultures. Preservation, however, brings to mind the notion of freezing our cultures in time, and the essentialization of qualities and practices that might very well now be arbitrary, if not irrelevant or harmful. Donald writes, “A focus on culture as a codified authority can result in a reduction of culture to essentializations, meaningless generalizations, or trivial anecdotes.”<sup>577</sup> Our traditions have also mingled with, influenced and been influenced by settler traditions, principles, practices, and religions. In principle, there is nothing inherently wrong this. Cross-pollination between cultures happens all the time all over the world, or as Lyons puts it, “there is no way around the fact that we live in mutually contaminating times.”<sup>578</sup> What concerns me is when the language of essentialism dominates and creates the impression of authenticity, in a static and/or dogmatic fashion. Critical traditionalism seeks to identify that which is best and relevant about our traditional teachings and stories, especially the underlying principles, and redeploy them to meet our contemporary challenges. It does not hold blindly onto dogmatic practices that are no longer relevant or appropriate. Singh, citing Ashis Nandy (1987), states that, “critical traditionalisms criticize

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<sup>576</sup> Alfred, 2009, 105.

<sup>577</sup> Donald et al, 67.

<sup>578</sup> Lyons, xi.

the present using the resources internal to non-modern traditions.”<sup>579</sup> In this sense I see critical traditionalism as one aspect of contemporary critique that is rooted in our traditional Nuu-chah-nulth stories and teachings, but I also believe that our traditions must remain open to critique as well. Historian Paige Raibmon reminds us, “Despite colonial claims to the contrary, the authenticity of Aboriginal life lay not in the mindless, mechanical reproduction of age-old rituals but in the fresh generation of meaningful ways to identify as (Indigenous) within a changing and increasingly modern age.”<sup>580</sup>

There are also some aspects about contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth culture and traditions that are sexist, misogynistic and gender normative in ways that current and future generations may prefer to abandon. More generally, Altamirano-Jiménez writes, “Dominant discourses of tradition are aimed at concealing the conflicting power relationship between gender and tradition and at legitimizing the status quo, which generally excludes Aboriginal women and their concerns.”<sup>581</sup> I believe that we can still uphold certain core principles and values, while not being tied down to specific ways of doing things and address cultural norms and institutions that discriminate against women. Shari Huhndorf and Cheryl Suzack write, “Those who struggle for gender equality are often seen, sometimes erroneously, as opposing traditional Indigenous practices and forms of social organization. Thus, Indigenous feminism frequently elicits accusations that it fractures communities and undermines more pressing struggles for Indigenous autonomy.”<sup>582</sup> I agree with Huhndorf and Suzack and reject the notion that a feminist perspective undermines Indigenous autonomy. I would argue

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<sup>579</sup> Singh, 78-79.

<sup>580</sup> Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounters From the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005): 199.

<sup>581</sup> Altamirano-Jiménez, 2008, 129.

<sup>582</sup> Shari M. Huhndorf and Cheryl Suzack, “Indigenous Feminisms: Theorizing the Issues,” in *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, eds. Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010): 2.

that true Indigenous autonomy is not possible unless it is brought about through Indigenous feminist critique and praxis. Kim Anderson writes, “For me, Indigenous feminism is about creating a new world out of the best of the old. Indigenous feminism is about honouring creation in all its forms, while also fostering the kind of critical thinking that will allow us to stay true to our traditional reverence for life.”<sup>583</sup> This is the approach that I hope I am promoting here, while at the same time recognizing that there is no singular Indigenous feminism. Indigenous feminisms are as diverse as Indigenous peoples, something I shall always endeavor to keep in mind.

At times there are debates about what is *authentically traditional*, with respect to gender roles, and what is not. Many dogmatic cultural practices dictate what women can do and not do, wear or not wear, say and act, especially during certain ceremonies. Whether certain patriarchal practices were genuine traditions or hybrid-settler-Indigenous traditions is no longer the point in my opinion.<sup>584</sup> Donald writes, “Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints are interreferential, interconnected, and yet simultaneously rife with the power dynamics of coloniality.”<sup>585</sup> We need to address these traditions critically, keeping the laws and protocols that foster justice, equality, respect, and balance, and discarding those that do not. I do not claim that this is an easy task and I certainly do not claim that our past was Utopic. As John Borrows reminds us, “There is no romantic time of pre-contact, which was an idyllic existence for Indigenous societies...Violence, tension, creation, destruction, harmony, and

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<sup>583</sup> Anderson, 89.

<sup>584</sup> There are a lot of Indigenous feminists that have done exemplary work in this area, many of which I cite in this thesis, but two volumes that certainly had an influence on my early thinking on this are: Joyce Green, ed., *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2007, and Kim Anderson and Bonita Lawrence, eds. *Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival*, Toronto: Sumach Press, 2006.

<sup>585</sup> Donald, 548.



tenuous peace have always been with us in varying degrees.”<sup>586</sup> Discussions about Indigenous legal traditions are dynamic, fluid conversations that occur in the communities amongst families, elders, youth and leaders and my contribution is but one perspective. Reid speaks about, “A traditional future,” that captures quite nicely, the aspects of Indigenous histories, teachings, laws, protocols and how they might apply to our present and future.<sup>587</sup> In the following chapters, I consider these themes and ideas in the context of Nuuchahnulth political economy through time.

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<sup>586</sup> John Borrows, *Canada's Indigenous Constitution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010): 10-11.

<sup>587</sup> Reid, 276-281.

## Chapter Five - Nuuchah-nulth Political Economy Through History

In this chapter, I highlight key events in the political economic history of the Nuuchah-nulth people. I pay particular attention to changes and adaptations throughout our history. Nuuchah-nulth-aht, like all peoples, have always had to cope with and navigate change in their communities. The changes that came with colonization, however, have arguably been the most dramatic. Kuokkanen writes, “Replacing subsistence with trade and relations of sharing with market exchanges led in many Indigenous societies to the collapse of traditional economies, loss of collective and individual autonomy, starvation, poverty and ecological imbalances, for example, overhunting due to pressures of trade.”<sup>588</sup> But our oral histories going back to pre-contact times are filled with lessons on how to manage and navigate change. And Reid writes, “What unfolded in these waters was no simple set of processes that spelled unequivocal doom for Native peoples. Like other historical processes, settler-colonialism in this region unfolded in contingent ways that indigenous historical actors attempted to shape for their own purposes and to benefit their own communities.”<sup>589</sup> I hope to identify and illuminate the guiding principles that informed our people as they dealt with new and challenging circumstances. In doing so, I seek to dispel a number of myths about Indigenous peoples that have developed over the years, some that I myself believed. I came into this project thinking that dramatic change was a very recent phenomenon and that it had only been a couple of generations since our Nuuchah-nulth communities were fully functioning and healthy, but that is not necessarily the case. I realize that this will require significant unpacking to fully articulate my point.

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<sup>588</sup> Kuokkanen, 2011a, 279.

<sup>589</sup> Reid, 13.

Let me step back a bit, for this is also connected to the notion of Natives “selling out.” The simplified narrative of settler colonial economic exploitation reads as follows: Settlers forcefully take Indigenous lands and resources, and Indigenous peoples resist this development attempting to defend their traditional ways of living. In this narrative, capitalist development is something that *happens to* Indigenous peoples. In many respects, this is true. Settlers did impose their will. They stole our lands, herded us on to reserves, and exploited the earth’s resources for their own benefit. It is also true that many Indigenous people, including Nuuchahnulth resisted *and* worked with settlers at various times. Our lands, waters, resources and traditional life ways were and continue to be threatened, but this is not the entire picture. Recent examples of Nuuchahnulth resistance to economic exploitation include our opposition to overzealous settler logging practices, the original incursion of fish farms, and potential mining projects in Clayoquot Sound. What first attracted me to this area of study was the juxtaposition of our initial opposition to these economic projects and the rather sudden about-face, eventual endorsement of these projects, and participation as partners. To me it felt like a betrayal. What I have learned since, is that the shift was not as sudden as I had assumed, and that our communities have been grappling with how best to engage with and resist capitalism for many, many generations. This realization was important for me, as it illuminated a fuller picture about our own agency in the economic activities that have taken place in our territories. We have not just been unwilling victims of settler colonial capitalism. We have actively tried to make the best of our situations, through each succeeding generation. This realization is both encouraging and discouraging. I am encouraged that we have remained active, always seeking ways in which to better survive our circumstances. It is discouraging as well, because it truly reveals the power and scope of

settler colonial and neoliberal capitalism and how hard it has been to resist. Our ongoing agency is important, however, which leads me to the second myth that I wish to dispel.

There are a number of schools of thought with respect to Indigenous peoples and their historical and contemporary status as environmentalists. On the one hand, you have people like Shepherd Krech III, who believe that Indigenous peoples were responsible for killing off North American megafauna,<sup>590</sup> and on the other hand, some people believe that Indigenous peoples were so sparsely populated, technologies so primitive, and the natural resources so abundant that we were incapable of having a negative impact on our environments.<sup>591</sup> I believe both perspectives to be flawed, but I want to address the latter argument in particular, which is often employed to suggest the simplicity – if not complete absence - of our governance and management systems. In Nuu-chah-nulth territory, this argument is disproved when you consider that in the wake of colonial settlement, our populations decreased dramatically, mostly due to foreign diseases to which our people had no immunity. It is estimated that coastal Indigenous populations plummeted by sixty-five to ninety percent in the span of a generation.<sup>592</sup> This would mean that there were more Nuu-chah-nulth people living on the west coast of Vancouver Island prior to contact than there are living there now, including non-Indigenous people. The truth is we always had an impact on our environments, were an active part of our ecosystems, and we employed sophisticated management systems to maintain balance through relations of respect and reciprocity. All of

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<sup>590</sup> Shepard Krech III, “Reflections on Conservation, Sustainability, and Environmentalism in Indigenous North America” in *American Anthropologist* 107, 1 (2005): 78-86.

<sup>591</sup> Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard, *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry: The Deception Behind Indigenous Cultural Preservation* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008): 215-248.

<sup>592</sup> Huu-ay-aht First Nations, “Kiix?in Agenda Paper” in *Nuu-chah-nulth Voices, Histories, Objects & Journeys*, ed. Alan L. Hoover (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 2000): 39.

this is to suggest that we have within our collective cultural memory and our oral histories, knowledge of how to interact with our environments that remains relevant today.

I wish to keep these two main points in mind: our complex governance systems and our continuous agency, as I consider the changes experienced throughout our economic history. Despite my own initial desire to think of our relationship with capitalism as black and white, we shall see that it is very much grey. This does not mean that our critiques are irrelevant either, but rather it is precisely because our realities are grey and complex, that we must sharpen our critiques so that we examine our situations more clearly and understand our roles going forward with the depth that they deserve. Being Indigenous comes with responsibilities. Being Nuu-chah-nulth, *living Nuu-chah-nulth-aht*, requires that we honour our stories, our ancestors, and make the best decisions possible for the health and wellbeing of present and future generations. A lot of Indigenous rhetoric focuses on future generations, but in my analysis I do not want to neglect the importance of present generations as well, which complicates the difficult decisions that we have to make in the contexts of settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism. In this review of Nuu-chah-nulth economic history, I begin with whaling.

### **Nuu-chah-nulth Whaling**

*“Whaling traditions were central to our very existence as a people and were intricately connected to Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth economic, political, religious, and social systems.”*  
— Charlotte Côté<sup>593</sup>

I begin this examination of the economic history of Nuu-chah-nulth-aht with an exploration of our time as the great whale hunters of the west coast. I descend from a whaling family. My great-great-grandfather Kiista was the last Ahous ḥaw’ił to successfully capture a whale

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<sup>593</sup> Côté, 16.

on the west coast.<sup>594</sup> I start here, because as Coté points out, it was central to our existence as Nuu-chah-nulth people and, I argue, critical to understanding our contemporary economic practices and decision-making. Nuu-chah-nulth people are not strangers to the idea of dancing to our own drums. Despite certain perceived external and internal expectations, we do our own thing. Ahous partnership with fish farm companies is the most obvious example, where nearly every other First Nation on the coast has rejected them. There are also some critical aspects to our whaling traditions that help explain our economic history and continue to inform our contemporary worldviews. I draw special attention to how our understanding of spirituality has informed our economic and subsistence practices as well as our engagements with neoliberal capitalism.

According to Coté, and contrary to what some people have thought, “For the Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth, whaling was the foundation of the economic structure. Our societies maintained optimum health by consuming large quantities of meat, fat, and oil from whales and other sea mammals.”<sup>595</sup> Coté believes that at one point as much as eighty percent of our nutritional intake came from whales.<sup>596</sup> This is significant because, as we shall soon understand, the cessation of traditional whaling was a tremendous blow to Nuu-chah-nulth subsistence, economic, cultural, and political practices. A number of factors contributed to the decline of our whaling practices, first among them was overharvesting by commercial whaling fleets. This, in combination with a multitude of other factors changed our world forever. Coté writes,

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<sup>594</sup> Given my analysis of the text and what I have been told orally, it seems clear to me that Chief Kiista was one of Philip Drucker’s informants (credited as āLiyū) on Nuu-chah-nulth whaling. See: Philip Drucker, “Nootka Whaling,” *Indians of the North Pacific Coast* McFeat, Tom, ed. (Toronto/Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1966): 22-27.

<sup>595</sup> Coté 196.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid. 65.

Beginning in the 1850s, our societies began to face rapid economic, political, social, and cultural changes that ultimately led to the end of whale hunts in the 1920s. My ancestors faced diseases that severed many of the hereditary lineages that had helped structure and maintain our social systems. We faced government policies that took our children away, banned our ceremonies, and taught us that our way of life was savage.<sup>597</sup>

First, I want to reiterate the spiritual significance of whaling and then touch on the interconnection of whaling and our governance systems, and how changes to these practices have helped shape our current economic precariousness.

More than just the loss of a vital food source, the loss of traditional whaling practices radically changed our economic circumstances and shook our spiritual understanding of the world to its foundations. To grasp this you need to understand Nuu-chah-nulth spirituality and its intimate integration within the practice of whaling. Nuu-chah-nulth-aht are intensely spiritual people. From a young age, Nuu-chah-nulth children are trained to humbly ask for spiritual strength so that they may have success in their endeavours. Children were encouraged to run down to the beach each morning and bathe in the frigid ocean waters. This practice would be built upon as they got older, into more substantial physical and spiritual preparations, including the practice of *uusimč*. Whaling chiefs observed these protocols and enacted rituals and intense physical preparations for months at a time. Côté writes,

Our whaling tradition was immersed in spiritual, ritual, and religious practices. The whaling *ha'wiih* underwent months of complex rituals and ceremonial preparation to assure their success in whaling. It was believed that a chief's ability to catch a whale was derived from the spiritual world that provided him with power or medicine that other members of the tribe did not possess.<sup>598</sup>

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<sup>597</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid. 23. *Emphasis* in original.

From this, I want to draw your attention to a few key points. First, Nuu-chah-nulth people believed that humble petitions to the spirit world were vital to economic success. Second, if it is not already evident, whaling was the sole right and responsibility of the ha'wiih. Both of these points have a profound impact on how we currently understand our economic and political circumstances.

If we understand our material and economic success in spiritual terms, what were historical Nuu-chah-nulth-aht to make of the overwhelming wealth and power of the Europeans they encountered? It is important to remember that contact and colonization came to our west coast waters much later than it did for Atlantic, Eastern and Central North American Indigenous peoples. The colonials that arrived on our shores were not malnourished and starving and colonization had developed an incredible amount of inertia and frightening efficiency by the early nineteenth century. If material success was highly dependent on spiritual preparations and protocols, then it stands to reason that European spiritual traditions, namely Christianity, must have been very powerful indeed.<sup>599</sup> I have always been troubled by the extent to which many of our people have adopted Christianity. I had previously attributed it to our weakening from disease and the forcefulness of residential schools, but in light of what Umeek suggests, we have to consider other contributing factors as well. This does not incline me to be more accepting of Christianity myself, but I better understand why many Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have accepted it and integrated it into their lives.<sup>600</sup> I also better understand how many of our people have regarded the material success

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<sup>599</sup> I want to be very clear that I am not disparaging our spiritual traditions and practices with this revelation. I am merely pointing out how our particular spiritual orientation shaped our interpretation of the spiritual orientation of settler colonials and our understanding of their material success.

<sup>600</sup> I have not studied this area at all, but for more analysis of the complications of Indigenous peoples and imperial religions see: Manuel Aguilar-Moreno, "Evangelization and Indigenous Religious Reactions to Conquest and Colonization," *The Cambridge History of Religions in Latin*



of settlers and in some cases, sought to emulate it. Of course, this is not to say that many Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have not been critical of and resisted Western religions and economic practices, but it adds some complexity to our story.

The second point that I want to address relates to the role of the ha'wiih in our traditional whaling practices and why this is economically significant, especially when those practices ended in the early part of the twentieth century. There is no question that the harpooning and capturing of whales was the sole prerogative of the hereditary chiefs.<sup>601</sup> And as indicated in chapter four, the role of the ha'wiih was central to the functioning of Nuu-chah-nulth governance. Côté writes, “While whaling elevated the status of the *ha'wiih*, providing them with wealth that maintained their position within their societies, it also served an important societal function in maintaining social cohesion, communal sharing, and tribal unity. Distribution of the whale benefited all members of the village so that everyone had a stake in the whaling tradition.”<sup>602</sup> You will recall that there were checks and balances built in to Nuu-chah-nulth systems of government, but when traditional whaling ceased, the central role of ha'wiih in Nuu-chah-nulth economics, also, arguably ceased. Côté states, “Social distinctions began to fade away, and people from all social ranks – chiefs, commoners, and slaves – had access to new economic opportunities for gaining wealth and moving up the social ladder.”<sup>603</sup> Many will regard this point as contentious, and it is not my intent to discredit the role of ha'wiih, but I feel it important to point out the consequences of changes to our economic and political systems on our traditional governance systems.

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*America*, edited by Virginia, Garrard-Burnett, Paul Freston, and Stephen C. Dove, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, and Justin Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton, eds. *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016.

<sup>601</sup> Drucker, 1966, 24.

<sup>602</sup> Côté, 39. *Emphasis* in original.

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.* 59.

In addition to the cessation of traditional whaling, the federal government also began to force a colonial governance system on our communities that had also become centralized on specific and static reserves. Côté writes, “As political and social power began to shift to the elected governing councils, the (hereditary) chiefs’ control over their land and marine space was challenged...social obligations and a chief’s authority were undermined.”<sup>604</sup> Although I would not say that the traditional governance systems of Nuuchahnulth have been completely forgotten, ha’wiih no longer have the same influence as they did prior to contact. Federal money and recognition continue to flow to the elected band and tribal councils of the *Indian Act*. As we will see in more recent times, however, the Ahousaht ha’wiih have made a recovery. They continue to assert influence on economic and political activities in their territories in critical, and sometimes, controversial ways. In the next chapter I will discuss the significance of the revival of Makah whaling in 1999 and the challenges to Indigenous autonomy that remain firmly entrenched in today’s settler colonial reality.

### **The Arrival of Mamaltnii: Colonial Trade, and Changing Subsistence Patterns**

Without question, the biggest changes that the Nuuchahnulth have struggled with, economically and otherwise, have been precipitated by the arrival of mamaltnii on our shores. In 1774, the *Santiago*, under the command of Juan Perez visited the west coast of Vancouver Island briefly but not much of this encounter has been reported.<sup>605</sup> Four years later, in 1778, Captain James Cook arrived in Mowachaht/Muchalaht territories, in an area that is now known as Friendly Cove. According to oral history, Captain Cook and his crew

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<sup>604</sup> Ibid. 58.

<sup>605</sup> Inglis and Haggarty, 94.

were not in good health. The Mowachaht welcomed and fed them.<sup>606</sup> The English stayed for a month, essentially beginning the maritime fur trade.<sup>607</sup> More British ships would come to trade in Nuuchahnulth territories, along with vessels from Spain, Portugal, the United States, France, and Russia. This initial contact is critical to understanding many of the events that would follow and the changes that continue to resonate in Indigenous-settler relations on the west coast of Vancouver Island. I will get to the economic impacts shortly, but first I want to address the function of naming in colonization. First, Cook would name the Mowachaht/Muchalaht territorial waters he traded in, Nootka Sound. This came from a misunderstanding in communication that he had with the first Nuuchahnulth-aht he encountered. Umeek writes,

According to oral history, the Mowachaht, who have lived in Nootka Sound for millennia, found Captain Cook apparently lost in the fog just outside Friendly Cove. Since English was not yet a locally required language, they provided him with directions to safe harbour in the Nuuchahnulth language. The Nuuchahnulth phrase employed for the occasion, *nutkh-she-ee*, which sounds a little like “noot’ka” when shouted from a distance over the sea, means “to turn around.” As the phrase gives no indication of direction, one can imagine that it was accompanied by a chorus of arms waving in large circles to indicate the route.<sup>608</sup>

The anecdotal version of this story tells of the Mowachaht yelling at Cook that he was going to run aground. For the subsequent two hundred years of anthropological and historical scholarship, we would be known as the Nootka.<sup>609</sup> In 1793, Captain George Vancouver, on a mapping mission, would circumnavigate the Island that would later bare his name.<sup>610</sup> Our

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<sup>606</sup> Black, 22.

<sup>607</sup> Union of BC Indian Chiefs, *Stolen Lands, Broken Promises: Researching the Indian Land Question in British Columbia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vancouver: Union of BC Indian Chiefs, 2005): 14.

<sup>608</sup> Umeek, 2004, 1.

<sup>609</sup> Others referred to as the “Aht people” due to the fact that aht as a suffix denotes a person to be from a particular place. See: Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, “Boatmanship,” *Indians of the North Pacific Coast* (Toronto/Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1966): 18.

<sup>610</sup> Union of BC Indian Chiefs, 14.

territories are now full of colonial names like Alberni, Tofino, Meares, Cook, Flores, Esperanza, Sproat and Zeballos. Mary Stuckey and John Murphy write, “naming naturalized the process of colonization, reflecting and reinforcing colonial power.”<sup>611</sup> They further add that, “A terminology may allow colonizers to see their new nation as unified, but that pretense is based upon the denial of indigenous identity, a denial that is *violent*.”<sup>612</sup> Coté, along with Keith Basso, and Cole Harris have also documented the significance of naming in colonization as well as understanding places and people from Indigenous perspectives.<sup>613</sup>

Many anthropologists and historians have attempted to document ‘traditional’ Indigenous life. This was done for a number of reasons, including a desire to document the “authentic” lives of a dying people before they disappeared. Between 1778 and 1805 more than fifty European and American ships visited Nuuchah-nulth territories.<sup>614</sup> Historians have used the logs and journals of these colonial travellers as evidence of traditional Nuuchah-nulth life and communities. This is problematic in many respects, not the least of which is how these perspectives shaped colonial narratives of conquest, but my focus here is on the nature of change and continuity in Nuuchah-nulth communities. Richard Inglis and James Haggarty point to the writings of Wike (1951), Lesage (1984), Fisher (1977), Moore (1977), Mills (1955), Gunther (1972), and Folan (1976) and write, “All of these studies have assumed that the descriptions of Aboriginal life in these documents pertain to an essentially

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<sup>611</sup> Mary E. Stuckey and John M. Murphy, “By Any Other Name: Rhetorical Colonialism in North America” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 25, 4 (2001): 76.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>613</sup> Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Language and Landscape among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996. Cole Harris, “How did Colonialism Dispospossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire,” in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, 1 (Mar. 2004): 165-182.

<sup>614</sup> Inglis and Haggarty, 92.

traditional culture, an assumption that is still commonly held today.”<sup>615</sup> The main problem with relying on early Euroamerican perspectives of Indigenous communities is that within the context of settler colonialism, ‘authentic’ Indigenous life is inaccurately frozen in time. This has had profound consequences in contemporary times with respect to day-to-day Indigenous-settler relations, government laws and policies, and in the colonial courts of law where Aboriginal rights and title cases have been decided.<sup>616</sup> I agree with Inglis and Haggarty’s primary argument that, “By assuming that these early descriptions reflect traditional cultural patterns, anthropologists have misinterpreted the magnitude and intensity of cultural change in the first decades of (colonial) recorded history in Nootka Sound...(and) traditional subsistence and settlement patterns changed early and dramatically.”<sup>617</sup> Relying solely on settler colonial accounts of Nuuchahnulth histories is fraught with complications and potential inaccuracies. All sources merit careful and critical examination as well as cross-referencing, which is what I have attempted to do here.

With respect to economic relations post-contact, the first major item to be traded was sea otter pelts, which were highly valued in China at the time. This is significant for a number of reasons. As I understand it, the wearing of sea-otter pelts is also the sole right of ha’wiih or as Moziño puts it, “The sea otter provides a garment reserved only to the nobles of the first rank.”<sup>618</sup> This would certainly reaffirm the role and place of ha’wiih in early

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<sup>615</sup> Ibid. 92.

<sup>616</sup> An enduring legal principle in the post-section 35 era is the “distinctive culture” test, wherein Aboriginal claimants must prove, “a pre-contact *practice* which was integral to the distinctive culture of the particular aboriginal community.” This is a direct quote from the *Sappier* and *Polchies* decisions quoted in: S. Ronald Stevenson, “Toward a Shared Narrative of Reconciliation: Developments in Canadian Aboriginal Rights Law,” *Storied Communities: Narratives of Contact and Arrival in Constituting Political Community*, edited by Hester Lessard, Rebecca Johnson, and Jeremy Webber (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011): 281.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid. 92-93.

<sup>618</sup> Moziño, 14.

trading with the Europeans. Trading in this respect did not necessarily disrupt Nuu-chah-nulth socio-political relations, but it did drastically alter subsistence patterns. Inglis and Haggarty write of the Nuu-chah-nulth at Yuquot,

Changes in traditional subsistence pursuits were immediate and profound. The economic focus became sea-otter hunting and supplying vessels with fresh fish, meat, berries, and vegetables. Manpower was scheduled away from traditional economic pursuits, to guard the vessels and thus prevent other groups from having direct access to the trade. Chiefs had to be present to handle protocol and to conduct the actual trade negotiations.<sup>619</sup>

Another reason that the advent of the maritime fur trade is important is that it led to year-round trading and a substantial shift in time and resources to facilitate.<sup>620</sup> Just as Europeans and Americans competed and conflicted with each other for favourable trade access, Nuu-chah-nulth ha'wiih competed with each other for favourable access to the colonial traders and their goods. I am not suggesting that Nuu-chah-nulth-aht did not previously compete with each other for resources or that we in fact did not engage in physical hostilities either. It is safe to say, however, that hostilities intensified with the arrival of the Europeans and the subsequent changes in our subsistence patterns.<sup>621</sup> The introduction of new weapons – especially firearms - also contributed to intensified warfare amongst Nuu-chah-nulth-aht including the Ahous-Otsuus war. Moziño wrote of the Nuu-chah-nulth in 1792 – eighteen years after initial contact with the Spaniards – “Today they handle all the European arms of flints, sabers, and swords with special dexterity.”<sup>622</sup>

The intensity of trading and sea otter hunting would not be without consequence, socio-politically, as well as environmentally. Inglis and Haggarty write, “After 1795, few traders visited the west coast of Vancouver Island. Sea-otter skins had become scarce and

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<sup>619</sup> Ibid. 103.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid. 96.

<sup>621</sup> Harris, 2001, 194-197.

<sup>622</sup> Moziño, 16.

the centre of the trade had moved to the north.”<sup>623</sup> In less than a generation, intense hunting and trading activities nearly decimated the sea-otter population of the west coast. This fact of early Indigenous-colonial economic relations weighs heavily in my analysis, both historically and contemporarily. First, I make the argument that we - or more accurately, the Nuu-chah-nulth ha’wiih - consciously decided to enter into these economic relationships with the colonials. They were not without agency in their early dealings with the Europeans, but their actions would have massive repercussions through time for the health and wellbeing of their hahuulthlii. On our relations with settler colonials, Raibmon writes, “Engagement with colonial agents and categories – whether acquiescent, collaborative, or defiant – further entrenched colonial hegemony.”<sup>624</sup> Second, the intensity of economic exploitation, resource depletion, and subsequent change in status of the area to colonial economic irrelevance is a pattern that continues to repeat itself. Historian Patricia Limerick succinctly describes this approach as, “get in, get rich, get out.”<sup>625</sup> The same thing would happen with seals, whales, trees, and fish. It has been a defining feature of settler colonial, and later neoliberal capitalism. And Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have not *always* been unwilling victims or sidelined in these activities in our territories. At times, we have been complicit and at times I believe we have been guilty of violating our own sacred laws and responsibilities at the behest of the market, but recently and importantly, this has been under the pressure of *actual* poverty and dire socio-economic circumstances as we have come to understand them.<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>623</sup> Ibid. 98.

<sup>624</sup> Raibmon, 10.

<sup>625</sup> Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1999): 100.

<sup>626</sup> I say *actual* poverty here because as I have already mentioned, while colonial officials may have thought Nuu-chah-nulth-aht impoverished in the past, I attribute this to different value-systems. It is

I want to briefly mention the significance of seal hunting in our economic history as well, not in historical detail, but more as a means of highlighting the changes in our economic patterns and the consequences of those changes. Côté writes, “Beginning in 1868, commercial pelagic off-shore sealing grew into a major industry in the Pacific Northwest, peaking in 1896. Commercial sealing schooners hired Makah and Nuuchah-nulth crewmen to accompany them to the northern sealing grounds in the Bering Sea.”<sup>627</sup> The late Chief Maquinna writes, “Before the fur seal became a focus for the European fur industry, it was an important source of food for the coastal people. Our people used the meat and made robes that were very warm and comfortable from their fine fur...The Europeans who first came among us at Nootka Sound changed our relationship with fur seals.”<sup>628</sup> Not only did seal hunting for foreign ships provide a new source of income for Nuuchah-nulth-aht overall, it also represented an opportunity for non-ha’wiih to engage with the colonial cash economy in ways that were not open to them in previous relationships, like whaling (whale oil was sold to colonial traders) or the sea-otter fur trade. The significance of this cannot be overstated. Some people might understand it as a form of economic democratization, but it became another form of change that would drastically alter traditional Nuuchah-nulth political, social, and economic relationships. As with most settler colonial economic patterns, the seal hunting industry would also be short-sighted and short-lived. Côté writes, “by the 1890s, the commercial pelagic sealing industry collapsed because of unregulated harvesting, and many Makah and Nuuchah-nulth members turned their attention to the emerging fishing

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also important to remember that in the past, we were never actually hungry as we had abundant access to food, despite not having money. Today, Indigenous people experience poverty and food insecurity both in their homelands and in Canada’s urban centres.

<sup>627</sup> Côté, 60.

<sup>628</sup> George, 62.



industry.”<sup>629</sup> Nuu-chah-nulth people had actively participated in market economies that would damage eco-system health, despite the many stories and laws that were meant to teach us otherwise. We had clearly crossed a line.

### **The Rise and Fall (and Rise?) of Nuu-chah-nulth Commercial Fishing**

Coté provides an appropriate segue into the dominant Nuu-chah-nulth economic activity of the last century, and one that I have also participated in: commercial fishing. The commercial fishing industry in British Columbia began to grow dramatically by the end of the nineteenth century and through the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>630</sup> With the cessation of whaling and the decline in hunting of other sea mammals, commercial fishing became the central economic activity of Nuu-chah-nulth-aht. Again, this would be another area of economic activity that was not restricted to the control of the Ha’wiih, but was open to all who had the means to buy boats and fishing licenses, the latter being a contentious and ongoing issue that I will get to shortly. Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have always fished for subsistence, moving with the seasons to fish and preserve their catch for the cold winter months. These practices intensified after the decline in sea mammal populations. Traditional political and economic distinctions were further eroded as the colonial cash economy began to dominate our economic relations.

Anyone could fish. It was not under the sole control of the ha’wiih, but commercial fishing also impacted another major aspect of traditional Nuu-chah-nulth governance and economic systems: Chiefly territories and rights were ignored by federal regulators *and* commercial fishers.<sup>631</sup> In the past, the territories of ha’wiih were clearly marked, respected

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<sup>629</sup> Coté, 61.

<sup>630</sup> Douglas C. Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries: Indian Reserves & Fishing Rights in British Columbia, 1849-1925* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008): 35.

<sup>631</sup> Harris, 2001, 3-4, 55, 209-211.

and defended. People, including other ha'wiih, had to have the permission of a chief to gather, fish, or hunt in their territory. Transgressions of this were dealt with harshly. People could gather, fish, or hunt in the territory of a haw'ił, but they needed permission and often a tribute of one's catch was given to that haw'ił as a show of respect and acknowledgement. Needless to say, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans did not observe these protocols; neither did non-Indigenous fishers, and eventually, neither did other Indigenous fishers. This went on intra and inter-tribally. A-in-chut, fondly remembers his days fishing with his uncles and cousins, but the two things that he never got used to were the industrial scale of fishing and the total disregard for the haw'huulthlii of other ha'wiih.<sup>632</sup> It would make sense that A-in-chut would point these two issues out because he is a haw'ił, and also a great-great grandson to Chief Kiista.

As with whaling, sea otter and seal hunting, the industrial-scale commercialization of these activities contributed to the collapse of sea-life populations, some of which have only just recovered in recent years. Many of the fish species that are harvested on the west coast of Vancouver Island today are in jeopardy. This includes the whole array of salmon varieties, cod, halibut, and herring. Ironically and sadly, the only fishery that is growing on the west coast is the fish farm industry. In the mid to late twentieth century, the Nuu-chah-nulth fishing fleet once numbered nearly two hundred boats.<sup>633</sup> That number dropped to less than ten by the early 2000s. Kelly Vodden writes, "The 1990s were a difficult decade for the BC fishery. By 1996 prices and revenues in the salmon fishery had fallen to less than half of what they were in the 1980s."<sup>634</sup> Vodden further writes, "In 1996 BC fishing communities

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<sup>632</sup> Atleo, 2010, 70-71.

<sup>633</sup> *Ahousaht et al v. Canada*, [2009] BCSC, para. 667.

<sup>634</sup> Kelly Vodden, "Sustainable Community Economic Development in a Coastal Context: The Case of Alert Bay, British Columbia," *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 3, 1 (2002): 63.

were hit with an economic disaster. The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced the Pacific Salmon Revitalization Strategy. Known as ‘the Mifflin Plan’ after fisheries Minister of the day (Fred Mifflin), the Plan aimed to conserve resources and increase economic viability within the fishing fleet. It was to accomplish this primarily through a 50% reduction in the size of the salmon fleet.”<sup>635</sup> Vodden concludes, “Thousands of jobs had been lost, particularly in remote First Nations communities highly dependent on the fishery for their livelihoods but unable to invest in license stacking.”<sup>636</sup> As a result of a recent legal case (*Ahousaht et al v. Canada*), our participation may finally start moving up again. This rise and fall in Nuuchahnulth participation in the commercial fisheries is important, because at one point in time, every single family was connected to fishing in some way, to a life on our homewaters. Today, nearly no one is connected to a life at sea. This has a number of consequences. By not making a living, however contentious, from the sea and sea life, we lose a fundamental connection to our history as seafaring people who derived much of our identities from such ways of living. Political Scientist, Paul Tennant points out important political consequences writing, “For individual Indians survival was a matter of economics rather than politics...The coastal fishing industry provided the major exception, becoming the only economic sector in the province in which Indians were well paid and able to maintain a substantial presence...These factors contributed to the continuing political self-confidence of the Indians in that part of the province.”<sup>637</sup> Dianne Newell adds,

Pacific Coast Indian men and women have always claimed aboriginal title, or rights, to their fisheries. They understood that they could not survive as

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid.

<sup>637</sup> Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990): 73.

‘distinct societies’ without greater control over their economic destinies. The fisheries were and still are [Newell published her book in 1993], I argue, a key to those destinies.<sup>638</sup>

As our numbers in the commercial fishery have declined, in general, so too has our willingness to oppose threats to that particular way of life/sustenance.

Additionally, alienation from our lands and waters enables us, indeed, forces us to look at them in different ways. We begin to see our relations less as *relatives* and equals, worthy of respect and more as *resources*, to be harvested and sold. This is the essence of neoliberal relationality to nature, animals and the environment.<sup>639</sup> Not only has the nature of our relations changed, but the growing scope of development has also had devastating consequences. Commercial fishing may have lasted longer than the sea otter and seal harvesting industries, but it has undergone a similar cycle of rise, over-exploitation, and decline.<sup>640</sup> The reasons for our intensive involvement in the industry are varied and complex, but we cannot ignore the fact that we did participate in the commercial fishing industry, which many have rightfully criticized as been unsustainable. In fact, I have heard that at one point in the late twentieth century, a small group of Indigenous women protested our involvement in the industry. It is significant that Indigenous women were able to see the imbalances and greed that negatively affected our communities, although not many Indigenous fishermen became wealthy capitalists.

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<sup>638</sup> Diane Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992): 3.

<sup>639</sup> Altamirano-Jiménez, 2013, 71-73

<sup>640</sup> Jeremy B.C. Jackson, Michael X. Kirby, Wolfgang H. Berger, Karen A. Bjorndal, Louis W. Botsford, Bruce J. Bourque, Roger H. Bradbury, Richard Cooke, Jon Erlandson, James A. Estes, Terence P. Hughes, Susan Kidwell, Carina B. Lange, Hunter S. Leniham, John M. Pandolfi, Charles H. Peterson, Robert S. Steneck, Mia J. Tegner and Robert R. Warner, "Historical Overfishing and the Recent Collapse of Coastal Ecosystems," *Science* 293 (July 2001): 629-637.

It is also important to point out that collectively, Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have at times resisted the overharvesting of fish, via petitions to government departments and in the courts. Recently, Nuu-chah-nulth, Haida, and Heiltsuk nations have been fighting the federal government and non-Native commercial fishers to stop an unsustainable commercial fishery that threatens the health of future herring.<sup>641</sup> Over the years, Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have also tried to work together with non-Native fishermen, attempting to build upon common ground: the long-term health of fish populations and disappointment in federal fisheries management, through organizations like the West Coast Aquatic Management Board. Another relatively recent change to the commercial industry has been its “privatization and consolidation.”<sup>642</sup> In the recent herring case for example, billionaire Jim Pattison owns the vast majority of commercial boats. Not only have government regulations gradually pushed Nuu-chah-nulth fishers out, they have done the same with individual non-Native fishers. It has become prohibitively expensive to be a commercial fisher, especially with specific changes to federal licensing regimes and the adoption of quota systems.<sup>643</sup> It now takes a rich person’s financing to be a fisher. Consequently, one man owns a substantial portion of the fleet and people that used to be independent operators are now out completely or work as employees. The late Chief Earl Maquinna George was right when he stated, “In the short period of a little more than a century, we have gone from using these things for our survival to being employees of large companies.”<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> Debora Steel, “Haida, Heiltsuk, and Nuu-chah-nulth Nations unite in opposition to commercial herring fisheries,” *Ha-shilth-sa*, February 3, 2014. Accessed April 4, 2016. <http://www.hashilthsa.com/news/2014-02-03/haida-heiltsuk-and-nuu-chah-nulth-nations-unite-opposition-commercial-herring-fisher>.

<sup>642</sup> Atleo, 2010, 72.

<sup>643</sup> Evelyn Pinkerton and Danielle N. Edwards, “The elephant in the room: The hidden cost of leasing individual transferable fishing quotas,” *Marine Policy* 33, 4 (July 2009): 707-713.

<sup>644</sup> George, 120.

Licensing and management has always been a contentious issue on the west coast.

With respect to Ahousaht commercial fishers, Wickaninnish states,

There was a guy that was appointed by the Ha'wiih to be our first chief councilor [Paul Sam] who advised all of us, all our people against paying for a [commercial fishing] license. He didn't believe in it. He thought we would regret it. At the time it only cost us a dollar. His advice sure came true. The way the license values are, you can't afford to be a fisherman. Just getting in is prohibitive.<sup>645</sup>

By agreeing to pay for commercial fishing licenses, Nuu-chah-nulth-aht granted a certain amount of legitimacy to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and its right to manage the west coast fisheries. This had profound consequences that are still felt today, but Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have not taken their ousting from the commercial fishing industry lying down. On June 19, 2003, eight Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations initiated a lawsuit (*Ahousaht et al v. Canada*) against the Canadian governments asserting the right to catch and sell fish.<sup>646</sup> The number of participating Nuu-chah-nulth nations dropped to five, but they eventually emerged victorious. With wins at the British Columbia Supreme Court in 2010, the British Columbia Court of Appeal in 2011, and with the Supreme Court of Canada rejecting the federal government's appeals in 2012 and 2014, the courts affirmed the Nuu-chah-nulth "right to harvest and sell all species of fish found within their territories."<sup>647</sup> But after nearly fourteen years in court and millions of dollars in legal fees, the matter is still not entirely settled. Negotiations regarding the implementation of the legal outcomes are ongoing. Uu-athluk, the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council fisheries department, announced that on March 9, 2015, "The five Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations return to court for a Justification Trial at which time Canada will attempt to justify why the Nuu-chah-nulth Nations were not

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<sup>645</sup> Atleo, 2010, 71.

<sup>646</sup> Côté 125.

<sup>647</sup> "Trial Updates for Ahousaht et al vs. Canada," *Uu-athluk*, accessed April 8, 2015. <http://uuathluk.ca/wordpress/litigation/trialupdates/>.

previously (or historically) given the right to harvest and sell all species of fish in their territories.”<sup>648</sup> Alas, the drama continues to unfold in Canada’s courts and at the negotiation table. Indigenous peoples fight for their right to continue their traditional and adaptive livelihoods as well as uphold their responsibilities to protect their homewaters, as in the case of the herring fishery. The battle rages on not only for the Indigenous right to harvest and manage sea life, but also on how to deal with relatively new and controversial economic players in our territorial waters: Fish farms.

### **Ahousaht: From Fishers to Farmers of Fish**

To say that they are controversial is an understatement, but the issue of fish farms in Clayoquot Sound is also a complicated one. My main interest here is in understanding our engagement with fish farm companies, first as opponents, and then later as partners in a complex and contentious relationship. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, resource extraction industries in Clayoquot Sound like forestry and mining, as well as the introduction of fish farming, together represent an important turning point in Nuu-chah-nulth economic history. I suggest that there have been three major eras of Nuu-chah-nulth engagement with colonial economies since contact. The first era of engagement began the day Captain Cook arrived in Nuu-chah-nulth waters and the month of trading that followed. Nuu-chah-nulth-aht were strong and confident and they exercised full agency in their trading relationship with the early colonial explorers. This is evident by the manner in which the ha’wiih immediately took control of the new trading relationships and engaged with the Europeans. There are several stories of ha’wiih that responded quick and decisively when their new trading partners failed to observe protocols of respect. In 1803, Chief Maquinna attacked the British vessel *Boston*, after the ship’s captain insulted him in trade negotiations.

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<sup>648</sup> “Trial Updates for Ahousaht et al vs. Canada.”

They burned the ship and killed all but two of the crew.<sup>649</sup> One of the survivors, John R. Jewitt, would live as Maquinna's slave for twenty-eight months. After his release, he wrote extensively about his captivity and life among the Nuuchah-nulth-aht.<sup>650</sup> And in 1811, The US ship *Tonquin* was seized and the crew killed by Tla-o-qui-aht witwaak after the ship's captain insulted a chief during trade negotiations by throwing furs in his face.<sup>651</sup> The Nuuchah-nulth-aht were not a timid people and they were not afraid to engage in conflict if they felt their laws were being violated or their persons and protocols disrespected. Although this posture would certainly change over the years of colonization, the underlying sense of rightful ownership, anger over colonial usurpation, and fighting spirit would persist.

The second era of engagement was introduced gradually during the early part of the nineteenth century, as Indigenous populations and power decreased and concurrently, colonial populations and power increased. Relations with colonial trading partners shifted to relations with settlers and settler governments that would develop into the Canadian state. In the wake of massive community depopulation and devastation, our method of engagement radically and necessarily shifted to one of survival. During this period of time colonial settlement and economic development were carried out with reckless impunity, while Nuuchah-nulth people struggled to adapt.<sup>652</sup> We continued to work to feed our families, meeting our basic needs as we always have, but we lost control of our territories and any meaningful say in how natural resources were harvested and managed. In many ways, Nuuchah-nulth-aht went into a state of cultural and political hibernation. Our children were taken from our homes and sent to residential schools and the potlatch and other cultural, spiritual and

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<sup>649</sup> Union of BC Indian Chiefs, 14.

<sup>650</sup> John R. Jewitt, *White Slaves of Maquinna: John R. Jewitt's Narrative of Capture and Confinement at Nootka*. Surrey: Heritage House, 2005.

<sup>651</sup> UBCIC, 15.

<sup>652</sup> See "The Politics of Survival" chapter in Tennant, 68-83.



political ceremonies and institutions were banned in 1885.<sup>653</sup> In 1927, Canada amended the *Indian Act* to make it illegal for Indigenous people to hire lawyers or organize for the pursuit of land claims grievances.<sup>654</sup> Additionally, Indians were prohibited from leaving our newly imposed reserves, which severely limited other economic opportunities.<sup>655</sup> Most of these restrictions were removed in 1951, but residential schools in Nuuchahnulth territories remained open until 1983.<sup>656</sup> During this time, which lasted well over one hundred years, Nuuchahnulth did what they could to survive, physically, culturally, socially, spiritually, and politically.

The third era of engagement began in the 1980s. In Ahous and Tla-o-qui territory, it began with our opposition to unsustainable logging practices in Clayoquot Sound. This also coincides with the rise of neoliberalism and the ongoing settler desire for economic growth, and the enclosure and control of “nature” particularly in resource rich places like British Columbia.<sup>657</sup> Within Indigenous communities, I should also point out some of the key political and legal changes in British Columbia and Canada after 1951. The next major event that gave rise to a cultural and political renaissance of Indigenous activism was the 1969 White Paper (Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy).<sup>658</sup> The National Indian Brotherhood (later to be named the Assembly of First Nations) was formed in 1970,

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<sup>653</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>654</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>655</sup> *The Pass System*, a documentary film directed by Alex Williams, details this aspect of settler colonialism in Canada.

<sup>656</sup> Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, ix.

<sup>657</sup> Altamirano-Jiménez, 2013, 70-71. See also: Karen Bakker, “The limits of ‘neo-liberal natures’: Debating green neoliberalism,” *Progress in Human Geography* 34, 4 (2010): 726, and Nik Heynen and Paul Robbins. “The neoliberalization of nature: Governance, privatization, enclosure and valuation,” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 16, 1 (2005): 5-8.

<sup>658</sup> Turner, 12-13.

and in British Columbia, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs was founded in 1969.<sup>659</sup> Within this economic and political context, Nuuchahnulth engagement with settler colonial economic development began to take on a particular pattern. The economic context is important because we need to fully understand the neoliberal capitalist environment within which we have to work. These systems are not of our making or design and in most cases, not consistent with our worldviews and values. The political context is important because in the background of all this economic activity is a struggle for Indigenous self-determination as it became increasingly articulated in the latter half of the twentieth century. Understanding the Nuuchahnulth desire to assert jurisdiction is critical to understanding our collective economic decision-making. I will summarize the pattern of this third era of engagement as follows: resistance, conflict, negotiation, assertion of Nuuchahnulth jurisdiction, economic partnership, and ongoing contention. We will see how this plays out in the next section on logging activity in Clayoquot Sound, but here I want to focus on how it has played out in our relationships with fish farms in our traditional territories.

Both Ahous and Tla-o-qui have fish farms in their territories, ostensibly with their conditional consent, but the details are murky and complicated. Ahousaht first signed an agreement with Pacific National Aquaculture in 2002,<sup>660</sup> and while the ownership of the fish farms has changed a number of times since then, secret agreements have been renegotiated and renewed every five years. The details of these agreements have never been released publically, nor have they been made widely available to community members. It is presumed that Ahousaht, or more specifically, representatives of the ha'wiih of Ahous have negotiated agreements that provide money, employment, and input on management,

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<sup>659</sup> Tennant, 151-164.

<sup>660</sup> Nathan Young and Ralph Matthews, *The Aquaculture Controversy in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010): 60.

including site locations and environmental concerns. Before I get into the Ahous story, allow me to briefly outline the nature of fish farms and their surrounding controversies. Nathan Young and Ralph Matthews offer this, “At its most basic, aquaculture involves extending the principles of agriculture to marine environments. It typically encompasses the commercial husbandry of fish, plants, and/or shellfish in contained or semi-contained spaces in fresh or ocean waters. For swimming fish or ‘finfish,’ this usually involves the suspension of nets in near shore ocean waters.”<sup>661</sup> Aquaculture has been practiced for millennia in parts of Africa, Asia and Europe, but Young and Matthews add, “Many aquaculture operations are now large-scale, highly mechanized, and owned or backed by some of the world’s largest food companies...The current global controversy over aquaculture is therefore really a controversy over newer, *industrial-scale* aquaculture.”<sup>662</sup> They provide some details of the scope and scale of aquaculture globally, nationally, and in locally in British Columbia,

There is no mistaking the fact that aquaculture is now a major global industry. According to statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), aquaculture now constitutes roughly one-third of total world fisheries harvest (a total of 52 million tonnes in 2006, nearly double the 27 million tonnes recorded in 1996), and has an annual commercial value of over US\$ 78 billion (FAO, 2008, 6). In Canada, aquaculture now dwarfs traditional wild-capture fisheries in some regions of the country. Overall, aquaculture production in Canada has expanded more than three-fold from 1991 to 2007 (from 50,000 tonnes to 170,000), although production has recently leveled off due to fierce international competition in aquaculture markets (Statistics Canada 2008). In British Columbia, aquaculture produced 72,000 tonnes of salmon valued at Cdn\$364 million in 2007. In comparison, the once-mighty wild-capture fishery landed only 20,000 tonnes of salmon at \$41 million in the province that same year (British Columbia 2008a).<sup>663</sup>

It should not be surprising then to see settler governments prioritize the expansion of salmon farming in British Columbia, while they continue to exhibit poor management decisions

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<sup>661</sup> Young and Matthews, 4.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid. 4-5. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid. 5.

with respect to the wild salmon industry.<sup>664</sup> Aquaculture, despite its many problems, has become an economic priority in British Columbia waters.

Why is there a controversy over aquaculture? In his book, *Four Fish*, Paul Greenberg neatly summarizes the concerns with respect to salmon farming in particular,

Fish farming in its first incarnations is almost always a privatization of a public resource – a mad-dash grab for ocean farming sites that previously belonged to no one. And the more efficient salmon farming became, the more environmentally problematic the industry became. The increased efficiency of improved, selectively bred salmon caused the fish to flood onto the market. Prices plunged. Farmers desperately opted to expand and grow more total pounds to compensate for the loss in per-pound revenue. Good farming sites with strong currents and clean water became rare. Farms were sited with poor water circulation and often in proximity to passageways for dwindling runs of wild salmon. As density increased, nitrogen wastes built up, causing algae to bloom and die and, in the process, deoxygenate the water. Overcrowding of farms attracted parasites, like a bloodsucking creature called a sea louse, which has been shown to be transferable from farmed populations to wild salmon runs. Diseases like infectious salmon anemia were born, first in Chile and then in the rest of the world, wiping out whole farms in a week. Diseases and pollution are classic problems associated with any kind of animal husbandry, but in the case of salmon farming all of this occurred within the context of a wild environment. And above and beyond all that, there was the essential feed equation that to many environmentalists didn't make sense: why use three pounds of wild fish as feed in order to generate just one pound of farmed salmon?<sup>665</sup>

Most people do not know much about farmed salmon or the problems associated with it, but there is a vocal minority of settler Canadians in British Columbia who are opposed to salmon farming as it is currently practiced. And a majority of Indigenous communities located on the west coast oppose salmon farming. Many of them believe that fish farms pose a direct threat to wild salmon stocks and their livelihoods. Ed Newman, former president of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia and Heiltsuk and Namgis hereditary chief

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<sup>664</sup> Evelyn Pinkerton, "Hegemony and resistance: Disturbing patterns and hopeful signs in the impact of neoliberal policies on small-scale fisheries around the world," *Marine Policy* 80 (2017): 4.

<sup>665</sup> Paul Greenberg, *Four Fish: The Future of the Last Wild Food* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2010): 49.

stated in 2002, “We’ve declared war on the fish farming industry. They might have to throw a lot of us in jail, but we don’t care. We have to protect our way of life.”<sup>666</sup>

But what happens when your way of life – commercial fishing – is no longer practiced by your community members anymore? Does this effectively remove a critical barrier to salmon farming? As noted, Nuu-chah-nulth participation in the commercial fishing industry dramatically declined in the latter part of the twentieth century. In fact, one could chart opposing trajectories in Indigenous participation in the west coast commercial fisheries and the rise of salmon farming in our traditional waters. I am not suggesting a direct correlation, but I am suggesting that when Indigenous people are removed from their livelihoods at sea, opposition to fish farms is also *potentially* removed.<sup>667</sup> We can no longer see fish farms as a threat to our ways of living if we no longer live those ways.

Our jettison from the commercial fishing industry also meant that our fishers, young and old, now had to look for work in the mainstream wage labour market. One of the major things that proponents say when justifying fish farms in Nuu-chah-nulth territories is that it provides much needed employment. Wally Samuel from Ahous, acknowledges the controversy but also highlighting the need for jobs states, “Yes, we’re caught between a rock and a hard place. But right now, it’s our livelihood.”<sup>668</sup> The impact benefit agreements are not public, but some details have leaked out. According to the *Westerly News*, when the protocol agreement was renewed in 2010, half of the jobs were earmarked for “B.C. First

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<sup>666</sup> Young and Matthews, 1.

<sup>667</sup> I emphasize *potentially*, because this is obviously not always the case, as I have noted, the vast majority of Indigenous communities on the west coast oppose fish farms.

<sup>668</sup> Seccia, March 25, 2010.

Nations.”<sup>669</sup> Ahousaht, at least publically, now support fish farms as partners, but that has not always been the case. Like the strong sentiments expressed by Ed Newman, one headline from 2002 read, “Ahousaht declares war on fish farms.”<sup>670</sup> The occasion was a protest led by Ahous ha’wiih at one of the fish farm sites, shortly after ten thousand salmon escaped after a storm. On behalf of the ha’wiih, Nelson Keitlah sang a war chant that was first sung at Cypre Point (also the location of the fish farm where the protest was taking place), just prior to the Ahous-Otsoos war in the eighteenth century. The Ahous ha’wiih were serious. So, how did they come to sign their first protocol agreement later that year with the fish farm company that they had declared war on? The key to understanding this is to look at the ongoing struggles of the Nuu-chah-nulth ha’wiih to reassert their jurisdiction. To look at another larger example of this I want to back up to consider the events in Clayoquot Sound in the 1980s and 1990s that would later be known as the “war in the woods.”

### **The War in the Woods and the Revival of the Nuu-chah-nulth Ha’wiih**

Just over two hundred years previous, the initial contact between Nuu-chah-nulth ha’wiih and Captain Cook would mark the beginning of contentious and tumultuous economic relationships with colonial settlers in our territories. The power and influence of the ha’wiih had declined in nearly every sphere of significance, but it did not die out completely. Our ceremonies and stories persisted and while our communities endured egregious abuses and dramatic changes, we have not forgotten who we are. This includes the foundations of our traditional governance institutions, our ha’wiih. Despite the ban, we continued to host and

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<sup>669</sup> Stefania Seccia, “Ahousaht First Nations Under Fire in Two Protests in One Week,” *Westerly News*, May 27, 2010, accessed April 10, 2015, [https://www.wildernesscommittee.org/news/ahousaht\\_first\\_nations\\_under\\_fire\\_two\\_protests\\_one\\_week](https://www.wildernesscommittee.org/news/ahousaht_first_nations_under_fire_two_protests_one_week).

<sup>670</sup> David Wiwchar, “Ahousaht declares war against fish farms,” *Raven’s Eye*, volume 5, issue 9 (2002), 3, Accessed April 10, 2015, <http://www.ammsa.com/node/25378>.

attend potlatches, bringing out the curtains, headdresses, songs, dances and stories of our chiefs. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, like Indigenous peoples everywhere, we experienced a cultural and political revival of sorts. Nuu-chah-nulth populations began to rebound, residential schools closed, and the people started to feel proud again. Indigenous communities all over British Columbia began to pursue their land claims and protest settler economic development projects that for too long excluded Indigenous input or consent. For the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, 1980 was a pivotal year. The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council filed a declaration and comprehensive claim with the federal government, and MacMillan Bloedel announced plans to log Meares Island, known to the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht as Waanačas/Hilhuuis. When the forestry company's barge landed on Waanačas/Hilhuuis, Tla-o-qui elected chief, Moses Martin said, "Welcome to Meares Island. This is our garden. You are welcome to visit but you will cut no trees here."<sup>671</sup> Thus began the contemporary struggle to control the economic future of Clayoquot Sound that persists today.

Neighbouring Nuu-chah-nulth nations, as well as many settlers supported the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht blockade on Waanačas/Hilhuuis. MacMillan Bloedel applied for a court injunction to remove the blockade, and the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht responded with their own injunction application to stop the logging. After more than a million dollars in legal fees and several small procedural victories in court for the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, the Provincial government requested an adjournment to seek a negotiated settlement. Logging was prevented on Waanačas/Hilhuuis, but conflict would arise again.<sup>672</sup> The Nuu-chah-nulth-aht were not the only ones blockading development, going to court and filing comprehensive claims. First Nations from across British Columbia were actively attempting

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<sup>671</sup> "Restoring First Nations to the Land: Lessons from Clayoquot Sound" (Port Alberni: Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council and Natural Resources Defense Council, 2001), 7.

<sup>672</sup> "Restoring First Nations", 8.

to assert their rights and claims to protect their lands. The 1973 *Calder* case, although technically a legal defeat for the Nisga'a, would pave the way for the most intense period of Aboriginal law litigation in Canadian history. The federal government repatriated the Canadian Constitution in 1982, which included section 35, recognizing and affirming Aboriginal rights. The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en peoples began their legal proceedings in 1984, which culminated in a 1997 ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) on the case *Delgamuukq v The Queen*, which would also have wide reaching implications. In 1983, the Haida blocked logging on Athili Gwaii (also known as Lyell Island) that would later become part of the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site.<sup>673</sup> The SCC also decided on *R v Sparrow* in 1990, which influenced subsequent cases relating to Aboriginal fishing rights. And while I am only pointing out a few of the most prominent cases, Indigenous peoples across British Columbia and Canada were definitely struggling to regain some of their lost rights, lands, and jurisdiction. No example was larger than the 1990 Oka crisis, in which Kanien'kehá:ka communities in Quebec fought to protect their lands from the expansion of a municipal golf course. It was a tumultuous decade indeed.

In 1993, the provincial government announced the Clayoquot Sound Land Use Decision. Without consulting Nuuchahnulth First Nations, the land use plan demarcated parks, buffer zones, scenic corridors, and logging areas – including the cutting of seventy-four percent of the old growth trees in Clayoquot Sound.<sup>674</sup> The Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht were outraged and called an emergency meeting with fellow Nuuchahnulth-aht. At that meeting, the tyii haw'ill, Tiitskiisip (Bert Mack) of Toqua, stood up and committed five thousand dollars to a war chest to fight the provincial land use decision. The four other tribes

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<sup>673</sup> Union of BC Indian Chiefs, 32.

<sup>674</sup> "Restoring First Nations", 8-9.



of the central region also committed five thousand dollars each. With that first twenty-five thousand dollars they hired a media consultant and took out advertisements in the local *Alberni Valley Times* and the *Victoria Times Colonist* to announce their objection to the provincial land use decision and their commitment to fight it. There are several points about the context within which this conflict began and escalated that are noteworthy here. First of all, this type of behaviour by the provincial government and resource extraction companies was typical. They had been running roughshod over coastal Indigenous community interests for more than a century of settler colonialism. What was different this time was that they were dealing with an increasingly politicized group of Indigenous communities willing to use whatever tools necessary to defend their rights and lands. In addition to this, the British Columbia Treaty Process was just getting underway. The Nuu-chah-nulth felt that his blatant disregard for their interests, both political and economic, was unacceptable. The provincial government at the time was led by the NDP. In addition to being a historically union-based party, the NDP tried to distinguish themselves from the other major parties in BC as the social justice party in support of Aboriginal interests. We would learn from the experience of the land use decision announcement and throughout claims negotiations, however, that the NDPs interests did *not* coincide with the interests of Nuu-chah-nulth ha'wiih. Every gain we got was through sheer force of will and a resolve to use any means of coercive pressure.

Another noteworthy aspect of the War in the Woods was that the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht took a decidedly metaphorical approach to this war. Despite the fact that the 1993 Clayoquot Sound blockades and peace camp would come to represent the largest sustained act of civil disobedience in Canadian history at the time,<sup>675</sup> Nuu-chah-nulth-aht did not participate in the physical protests in large numbers. Instead, they opted for political lobbying and publicity

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<sup>675</sup> Ibid. 11.

campaigns. More than 850 peaceful protesters were arrested during the summer of 1993. For the environmental movement, Clayoquot Sound became a template. Warren Magnusson and Karena Shaw write, “Clayoquot was an important moment in the development of the international campaign against logging in the world’s temperate rainforests; for a long time it was the international campaign’s poster child”<sup>676</sup> What is not well known is that the non-Indigenous protesters had to ask the ha’wiih for permission to demonstrate in Nuu-chah-nulth territories. The relationship between Nuu-chah-nulth communities and the environmental protesters and their ENGOs would remain fragile throughout the conflict and would eventually reach a breaking point, as interests radically diverged. Although these details are forgotten over time, it is instructive to remember that at the centre of all this for Nuu-chah-nulth-aht was respect for the authority and jurisdiction of the ha’wiih.

As noted, Nuu-chah-nulth-aht decided not to physically put themselves on the protest line in Clayoquot Sound, as they did for Waanačas/Hiłhuuis. This is interesting, but upon further investigation, not surprising. The ENGOs co-opted the physical protests and geared them toward their own particular conservation agendas. The momentum that built up from the Meares Island protests in 1980, the Lyell Island protests in 1985, and Clayoquot Sound in 1993 solidified a protest tactic that became favoured by privileged environmentalists.<sup>677</sup> It is not that Nuu-chah-nulth-aht had entirely abandoned physical tactics, but in this particular case they felt it would not yield the results that they desired. Physical, albeit peaceful

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<sup>676</sup> Magnusson and Shaw, viii.

<sup>677</sup> I say privileged, because despite all the fuss that has been made about the hundreds of arrests of settler activists, their lives and livelihoods were not negatively affected by their activism in the long run. This has almost always been the case in North America. For example, nearly every member of the Weather Underground, a white radical protest group in the late 1960 and 1970s that bombed university, corporate, and government buildings (including the Pentagon), is now living normal productive lives. In contrast, many members of Indigenous and African American protest groups, like the American Indian Movement and the Black Panthers ended up in jail or dead.

protesting in Clayoquot Sound was dominated by settler activists and their supporting ENGOs, which ultimately did not have the same goals as the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht. At other places around British Columbia and Canada, the 1980s, 1990s, and even 2000s, would witness plenty of physical Indigenous protesting over lands and rights. The West Coast Warrior Society (WCWS), whose members were mainly Nuu-chah-nulth youth, was active at Indigenous protests in Cheam and Sun Peaks in British Columbia, and Esgenoôpetitj (Burnt Church), New Brunswick. Members of the WCWS and the Native Youth Movement also found themselves at odds with First Nations in the BCTP, which included Nuu-chah-nulth-aht. The youth felt that the leaders were selling out by engaging in these processes, and giving up too much. They voiced valid criticisms, some of which I share in this thesis, but always in the background for Nuu-chah-nulth ha'wiih, however, has been the desire to support actions and processes that uphold and respect their governance and jurisdiction. And this is something that many environmental groups in Clayoquot Sound, despite their rhetoric in support Aboriginal interests, did not do.

To put it as plainly as possible, most environmental protesters and groups were fighting for the total preservation in Clayoquot Sound. These were idealist activists with postmodern values intent on saving Clayoquot. When pressed, many would express support for local Indigenous communities, but their actions also reeked of a form of environmental colonialism. Bruce Braun has written about this dynamic at length in his book, *The Intemperate Rainforest*, challenging what he characterizes as a binary logic that pits “pristine nature” against “destructive humanity.”<sup>678</sup> This binary logic erases contemporary Indigeneity, as it forces us to fit our Indigeneity into that false conception of pristine nature

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<sup>678</sup> Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): 2.

or have our authenticity questioned. Some believe this is by design; that a false conception of nature and Indigeneity allows for purposeful misrecognition.<sup>679</sup> Of course, this is not to say that Indigenous people generally, and Nuu-chah-nulth-aht in particular, do not have their own environmental concerns, but it is an injustice to have our Indigeneity defined by a colonial environmentalism. Paul Nadasdy has worked extensively to refute stereotypes of the “ecologically noble Indian” in his work and he clarifies, “Environmentalists have their own agenda, which is often more in tune with that of other Euro-North Americans than with the interests of (Indigenous) people.”<sup>680</sup> He writes further,

They (Indigenous people) are simply people with a complex set of beliefs, practices, and values that defy standard Euro-North American schemes of categorization. To be sure, they sometimes make use of environmentalist rhetoric, because it confers on them a degree of legitimacy and power in certain political contexts. But in my experience, they seldom do so cynically; more often they genuinely believe that their own practices are more environmentally benign than those of the dominant Euro-North American society. Their claims to this effect must be considered on their own merits, rather than as part of a larger general debate over their ecological nobility.<sup>681</sup>

As Nadasdy and Braun have pointed out, we can see that the conflicts in Clayoquot Sound were more complicated than most people remember. Nuu-chah-nulth-aht found themselves defending their Indigeneity and their Indigenous rights and responsibilities on a number of fronts. It was a multitude of efforts, and not always cooperative, by both environmentalists and Nuu-chah-nulth-aht that stopped the destructive clear cut logging that was planned for Clayoquot Sound. In the immediate aftermath of the War in the Woods, relations with ENGOs would continue to deteriorate. In 1994, NTC chairman George Watts accused the

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<sup>679</sup> See: Elizabeth A. Povinelli. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002 and for more on recognition and misrecognition, see Coulthard, 2009.

<sup>680</sup> Paul Nadasdy, “Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism,” in *Ethnohistory* 52, 2 (Spring 2005): 322.

<sup>681</sup> Nadasdy, 322.

environmental movement of “neocolonialism” and in 1996, Nuuchahnulth “banned” Greenpeace.<sup>682</sup>

Nuuchahnulth acted in ways they thought would maximize their chances of achieving their goals: Re-establishing the rightful authority of the ha’wiih, the cessation of overly destructive logging practices, and the long-term security of economic opportunities for their communities. It became apparent to them that this would not be achieved by aligning themselves with the most radical ENGOs. In the long term, the ha’wiih believed that their goals would best be met by engaging with the governments on what they believed to be a nation-to-nation basis.<sup>683</sup> Remember that all of this is taking place within the new context of the BCTP and its attendant optimism as well as the forthcoming RCAP report. Critics would rightly point out that the BCTP, which was an extension of Canada’s comprehensive claims policy, was not an actual treaty process in the international sense, but a domesticated entrenchment of the Indigenous land question within the confines of Canadian settler colonialism.<sup>684</sup> Despite this, many people were encouraged by the political space that their activism and events like the Oka crisis had opened up. The willingness to negotiate substantive issues was unprecedented in Canadian history and certainly within the recent memory of the Nuuchahnulth. With respect to economic matters on the ground, it would not come easy.

The initial Nuuchahnulth requests to meet provincial representatives went largely ignored, but with the help of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and his organization, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the ha’wiih finally began to attract some attention. A

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<sup>682</sup> Braun, 107-108.

<sup>683</sup> See the 1994 Ha’wiih Declaration, quoted in its entirety in this thesis on page 139.

<sup>684</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Deconstructing the British Columbia Treaty Process*. Unpublished paper, 2000. James Tully, “Reconsidering the B.C. Treaty Process” *Speaking Truth to Power: A Treaty Forum*. (Ottawa: Law Commission of Canada, 2001): 3-17.

group of Nuu-chah-nulth ha'wiih and their speakers and advisors travelled to Washington, DC and New York City in September 1993 to lobby American politicians and make a statement to the United Nations. Of all the environmental groups working in Clayoquot Sound, including Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, Western Canada Wilderness Committee, and Friends of Clayoquot Sound, the NRDC was the most respectful of Nuu-chah-nulth protocols and wishes. They respected the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht desire to lead the fight. The Nuu-chah-nulth delegation was in the United States for just under a week. They made sure to keep the media in British Columbia up to date with who they were meeting, which included senators Ted Kennedy, John Kerry, Max Baucus, the US Department of State, as well as the Canadian Ambassador.<sup>685</sup> By the time they concluded their meetings, the provincial government was calling the Nuu-chah-nulth delegation requesting a meeting with the cabinet. Not everyone in the Nuu-chah-nulth team could meet the provincial cabinet when the government requested, so another meeting was set for October 5, 1993 in Port Alberni. Representing the provincial government was the Premier Mike Harcourt, and cabinet members Glen Clark (Employment and Investment), Andrew Petter (Forestry), John Cashore (Aboriginal Affairs), and Colin Gabelmann (Attorney General). Again, the goal of the Nuu-chah-nulth ha'wiih was to bring the government to the negotiating table, and the best way they knew to do that was to threaten the stability of the economy with their lobbying efforts and legal maneuvers. The Nuu-chah-nulth-aht had set aside money for additional injunctions to stop logging in Clayoquot River Valley, at Hesquiaht Point Creek and on Flores Island.

Negotiations with the provincial government began in early 1994, and they were

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<sup>685</sup> In 1993, the Canadian Ambassador to the United States was general John de Chastelain, who incidently, was also the Chief of the Defense Staff during the Oka Crisis in 1990.

unlike any negotiations with a group of Indigenous peoples before or since. It is joked that they were biblical, because they met in Victoria for forty days and forty nights, although they had originally been scheduled to meet for only five days. Wickaninnish says that the Nuuchah-nulth negotiators were committed to staying until they had an agreement. After six weeks of intense negotiations, the Nuuchah-nulth ha'wiih signed an interim measures agreement (IMA) under the auspices of the BC Treaty Process. The original agreement lasted for two years and came with funding for education and economic opportunities as well as the establishment of the Central Region Board (CRB) and the Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound. The original IMA was signed in 1994, and it was renewed numerous times, until 2010, by which time the Nuuchah-nulth treaty negotiation environment had changed considerably. The CRB was charged with the responsibility of managing resource decisions in Clayoquot Sound and approving economic projects. It was comprised of five Nuuchah-nulth members, five local non-Indigenous members and two co-chairs, one appointed by the province, and one appointed by the Nuuchah-nulth-aht. The CRB operated by a process of 'double majority.' Although development proposals were discussed and voted on, to gain approval a decision needed to have the favour of a majority of the board as a whole, *plus a majority of the Nuuchah-nulth members*. No other agreement in BC history had ever given this much power to Indigenous people – essentially a *veto* - and the governments would never negotiate another agreement like it. The Nuuchah-nulth ha'wiih strongly believed that they were still the rightful owners of all that existed within their ha'huulthlii.

The Scientific Panel was comprised of four Nuuchah-nulth members – Umeek (Dr. Richard Atleo), and elders Roy Haiyupus, Stanley Sam, and Lawrence Paul – and fifteen

non-Indigenous scientists. Umeek and Dr. Fred Brunnell were the co-chairs of the Scientific Panel. Ronald Trosper points out that Umeek was a hereditary chief and Dr. Brunnell was a Quaker, and that their respective backgrounds aided in the establishment of a consensus-based decision making model for the panel.<sup>686</sup> Further, the Nuuchah-nulth panel members insisted on the use of a protocol for discussion that was inclusive of all panel members:

The protocol reflects the Nuuchah-Nulth approach to group processes whereby all members participate in determining the issues, information, and actions relevant to the Panel's task. It is characterized by a demonstrable and inclusive respect for one another, for different values, and for data founded both in science and 'lived experience.' It calls for each Panel member to exercise patience, flexibility, endurance, and faith in a process and task that are surrounded by conflict and turmoil.<sup>687</sup>

At times this approach was frustrating, as it meant that issues were discussed at much greater length and included some predictable repetition, but the Nuuchah-nulth panel members were insistent to ensure that each member had a say, which ultimately respected and validated *everyone's* point of view. The Scientific Panel represented a dramatic departure from previous deliberations on resource management on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

The original 1993 Land Use Decision called for the logging of seventy-four percent of the old growth trees in Clayoquot Sound at a rate of nine hundred thousand cubic metres for twenty-five years. In addition to the decimation of our old growth forests, typical logging practices at the time included the practice of clearcut logging as opposed to a selective approach to harvesting trees. Clearcutting increased the likelihood of harmful run-off and landslides that threatened salmon spawning streams. This was partially a consequence of the

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<sup>686</sup> Trosper, 87.

<sup>687</sup> Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound, *Report of the Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound* (Victoria: Clayoquot Scientific Panel, 1994): 5.



disparate nature of government bureaucracies and management agencies that did not communicate with each other. A Nuu-chah-nulth approach to ecosystem management attempted to rectify this shortcoming. Another method of settler colonial forestry is “tree-farming,” which is a type of tenure issued by the province that would allow for the harvesting of trees every fifty to sixty years or so, which consequently never allows for *new* old growth forests to grow. In contrast, the Scientific Panel recommended a much longer cycle of selective logging so that there would always be old growth forests. Of course, this disappointed both logging corporations and environmentalists. Wickaninnish clarifies the Nuu-chah-nulth position on forestry management in Clayoquot Sound,

We never opposed logging (outright). We believe that resources are there for our benefit. But they are not there for our abuse; we have to take care of them. We think there should always be old growth. How? You find out the rate at which trees and forest areas develop and you keep your harvest at a rate that allows for the development of old growth areas to replace the ones you are cutting.<sup>688</sup>

So, the forestry companies were now prohibited from logging in the manner they had grown accustomed to and many of the environmentalists were disappointed that they were not able to save Clayoquot in its pristine entirety. For the most part the Nuu-chah-nulth ha’wiih got what they wanted...for the time being.

### **Contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development**

There are gaps in my description of Nuu-chah-nulth economic activity, but my intent is not to provide an all-encompassing historical account of events. I am primarily interested in change and continuity in Nuu-chah-nulth territories through an examination of our political economic history since contact. With respect to change, I want to understand the influences

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<sup>688</sup> Wickaninnish (Clifford Atleo, Sr.), “Land, Science, and Indigenous Science: Tales from a Modern Treaty Negotiation Process,” in *Science and Native American Communities: Legacies of Pain, Visions of Promise*, ed. Keith James (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001): 160-161.

of external colonial actors and conditions as well as Nuu-chah-nulth reactive and proactive responses to change. A danger in focusing exclusively on settler colonialism in my analysis is the potential to overshadow Indigenous agency in responding to, and *co-crafting*, the change that we experience.<sup>689</sup> Speaking specifically of the resilience of the Makah, Reid writes, “Settler-colonial intrusions also did not automatically ruin Makah’s good lives. Rather, the People of the Cape succeeded because they engaged the settler-colonial world, but on their own terms and for their own reasons.”<sup>690</sup> I still believe that understanding our contemporary economic and political situation within the context of settler colonialism provides us with valuable insights, but I have also gained a greater appreciation for Nuu-chah-nulth agency throughout our shared history with settlers. Specifically, I have gained a stronger understanding of the role of the ha’wiih and the struggle for continuity of Nuu-chah-nulth governance systems and cultures. This understanding of the ha’wiih requires some more unpacking before moving on.

It might sound odd that I underestimated the role of the ha’wiih in my initial analysis of Nuu-chah-nulth economic development. In all the writing I have ever done with respect to Nuu-chah-nulth governance, the ha’wiih have always taken centre stage. Nuu-chah-nulth-aht are told stories of the importance and centrality of the ha’wiih to the healthy functioning and flourishing of our communities. Nuu-chah-nulth scholars, Umeek, Charlotte Côté, Chawwin-is, and Johnny Mack have all written at length about this, despite the diversity of their respective research interests. I still managed to not fully grasp the centrality of ha’wiih until now. I have had to remind myself that the current context of neoliberal settler colonialism

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<sup>689</sup> I owe this particular insight of Indigenous agency vis-à-vis settler colonialism to Ned Blackhawk, who was presenting on a “Historicizing Settler Colonialism” panel at Yale University, April 14, 2015.

<sup>690</sup> Reid, 276.

gladly allows for shallow and symbolic expressions of Indigenous culture, so long as those expressions do not pose a threat to settler economic and political (read: Hobbesian) stability or jurisdiction. Our cultures have been circumscribed within the confines of recognition, reconciliation and symbolic politics in Canada.<sup>691</sup> In this context, I too, have taken the role of the ha'wiih for granted, not fully appreciating their ceaseless efforts to regain control, reassert jurisdiction and once again fulfill their responsibilities. None of this is to suggest that the Nuu-chah-nulth ha'wiih are infallible and not ever deserving of critique, but that understanding their roles is key to understanding change and continuity in Nuu-chah-nulth political economy.

For my examination of contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth economic practices, I focus on the period after the 1994 IMA was signed, for this was to represent a new era of co-management in Clayoquot Sound and an attempt to return the ha'wiih to their place as decision-makers. I have already looked at commercial fishing and fish farms, which remain an ongoing concern, but now I will look at a couple collective examples – perhaps similar to the approach advocated by Duane Champagne's tribal capitalism.

### ***Iisaak Forest Resources***

The Central Region Nuu-chah-nulth-aht wanted to get into the forestry business to begin harvesting a share of the resources from their territories. They also wanted to lead the way with logging practices that were consistent with Nuu-chah-nulth values and principles. They were unsuccessful in obtaining support for this in the first IMA in 1994, but managed to get it at the conclusion of the 1996 negotiations for the Interim Measures Extension Agreement

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<sup>691</sup> Although recently elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Liberal party certainly adhere to the politics of recognition and reconciliation, I have added “symbolic” politics because they have proven very adept at this method of political engagement with Aboriginal people. The best example of this might have been on display at the November 4, 2015 cabinet swearing in ceremony, in which Métis, Inuit and First Nation people all played a prominent role.

(IMEA). Iisaak Forest Resources Ltd. was created in 1998 as a joint venture between the five Nuuchahnulth nations of the Central Region and Weyerhaeuser. The Nuuchahnulth-aht owned fifty-one percent of the new company, while Weyerhaeuser owned forty-nine percent. In 2005, as Weyerhaeuser was selling all of its BC interests, the Nuuchahnulth-aht bought out the remaining forty-nine percent. Iisaak describes itself as “an innovative ecologically sensitive forest management company. The wood we produce...is of the utmost quality, harvested to the strict guidelines set out by the Clayoquot Sound Science Panel within the Nuuchahnulth traditional territories.”<sup>692</sup> They state further that the company seeks to, “Develop and deliver new, innovative ways of managing the resources of Clayoquot Sound which respect cultural, spiritual, recreational, economic and scenic values.”<sup>693</sup>

Iisaak’s goals are to:

Create Diversification

- Establish economic participation of First Nations in the forest sector.
- Supply logs to local value added sector to create business opportunities.
- Provide opportunities to gain expertise and build capacity in ecosystem-based forestry for forestry workers, logging contractors, and small scale specialized equipment manufacturers.
- Integrate forestry with conservation values.

Foster Community Stability

- Promote local control of resource management in Clayoquot Sound.
- Increase revenue.
- Enhance local employment opportunities.
- Participate in Clayoquot Sound initiatives - including Biosphere.
- Reduce conflict.<sup>694</sup>

I want to draw attention to three of their stated goals. The first is the integration of forestry *and* conservation values. As already noted, many of the environmentalists were disappointed

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<sup>692</sup> Iisaak Forest Resources Ltd., Accessed April 15, 2015, [www.iisaak.com](http://www.iisaak.com).

<sup>693</sup> Iisaak Forest Resources Ltd., *Our New Approach*, Accessed April 15, 2015 [www.iisaak.com/approach.html](http://www.iisaak.com/approach.html).

<sup>694</sup> Ibid.

that they failed to completely *save* Clayoquot, but their practical sides could not go against the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht who had fought hard to have a say on the management of forest resources and the right to benefit from those resources in a sustainable manner. From the outset, Iisaak was going to face some unique challenges, and some have argued, unique opportunities as well. As Wickaninnish has stated, Nuu-chah-nulth-aht believe that it is possible to practice forestry in a sustainable manner, both environmentally and economically. One way that Iisaak thought it could do this was by being the first company in BC to obtain Forest Stewardship Council certification, which it did in July 2001.<sup>695</sup> In doing this, Iisaak sought to tap into the evolving global market that was beginning to attach a value to forestry practices conducted in a sustainable manner.

The second related goal I want to address is that of increasing revenue. I feel like this would be one of their more challenging goals given the constraints that it was operating within – namely the recommendations of the Science Panel. The biggest external constraint would be the market and the assumption that the more destructive practices of other forestry companies were designed to maximize profit. I have been told that external constraints have had very little impact on the company's profitability, however. Most of the major concerns about Iisaak's functioning as a company emanate from its corporate governance, that is the relations among the former Central Region nations and its internal management.

The third goal to reduce conflict is interesting. One could argue that most of the concessions by settler governments and corporations have been made to reduce conflict with Indigenous peoples. In the case of Clayoquot Sound, this also includes the activism of environmentalists. Reducing conflict is usually meant to increase economic stability. In previous times, this was achieved through confining Indigenous people to reserves and

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<sup>695</sup> Forest Stewardship Council, Accessed April 5, 2016. <https://ca.fsc.org/en-ca>.

limiting their political and legal options. As the legal and political terrain changed in the latter half of the twentieth century, stability had to come through accommodation of Indigenous interests. Thus, the costs of doing business changed, which we have seen in the adaptable and proactive nature of engagement taken by aquaculture companies and as we shall also see in the case of mining companies. I would like to point out that none of these adaptations or increasing sensitivity to Indigenous interests radically alters the framework of neoliberal capitalism. In reality, just enough concessions are given to buy enough peace and stability for business and resource extraction to continue. Some find this perspective cynical, but I believe the empirical evidence of ongoing rampant poverty of Indigenous communities, land alienation and exploitation, and denial of our robust rights and responsibilities, despite some relatively small gains, proves that we are still subject to asymmetrical colonial relations.

The latest I have heard is that Iisaak Forest Product's future is uncertain. This seems due to a number of complicated factors, but certainly it has been a challenge for them to uphold the recommendations of the Scientific Panel and Nuuchahnulth values and principles in a competitive capitalist forest products market, where races to the bottom reward corporations and their share-holders, but endanger ecosystems and the long-term health of communities. The next major economic project proposal in our territories would take a familiar trajectory, but the outcomes may not necessarily be the same.

### ***Chitaapi: To Mine or not to Mine***

The case of Chitaapi is unresolved and ongoing; despite the fact that several companies have been trying to get at the copper since at least 2000. Chitaapi is also known as Catface Mountain and is located within Ahous territory. The current tenure holder is Imperial

Metals, which is also proposing a gold mine in Tla-o-qui territory. The case of Chitaapi is interesting for many reasons, not the least of which is its historical significance in Clayoquot Sound, especially to the Ahousaht. For the Ahousaht, Chitaapi was a sacred place of prayer and planning, especially leading up to the Ahous-Otsoos war. The issue of inter-tribal conflict has emerged again, if ever so subtly as we shall soon see. Chitaapi also represents the pattern of engagement that has been enacted since the early 1990s: resistance, conflict, negotiation, recognition of the ha'wiih, partnership, and ongoing contention, although with different results than the fish farm story. The discussions and debates over Chitaapi also reveal the dynamic tensions that exist between the ha'wiih and the muschim, the leadership and the people. Looking at each of these issues a little closer reveals some important aspects of the current state of economic development in Nuu-chah-nulth territories as well as our political futures.

In 2006, Maquinna, tyii ha'wilth of Ahous declared, "The destruction of Catface in the end will never be worth it."<sup>696</sup> Maquinna said that the mining company had been courting Ahous since 2000 with promises to consult and share economic benefits. The initial resistance to mining Chitaapi was expressed in two ways. First, the Ahousaht highlighted the cultural significance of Chitaapi and second, there were environmental concerns over an open pit mine in Clayoquot Sound. I should note that the conflict stage of the pattern of engagement that I have identified has been increasingly minimized by the third and fourth stages, which have effectively pre-empted conflict. Given the current legal and political climate, some resource extraction companies are proactively engaging with Indigenous

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<sup>696</sup> Denise August, "The destruction of Catface in the end will never be worth it. Chief George," *WCVI Documents Database*, Accessed April 16, 2015. [http://www.westcoastaquatic.info/searchdb/searchdb/WCVI\\_viewarticle.php?main\\_id=2465](http://www.westcoastaquatic.info/searchdb/searchdb/WCVI_viewarticle.php?main_id=2465). Note: This Maquinna is the son of Earl George, and he carries on his father's name as well as holding the position of tyii ha'wilth.

communities in efforts to avoid the types of conflicts that led to the current legal and political climate in the first place. Despite the fact that the tenure for the Chitaapi site has been held by three different companies since 2000 – Doublestar Resources, Selkirk Metals and now Imperial Metals – all of them have followed the same playbook with respect to engaging ha’wiih in hopes of gaining Nuu-chah-nulth support. As you can see by Maquinna’s initial response, the chiefs did not alter their position immediately, despite the promises of economic benefits. Maquinna explained his position to Doublestar president, Alan Savage, “I told him not all our beliefs revolve around European currency; that mountain is sacred to us.”<sup>697</sup> Maquinna indicated that the Ahousaht had also voted on the matter and for the time being at least, there was some unanimity amongst ha’wiih, community members and environmentalists in opposition to the mining of Chitaapi. Within a few short years, this would change.

A memorandum of understanding was signed April 9, 2008, and exploratory drilling on Chitaapi began with the support of Ahous ha’wiih. Evidently, sacred history became overshadowed by economic necessity, but as we shall see it is never that simple. An Ahous committee was struck to investigate the details of the mine proposal and gather information about the potential environmental hazards, while the company was permitted to proceed with exploratory drilling. The exploration phase was put on hold by the end of 2008, however, as the global financial crisis struck and Selkirk lost a significant amount of its market capitalization. Imperial Metals would buy Selkirk Metals in 2009, and continue to work with the Ahous ha’wiih, but the matter is still far from resolved.

Environmentalists have predictably opposed all mining in the Sound, including, both

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<sup>697</sup> Denise August. I find it interesting that Maquinna said, “European currency.” This indicates to me that Ahousaht still very much consider settler economic development projects *foreign*.



the Chitaapi proposal and the other Imperial Metals interest, the Pandora mine proposal in Tla-o-qui territory. Groups like Friends of Clayoquot Sound have also actively worked with some grassroots Nuu-chah-nulth-aht to campaign against these mine proposals. Clearly, both environmental groups and corporations have realized that Indigenous people are not going anywhere and must be engaged. A seemingly improbable situation has sprouted from this dynamic. Imperial Metals is now casting itself as a social justice mining company by siding with Indigenous communities *against* environmentalists. Imperial Chairman and Director, Pierre Lebel, said that he was initially discouraged from pursuing the “Catface asset,” but changed his mind at the behest of the Ahousaht, and in defiance of environmental protests. Lebel stated, “We heard from the elders who said, ‘we have no hope, we have no self esteem, we have no jobs for our young people, we have drug abuse, alcohol use, physical abuse, there’s 15 to 20 of us piled into housing with no plumbing.’”<sup>698</sup> Lebel concluded with, “On that basis, I have said, we will not turn our back on this *obligation*. We are miners and we have a *social obligation* to do that job. If this community wants this development to take place, we will not shy away from that, even if it means protests and so forth.”<sup>699</sup> It is true that many Ahousaht are in poverty and socio-economic conditions are grim, and this situation is not mitigated by the privileged postmodern values of environmentalists, but I am skeptical of Lebel’s motives and his attempts at “corporate social responsibility.” Mining has a horrendous reputation globally with respect to environmental and Indigenous concerns. Interestingly, a majority of global mining interests are owned by Canadian companies.<sup>700</sup> Is this positioning as social justice miners expressed by Lebel simply a public

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<sup>698</sup> 250 News, “Catface Mine Controversial but will be Pursued,” June 7, 2010. Accessed April 16, 2015, <http://old.250news.com/blog/view/16539>. *Emphasis added*.

<sup>699</sup> Ibid.

<sup>700</sup> Dave Dean, “75% of World’s Mining Companies Are Based in Canada.” *Vice*, July 9, 2013.

relations exercise in Indigiwashing or is it a genuine attempt to work with Indigenous communities? An honest historical understanding of capitalism suggests that it is the former. And does it matter to Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, so long as we get what we need and want for our people? I explore the broader implications of this and the principle of hishuukish tsawalk in my concluding chapter.

A number of Nuu-chah-nulth-aht are opposed to the mining of Chitaapi. Working with local environmental groups, grassroots Nuu-chah-nulth-aht have organized information meetings, brought in speakers to discuss the issues, and protested at Imperial Metals meetings in Vancouver. Nuu-chah-nulth opposition to the mines has come from members of both Ahous and Tla-o-qui. And while Tla-o-qui opposition to the Pandora mine proposal is understandable, their opposition to Chitaapi has exposed a dynamic of inter-tribal relations that must now be factored into our understanding of ha'wiih jurisdictional relations and management. This also has implications for our contemporary conception and deployment hishuukish tsawalk that warrants further community discussion. In 2012, a meeting was held in Tla-o-qui territory called, "Mining Clayoquot's Future?" A number of community members and guests were invited to present and discuss the issues. Their concerns were mostly environmental, but also connected to their understandings of Nuu-chah-nulth values, principles, and responsibilities. Joe Martin, a well-known canoe builder from Tla-o-qui stated, "I want this land to be better than when I was here."<sup>701</sup> His daughter Gisele Martin reminded people that, "Nature will provide for our need but not our greed."<sup>702</sup> It is not entirely clear whom she was referring to with her statement. The greed of resource

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[https://www.vice.com/en\\_ca/article/75-of-the-worlds-mining-companies-are-based-in-canada](https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/75-of-the-worlds-mining-companies-are-based-in-canada).

<sup>701</sup> "Mining Clayoquot's Future? 'TIICH' Tla-o-qui-aht Community Group." YouTube video, 8:05. Posted by "FriendsofClayoquot," uploaded March 26, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAukAffaBas>.

<sup>702</sup> "Mining Clayoquot's Future? TIICH'."

extraction companies is well documented and understood, but one has to wonder if we will begin to think of ourselves in the same way when our communities decide to partner with those same companies. Typical impact benefit agreements do not pay First Nation communities exorbitant amounts of money. They certainly do not profit in the same way mega-corporations do. I will ponder this issue more as I examine the matter of individual and collective engagements with capitalism in my concluding chapter. Another noteworthy dynamic at this meeting relates to inter-tribal relations and how Nuu-chah-nulth-aht viewed the boundaries of ha'wiih in the past.

A number of Ahousaht also attended the “Mining Clayoquot’s Future?” meeting. The delegation was led by tyii hawił, Maquinna. Before they spoke, they stood at the front of the room and sang a prayer chant, which belonged to haiyuupinuul. It was the same prayer chant that was sung at the 2000 fish farm protest, and thus the same chant from the beginning of the Ahous-Otsoos war. This is tremendously significant. There are a lot of different prayer chants that they could have sung, but they chose that specific one. Now it could simply be because the location of that first chant was atop Chitaapi, but I think it is more than that, for at least two reasons. When it was brought back out in 2000, on the occasion of the fish farm protest, the hostile intent was obvious. The message was: “We are prepared to go to war.” They did not use this chant lightly and it was clearly meant to signify the seriousness of their resolve. Secondly, at the 2012 meeting, they followed the chant with words that made it clear that Chitaapi was in Ahous territory and the ha'wiih were prepared to defend their interests there, as they had during the Ahous-Otsoos war.

Before Maquinna spoke, David Frank spoke on behalf of the ha'wiih, which is more customary. Traditionally, ha'wiih had speakers that spoke publically on their behalf. They

were trained orators, and I have been told that part of the reason for this practice was that *the word of the ha'wiih was law*. Thus, they had to exercise great caution with what they said because it was assumed that they would be held to it. In the past, ha'wiih often limited their public speaking to good news on celebratory occasions, or, perhaps as this case indicates, when expressing a stern commitment to defend their hahuulii. Maquinna would speak on this occasion, but before we get to his statements I want to address Frank's opening comments. He began by thanking and acknowledging the Tla-o-qui ha'wiih as proper Nuuchah-nulth protocol demands. Frank then stated, "We assert the authority of our ha'wiih" and "the power of our ha'wiih must be recognized."<sup>703</sup> He lays out the first position of the Ahous ha'wiih, no matter who the audience is, be they settlers or other Nuuchah-nulth-aht. Frank states further, "Any economic activity in our hahuulii is by the sole permission and authority of our ha'wiih."<sup>704</sup> This position has been increasingly reinforced since the conflict on Waanačas/Hilhuuis in 1985.<sup>705</sup> Finally, Frank reminded the meeting participants that, "We will use our resources in our ha'huulthii, recognizing that we do not need external government permission or permits."<sup>706</sup> Again, this is an assertion of the authority and jurisdiction of the Ahous ha'wiih within their territories, not simply for the benefit of the Tla-o-qui-aht, but also settler governments and corporations. They might not always be successful in this regard, as the history of settler colonialism indicates, but it is a position that they continue to push at every opportunity.

Maquinna also spoke at this meeting, which is noteworthy. I acknowledge that this

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<sup>703</sup> "Mining Clayoquot's Future? Ahousaht Chiefs." YouTube video, 18:29. Posted by "FriendsofClayoquot," uploaded March 29, 2012.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqSKtsFp\\_lw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqSKtsFp_lw).

<sup>704</sup> Ibid.

<sup>705</sup> It should be noted that we refer to Meares Island as "Waanačas/Hilhuuis" because both Ahous and Tla-o-qui claim ownership of it and these are their respective names for it.

<sup>706</sup> "Mining Clayoquot's Future? Ahousaht Chiefs."

could reflect a contemporary phenomenon of ha'wiih speaking on their own behalf more often, but because Maquinna also had a speaker make the opening comments, we can assume that he was showing how important he felt this particular issue was to him and his community. Maquinna began with, "Where we presently sit were a people that didn't want to share the resources and we took them to war. It took us eleven years to defeat those people, the Otsoos."<sup>707</sup> The significance of the Ahous-Otsoos war continues to figure into present day political and economic dynamics in ways that I had initially found surprising, but considering the revival of the ha'wiih since the 1980s and 1990s, it should not be. Maquinna further added, "Chitaapi is very dear to us, a special place of prayer, so when you talk about Chitaapi, *be careful...*because it belongs to us."<sup>708</sup> I will not go so far as to say that the Ahousaht were threatening the Tla-o-qui-aht, not outright, but they were certainly trying to remind them of the need to respect the authority and jurisdiction of their ha'wiih. Presumably, Ahous would return the courtesy with respect to Tla-o-qui ha'wiih and the activities within *their* ha'huulthii, as in the case of the Pandora mine.

I want to discuss three additional issues that flow from the case of Chitaapi. They relate to the perception and reality of Nuuchah-nulth inter-tribal unity, the application of the principle of hišuuikiš tsawalk, and the relationships between the ha'wiih and the musčim. The issue of Nuuchah-nulth unity is an interesting one. As already noted, early explorers, historians and anthropologists mistakenly referred to us as Nootka. In one sense, Nuuchah-nulth identity is a correction of that mistake, but what are its true implications when it comes to our political and economic organizing? We started organizing collectively through the West Coast Allied Tribes in 1958, and incorporated as the West Coast District Society of

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<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid. *Emphasis* added.

Indian Chiefs in 1973, and finally renamed ourselves as the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council 1979. We share similar languages and cultural and political practices, but it would be a mistake to assume that Nuu-chah-nulth unity is natural or easy to maintain. The political and administrative unity of Nuu-chah-nulth-aht has always been predicated on political necessity, strategic strength in numbers, and economies of scale, but it has always been precarious in my experience. This was confirmed during my tenure as Treaty Process Manager for the NTC from 2001-2005. Shortly after beginning work at the NTC, the twelve nations of the Nuu-chah-nulth Treaty Table split on the acceptance of an agreement-in-principle in a way that would definitively end the collective negotiations of the NTC.<sup>709</sup> The most significant impact as it relates to the Central Region was the formation of the Maa-nulth Treaty Society, and final agreement it completed in 2006. Two of the Maa-nulth nations – Toquaht and Ucluelet – were also members of the Central Region. This greatly complicated matters with respect to the Central Region Board and the IMEA, which was originally considered a “bridge to treaty,” but as part of the larger Nuu-chah-nulth negotiating body. The IMEA was not renewed and the Central Region Board ceased operations in 2009. All of this is to suggest that political and economic unity amongst Nuu-chah-nulth has always been precarious and complex. I argue that this has only heightened since 1993 and the revival of the ha’wiih and their renewed place of prominence in the political and economic activities within their respective ha’hulthii.

The second issue I wish to expand upon is the application of hišuuikiš tsawalk in the context of Maquinna’s warning about what happens at Chitaapi as solely an Ahous matter.

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<sup>709</sup> As noted in chapter four, Nuu-chah-nulth nations negotiating in the BCTP went through several configurations. The twelve nations of the “Nuu-chah-nulth treaty table” in 2001 did not include Hupačasath, Ditidaht or Pacheedaht. The five Maa-nulth nations broke away from the main group of twelve nations shortly after 2001, and the remaining seven would further break a part in the years that followed.

The problem with invoking strict territorial boundaries and jurisdiction with respect to *industrial scale* economic projects is that the potential negative environmental effects are hard if not impossible to contain within those strict territorial boundaries. For example, many Hesquiaht (our immediate northern neighbor) feel that the fish farms within Ahous territories have negative impacts on the health of Hesqui ecosystems and salmon streams. Likewise, I understand that the Tla-o-qui-aht are concerned about the potential negative environmental effects of a copper mine in Ahous territory as they are our immediate neighbour to the south. It could be argued that smaller-scale economic activities, with little to no ecological footprint, might exist well within the sole prerogative of the ha'wiih of a specific nation. If we are to take the lesson of hišuuikiš tsawalk seriously, however, especially with respect to industrial scale economic activities, then it stands to reason *and* the proper observance of Nuuchahnulth principles and protocols that the Ahous ha'wiih should listen to, and carefully consider Tla-o-qui concerns. I believe that this problem will only worsen as we are forced to consider more large-scale economic projects to provide revenue for our nations and jobs for our people. When each nation and family was able to provide for its own economic and subsistence needs, even during the commercial fishing days, these issues were not as common. Although, as the story of the Ahous-Otsoos war indicates, intertribal tensions and conflicts are always possible.

The third issue relates to the relations between ha'wiih and musčim with respect to these projects. Musčim is usually used to describe Nuuchahnulth-aht that are not ha'wiih. In looking at our historically stratified Nuuchahnulth societies, many understand musčim to mean “commoner,” which is understandably contentious. While many have no problem speaking of ha'wiih and their place as leaders in our communities, some feel that to refer to

community people as commoners is elitist and insulting. For them, musčim simply means “people.” Charlotte Coté writes, “The next in this ranked social order were *maschimes*, or the commoners, who were related to respected *ha’wiih* of some standing in their community but who did not generally accumulate wealth or potlatch. *Maschimes* could raise their status by mastering skills, such as by becoming great canoe makers, respected warriors, or esteemed healers.”<sup>710</sup> There is a great deal of debate, both in the community and in the literature, on the exact nature of the relationships between musčim and ha’wiih. I have already discussed this at some length in chapter four, but here I want to focus on our contemporary reality. Although the ha’wiih have regained some of their former authority, Ahous still holds elections for chief and council to administer funding and programs under the *Indian Act*. As such, the people have come to expect a certain degree of input into the community’s political machinations via liberal democratic processes. Some argue that this is a violation of traditional Nuu-chah-nulth governance principles, while others argue that this is an aspect of liberal political culture that is good for our communities. Maquinna has stated that he respects the opinions of his people and after lengthy community consultations at home and away, the Ahous ha’wiih have just this year decided to prohibit industrial mining and logging in their ha’houlthlii as part of a new Ahousaht land use vision.<sup>711</sup>

## Conclusion

Nuu-chah-nulth people should be able to live in their homelands with livelihoods that allow them to feed their families and fulfill their sacred obligations to future generations. I state clearly that if their environmental activism does not make room for this possibility than it is

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<sup>710</sup> Coté, 22.

<sup>711</sup> Denise Titian, “No to industrial mining and logging, say Ahousaht Ha’wiih,” *Ha-shilth-sa newspaper*, January 26, 2017. <http://www.hashilthsa.com/news/2017-01-26/%E2%80%98no%E2%80%99-industrial-mining-and-logging-say-ahousaht-ha%E2%80%99wiih>.



as colonial as every other aspect of settler colonialism. I share this message with governments and corporations as well. Most of us do not live at home let alone make our livings there. Our leaders are faced with two profound challenges: providing our people with livelihood opportunities at home and protecting and sustaining our homewaters and lands for future generations. Unfortunately, the realities of settler colonialism and the practices of neoliberal capitalism have made this incredibly difficult.

In looking at the historical and contemporary political economy of the Ahousaht, I reveal a number of key issues that I hope are helpful in going forward. I have tried my best to understand how we have arrived at our present place and why our leaders and communities are making the decisions that they are with respect to economic development in Ahous territories. Nuuchahnulth have endured tremendous change throughout our shared history of settler colonialism with British Columbians and Canadians. We have been subject to a lot of imposed change and we have also tried our best, at every step, to adapt to change and co-craft it to meet our needs. Both of these dynamics have challenged our worldviews and values. Sometimes we have succeeded in maintaining our livelihoods *and* fulfilling our sacred responsibilities and sometimes we have greatly struggled with both. It might be an oversimplification to break it down the way I do, even with the vast complexity of settler colonialism, but I believe it comes down to some basic fundamentals. We deserve to live in our homelands with the capacity to sustain our families and communities, and our communities have decided that this includes keeping out some of the destructive industrial-scale economic development that could threaten our long-term ecological sustainability. In the next chapter, I explore some Nuuchahnulth efforts at community resurgence.

## Chapter Six - *Living Nuu-chah-nulth-aht:* Renewing Relations of Respect and Reciprocity

### Introduction: From Critique to Resurgence

Now more than ever, it is important for Indigenous people to be able to say no; no to violence – state-sanctioned and internalized, no to neoliberalism, no to destructive economic development, and no to settler colonialism. Resistance is necessary. The Indigenous academic tradition of critique, first brought to my attention in the writings of scholars like Vine Deloria, Jr. and later the Indigenous Governance program at the University of Victoria, has encouraged a new generation of passionate Indigenous scholarship raging against the machines of violence, colonialism, and capitalism. Resistance is vital to resurgence. As Glen Coulthard points out, resistance is not simply a negative reaction, it is also an affirmative action. When Indigenous people say no, “they also have ingrained within them a resounding ‘yes’: they are the affirmative *enactment* of another modality of being, a different way of relating to and with the world”<sup>712</sup>

It is also important to be mindful of the internal community dynamics within which critique takes place. Some leaders dismiss grassroots community dissent to an economic project or political activity because alternatives are not offered. Opposition is criticized for being negative and not forward thinking enough. This is problematic for a number of reasons. The merits of a point of criticism should not be dependent on there being a utopic alternative. This kind of response to legitimate criticism suggests that there are no viable alternatives and that the acceptance of hegemonic settler political, economic and legal paradigms is the only practical solution. And yet, our very dependence on dominant systems and processes limits the possibility of Indigenous alternatives. We must also be mindful that

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<sup>712</sup> Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 2014): 169. *Emphasis* in original.

playing by accepted settler rules and within their colonial systems *pays* well for some. Entire careers of Aboriginal and settler Canadian negotiators and consultants have been made in these state-endorsed processes. Additionally, there is a lot riding on whether the processes of recognition and reconciliation are successful in granting Canada the legitimacy it desires and the unfettered access to Indigenous waters, lands and resources.

Johnny Mack makes some insightful contributions to my understanding of critique within the Nuu-chah-nulth context. In his particular case he shares his experiences as an academic and a member of the Toquaht First Nation. Mack states, “My responsibility lay not in whether or not to render critique, but rather in how to deliver it – in the methods employed to convey my opinions.”<sup>713</sup> Mack offers three “complexes” that in one way or another tend to neutralize valid criticisms. The “calm waters complex” is manifested when critique is not expressed publically out of a fear of being disrespectful or disruptive. The “callous warrior complex” is exhibited when criticism has no such concern for perceived disrespect or tranquility, but is easily dismissed by leaders based on those grounds. Finally, the “convention complex” is what occurs when criticism is channeled through “proper” consultative and bureaucratic channels only to lose potency and ultimately suffer co-optation and irrelevance.<sup>714</sup> On the issue of respect, Mack makes a particularly important contribution to the issue of critique in a Nuu-chah-nulth context. He writes:

An important point to keep in mind is that *eesok* also entails a respect of the self. For this reason, the principles of generosity cannot be said to legitimate a calm waters complex, where someone withholds their critical views for the sake of tranquility. Relations of respect do not equate to a calm waters rationalization of relations of peace at all costs.<sup>715</sup>

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<sup>713</sup> Mack, 2009, 18.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid. 9-11.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid. 24.

We respect our communities and ourselves when we speak our truths, even when this leads to public disagreement with leaders. Having acknowledged this, fortunately, there are alternatives that do not preclude us from resisting and resurging simultaneously.

The theoretical work of resurgence is ongoing. Despite our peoples' histories and stories about change, decolonization is uncharted territory, and we must be creative and flexible. A significant portion of this thesis is intended to do just that, to understand Nuuchah-nulth worldviews, principles and values, to interpret and re-interpret our teachings. However, the focus here is how to bring those theories to life through what Coulthard describes as "transformative praxis"<sup>716</sup> and "grounded normativity."<sup>717</sup> I also take inspiration from Leanne Simpson, who writes,

We must choose to live as Nishnaabeg, committing to *mno mibaadziwin*, (the 'good life' or 'continuous rebirth') committing to building resurgence. We have a choice, and that choice requires action, commitment, and responsibility. We are not simply born Nishnaabeg...We must commit to living the good life each day...We must *live* our knowledge.<sup>718</sup>

And thus we come to the notion of *living* alternatives or *living* Indigenously. These are processes of revival, renewal, and resurgence, individually and collectively.

I speak of revival because in many instances, we seek to do exactly that, to bring back a traditional practice. This is being done with our languages. Although they are nearly extinct in some cases, more and more of Nuuchah-nulth-aht are working hard to re-learn our languages. From an Indigenous political theory perspective, we are learning that our languages are rich with meanings and nuances that provide insights into our particular

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<sup>716</sup> Glen Coulthard, "Beyond Recognition: Indigenous Self-Determination as Prefigurative Practice," *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations*, Leanne Simpson, ed. (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press, 2008): 199.

<sup>717</sup> Coulthard, 2014, 172.

<sup>718</sup> Leanne Simpson, ed. "Our Elder Brothers: The Lifeblood of Resurgence," *Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press, 2008): 73-74. *Emphasis added.*

worldviews. Of course, there are also plenty of examples where our cultural traditions carry on in the form of stories, songs, dances, prayers, and ceremonies despite colonial efforts to abolish them. There may also be cases where revival is inappropriate or undesirable. Obvious examples for Nuuchah-nulth-aht include strict social hierarchies that included the ownership of slaves. We also need to root out patriarchy, sexism and misogyny, “traditional” or otherwise. Recently, there have been increasing numbers of women ha’wiih and wit’waak. This alone does not address the issues of patriarchy, sexism and misogyny, but I believe it is a step in the right direction.

What I mean by renewal is precisely the work of interpreting our traditional Nuuchah-nulth principles and separating them from traditional practices. It is my contention that principles are more foundational and have greater longevity. Traditional practices on the other hand can be revived, forgotten or renewed. This is a significant challenge in Nuuchah-nulth communities because many of our people understand our traditions specifically as practices to the extent that they are followed dogmatically. In some cases, there has been a shallowing of our cultural teachings and all that remains are specific practices with little to no understanding of their deeper meanings or context. I appreciate that this assertion is contentious and not without its complications, but it is ground that still needs to be explored. At the heart of my project is a desire to understand the “why” of our traditional teachings. I have always been irked at the invocation of nuu-maak or “that is the way we’ve always done it” as a response to inquiries about why we did or did not do things. Nuu-maak generally means “taboo” in the Nuuchah-nulth language and often implies that some future harm or tragedy will befall a person or their family when they ignore our teachings or protocols. And clearly, just because we have long-held traditions, this does not mean that we have *always*

done things a particular way. Many of our stories, especially those involving Ko-ışin (raven), speak of lessons learned and a complex evolution of how we came to live respectfully and honour relations of reciprocity in our territories. By critically engaging our traditions and in some cases reviving relevant practices and developing new practices rooted in our foundational principles we can perpetuate unique Nuu-chah-nulth ways of living that make sense for our homelands and honour our responsibilities and relations.

*Living* Nuu-chah-nulth-aht is a call to resist shallow and commodified expressions of our culture. It is a rejection of destructive settler-colonial economic practices, and the revival of traditional Nuu-chah-nulth principles through *living* on our lands and waters, honouring our responsibilities and respecting our relations.<sup>719</sup> *Living* Nuu-chah-nulth is a call to deepen our understandings, to learn how and why, and to live in harmony once again with all of our relatives. I began this project from the academic perspective of political economy and an inquiry into the possibilities and consequences of an Aboriginalized capitalism. I conclude in a way that I hope re-blurs lines, defies compartmentalization, and respects the Nuu-chah-nulth principle of hishuukish tsa'walk. As such my examples of *Living* Nuu-chah-nulth-aht are not limited to the realms of economics and business. I look at the ways in which our people are seeking consistency in *every* aspect of their lives. Certainly, I recognize that we all have families and wish to fulfill our responsibilities to care and provide for them, but what I am speaking of now goes beyond material needs and includes everything that would constitute a full, good Nuu-chah-nulth life. I am not pulling this idea out of thin air, as I

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<sup>719</sup> I believe in the truth of this statement. I also understand its contention. As a Nuu-chah-nulth-aht living in Skwxwú7mesh/Tsleil-Waututh/Musqueam territories, I am like more than sixty percent of my fellow citizens who do not live at home. My intent is not to denigrate our experiences or realities. I do believe in the importance of maintaining close connections to home, however, and I am grateful for those of my family and community who help us stay connected in small, but vital ways. One of the ways in which we can honour our connections to home is to represent ourselves well in other Indigenous peoples' territories, in part, through respecting their laws and protocols.

hope I have shown, but I believe that decolonization involves a critical engagement with our traditions and a redeployment of them to suit our contemporary challenges without betraying the traditional principles and obligations that remain relevant. And while some of these examples can be interpreted as individual acts “everyday decolonization,”<sup>720</sup> or “everyday acts of resurgence,”<sup>721</sup> I think they are more likely to be successful when engaged with on a larger scope, beginning with families, houses and nations. These stories exemplify an affirmative move from critique to resurgence.

### **The Nuu-chah-nulth Stop the Violence March**

*“Violence against women is...common in indigenous communities although community members are often reluctant to discuss it publicly or raise it as a problem.”*

- Rauna Kuokkanen<sup>722</sup>

Although this example of Nuu-chah-nulth resistance and resurgence was some time ago, it is one that I co-organized and participated in, and a story that needs to continue being told, re-told and acted upon. In the spring of 2006, I got together with two Nuu-chah-nulth friends in Mituunii.<sup>723</sup> One was a graduate student at the time and the other was an elected leader of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council. One friend had just returned from a trip home to Tla-o-qui and clearly had a heavy heart. Several of her relatives told her of a recent story of tragic and despicable community violence. A young Tla-o-qui woman was brutally attacked just two weeks after her ayts-tuu-thaa, a Nuu-chah-nulth coming of age ceremony. The community was in shock, but it was the women in particular who felt compelled to act. The women of Tla-o-qui held a protest, which Ha’wiih’tup had attended. He was given a paddle

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<sup>720</sup> Hunt and Holmes, 154.

<sup>721</sup> Cornassel, 88.

<sup>722</sup> Rauna Kuokkanen, “Gendered Violence and Politics in Indigenous Communities,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 17, 2 (2015): 282.

<sup>723</sup> Mituunii is what Nuu-chah-nulth people call Victoria, British Columbia, home of the Lekwungen and WSÁNEĆ peoples.

and he was told to bring it to all our Nuu-chah-nulth communities with the message that internalized violence must be addressed, and the Stop the Violence march was born.

In discussing the Stop the Violence March with a relative during the planning stages, Chaw-win-is learned that,

The Ayts-tuu-thlaa served to publicly acknowledge our young women by lifting them up and placing a beautiful shawl on their shoulders, displaying their family history or teachings. She would also be instructed by aunts, grandmothers and other family members on what it meant to be a young woman, how we need to carry ourselves and live respectfully rooted in our Nuu-chah-nulth ways.<sup>724</sup>

The Ayts-tuu-thlaa was not only about educating young women. It was a communal acknowledgement of respect that everyone was meant to honour. The Tla-o-qui-aht story was heart wrenching, enraging, and baffling precisely because the assault came so quickly after this sacred and public ceremony. This example reminds us that it is entirely possible to go through the motions of our cultural practices and observe these rites of passage and *still violate* their deeper meanings.<sup>725</sup> It is possible to *appear* traditionally cultural and still ignore the underlying principles of iisaak and hishuukish tsa'walk. At the same time, the organizers of the march did not feel compelled to abandon cultural practices, protocols, and ceremonies. We chose to do what we could to re-centre the deeper meanings of our cultures.

The first goal of the Stop the Violence march was to loudly say that we would no longer be quiet about internalized violence and abuse in our communities. The women of Tla-o-qui spoke up and we had heard them. We travelled to all fifteen Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations on Vancouver Island over a ten-day period with the message that the violence had to

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<sup>724</sup> Glen Coulthard, "Nuu-chah-nulth struggles against sexual violence: Interview with Chiinuks (Ruth Ogilvie) and Na'cha'uaht (Cliff Atleo Jr)," *The New Socialist* 58 (September-October 2006): 29.

<sup>725</sup> I understand that our communal past was not some Utopia where everyone acted according to our laws and protocols. As the story Kaanikum illustrates, we had laws and people abided them *and* violated them, and there were consequences.



stop. In each community we met with concerned Nuu-chah-nulth-aht and survivors of violence. Sometimes we met with leaders and sometimes they ignored us. When possible we met with ha'wiih. We didn't go out of our way to snub elected band councils, and certainly many of them were gracious, welcoming and supportive. Of course, not all contemporary traditional Nuu-chah-nulth governance systems are respected and healthy either. In some cases, we learned that certain hereditary leaders themselves were the perpetrators of the abuse and violence that we were speaking out against and/or silent and complicit. Additionally, we cannot simply blame colonialism for internalized gendered violence. Kuokkanen explains, "While we cannot omit the interrogation of colonization...there is a need to reject those discourses of colonization that externalize responsibility for gendered violence or construct male violence as a reflection of their own victimhood and loss of status."<sup>726</sup> As indicated in chapter four, Nuu-chah-nulth leaders are not above Indigenous law. Muscogee (Creek) scholar, Sarah Deer writes, "When a rapist serves as a tribal leader (or inherits a hereditary title), the entire community suffers. Whenever possible, such perpetrators should be called out, exposed, impeached, and fired."<sup>727</sup> By speaking about these issues openly, we hoped to create a safe space for others to speak out against violence. We heard a lot of tragic stories and our hearts were heavy, but we also heard many inspiring stories of survival, resistance, and resurgence.

The second goal of the Stop the Violence march was to bring the message of yaa-uk-mis – love. In saying no to violence we were resisting internalized patriarchy and misogyny. At the same time, we were bringing the message of resurgent love. Chaw-win-is thought that this would be best expressed through the spirit of the ayts-tuu-thlaa. Before leaving on our

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<sup>726</sup> Kuokkanen, 2015, 273.

<sup>727</sup> Sarah Deer, *The beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2015): 162.

journey, Denise Williams, a Tla-o-qui-aht fashion designer, made fifteen shawls that we took with us. A shawl was given to a young woman in each village in the spirit of the ayts-tuu-thlaa. Each community decided who would receive a shawl. With the exception of one community, whose hereditary leader told us that they did not have a violence problem; we were welcomed with open arms by everyone else. We were housed and fed and fellow Nuuchah-nulth-aht young and old marched with us through their communities with the messages of love, resistance, and resurgence. It was exhausting but soul enriching at the same time.

We funded our travels ourselves with the help of friends and in some cases community people and councils donated money to help us cover our expenses. We purposefully tried to make the march a voluntary and independent effort. Chaw-win-is and I explain our reasoning for this in an interview with Glen Coulthard:

**Chiinuks:** I think it goes without saying that if I want to remain an authentic Kousa [human being, real person], organizing must always fall outside of the colonial system. Everyone knows that the state has always sought to destroy indigenous ways of being in the world. The kind of organizing we began with in this march is rooted in our responsibility as indigenous peoples to our land, home and community. We organize on the basis of the threat of the day. Today this means neo-colonialism and its effects, which includes the systemic rage that has turned inward on ourselves. Since the colonial-state can't address these issues, we must find solutions that derive from our own communities.

**Na'cha'uaht:** For me, the colonial-state system was never meant to liberate us or allow us to be ourselves and craft our futures as we see fit. Well-intentioned people and efforts get swallowed up by the band councils and government programs to a point where they, at best, simply prop up a corrupt social-safety net, or worse, fundamentally change who we are as indigenous people.

The benefit of organizing outside this system has been the opportunity to show people that we can achieve tangible results without relying on government funding or direction. It has been an awesome experience to see people realize that our ways, Nuuchah-nulth ways and teachings, are still valid and can guide us in a way that could never be achieved within the colonial-state system.

Of course, this is not to say that there aren't challenges, which often relate to our own impatience and desire for immediate change. In rejecting government funding we have needed to be more creative in terms of organizing and fund-raising. In the long-run, however, this will help us develop greater independence, which adds to our desire to do things right.<sup>728</sup>

We tried to do a lot with the march, but it was always rooted in the desire to do things *properly*. We consulted family members and respected elders and young people constantly. We recognized that we were not going to change things overnight, but we needed to make a concerted effort to challenge colonial dominance and re-centre Nuuchahnulth ways of being and living. It is hard to say what the legacy of the march is. At the time, we shared many powerful moments, but violence continues in our communities. None of us are social workers or professional counselors and the structures of settler colonialism remain firmly in place. Those involved, the organizers and participants, have all retreated back to our respective daily grinds and familial responsibilities, but we recognize that we must renew our efforts at making substantive change outside the structures of settler colonialism and state hegemony. This part of the struggle remains ongoing and vital to true decolonization.

### **From Fishing to Fish Farming to Farming**

As the previous chapters have shown, Nuuchahnulth-aht have survived and thrived off of our oceans, rivers, and foreshore for millennia. Our methods have certainly changed, none more so than in the last century. In that time, we have ceased our traditional whale hunting, and focused on other sustenance and adaptive practices. We started commercial fishing, that is we caught larger amounts of fish, usually salmon, and sold them to settler companies who processed them and sold them in grocery stores. As indicated in the previous chapter, commercial fishing as an adaptive practice is complicated. One could argue that the

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<sup>728</sup> Coulthard, 2006, 30-31. Note: Chaw-win-is and I were both going by our previous traditional names at the time.

industrial scale of the fishery made it ultimately unsustainable and therefore a violation of our principles.<sup>729</sup> On the other hand, it would be hard to make the argument that many of our people became capitalists. Most of my family has been involved in the commercial fisheries on the west coast. Some did well, others not so much, but no one became what Canadian society would consider rich. My aunts, uncles, and cousins worked and provided for their families, but no one accumulated wealth for the sake of creating more wealth. This is consistent with Duane Champagne's assessment of early Indigenous engagement with colonial markets. We work to survive. Over time, this gets increasingly complicated and not because Indigenous people are becoming wealthy by Canadian standards, but because we are engaging with capitalist markets more and more as communities. It has become harder to say that we are not becoming active capitalists, albeit not the greatest beneficiaries of it.

The turn of the century brought us to our lowest levels of participation in the west coast commercial fisheries ever. At the same time another factor entered the picture: fish farming. As wild salmon populations have declined, and the commercial fishing industry shrinks, fish farming grows exponentially. I discussed this in the previous chapter, but I want to reiterate one key point. It has been monumentally tragic that a fishing people have been pushed out of our traditional and adaptive livelihoods, starved into submission, and forced to work as employees of fish farms that threaten the health of our wild salmon stocks. Citing Rosa Luxemburg, Kuokkanen writes, "only by destroying their capacity to subsist are people brought under the complete control and power of capital. Coercion is needed to destroy not only the capacity to subsist but also a people's economic and political

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<sup>729</sup> It should be noted that as the commercial and recreational fisheries grew, Indigenous peoples have made up smaller and smaller proportions of the overall fishing fleets.

autonomy.”<sup>730</sup> Although many of our people have left home for school and work, many would like to return, but in order to do this we need to be able to make a living or at the very least be able to feed our families. A few years ago, an interesting and ironic experiment with community gardens began at a few of our west coast communities.

I came across this example when my wife was working for the First Nations Agricultural Association (FNAA), based in Tk’emlúps Secwépemc territory. The FNAA, among other things, gave out small grants to First Nation communities to help set up community gardens. Part of my wife’s job was to visit these communities and three of them were in Clayoquot Sound: Hesqui, Ahous, and Tla-o-qui. I travelled with her to Tla-o-qui and Ahous. The contact for Tla-o-qui was an old friend and former fellow West Coast Warrior Society member. He had also supported and participated in the Stop the Violence march. We did not know who the contact person for Ahous was going to be and when we showed up to the main village of Maaqtusiis, we were surprised to discover that it was one of my uncles; actually the first uncle to take me commercial fishing when I was thirteen. One of the biggest reasons this is ironic of course is because for millennia, Nuuchah-nulth-aht derived our primary sustenance from the ocean, rivers and foreshore. Although we gathered and harvested many berries and roots from the land, we were not agricultural in a way that most people understand. But it is also ironic because while at residential schools, the priests, nuns, ministers, and supervisors often forced our young people to learn about agriculture. It was commonly known that most residential schools, among other things, tried to assimilate our people into settler colonial ways of living, including the sedentary lifestyle that came with agricultural food production. Needless to say, for the generations and generations that the Indian residential schools were open, I do not know of any Nuuchah-

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<sup>730</sup> Kuokkanen, 2011b, 223.

nulth-aht that were inspired to pursue the agricultural life when they grew up. This current example is different for several key reasons, however.

First, these initiatives are being led by Indigenous people and supported by mostly Indigenous organizations. It makes a huge difference to the success and relevance of a project if our own people are initiating it. Second, our communities are opening up to new alternatives when it comes to food security and sovereignty. This is becoming necessary because our people do not have the same access to the traditional seafood that we used to. Although some of our people still fish, we do not take to our rivers and seas in the same way. What is more common these days is that band councils hire one of the few people that still own fishing boat to go out and catch fish for the entire community. My home community of Ahous does this and they catch fish for the people at Maaqtusiis as well as many of us living in nearby cities such as Tofino, Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Victoria, and Vancouver. While many of us living away from home certainly appreciate this “food fish,” strictly limiting our connection to physical nourishment marks a significant change in our relationship to our homewaters and lands. In addition to this is the ever-increasing cost of bringing groceries to remote communities, which places extra pressure on Nuu-chah-nulth families.

Finally, and perhaps more grimly, the long-term impacts of climate change on our food systems might require that we explore options that are creative and flexible. It is hypothesized that if the average ocean temperatures increase just two or three degrees centigrade, this will have devastating consequences on our traditional seafood.<sup>731</sup> During the summer of 2015, a massive toxic algae bloom was observed off the west coast of North

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<sup>731</sup> D.W. Welch, Y. Ishida, and K. Nagasawa, “Thermal limits and ocean migrations of sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*): long-term consequences of global warming” *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 55, 4 (1998): 937-948.

America (from northern California to at least the west coast of Vancouver Island) that may be caused by climate change.<sup>732</sup> The health of life at sea impacts the health of life on land and the health of the land effects life in our streams, rivers and oceans. This is the essence of hishuukish tsawalk. This is something that capitalists and government bureaucrats often ignore and something that will impact our people for a very long time, even if immediate changes are made to mitigate the harms of climate change. Many parts of the west coast are inhospitable to agriculture, with cooler temperatures, less sun exposure and the prevalence of saltwater air. That being said, community gardens can produce healthy food with patience, practice, and perhaps some supportive advice from local settler people with more experience.

My uncle gave us a tour of the community garden as well as what he was growing at his home. He spoke of the challenges they were having and the things they were learning. This was exciting because he explained that many of the community members were getting involved, including the children. It was also exciting for me because they were taking control of this project and learning through *experimentation*. They exhibited the spirit of adaptation that I wish to highlight here. Of all things, one could say that agriculture is a foreign activity for most northwest coast Indigenous peoples, and we certainly have a notorious history with it because of settler government policies pushing sedentary living and assimilationist education in the residential schools. In this case, however, our people are approaching it from their own perspective with their own priorities. Unlike industrial-scale activities that are controversial like the fish farms or mining projects, small-scale community

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<sup>732</sup> Michael Milstein, “NOAA Fisheries mobilizes to gauge unprecedented West Coast toxic algal bloom: Offshore survey will measure extent and severity of largest harmful algal bloom in more than a decade,” *Northwest Fisheries Science Center*, June 2015.  
[http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/news/features/west\\_coast\\_algal\\_bloom/index.cfm](http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/news/features/west_coast_algal_bloom/index.cfm).

gardening is much more consistent with Nuu-chah-nulth values and principles of respect, oneness, and reciprocity. In the most straightforward terms, community gardening is consistent with respect for the health of the land, our neighbours, and future generations. As a community activity, our members are able to work and share and give back to each other with their time and efforts. In contemporary environmental parlance, these smaller-scale projects have a smaller ecological footprint, consistent with the carrying capacity of the ha'hulthlii of our ha'wiih.<sup>733</sup>

### **Seitcher Bay**

The example of Seitcher Bay exemplifies everything that I am talking about here, in theoretical and practical terms. It represents a concerted effort undertaken by young Nuu-chah-nulth-aht to return to their homelands and waters, renewing relations of respect and reciprocity. The Seitcher family and supporters are trying to recreate consistency between their daily experiences and their Nuu-chah-nulth worldviews, values and principles. It is an experiment, rooted in traditional Indigenous teachings and motivated by love for the land, our people, our families, and our sacred responsibilities. I will first describe how and why the Seitcher family sought to re-connect to their traditional territories and then discuss the significance of their efforts.

In 2003, members of the Seitcher family returned to Seitcher Bay in a way that they had not for over eighty years.<sup>734</sup> At first they returned for short visits, but in the subsequent years, they have spent more and more of each year living there. They have built four cabins

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<sup>733</sup> William Rees is credited with originating the “ecological footprint” concept. For more on it and carrying capacity analysis, see: William E. Rees. “Revisiting Carrying Capacity: Area-Based Indicators of Sustainability,” *Population and Environment, A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 17, 3 (1996): 195-215.

<sup>734</sup> Kristi Dobson, “Family lives off the grid, appreciating nature’s bounty,” *Alberni.ca: Port Alberni’s Community Website*, May 24, 2016. <https://www.alberni.ca/valley-heartbeat/family-lives-grid-appreciating-natures-bounty>.



(without hydro or modern appliances) and have plans to build a longhouse.<sup>735</sup> In earlier times it was referred to as “Seitcher’s Place.” Seitcher family members now belong to both present-day Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht. A point that I want to emphasize here is that Seitcher Bay is not one of the many dozens of tiny reserves throughout Ahous and Tla-o-qui territories. Seitcher Bay does not *legally belong* to the Seitcher family in the settler Canadian sense, but the Nuu-chah-nulth people of Ahous and Tla-o-qui recognize it as theirs.

Prior to his family’s efforts to return to Seitcher Bay, Naas-a-thluk and his wife, Nitanis Desjarlais lived in a variety of places, including Vancouver, which he believes contributed to his family’s desire to reconnect with home. Both Naas-a-thluk and Desjarlais were activists in their youth during the 1990s and 2000s. Naas-a-thluk was also a member of the now defunct West Coast Warrior Society, which brought him many places in the defense of Indigenous communities and life ways.<sup>736</sup> Despite this work, living away from home in the big city also took its toll. In a paper written for the National Aboriginal Health Organization, Taiaiake Alfred writes,

This is a major effect of colonization: denial of access to land-based cultural practices leading to a loss of freedom on both the individual and collective levels equating to the psychological effect of *anomie*, or the state of profound alienation that results from experiencing serious cultural dissolution, which is then the direct cause of serious substance abuse problems, suicide and interpersonal violence.<sup>737</sup>

This is a fairly general statement and certainly not everyone will agree, but we should not underestimate both the individual and collective psychological and emotional impacts of alienation from our homelands and traditional life ways. This is not to say that many of our people have not carved out fulfilling lives for themselves away from home and maintained

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<sup>735</sup> Ibid.

<sup>736</sup> Atleo, 2015, 163.

<sup>737</sup> Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, “Colonialism and State Dependency” *Journal of Aboriginal Health* 5, 2 (November 7, 2009): 49. *Emphasis* in original.

or not maintained certain connections to home, but generally speaking, the negative effects of alienation are well documented and important. Alfred concludes, “The message from traditional teachings and from the academic research is consistent and clear: return to the land and re-learn how to live as Indigenous people according to the original teachings that sustained people and the earth for thousands of years.”<sup>738</sup> I understand that many people will take exception to this statement and find it problematic on a number of fronts, including an anti-essentialist perspective, but in the case of Naas-a-thluk and his family, they agree that returning to their homelands was an important part of their efforts at decolonization, resurgence and *living* Nuu-chah-nulth-aht.

Naas-a-thluk is quick to point out what Seitcher Bay has meant to his family historically and contemporarily. When his ancestors first moved there it was a place of refuge from turmoil that they were experiencing at the time. His family considers Seitcher Bay a place of healing and regeneration, in light of this history, as well as a refuge from the realities and rigours of modern Canadian living. Naas-a-thluk also points to a historical and ongoing role fulfilled by his family that has facilitated this re-connection to the land, that of “prayer warriors.”<sup>739</sup> This is significant because many traditional Indigenous roles have been suppressed through the mechanisms of settler colonialism. The potlatch ban and residential schools both worked to eliminate traditional Indigenous roles and disrupt healthy communities. In particular, I would say that the role of the warrior, or *wii-uk* in Nuu-chah-nulth was suppressed as it presented an ongoing threat to the smooth usurpation of Indigenous lands by colonial governments. This suppression has been ongoing and consistent.

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<sup>738</sup> Ibid. 57.

<sup>739</sup> Atleo, 2015, 163.

During the early 2000s the now-disbanded West Coast Warrior Society (WCWS), which attempted to fulfill this role of protection, both at home and abroad, became a target for Canadian law enforcement and spy agencies. In 2002, a group called the Integrated National Security Enforcement Team raided Naas-a-thluk's house allegedly looking for a cache of firearms.<sup>740</sup> The raid included a SWAT-type team with automatic weapons and machines to x-ray the walls, ceilings and floors. They did not find any weapons because there were none, but if part of their intention was to intimidate community members, they succeeded. The state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence becomes very real when you are confronted with the guns and badges of the state. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police came similarly armed to the teeth in response to the more recent and peaceful anti-fracking protests in Elsipogtog, Mi'kmaq territory in 2013.<sup>741</sup> Although my interactions with the state were not so dramatic, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service interviewed me twice, both before and during my membership with the WCWS. All of the members were questioned and harassed either by intelligence or law enforcement officers, and the group ultimately disbanded as their work became untenable. Although many of the WCWS members and their families were shaken up by this increased attention from Canada's security establishment, it was really the impact that it had on our communities that further alienated the role of the contemporary warrior, and disbandment became the only logical conclusion. After all of this, many of our people, men and women, remain wit'waak at heart and continue their activism in less conspicuous ways.

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<sup>740</sup> Peter Barnsley, "Anti-terrorist raids Native activist's home" *Windspeaker* 20, 7 (2002). Accessed February 20, 2015. <http://www.ammsa.com/publications/windspeaker/anti-terrorist-unit-raids-native-activists-home>.

<sup>741</sup> Jorge Barrera, "Ottawa prepared for nation-wide protests following RCMP Elsipogtog raid: documents," *APTN News* website, January 8, 2014. Accessed February 20, 2015. <http://aptn.ca/news/2014/01/08/ottawa-prepared-nation-wide-protests-following-rcmp-elsipogtog-raid-documents/>.

The second point that I want to expand on is the notion of going back to the land. For at least a generation, we have been told, and have sometimes told ourselves that we *can't go back*. We hear proponents of Aboriginal economic development say things like, “no one is talking about going back to living in the bush.” Even combative settlers will say things like, “If you hate Canada so much, why don't you go back to living off the land.” In both of these contexts, going back implies a regression that stands against the dominant liberal theme of progress, a supposed universal aspiration. In the instance of the Aboriginal invocation, we are asked to buy into the idea that traditional practices are no longer realistic or relevant. We are led to believe that progress in the liberal sense is unavoidable and inevitable. In the instance of the settler invocation of backward movement, we are led to believe that our traditional ways represent an earlier and less developed stage of human history. In this vein of thinking, settlers have brought civilization to Indigenous peoples and the latter are presumed to feel thankful for this gift. What I suggest here is that going back in some respects is a necessary act of honouring our traditional Indigenous principles and fulfillment of our responsibilities. By going back to our homelands and waters, and reviving certain traditional practices and developing new practices rooted in traditional principles, we re-create the possibility of living in a healthy present that will benefit future generations, what Reid has already referred to as, “A traditional future.”<sup>742</sup>

The Seitcher family is working hard to relearn and revitalize traditional food harvesting and preservation techniques. They are also researching traditional medicinal knowledge and practices.<sup>743</sup> A part of their return home is a concerted effort to relearn the old ways. Unfortunately, many of our old ways have been lost and we need to learn again

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<sup>742</sup> Reid, 276-281.

<sup>743</sup> Dobson.

through trial and error. There is an experimental aspect to a return to our homelands that cannot be ignored, and we should not be afraid of it. Desjarlais shares, “We wanted to see if we could do it and survive the winter like our ancestors. So we pushed up a level of *learning by doing*.”<sup>744</sup> Learning by doing is one of the best ways to embody lessons and Indigenous ways of living. Tsalagi scholar, Brian Yazzie Burkhart writes, “For American Indians, knowledge is knowledge in experience” and that from many Indigenous perspectives, “Knowledge can never be divorced from human action and experience.”<sup>745</sup> At this point in time, the family spends about half their time at Seitcher Bay, especially in the months from late spring until early fall. Their ultimate goal is to spend a majority of their time there and be self-sufficient. Right now, Seitcher Bay is a place of refuge and healing, but not a place that the family can spend their entire time yet. Naas-a-thluk and many of his family members split their time, including time needed to work wage labour or contracts to essentially subsidize their ability to live at Seitcher Bay. This has required flexibility in their approach that is noteworthy.

Desjarlais and Naas-a-thluk have eight children and therefore a tremendous responsibility that is not without complications in our contemporary reality.<sup>746</sup> Until they can achieve complete self-sufficiency in their territories, they have no choice but to split their time and supplement what they are able to do at Seitcher Bay with a life earning money in the wage and/or entrepreneurial markets. They have also sought out like-minded people to share in their experience and support their efforts. Naas-a-thluk says that he has received a lot of positive encouragement from other Nuu-chah-nulth-aht from Ahous, Tla-o-qui and

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<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

<sup>745</sup> Brian Yazzie Burkhart, “What Coyote and Thales can teach us: an outline for American Indian epistemology,” *American Indian Thought*, ed. Anne Waters (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004): 20-21.

<sup>746</sup> Dobson.

neighbouring communities, but he has not limited his interactions to Nuu-chah-nulth-aht or other Indigenous people. They recently formed a group called, Hithmesaqin, which means, “Where we want to be.” On this flexibility and working with non-Nuu-chah-nulth-aht Naas-a-thluk says,

Today, the cultural landscape of Clayoquot Sound honours a diverse array of ethnicities and backgrounds, each with unique and significant teachings and insights waiting to be shared. It has been more than two hundred years since these lands have become co-inhabited and it appears that we, as a people, are now prepared to take courageous steps to move forward together, to build cultural bridges and forge a new path that honours and recognizes a truer history, a deeper understanding of where we are and where we would like things to be for our future generations.<sup>747</sup>

The Nuu-chah-nulth-aht at Seitcher Bay have learned the importance of interconnection, humility, and flexibility. While they hold many important ideals in their hearts, their process of re-connection and revitalization is not dogmatic, but is instead flexible and being carried out in a way that I believe is relatable to many of us. This year will be the fourteenth year that they have gone to Seitcher Bay. They have their four cabins and have plans for more low-impact expansion, including a longhouse and the carving of traditional dugout canoes. They will continue to expand their knowledge of traditional foods and medicines and pass these lessons on to their children. Desjarlais has also emphasized the importance of language revitalization to their family, conceding that much of their initial knowledge came from elders and books and instead they wanted to be “immersed.”<sup>748</sup> Desjarlais states, “I wanted to go deeper and it was the language that was key to living and how (our ancestors) translated the world.”<sup>749</sup> Nuu-chah-nulth language remains crucial to a lot of us.

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<sup>747</sup> Naas-a-thluk, “First Nations,” *Friends of Clayoquot Sound*. <http://focs.ca/clayoquot-sound/first-nations/>.

<sup>748</sup> Dobson.

<sup>749</sup> Ibid.

## **Qwai-aht tu-kin tsiik-tsiika: Nuuchah-nulth Language Revitalization<sup>750</sup>**

Our languages are not just another form of communication. Hidden in our languages are clues at alternative Indigenous worldviews. Chickasaw and Cheyenne legal scholar, James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson writes, “Aboriginal people cannot know who they are through the structure of alien languages.”<sup>751</sup> Henderson goes on to explain the vital link between Indigenous languages and unique Indigenous worldviews. On Indigenous languages and the role of the contemporary warrior, Taiaiake Alfred writes, “The act of speaking and using *Onkwehonwe* languages to reorganize and reframe our existences is perhaps the most radical act we can perform as *Onkwehonwe* warriors.”<sup>752</sup> Indigenous languages all over the world are dying at a rapid rate, but many grassroots activists are focusing their attentions on the task of language revitalization. For these people, language revitalization is more than just the preservation of a cultural activity, but as Naas-a-thluk and others believe, also the vital act of recovering and maintaining unique Indigenous ways of being and living.

In Nuuchah-nulth territory some of the most profound efforts at language revitalization are taking place amongst small family groups, away from the spotlight of tribal council politics and programs. My own experience with this has involved several of my cousins and our parents – mainly my father, Wickaninnish. Wickaninnish attended Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS) in Port Alberni for most of his elementary and high school years. Although he remembers learning English at the day school in his home village of Maaqtosiis, when he arrived at AIRS he remembers, “I constantly wanted to speak

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<sup>750</sup> Qwai-aht tu-kin tsiik-tsiika means, “How we speak our language” in Nuuchah-nulth.

<sup>751</sup> James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson, “Ayukpachi: Empowering Aboriginal Thought” in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Marie Battiste, ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000): 252.

<sup>752</sup> Alfred, 2005, 248. “*Onkwehonwe*” is the Haudenasaunee word for “Indigenous people.”

our language, because that's the way I was." After a few weeks his elder brother Richard said, "Clifford, you have to start speaking English."<sup>753</sup> Wickaninnish remembers that his brother was not chastising him or putting him down; he was just advising him based on his own years of experience with the written and unwritten rules at AIRS. While other former students have reported rather severe experiences related to language loss at residential school, Wickaninnish points out a subtle yet no less destructive influence. He remembers a "self imposed suppression of the language."<sup>754</sup> English became more important to their survival in their new environment. As a consequence, when my father decided to relearn his language in his late forties, he had to start at what he estimated was the effective vocabulary of a ten year old.

In 2004, my cousins Pawasqwachitl and Hiish-miik and I approached my father about learning the Nuuchahnulth language, specifically the Ahousaht dialect. Wickaninnish figures he is now as conversant in Nuuchahnulth as a "high school graduate." He was able to relearn and learn by speaking with elders who knew more than he did. He was more than happy to share what he had learned with my cousins and me. Over the course of a little more than a year, getting together on weekends, we learned conversational basics and some prayers. We also learned the meanings of our names, our house affiliations and various protocols such as how to properly introduce ourselves and thank people formally. At one point, I came to the ironic realization that we were "learning about Nuuchahnulth culture and practices" rather than simply "being or *living* Nuuchahnulth-aht." Since I have moved away for university, I no longer benefit from these in-person language sessions with my father, but we have learned to improvise through conversations

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<sup>753</sup> Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, 1996, 52.

<sup>754</sup> Ibid.



via telephone or Skype. My father continues to teach his eldest grandson and my nephew Kashus how to speak Nuuchahnulth, even taking the time to teach him some of Kashus' father's Tseshaht dialect.

Other groups have begun to organize and continue to work to preserve the Nuuchahnulth language. One such group meets in Port Alberni twice weekly and is led by Ahous elder, Katie Fraser. They have also held immersion camps in our traditional territories. According to Wickaninnish, they average about eighteen people per session, mostly speaking the Ahousaht dialect. Katie, in addition to being a fluent speaker is also educated in linguistics and international phonetics. The Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council does not fund the group and most of their resources are self-financed. For the purposes of fund-raising they have formed a society, of which Wickaninnish is a board member.

Clearly, many of our people feel that our language is vital to an authentic Nuuchahnulth way of life and that it cannot wait for tribal council or federal funding. Growing numbers of Nuuchahnulth people are taking it upon themselves to relearn their languages. At a grassroots level, the participants in these activities might not consider what they do decolonization. They are simply striving to *live* Nuuchahnulth-aht. In the way of a warning, Henderson reminds us, "Without access to their Aboriginal language, Aboriginal people can neither create nor sustain a postcolonial order. They can have access to Aboriginal cultures through English, but they cannot grasp the inherent beauty of Aboriginal worldviews and language through English. *They end up living a translated life.*"<sup>755</sup> To be sure, this is a contentious statement, especially when you consider that all of our languages are endangered and most do not know how to speak it. That being said, some Nuuchah-

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<sup>755</sup> Henderson, 264. *Emphasis* added.

nulth-aht are tired of the prospect of living a translated life, tired of trying to be Canadian, and remembering what it means to be *Quu-asa*.

### **The Revival of Makah/Nuu-chah-nulth Traditional Whaling**

The Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tš revival of their traditional whale hunt in 1999 was an astonishing event on many levels. Although the Makah whalers were compelled by settler authorities to use a high-caliber rifle to quickly kill the whale once it was harpooned and were accompanied by gas-powered support/safety boats, “they maintained the cultural integrity of their whaling ancestors,” by observing important spiritual protocols and preparations, as well as actually hunting the whale in a traditional dugout canoe paddled by hand.<sup>756</sup> The experience of the Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tš epitomized what many Nuu-chah-nulth-aht aspire to do; that is, revive the best of their traditions as a means to address their myriad community cultural, social, and economic challenges. Indigenous people up and down the coast of Canada and the United States were energized and proud to be Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tš and Nuu-chah-nulth-aht. Although the 1999 hunt failed to usher in a new sustained era of traditional whaling, for reasons that I will soon reveal, the Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tš continue to inspire us all.

Coté and Umeek have already laid out the historical significance of whaling to Nuu-chah-nulth and Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tš peoples. We still remember the stories of the great whaling chiefs and celebrate them in our songs, dances, names, and artwork. The power of the Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tš revival was that it breathed life into our traditions, making them *real* for our people today. Our traditions transcended time in tangible ways that Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tš were able to literally consume and embody. Raibmon writes, “The whale hunt revived traditional practice in a decidedly and self-consciously contemporary context. Fundamentally presentist community concerns, including anxiety about assimilation and a desire to remain culturally

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<sup>756</sup> Coté, 138.

distinct from the surrounding non-Aboriginal population, made this a hunt for identity as well as for whales.”<sup>757</sup> Reid writes that the revived Qʷidiččaʔa·t̓x whale hunt “demonstrated the continued cultural importance of tribally specific hunting practices and helped move Makah culture from the museum back onto the water.”<sup>758</sup> He adds, “Makah whalers did more than harpoon a whale – they dramatically anchored their nation’s identity to the sea, just as generations of ancestors had done.”<sup>759</sup> The positive cultural impacts are clear to the Qʷidiččaʔa·t̓x and Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, and many of the Indigenous peoples from around the world that celebrated with them, but not everyone was happy about this traditional revival.

One of the more graphic anti-whaling slogans was, “Save a Whale, Harpoon a Makah.”<sup>760</sup> And, in an editorial about the violent opposition to the Qʷidiččaʔa·t̓x whale hunt and its historical colonial context, the *Tacoma News Tribune* wrote,

The Makah tribe received various threats of violence in recent weeks as it prepared to resume its traditional whale hunt. One of the ugliest came when the director of the Makah Whaling Commission found 25 messages left on her answering machine. Each consisted of a gun being loaded and fired. *This is not a new phenomenon.* Washington state has long harbored a streak of anti-Indian bigotry, much of which focuses obsessively on tribal hunting and fishing rights. Historically challenged Washingtonians see these rights as “special privileges.” In fact, they are ancestral practices the Indian nations insisted on retaining when they ceded most of the state’s territory to the U.S. government in the 1850s. Some Indian-bashers are using the Makah whaling dispute as a politically correct cover for venting genuinely vicious feelings.<sup>761</sup>

Although not all of the opposition to the hunt was strictly based on racial bigotry, even the environmental objections came from liberal progressive positions that nonetheless cast Indigenous traditions as primitive. Michael Kundu, a coordinator for the Sea Shepherd

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<sup>757</sup> Raibmon, 2.

<sup>758</sup> Reid, 271.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid. 272.

<sup>760</sup> Robert J. Miller, “Exercising Cultural Self-Determination: The Makah Indian Tribe Goes Whaling,” *American Indian Law Review* 25, 2 (2000/2001): 165.

<sup>761</sup> Sullivan, 14-15. *Emphasis* added.

Society wrote, “A society can never *evolve* by adopting archaic or inhumane rituals. *Progress* affects everyone living in this new era of the Global Village. No legitimate argument can be made that the Makah, or any other ethnic group, can move their culture *forward* through ritual killing.”<sup>762</sup> From my perspective, this is nothing other than eco-colonialism. In contrast, the *Tacoma News Tribune* editorial was surprisingly insightful regarding the racialized and colonial context of the controversy, making important connections between today’s progressive liberalism and older notions of overt racism that liberalism is thought to have transcended. Côté writes, “The anti-whaling protesters effectively initiated a discourse that regenerated ethnocentric notions of Native people and Native culture, which was, for the most part, racist. The whaling opponents utilized images of the ‘Indian as noble,’ ‘Indian as savage,’ and ‘Indian as environmentalist’ to create a rhetoric founded on misconceptions, stereotypes, and myths.”<sup>763</sup> The whale hunt was unapologetically Q<sup>w</sup>idičča?ə·t̥x̌, and after generations of surviving settler colonialism, their actions were downright revolutionary.

The Makah Tribal Council wanted to ensure they had broad community support for their revived whale hunt and thus they held a referendum in 1995. Seventy-six percent of tribal members voted in favour of the hunt.<sup>764</sup> As outside opposition became increasingly vicious, those numbers only increased. Reid writes, “Even the racist backlash against Makah whaling had positive consequences because it brought the community together.”<sup>765</sup> They became galvanized around their cultural revitalization efforts and concurrent settler opposition, which for me raises an intriguing and troubling dynamic. It would seem, that

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<sup>762</sup> Ibid. 14. *Emphasis* added.

<sup>763</sup> Côté, 150.

<sup>764</sup> Ibid. 131.

<sup>765</sup> Reid, 271.

under contemporary settler colonial conditions, Indigenous unity is enhanced when there is an ‘us versus them’ dynamic, whether initiated from within or without. Despite all of the injustices that have accompanied settler colonialism, Indigenous peoples have been able to hold themselves together not only in spite of racist colonial policies, but in part, because of them. To be clear, I would never argue for greater colonial oppression, but I think we ought to be aware and critical of the potential oppression inherent to neoliberal capitalism that otherwise seems open and welcoming. In my humble opinion, neoliberal capitalism is a Trojan horse. Although their efforts produced mixed results, the Q<sup>w</sup>idiččaʔa·tǵ whale hunt is empowering because it epitomized Indigenous self-determination in a contemporary context. Reid writes, “By deciding what constitutes ‘traditional culture’ and how they will practice it, Makahs are exercising self-determination and expressing their identity in today’s world.”<sup>766</sup> Côté reminds us that, “Cultures are dynamic and fluid; they change and transform according to internal and external forces, adaptations, and the introduction of new ideas, skills, knowledge, and technologies.”<sup>767</sup> I would never argue for a return to a mythically pure Indigenous culture frozen in the past, but we want to move forward on our own terms. Reid concludes, “Whaling illustrates that this American Indian nation lives in the present and looks toward the future while retaining what is best about its traditions.”<sup>768</sup>

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<sup>766</sup> Ibid. 281.

<sup>767</sup> Côté, 153.

<sup>768</sup> Reid, 277-278.

## Chapter Seven - Conclusion

*“He clung tenaciously to the belief that our ways are valuable and can carry us through the coming generations with strength, honour, dignity, freedom and haahuulthlii.”*

– Chaw-win-is speaking of her great-grandfather, Kanaiya<sup>769</sup>

*“Transformation and change are major themes of the  
Nuu-chah-nulth reality and worldview.”*

- Umeek<sup>770</sup>

*“For Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die. And for capitalism to die, we must actively participate in the construction of Indigenous alternatives to it”*

- Glen Coulthard<sup>771</sup>

My research interests were sparked by what I perceived to be sudden changes in my Nuu-chah-nulth homewaters and lands. However, I learned that our people have been affected by, adapted to, and *co-crafted* change in our territories since time immemorial. I argue that the changes that have come with settler colonialism – permanent settler occupation, attempted assimilation, cultural genocide, neoliberal capitalism, ongoing oppression as well as recent “reconciliation” efforts - inviting us in as co-conspirators, subject transformation, deep market penetration - have been more existentially threatening however, and have required every iota of our strength and teachings to survive. In the 1990s and 2000s, the Nuu-chah-nulth-aht reached a critical juncture, with the decline of the commercial salmon fishery, changing legal and political dynamics, and ongoing industrial-scale economic development in our territories – namely forestry, fish farming and mining. With Nuu-chah-nulth participation in these new projects - especially the latter two - I felt like we crossed a line into new territory. I was angered and dismayed and I wanted to know how this was possible and why it happened. Thus I began with a particular set of assumptions. I wanted to prove

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<sup>769</sup> Chiiuuk, 41-42.

<sup>770</sup> Umeek, 2004, 59.

<sup>771</sup> Coulthard, 2014, 173.

that by participating in these activities we were violating ancient Nuu-chah-nulth values, principles, and laws. It was one thing for settlers to engage in these types of destructive economic behaviours, but when we started to partner-up in these economic ventures, I felt that this represented a betrayal of who we were as Nuu-chah-nulth-aht. I felt like we sold out. As this thesis indicates, many of these initial assumptions have been challenged, while some have been affirmed. My examination of Ahousaht political economy has revealed some surprises and a complex picture of a people struggling to survive, honour their ancestors, and provide opportunities and a legacy for future generations, all within the context and confines of settler colonialism and neoliberal capitalism.

Change, in a Nuu-chah-nulth context goes back to the beginning of creation. Nuu-chah-nulth-aht are taught not to fear change, but to embrace it as a natural part of life. This type of change and transformation are understood within the context of a consistent and principle-based worldview and there are Nuu-chah-nulth laws and principles that *must* be upheld. Iisaak provides a foundation for the establishment of relationships that promote balance and harmony. We have learned these lessons through living within our homelands and waters for millennia. Hiišuuikiš čawaak also reminds us that we all come from common origins. Our actions are never in isolation, and forming lasting relationships requires respect, reciprocity, and a responsibility to work toward balance and harmony. Whether one calls it community revitalization, decolonization, or simply *living* well, it is evident that many Nuu-chah-nulth-aht are doing what they can to survive and thrive. Settler colonialism has presented us with massively different ways of seeing the world, and altered our political and economic contexts, capacities and approaches, but we have not abandoned all of our traditional ways. I believe that we can engage them critically, keeping the best of our

traditions, while discarding those that are unjust, no longer work for us, or are no longer appropriate, such as misogyny, patriarchy and slavery. As Boldt writes, “the challenge of living and surviving as Indians is to reformulate the ancient customs and traditions without compromising the enduring truths.”<sup>772</sup> Again, I distinguish between traditional principles and traditional practices. The latter are more adaptable and should be understood as such to avoid the pitfalls of dogmatic essentialism, while the former are more universal and everlasting in nature and can continue to inform the revival of *some* traditional practices, but also guide the introduction of entirely new practices that are still consistent with Nuuchahnulth worldviews and principles.

With respect to Aboriginal capitalism, Nuuchahnulth have taken what many people would call a pragmatic perspective. While I felt like the economic changes since the 1990s were significantly different, and in a neoliberal context they are, Nuuchahnulth ha’wiih have remained consistent in their determination to obtain respect, recognition, and practical control over their territories. Again, to understand contemporary Ahousaht political economy, you need to understand the centrality of the ha’wiih. While generations of settler colonialism have certainly displaced them politically and economically, in the case of the Ahousaht, they have engineered a revival. Since 1993, the ha’wiih have taken centre stage in Clayoquot Sound economic development. It is also important to remember that these have not just been the isolated actions of a few Nuuchahnulth men. Throughout the years of colonization, Nuuchahnulth ha’wiih have mostly maintained their *legitimacy* amongst the people that has laid the groundwork for this revival. There is a reciprocal and mutually respectful relationship between ha’wiih and musčim. In a Nuuchahnulth context, one cannot be strong without the strength of the other and vice versa. As for an adaptation of this

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<sup>772</sup> Boldt, 198.



relationship we can see it in increasing numbers of Nuu-chah-nulth women in leadership positions, and the extensive consultation process that led to the recent decision by the Ahousaht ha'wiih to ban industrial mining and logging in their territories.

And this is where I see that we have room to move, to debate and discuss. It is our inherent Indigenous responsibility, our familial obligation, to question and be critical for our collective interests. On the one hand, I undertook this research project to investigate and understand. It is also a fulfillment of my role as an Indigenous academic, as a Nuu-chah-nulth-aht and Ahousaht within a chief's family to contribute to these discussions and debates. There is a lot of work that needs to be done in this regard, with respect to understanding our histories, our contemporary circumstances, and plotting our future directions. I still believe that neoliberal capitalism represents an existential threat to Nuu-chah-nulth-aht, particularly its subject transforming aspects and complete surrender to market supremacy. We have survived settler Canada's genocidal efforts and I believe that we will survive capitalism. Champagne, more than anyone gave me the insight that there is a difference between Indigenous people navigating capitalism and Indigenous people *becoming capitalists*. I acknowledge that the latter *is possible* in the Nuu-chah-nulth case, and this is precisely why work like this is necessary and must continue. Academics, as well as leaders and grassroots activists can all contribute to our collective understanding and aspirations. And we must continually strive to *live* in harmony and balance with our homewaters and lands. Hiišuukiš čawaak teaches us that we cannot do it alone. If our individual *and communal* efforts at decolonization are going to be successful in the long term, settlers must also engage in their own decolonization efforts. Many non-Indigenous people are calling for alternatives as well. Anti-capitalist and anti-colonial scholarship

offering criticism and seeking alternatives is on the rise.<sup>773</sup> It is not only Indigenous people that are experiencing imbalance in the world. A true extension of Nuu-chah-nulth principles reminds us that the whole world is one; interconnected. Our actions in our homelands have impacts globally and vice versa. What we do matters to others, and what others do matters to us.

This is why many of the resurgence efforts that I highlight in chapter six inspire me. They are not all economic examples, but I believe they are important and deserve a place in our community development discussions and planning. I highlight these examples of Indigenous revitalization precisely because they blur the lines of discreet segments and demand that we look at the interconnection of all things. At the same time, we all understand that each Nuu-chah-nulth individual and family and community knows that self-sufficiency, and the ability to feed ourselves is without question an ongoing priority. Kuokkanen writes, “It is clear that indigenous economies have been decimated in the course of history. Yet it is incorrect to argue that indigenous or subsistence economies are no longer able to sustain indigenous communities.”<sup>774</sup> Indigenous people and communities have endured an ongoing assault to engage with market and state-centric economic practices, but they have not

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<sup>773</sup> Here is a small sample of this type of literature: Mark Anielski. *The Economics of Happiness: Building Genuine Wealth*. Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2009. William K. Carroll & Kanchan Sarker, eds. *A World to Win: Contemporary Social Movements and Counter-Hegemony*. Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2016. Diane Coyle. *The Economics of Enough: How to Run the Economy as if the Future Matters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011. Rob Dietz & Dan O’Neill, eds. *Enough is Enough: Building a Sustainable Economy in a World of Finite Resources*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koeler Publishers, 2013. J.K. Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron & Stephen Healy, eds. *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming our Communities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. Tim Jackson. *Prosperity Without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet*. Washington, DC: Earthscan, 2011. Michael Jacobs & Mariana Mazzucato, eds. *Rethinking Capitalism: Economics and Policy for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*. Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2016. Geoff Mann. *Disassembly Required: A Field Guide to Actually Existing Capitalism*. Oakland: AK Press, 2013. David Ransom & Vanessa Bird, eds. *People First Economics*. Oxford: New Internationalist, 2009. Jeff Shantz & José Brendan Macdonald, eds. *Beyond Capitalism: Building Democratic Alternatives for Today and the Future*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

<sup>774</sup> Kuokkanen, 2011b, 216.

completely forgotten their own ways. Jeff Corntassel writes, “An alternative to state-centered processes that prioritize the legitimization of settler occupation of Indigenous homelands is community-centered resurgence.”<sup>775</sup> He adds, “Rather than emulating Western institutions and nation-building models (ie. The Harvard Project approach), the top priority for responsibility-based communities should be to revitalize local Indigenous economies.”<sup>776</sup> Valerie Phillips reaffirms the virtue in local Indigenous economies, writing that under “Indigenous economics, markets are subservient to (a) subsistence paradigm and (the) welfare of the people.”<sup>777</sup> But we have to fight for them. The challenge for Nuu-chah-nulth-aht is to do this in the most respectful way possible, even as many of our people remain precariously impoverished. In conclusion, I still have valid concerns and how things work out is not predetermined either way. I understand our history and contemporary navigation more thoroughly now. I am confident that we will do our best, exercise our agency as much as the state and markets will allow and strive to push those boundaries and positively influence others. These efforts require individual, familial and nation-wide commitment and efforts. We will continue to re-learn our languages and stories. We will listen to and respect Nuu-chah-nulth women and girls. We will continue to sing and dance and teach our children by example what it is to *live* Nuu-chah-nulth-aht and create new stories.

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<sup>775</sup> Jeff Corntassel, “Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, 1 (2012): 94.

<sup>776</sup> *Ibid.* 95.

<sup>777</sup> Valerie J. Phillips, “Parallel Worlds: A Sideways Approach to Promoting Indigenous-Nonindigenous Trade and Sustainable Development,” *Michigan State Journal of International Law* 14 (2006): 535.

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