Constructing an Aboriginal Landscape

The overwhelming solitude and stillness of the shores, the monotony of the dark pines and cedars, of the channels and of the roaring cascades begat a longing for the sight of human work, of human habitation, that swallows the admiration of the magnificent scenery.

—Francis Beattie 1896:229

When traveling by canoe through the labyrinthine channels of coastal British Columbia to salvage something of its rapidly diminishing Indian culture, Beattie described the loneliness and emptiness of the landscape, a place of awe-inspiring proportions, a stark contrast to the familiar order of civilized space. The idea of the coast as a region of wilderness par excellence is nothing new. Indeed, since the late eighteenth century, when Europeans began to visit its shoreline and to penetrate what was for them its unexplored interior, coastal viewing inspired sublime tropes mirroring the grandeur of its physical proportions (Tippet 1979). "Vast" were its mountain ranges, "interminable" were its forests, but significantly, the landscape revealed little in the way of human endeavor (fig. 3.1). Half a century later, anthropologist Phillip Drucker's gaze similarly framed and captured the landscape: "The woods, seen from the water, seem to form an impenetrable mantle over the irregular surface of the land. After one finally breaks through the luxurious growth along the margin, he finds himself in a dark gloomy moss-covered world. . . . It is scarcely to be wondered at, what with the ruggedness of the rockbound mountainous terrain and the dense tangle of vegetation, that the Native population for the most part frequented the woods but little" (Drucker 1951:8–9).

Even more recently, observers have described the landscape as "more a backdrop for Native life than a focus of it" (Wagner 1972:15). Indigenous populations, it was believed, were to be found in their settlements on the

Figure 3.1. The Northwest Coast idealized as wilderness par excellence: Harrison Lake's shoreline, with the Coast Mountains in the background. (Photograph by the author)
coastal margins or along major rivers, mere exons of culture in an almost limitless wilderness. Geographer Phillip Wagner (1972:215), for example, has argued that it is completely "justified" to dispense with "dotted considerations" of the conditions inland because Natives "lived almost entirely on products of the sea itself, the strand and the immediately adjacent forest fringe." The landscape beyond the villages was dominated by ancient stands of old-growth forest, places held firmly in the clutches of nature, a view embraced by the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which saw Indigenous peoples as nature's "original conservationists"—people so intimately bound to the land they "felt no mark upon it" (White and Cronon 1983:417; see also Nicholas 1999). If human culture was synonymous with the visibility of human achievement, especially an ability to harness nature, then the coastal landscape revealed little evidence of such intelligent and creative industry.

This aesthetic frame remains prevalent in today's consumer world. A myriad of popular websites, glossy coffee-table books, and interior memorabilia reproduce the idea of the Northwest Coast as forever pristine and untouched (see Cragg 1987; Crawford and Urry 1997). References to past or present Indigenous habitation beyond the water's edge are relegated to the media's margins. The origins of these often authentic responses are complex. As Bruce Braun (2002) persuasively argues, a convoluted history entangled with the agendas of different interest groups has influenced these perceptions of space. Over the last few decades this landscape has been as much a contested battleground for the forestry lobby and environmental activists as a source of artistic inspiration or recreational playground. Nevertheless, if we accept the grand narrative of first contact and European colonization, the marginality of the landscape and its lack of human agency—in short, its domination by nature not culture—represent the region's most salient peculiarity.

While the wilderness aesthetic is prominent in other North American colonial experiences (Short 1991:6), this view does not stand unchallenged; varying and diverse conditions of knowledge determine how we see the world rather than any objective reality. Attempting to exchange one cultural filter for another, chapters 3, 4, and 5 sketch out the principal ways Indigenous peoples in the early period of contact engaged the landscape before settlement began to drastically reshape Aboriginal life. Evidence from the Fraser Valley and beyond provides a counterpoint to colonial discourse. Drawing on Coast Salish oral history and certain forms of environmental and archaeological research, we are beginning to question the myth of an empty land and reveal a portrait of an intensely humanized one. The picture that emerges is of a place socialized through history, a place where nature was lived in, worked upon, and shaped in ways not unlike the domestic landscapes of the Old World.

Before moving on, however, I must note another premise. As much as this chapter is about rethinking the relationship between Native peoples and the land—how it has been rendered by over two hundred years of Eurocentricism— it is also about the process of writing landscapes. We return to our agendas, interests, and predispositions, significantly color the kinds of observations we make about the past and the zones we consider. This argument is not new but is important to recall because while a picture is developing that challenges many of the essential attributes of colonialism, much of this rethinking is still very much rooted in the assumptions of colonial discourse, particularly an adherence to core-periphery models and a tendency to dismiss the active quality of the landscape and its implications for social reproduction. By demonstrating these points, this chapter, illustrating what the early period of contact might have actually looked like, presents a critical prelude to chapters 4 and 5, which apply theoretical critique to the social landscapes of the zone.

The Landscape as a Metaphor for History

Boas was a product of Enlightenment education; it is entirely reasonable that his observations privileged vision over the other senses, and remarkable that his writing sometimes promoted the wilderness aesthetic. As a member of the American elite, he would have been influenced by extensive reproductions of frontier regions embodied in the sublime landscape paintings of Albert Bierstadt and Frederic E. Church among others (see Dows 1993; Schama 1995). Where Boas differed from his contemporaries, however, was in his recognition that Native values operated within a very different cultural logic. In opposition to the more popular views of the time for defined human culture according to a unilinear scheme of evolutionary progress, he defined human cultures as unique entities to be understood on their own terms (Gosden 1990:6; Trigger 1989:124). Arguing against ethnocentrism, the ready-made laboratory of the coast with its varied human and physical geography suggested to Boas that cultures acquired an understanding of the world relative to their particular relationship with the environment (see Darnell 2000:4; Gosden 1990:43–46; Trigger 1989:124). Northwest Coast peoples did not see the same world as the Europeans, whose impressions of wilderness were responses particular to Western ways of seeing.

Spurred by Boas, cultural anthropology by the end of the nineteenth century had begun to challenge Western epistemological primacy. A response to
the perceived demise of indigenous cultures in the face of colonialism, as well as a reaction against the belief that the progress of Western society was inevitable or even beneficial (Trigger 1989:154). More than taken-for-granted assumptions about European superiority were at stake here; the ascendency of Enlightenment thinking with its emphasis on rationalism and objectivity was also being contested. Newcomers were compelled to momentarily suspend their assumptions as tensions arose between the perceived image of wilderness and the actual ways in which the landscape shaped the lives of Natives peoples. In his travels across the fledgling province of British Columbia at the end of the nineteenth century, journalist Francis MacNab observed the extraordinary tradition prevalent among Aboriginals of interweaving the non-human world with cultural attributes. Whereas newcomers saw the forests as taunted, moss covered, and empty, the Indians, he noted, saw the “hidden life of a spirit in every stream or strange rock” (MacNab 1898:97).

Although the content of traditions varied greatly, the Northwest Coast peoples were united in the common belief that the landscape’s physical form was tied directly to a period of ceaseless conflict and world building on a heroic scale. Contrary to the notion of a primordial slumber, a notion imposed by explorers and later settlers, the landscape in Aboriginal knowledge emerged from the manifestation of a time before time, what anthropologists have collectively described as the Myth Age (Hymes 1990; Sutcliffe 1990). To the Coast Salish, conspicuous places in the lower Fraser Valley were (and for some Stó:lo continue to be) imbued with distant memories of the actions of mythological beings and provided coordinates tethering Halkomelem concepts of history and identity. According to oral traditions, the creation of the landscape was ordered around the events of Sawóxwiyám (the Myth Age), when the world was chaotic and yet uniformed. During this “time immemorial,” non-human beings traveled the earth from place to place, leaving evidence of their actions as not only natural features and organisms but also present human imagines. The transformations of the Myth Age created a cosmological order, invested beings and places with certain saliences, and established norms of cultural discourse for posterity.

Of course, our attempts to reconstruct and represent this incredibly complex cosmology present a serious challenge to the modern scholar, and criticism abounds concerning the use of oral traditions as a vehicle to achieve this, especially for very distant periods (e.g., Mason 2000). Still, attempts to reach a reasoned consensus about cultural values immediately prior to or during the early period of contact with European and Asian newcomers have been fruitful. Fortunately, the Northwest Coast’s relatively rich ethnographic and historical writings seem to agree on a particular understanding of Native cosmology, which is often unavailable in other areas (Bolo-Hawk 2000). Nicholas Thomas (2003:345) argues that while it would be simplistic to suggest that oral traditions from the twentieth century were entirely true of the eighteenth, they are at least indicative of earlier cultural perceptions.

The Myth Age can be divided into two separate periods. In the Myth Age proper, dangerous monsters and beings in constant flux between animal and human forms inhabited the perpetually changing world. Powerful creatures molded the strange and ever-changing places where they dwelled. In this period, only animals could talk, they could have intercourse and produce offspring with people, many of whom became the ancestors of the first family lineages to inhabit the present world. The second period is thought to have begun when the transformers—Xexáls—traveled through the world, changing shape-shifting creatures into landforms, animals and plants into their current form, and generally setting things in order for the people of the present age (Hymes 1990:593; Sutcliffe 1990:466).

In 1890 Chief George Chehalis of the Chehalis people recounted to Boas the beginning of the age of transformations:

Above Sk’x’il (Harrison Lake), right in the mountains, lived Redheaded Woodpecker. His wives were Black Bear and Grizzly Bear. He had three sons and one daughter with Black Bear. Grizzly Bear had no children. . . . Then Grizzly Bear began quarreling with her husband and finally killed him . . . the four children left their mother and together wandered up along the Fraser River towards the sunrise. When they had arrived at the sunrise, they walked into the sky and wandered towards the sunset. From there they turned back and wandered east once more. They had received the name Qals (Xexáls) and transformed everyone they met into stones or other things. (Boas 2002:92)

Traveling along different routes through the Fraser Valley and its adjacent territories, the transformers changed beings who opposed them, acted selfishly, or would better serve the world in other forms. At several places along the river, Xexáls fought with warriors and shamans, transforming them respectively into conspicuous rocks and outcrops. In one story, the transformers were crossing the lands of the Pilat along the lower Chilliwack River when they met an old woman or witch. A noted shaman aware of their powers, she urinated in a small basket with the intention of using the liquid to possess them. Xexáls ridiculed her efforts, exclaiming, “You are a very poor sort of seiwel. I can do what I like with you. I will punish you by transforming you into a boulder and placing you in the stream” (Hill-Tout 1978:65).
Transformed to stone, both the sender and her receptacle may be seen at this very spot today.

At other places Xesaxid used their powers to change Myth Age beings into recognizable creatures. As a village near New Westminster, they confronted an insolent family of beggars who furiously mocked them. In retribution for their impudence, they were changed into ravens and sentenced to an existence as scavengers (Jenness 1953:22). Xesaxid also engaged in more monumental acts of creation. A short distance from the coastline, for example, they anchored the former island of Twaswassen to the bottom of the Strait of Georgia so that in time it would grow in size and join the mainland. Thus the world came to resemble its present order.

The Myth Age not only determined the creation of the non-human world, it also presaged the formation of human lineages. Despite having worked only briefly in the Fraser Valley, Boss (1894) was probably the first to see the special socioeconomic relationship different kin groups shared with their environment, their connections with particular totems of animals, plants, landforms, and even mythical benefactors, all of which had been “set right” in the Myth Age. According to Boss, “The tribal traditions tell that Qals, the deity, met the ancestors of all these tribes and transformed them into certain plants or animals which generally abounded near the site of the winter village” (1894:454).

Although Boss incorrectly assumed that each household formed a discrete tribal identity (Duff 1922:86), he nevertheless made the important observation that certain features in the landscape were associated with the origin stories of family lineages, providing a physical anchor or totemic geography that connected people in the present with their genealogical ancestors. For instance, the P specum believed their ancestor Anwak’o was transformed into a mountain goat while atop nearby Lulhkege (Mount Cheam). For the P specum, this event explains why mountain goats abound on its alpine slopes (Boss 1902:106-107). Similarly, the K a l s, based at their winter village on the Fraser River, linked their own origins to a totemic geography surrounding Sam’chit (Sheridan Hill), a short distance to the north, where their benefactor Swanset descended from the sky world to set things in order for their ancestors in the present world. His transformative deeds created a series of sloughs and rivers (fig. 5.2), altering the land so “it would provide them with an abundance of Indian potatoes, cranberries, and other foods” (Jenness 1953:12-14).

The world in its present form was no longer characterized by “mind and matter, animate and inanimate, human and natural, subject and object” (Harris 1977:75). Instead, relations between humans and the landscape were built on stories and connections defined in the Myth Age. In order to remember their beginnings, the elders passed down this knowledge from generation to generation as a means to distinguish their identity and place them in the wider history and geography of the contemporary world. Like inherited names and certain objects of material culture, oral histories were considered private property intangible from kin lines (Burnet 1975:441). As Hill-Tout, who continued Boss’s work in the valley argues, “The becomes clear from the case each set [extended family] takes in preserving the family pedigrees and records which show that these groups claim independent and distinct origin” (1904:111).

Place names served to buttress Myth Age traditions about the land, creating a mental map of geography, prosaic reminders of connections from the time of world making. While many place names would have entered people’s spatial consciousness on a more mundane level, important, for example, when geographical and ecological distinctions important to wayfinding (see Johnson 2000; McHalsie 2001), a significant number evoked mnemonic landscapes (what Boss referred to as the tribe) in order as people believed themselves to be associated with or possessed by a named place (Thornton 1993:197). Sutcliffe has suggested that K a l s identity, for instance, was anchored to the eponymous place name of their winter village on the Fraser River. Boundaries between the K a l s and outsiders were reinforced by different knowledge of named summer villages and resource patches between the Fraser and Pir...
Lake, such as the sturgeon fishing grounds, and also by the names of landforms, caves, and rock outcrops created by Swaneset and Xecails during the period of transformations (Suttles 1955:20). Many of these places were imbued with memories of Myth Age events and their residual power. As Sto:lo Elder Elizabeth Phillips has observed, "These places are very important for us, those that know about them. They are something that is proof of our past" (quoted in Mojs 1994:184).

Xecails (Gritting His Teeth), a bedrock exposure with unusual shallow grooves perched fifteen meters above the river, illustrates these ideas. Located near modern-day Yale in the Fraser Canyon, this place was the site of a great Myth Age battle between the transformors and a powerful local shaman called Kviyaxetel. During the melee each attempted to transform the other using various means. As Mojs explains, "Gritting his teeth, Xails [Xecails] proceeded to scratch the rock upon which he was sitting with his thumbnail and with each scratch weakened his opponent. Eventually Kviyaxetel was defeated and transformed into stone" (1994:194). The scratch marks remained as both a reminder for posterity and a medium joining those who knew the story in a common sense of identity. A place intimately linked with the cultural geography of canyon settlements (commonly known as the Tats), Xecails would have represented, in the words of Thornton, a "linguistic grafting of social bodies onto physical places" (1997:298); every time its name was spoken, geographical evocation merged people with place, separating those familiar with the story from outsiders.

Coast Salish cosmology permeated the landscape in other ways as well. In addition to particular place names, certain non-human beings encountered in the present world were integral to the cosmological order imposed by the Myth Age. While relationships with totemic ancestors were largely symbolic affiliations, certain non-humans were considered equals endowed with an ego and a subjective perception like that of humans. Sentient beings existed in an animist system of reciprocity between humans and non-humans, a relationship perpetuated by an unceasing exchange of ritual services based on the belief that human owed a debt to non-human beings for food or materials (see Descola 1996;43; Mauze 1998:249; Suttles 1981). Thus human action that caused death or injury to animate beings required compensation to stabilize the balance of relations.

Although its details varied from place to place, the first salmon ceremony, ritualizing the first catch in order to assure its timely arrival the following year, illustrates one of the most widely respected animist beliefs. After digging a long trench for a fire, each man would gently deposit a salmon on a rush mat beside a woman, who set it on a rack above the fire, sprinkling it with ochre and the seeds of the indigenous consumption plant. Once the women laid the cooked fish on the mats, people are then reverently gathered and returned all the bones to the river (Hennings 1955:202). See also Hill-Tout 1908;313; Suttles 1981:706; Suttles 1993:46).

In a landscape dominated by forests, trees too could be animate beings. Ethnographic research throughout the southern coast suggests a pervasive animist relationship with the all-important cedar. The use of cedar trees for wood and bark (as I discuss below) required a certain respect, and they were not felled at random. Crossing into the trunk arrested the soundness, and planks for building were often taken from live standing trees. These economical practices ensured that labor was well spent, while also protecting the inner spirit of the tree. Bark strippers respected the cedar, taking only narrow strips and leaving enough bark around the trunk for the circulation of sap. When entire trees were cut down to build canoes, for example, different rituals were observed. Canoe makers would fast and pray in preparation for locating a suitable tree, to which they would offer gifts before felling (Mauze 1998:249; Stryd and Fedden 1998; Turner 1998:48; Turner and Peacock 2005:123-124).

Coast Salish cosmology challenges representations of the Northwest Coast in colonial discourse. Contrary to its perceived status as an empty space, at best a background to Native life, the landscape for the Coast Salish read like a book: each mountain, river, and stone, to quote Keith Basso (1984:44), was like a "memetic peg" on which hung a story of the mythical past. A series of allegorical cues about the origins of the world and people's places in it, these stories offered the present age a sense of stability about the cosmos and knowledge about how to make one's way in the world.

A Modified Landscape

Bous's reasoning about the historical and geographical particularity of Indigenous cultures has long been eulogized. Less appreciated, however, was his recognition of the transformative power his subjects could wield over the land. In reading his voluminous contributions to Northwest Coast anthropology, geographer Douglas Deur (1999, 2002, 2005) notes that Bous was well aware of the influence of Native groups in shaping certain plant communities. For example, he noted that the Kwakwaka'wakw on eastern Vancouver Island managed plots of straggly plants that colonized the tidal flats. Harvested for their edible roots, they formed a stable source of dietary starch for many Northwest Coast peoples. As Deur asserts, "From Vancouver
Island northward... places... were managed in a manner that can only be described as cultivation” (Ouen 1990:124).

Still, fires were certainly not the first to make such observations. Indeed, one hundred years earlier, some of the coast’s earliest explorers noted a discrepancy between the perceived usage of wilderness and the reality. After an excursion “through the woods” near Fort Discovery at the mouth of Puget Sound, George Vancouver’s botanist, Archibald Menzies, noted in his diary for the fourth of May 1792 that “a few of the largest trees among the cedar” ([375] by fire in two centuries fit to admit a person into.” Menzies suggested some possible interpretations for the unusual features. They were “done by the Natives either to screen them from... animals they meant to assure of food for themselves in case of being pursued.” Alternatively, he proposed, unaware of how close he was to the mark, “it may be the means they have of killing large trees for making their Canoes” (Menzies 1923:206-211).

Despite these random glimpses scattered throughout early writings on first encounters, for almost two hundred years the actions of the coast’s first inhabitants were largely ignored. In return to Wagner’s view, the landscape as an empty backdrop in social life remained supreme; a way of seeing that remained deeply with the European project to subdue, colonize, and settle North America (Burton 1999; Cronon 1983; Demas 1992; Dods 2002; White and Cronon 1988). William Cronon (1983), for example, has revealed how an implicit colonialist discourse helped legitimate the appropriation of land in the forests of New England. Colonists believed that the Native mobile pattern of residency, coupled with a lack of what they perceived to be productive forms of harvesting nature, enabled them in the way of proprietary rights.

Furthermore, as massive outbreaks of introduced diseases such as smallpox took their toll on indigenous populations, the empty land myth was easier to accept, especially as colonists rushed westward across the continent between 1750 and 1850 (Demas 1992; 1998). Ironically, the suppression of wildlifes by colonial administrations in the twentieth century actually encouraged the appearance of tangled wilderness as forest understores became congested with deadwood ordinarily cleared away by episodic wildfires (Dods 2002).

Recent investigations addressing the prehistory of land use on the Northwest Coast and other parts of the continent (e.g., Delcourt et al. 1998; Kaye and Swetnam 1999; Nicholas 1999) have begun to raise questions about the myths and caricatures perpetuated by the colonial encounter. Scientific examination of pollen and charcoal profiles, systematic study of archaeological and traditional-use surveys, and renewed scrutiny of the ethnographic record have revealed that earlier perceptions were rooted in a kind of cultural

oguma and that the so-called wilderness was often seen as a “state of nature” (Owen 1990:124-5) or other form of alteration. The research has convincingly demonstrated that what newcomers took for an unhelpful nature was often in part a product of human intervention, consequently a result of resource procurement or landscape management practices, some of which may have dated to the early Plateau peoples (Gilleon 1994).

Fire was a ubiquitous tool for shaping the landscape. We are beginning to recognize that prior to contact, even in the relatively small areas of the coast, fires were relatively common. The frequency was linked to natural causes, yet people sometimes set or encouraged fires to influence the character of plant communities (Gatesfield 1982; Lepofsky et al. 1989; Swenson 1999). Establishing the nature of these past practices is difficult, although much can be inferred by drawing on different kinds of evidence. Historical journal accounts and statements from Native informants indicate several reasons for starting fires. American surveyors Henry Isaac observed the smoking character of fire-modified landscapes in the late eighteenth-century survey of the international boundary line east of the Fraser Valley in the Cascade Mountains.

On this side of the stream we found the whole house burned by fire,..., by persons lately encamped here. Smoke was still rising to all directions from numerous old wigwams and trees etc. [sic]. Fires are very frequent during the summer [sic] season in these Mountain forests, and are often ignited purposely by some of the Indians... to clear the woods from underbrush & make travel easier. Once ignited, they generally burn the whole summer, and only the drenching rain of the fall are able to check their further spread. (Cassier 1866:20)

Using fire to maintain an open understory enabled people to move more easily through the landscape and opened up routes of communication between different groups. Burning practices reduced the likelihood of unmaintained wildlifes while clearing up the land (Barrett and Arno 1992; Burton 1999). A concept I will return to in chapter 4.

Recently burned areas also encouraged the growth of desirable foliage, attracting game and plant foods that thrived in a sun-dominated environment. Low-intensity fires that enriched the soil while imposing other vegetation were used to manage plant foods and ensure heavy crops. On dryer parts of the coast, such as the rain shadow along the eastern slope of Vancouver Island, a unique ecology of meadows and grassy oak parkland were sustained with regular episodes of landscape burning to promote the growth
at different species of canna, a meadow-adapted root food harvested with digging sticks (Turner 1999). According to formerly unpublished ethnographic notes, family-owned plots where plants grew in abundance could be marked with staks, rocks, or even shallow ditches to keep others out (Suttle 2003:181–187).

Coastal groups also used fire as a management tool in places traditionally considered too moist to burn over. Complicating this picture of landscape interaction, multiple lines of evidence suggest that fire was also used to modify the vegetation of alpine and sub-alpine environments to encourage the growth of naturally occurring berry patches (Gottfredson 1994; Lepofsky et al. 2005). Interview with Coastal Salish elders have established that berries gathered from the slopes of nearby mountains were an important food source, an activity that may have been combined with hunting, lithic procurement, and other high-elevation activities (Reimer 2006). Conspicuous acts of prescribed burning were employed to check the growth of hemlock trees and competing groundcover such as heather, as well as to dispatch pests that could potentially damage future harvests. Pruning was also used to curb the interference of unwanted vegetation at a more localized scale. Together these practices encouraged the growth of different species of blueberry that proliferated in the well-drained and slightly drier conditions of the sunny-facing slopes (Lepofsky et al. 2005:226). Palaeo-environmental data in the form of charcoal deposits and pollen from nearby lake cores, forest-age structures, and some features interpreted as berry-drying trenches have helped archaeologists ascertain the considerable continuity of practices that may have been carried out intermittently over the last two thousand years (Franke 2009; Lepofsky et al. 2005).

Other forms of cultivation were more labor intensive. Techniques that included weeding, mulching, tilling, and the application of fertilizer, such as fish entrails, kept family- and village-owned garden plots productive and free of competitors (Deur 2005:306; Lepofsky 2004). As mentioned previously, estuarine tidal flats were cultivated into nearly ordered plots of spring-bank clover and Pacific silverweed, sought for their starchy rhizomes. Frequently, these were grown alongside other root-bearing estuarine plants, including northern rice-root lily and Noooka lupin (Deur 1999, 2002, 2005). Along river valleys like the Fraser, low-lying marshy ground was colonized and worked in strips to encourage the growth of waspaq, another important root that grew in sloughs and cranberry bogs. Family groups established individual claims for the season by clearing tracts several hundred feet long of competing vegetation. This task completed, the plants were left to mature until October or November when the fleshy bodies, as large as white potatoes, were ready to be gathered. By the following year, new growth obscured the land and the cultivated ground reverted to common use (Suttle 1985:42).

The landscape was also shaped in other ways. Not simply a setting for the proverbial hunt, stands of cedar were systematically exploited for building and weaving materials. Today cedar trees in the coastal forest continue to preserve signs of Aboriginal logging and bark stripping (Mooney and Eldridge 1992), the sheer scale of which is, to my knowledge, unprecedented. Wood and bark from this “tree of life” (Stewart 1984) provided an unlimited source of workable fiber, the main building block of what is certainly one of the world’s most remarkable wood- and bark-working cultures. The soft pliant inner bark of the red and yellow cedar was used to make clothing and basketry, a practice that endures in some contemporary Indigenous communities, while the long-lasting wood of red cedar—prized from both standing or felled trees—was used extensively for shelter (such as the southern shell-roof house), canoes, totem poles, and a variety of tools (Stewart 1984; Struyl and Feddena 1998:12; Turner 1998:31–37; Turner and Peacock 2005:12–13).

Direct evidence of prehistoric forest modification in the Fraser Valley is scarce, but there are ways of inferring support for these activities. Archaeological surveys from other parts of the coast suggest that cedar forests, where accessible, were well worked. For example, the Meares Island study on the west coast of Vancouver Island, which documented different kinds of tool marks and cultural scars consistent with logging and bark stripping, demonstrated the extensive Indigenous use of cedar (Strydl and Eldridge 1991). Despite the dominance of Douglas fir, the cedar was nonetheless well represented in the dryer climate of the valley (Edgell 1987:101). Given patterns of exploitation on other parts of the coast, cedar stands would also have arguably borne evidence of routine working. On this point, historical observations are more forthcoming. In a report to the Ethnological Society of London, Royal Engineer Charles Wilson commented on the enormous stumps of cedar that towered over the forest floor in parts of the valley. During the survey of the international boundary line, he recognized the tell-tale signs of stone chisel marks on the remains of old-growth trees, which he believed had been “felled many years ago” before the introduction of iron. Apologically describing the enigmatic features that archaeological surveys occasionally document in areas of old growth, Wilson thought the stumps had “somewhat the appearance of those gnawed through by the beaver, but not nearly so cleanly cut” (Wilson 1866:288).

Other signs of human use were inscribed in the land itself. Wooden fishing weirs and fish traps, for example, marked tributaries and tidal zones (Green 2005), while stone-built lookout and defensive features were created at stra-
writing aboriginal landscapes

in the introduction to this book, i suggested that the history of the west—the big picture of colonial discourse—elicted natives to the margins of the historical stage, largely writing them out of the landscape. their settlements along major rivers and the coastal fringe were visible enough, yet the landscape beyond the water's edge was considered, to reprise wagner's comments, "more a backdrop for native life than a focus of it" (1972:15). the evidence i have presented so far, however, paints a vastly different picture. even if it fails to curtail more romantic perceptions of the coast tracted in popular literature, it makes its social place as wilderness "naturalized" less sustainable. far from the primordial "hunting chase" of the western gaze, we are now realizing how amazingly complex were the human-environment relationships that helped structure the social world (amos 2005; deur and tierney 2005).

moreover, the wide geographic scale of environmental alterations and the ambiguous character of the archaeological and ethnographic evidence have forced us to rethink certain assumptions, such as the simple duality posed between hunter-gatherers and agricultural peoples and the presumed teleology connecting one to the other. at a more basic level, however, we have been encouraged to recognize the aboriginal landscapes as an analytical occasion with the same credibility and historical weight attributed to peoples whose histories are written. (would it not be unthinkable to separate the history of the english from the english landscape?) significantly, this deconstruction has enabled the unmaking of colonial power structures. yielding much ground for the null of decolonization, it has given voice to traditions of land use and land ownership that undermine the stereotypical view of indigenous peoples with few vested interests away from the riverbank or shoreline.

at this point, however, we begin to encounter problems with the emerging narrative. in spite of having addressed earlier understandings, perpetuating by putting people back into the landscape, nor repudiations claiming some arbitrary line that does little to capture the complicated remakes of social life rigidly categorizing the significance of space can all too easily hinder understanding. as previously discussed, unyielding distinctions between sacred and profane, symbolic and mundane, of social and economic use to drive wedges between different kinds of human activity generate shallow interpretations of landscape that belie the unpredictable and multifaceted character of its habitation (boland 1995:280). partly a product of very different disciplines and their preferred lines of questioning, these varied approaches to the landscape also reflect a broader philosophical dichotomy between history and science, particularization and generalization, event and process, and agency and structure (williamson 2004:177).

it is important to remember that academic writing (my own included) is not divorced from its own agenda and the discussions in which it is situated (shanks and tilley 1987:103). ironically, these discussions serve to say more about us than people living in the past and continue to reflect many of the assumptions of colonizing writing (williamson 2004). principal among these is an implicit adherence to core-periphery models and the other simplistic dichotomies they entail. while these models may be useful in understanding broad social and historical processes, such a global view of market connectivity in the context of nineteenth-century exploitation, they dangerously commoditize the periphery—the landscape—as a passive, primordial space dominated by its implied opposite, the vibrant dynamism of the colonial metropolis.

this positivist measures the history of the landscape by the force and vigor of colonizers who cultivated it as a reflection of their humanist agendas. the current interest in (re)constructing the aboriginal landscape stems from many similar assumptions worth touching on here as a means of informing my intellectual tack in the following two chapters.

first, our interest in the historical and mythical dimensions of the aboriginal landscape is actually much older than landscape studies would
presume. Of course, early writers were not concerned with the landscape as I have defined it but rather with salvaging place-specific details of belief systems popularly thought to be on the decline, a characterization that implied a clear distinction between the submissive colonial margins and the vibrant centers of colonial enterprise: London, Toronto, and, later, Vancouver. Ironically, while cultural anthropology successfully demonstrated the historical particularity of Northwest Coast peoples—in good part through recognizing the very different cultural takes on landscape vis-à-vis its mythical proportions—present understandings of this once dynamic and shifting place can acquire a certain flatness in ethnographic accounts.

A desire to record, collect, and control “at least part of their obscure history” (Baas 1887:488) before acculturation snuffed out this information resulted in a search for “canonical texts” (Darnell 2002:447), histories or myths yet unmarred by modern interferences (see in particular Barnett 1975; Baas 1894; Duff 1997; Hill/Raut 1904; Jensen 1955; Wells 1987). Yet the desire to simplify and control through description ultimately meant a process of distillation, as ethnographers were encouraged to produce a single “correct” version of each tribe’s history and its ties to place (Clifford 1986). This objective persisted despite the fact that authoritative “tellings” were hard to come by when different informants, or even the same individual, offered different versions of the same story in different circumstances (e.g., Cole 1948; Duff 1952; Hymes 1985). Indeed, the perceived cohesiveness of the tribe, its geographical associations, and its unwarranted historical prominence in the writing of Coast Salish ethnography are almost certainly a product of this distillation.

Extracting clear and immediate traditions, then, became one of the main occupations of ethnographers as they sought to fix an ethnographic map of different cultural traditions to the landscape. The map analogy suggests the situation of colonizers who must find their way around an unfamiliar landscape and are forced to compensate for lack of practical mastery by creating a static model (Bourdieu 1977:2). However, such a formulation of history, according to Marshall Sahlins, “proceeds more like Fenimore Cooper Indians, to use Elman Service’s characterization, each man as they walk single file along the trail, careful not to step in the footprints of the one ahead so as to leave the impression of one giant Indian” (1987:37). The point here is that our scholarly writing has tended to emphasize the structural and systemic aspect of cultures without any real concern for the variability and texture of social relations at the scale of encounter (Hendon 2003:273). Our approach thus resembles a collecting mentality, more predisposed to the labeling and display of objects in glass cabinets than the understanding of how relations play out in the contingency of social networks (see Gordon 1999:211). Colonial perceptions have worked to humanize the landscape, but our attempts to dispel these myths have to some degree replaced one spatial abstraction with another.

Second, questions arising from a different line of inquiry have reinvented and reevaluated the landscape. More recent efforts have focused on understanding the processes in prehistory that facilitated the social and cultural development of Native societies from what are sometimes considered egalitarian roots to the culturally complex forms revealed in ethnography. Undermining earlier arguments that the landscape was little more than a surface facilitating the diffusion of people and ideas (e.g., Borden 1908) is the discovery that control of the natural world played a crucial role in the evolution of culture, particularly harnessing the seasonal availability of salmon (Ames and Maschner 1999; Marson and Coulaloup 1995; Suttles 1998; for a good review, see Ames 1994). With increased examination of environments beyond the water’s edge, research has documented or explicitly theorized the multifaceted nature of prehistoric subsistence economies, which until recently has been largely dominated by arguments that stress riverine and maritime modes of production (e.g., Gottesfield 1993; Ledoux 2004; Martindale and Jurakic 2004; Prince 2001; Stryd and Eldridge 1993; Stryd and Poddema 1998; Turner 1998, 1999; see also papers in Dern and Turner 2005).

Clarifying these works as homogenous would be unfair, yet one can identify a central tenet that holds the culturally complex societies of the proto-historic period—and demonstrating institutionalized social hierarchies, sedentary villages with monumental architecture, and large populations—were significantly implicated in forms of environmental exploitation, particularly the control and intensification of resources. From this perspective, the landscape becomes important mainly as an index of production, the driver that fuels change in the social structure. In other words, the question of interest framing the landscape is “how did they finance complexity?” (Ames 2003:74).

This path of investigation, appropriate perhaps for general systemic models, does not greatly enable our understanding of how past communities inhabited and interpreted their worlds (Edmonds 1998; 2008). Because often declared priority is to seek generalizing models of social change, both the routine and exceptional qualities of past lives often slip through the cracks of this theoretical scaffolding. Emphasizing the landscape as a space of economic activity tends to obscure the varied ways in which landscapes were socially meaningful to those who inhabited them (Ingold 1993:135; 1998). Although we are right to view the landscape as a variable, our interpretations often reduce this variability to issues of dietary or medical value, risk buffering,
adoption, and labor efficiency, concepts that speak little about human values. This is an important point because for all our knowledge about indigenous land use practices, we have very little understanding of how the material culture of landscape management—ecological forms defined as a product of cultural intervention—and the social practices and work routines inscribed in such contexts helped reproduce, transform, or challenge past social orders.

On the history of archaeological research in Australia, Murray (2001b) reminds us that the emerging story is a cumulative narrative of Native people harnessing the environment to create ever more complex cultural forms—a plot line that echoes the materialist history of the colonization of the Northwest Coast in the nineteenth century, a theme I will discuss in detail in chapter 8. The significant difference here is one of scale. The centers and figures of nineteenth-century colonial power had a global reach—London over the British Empire and, later, Victoria and Vancouver over British Columbia, for example. Similarly, but on a smaller scale, the central place of the village site on the Northwest Coast dominated a more circumscribed economic geography beyond its boundaries, forcing social life to subsist at the cultural ossicles of settlements where colonial discourse first located them. Social interaction was largely expressed and negotiated through the built environment of the remote village and its clutter of anthropological signifiers—temple poles, winter dances, big men, and potlatches, for instance—a historical approach that perpetuates a division between the social as of the village and worked space beyond.

Final Thoughts

Our attempts to rethink the popular historical perception of the Northwest Coast as one of North America’s most rugged and untouched wildernesses have clearly met with some success. Contrary to tropes about the emptiness of its predominantly forested muskeg, the Aboriginal landscape at the time of European contact was a place routinely tended, inscribed through activity, and historically differentiated by its origins in the mythical past, a story that people could narrate to navigate the social space of the present world. The social context of this landscape could be read as much as the enclosed and coppiced landscapes of old Europe. For the newcomer, however, the grammar was unfamiliar and thus frequently ignored (Dods 2002:48).

Still, as my preceding analysis suggests, assumptions grounded more in the historiography of European colonialism and its imperatives of control than in the reflective, fine-grained, and dynamic nature of social life continue to construct the landscape. Social divisions between the landscape of myth and the landscape of human alteration need to be recognized as arbitrary alignments. As Hoch (1995:5) maintains, the problem with the form of binary categorization is that it makes polarized experience central to the landscape, obscuring the way that subjective voices are continually worked by relational concerns to enable new forms of meaning. The argument I develop in the next two chapters attempts to bridge this binary by disentangling the conventional frame and approaching the story we tell the way amenable to the mutable and multi-scalar character of social life through the prism of encounter.
Between Stories and the Landscape

Anthropology relies heavily on interview testimony to expose cultural semantics and research revealing the mythologies, dreams, and epic formulations of ritual sagas associated with different places in the Aboriginal landscape. No exception. During the 1960s, Oliver Wells, one of the Fraser Valley's most prominent historians of Native life, recorded on his reel-to-reel tape recorder dozens of interviews with Chilliwack and neighboring tribal elders. The stories were related under controlled conditions set apart from the landscape itself, usually under the roof of Wells's family home in Edelman, where his informants imparted the history of their peoples over cups of tea. Taped, transcribed, and later published after his untimely death, this collection offers an invaluable record of place-specific traditions, which might have otherwise been lost along with the last vestiges of an authentic Indian life.

Wells’s interview sessions provide a number of analogical insights on the process of legitimizing historical traditions. Of interest here is not only the content of the message but also the material conditions of the telling. Although Wells’s informants narrated their stories in a farmhouse in an agricultural setting, hardly an authentic backdrop, the context of these occasions was not completely divorced from the geographically defined and performative quality of storytelling that would have prevailed a century earlier. These events had their own spatial and temporal anchoring that shifted people from the task of food procurement and other social obligations into an arena mediated by powerful tribal historians who served as arbiters of history. Recognizing that such events were often tied to structured social contexts raises questions about whether the storied landscape could change when the roles of narrator and audience were not so clearly defined.

We know from chapter 3 that tribal traditions were narrated for particular occasions and could vary with the message storytellers wanted to stress. Moreover, I have suggested that ethnographic distillation has privileged particular versions of tribal history at the expense of others that may in retrospect have provided more singular views of Aboriginal history than those gleaned from other sources. Historians of all stripes have happily airbrushed out varying degrees problems arising from fragmented evidence and generalizations. Yet arriving at an appreciation of the Aboriginal landscape is made all the more difficult by the fact that what evidence we do possess was largely assembled by those who wielded a certain degree of power. Returning to the assertion I weave throughout this book—the routine practices of everyday life gave considerable meaning to the landscape and its denizens (Bartholomew 1987: 130–38; Sahlin 1987: 5)—we may find significant disjunctures between tribal discourse and ways of seeing created through the situated experience of place.

Drawing on a well-known Coast Salish origin tradition, this chapter contrasts the framing of the storied landscape as related by a respected tribal historian with how it might have been experienced in material terms through embodied practice on the ground. This allows us to examine the different conditions of production for Native history and identity, how they perpetuated a particular view of history and became entangled in the material world in sometimes ambiguous and unexpected ways. The issues I raise have further implications. It is sometimes said that the storied landscape is unchanging and sedentary "in place" (e.g., McHale 2001), but by considering landscapes’ connections to other places and times, this chapter will also reveal how broader-scale processes and events transcending more local interaction networks informed oral traditions. This emphasis allows me to bridge the gap between the Aboriginal landscape and that which was mediated through contact with Europeans around the turn of the nineteenth century.

Spaces for Storytelling

Although stories were apparently common in every contour of the Aboriginal landscape, they were not necessarily consumables to be traded informally. Storytelling had a particular timing and spacing embedded in the wider context of the annual round. The winter months of the year were devoted to tasks such as food getting and other subsistence requirements; the cold months were the time for gathering, reflection, and renewal. Marked by a return of household and conjugal groups from their dispersed summer and fall camps to the winter village, the cold season was commemorated by hosting social exchanges and breathing new life into old traditions. As Hymes (1990:593)
reminds us, fireside gatherings were the expected venues for the transmission of traditions (see also Lerner 1975:9). These were special places where the extended family became acquainted with affinal ties and ancestors, where storytellers articulated the past according to contemporary concerns.

Not just anyone could tell the stories. So great was this responsibility that the honor was accorded only to the most respected elders, who memorized and guarded this knowledge (Crouchshank 1997; Wells 1987). In the ritualized context of longhouses, the storyteller’s role as an intermediary of social organization helped distinguish insiders from outsiders, placing their descendents within the wider context of historical and geographical relations. Thus knowledge about the past and its concomitant ties to power flowed from the top down, from storytellers to everybody else.

At the fireside, the storied landscape resonated with the histories of the most powerful family groups—unelih or “worthy people,” who knew their history (Carlson 1996:86–91). For unelih, who may have represented about half the Indigenous population, the landscape of the valley spoke of epic accounts of world building from the Myth Age and places where resources had been put at the disposal of the present world. It also spoke of the names they possessed legitimating these claims. Kept by the pantheon of ethnographers in the early twentieth century, tribal discourses naturalized the notion of the cognate kin group as the appropriate marker of social distinction, a boundary dependent on a defined territory set down in the Myth Age. Of course, traditions have always served to naturalize power, so grand narratives, whether exhibited orally or textually, tend to be controlled by those in charge (Tookum 1992).

Accounts of the heroic deeds of certain descendents may work to diminish the exploits of society’s less powerful, yet they do not necessarily suppress the production of alternative histories. Even the less respected in society created distinctions between themselves and the landscape, features as important to them as totemic geographies were to the plolines of authority. Dominant histories may eulogize the Myth Age, extol the genealogies of powerful kin lines, or condemn acts of tribal transgression, but common folks, too, had stories to tell. They necessarily “talked story” about their stories of contemporary relations, relating not just mundane news but also what canons of value deemed significant (Sahlins 1987:51).

Interestingly, in marked contrast to the much discussed definition of the closed tribe, anthropologists have stressed the fluid and spatially diffuse nature of kinship relations whose social and economic ties frequently transcended any notion of the bounded local group (Ouell 1952:255; Sutcliffe 1955:14, 1968:65). As Sutcliffe observes, one of the most interesting con-

traditions of Coast Salish culture is the “breadth of social and ceremonial relationships that one small community may have with other communities” (1955:14). In different areas of social life, historical relationships developed between peoples and places that were enacted at more intimate scales of encounter. They included the experiences of Indian (worthless) people, lower-status families, poor people, those who had “forgotten their history” (Carlson 1996:86–91).

Stalking the Storied Landscape

Attempts to trace the chain of events below the level of oral traditions involve unpacking the authority of particular traditions and the underlying ethnographic practices that mediate their meanings. Anthropologists have commonly accepted that oral traditions are not personal discourse or objects exterior to the interests and agendas of storytellers and their audiences, as Levi-Strauss influentially argued (1956:9). While in this area has persuasively contended that the presentation of both material and oral narrative to place names is particularly inspiring.

Similar to Northwest Coast tradition, place names in the Apache world are considered inseparable from the stories that give the landscape meaning, which the elders use to teach their people lessons about respectful living. As Basso maintains, the impact of the narrative does not end with the completion of the story but endures in discussion of places and their significance. Thus the storied landscape is said to “walk” people who listen these messages to their own experiences. Consequently, places enter the life pathways of individuals in fluid and novel ways that may be quite different from their originally intended meanings.

Although Basso (1984:34) suggests that the meaning of myths and historical narratives commonly employed in teaching are often negotiated, this may say much about the disproportionate attention devoted to linguistic analysis than about the diverse range in which people engaged the storied landscape and drew meaning from it. The socially consequential nature of place is constructed not through language alone but also through phenomenological experience. As argued in the last chapter, we cannot readily isolate histories to which varied forms of environmental inhabitation give rise.
These reasons, and the identities they inform, are grounded in interaction occurring in different times and places at different scales of social existence. Consequently, the Aboriginal landscape and its mythical proportions gain legitimacy not only in the skilful narration of the storyteller that actively engaged listeners but also according to the creative ways stories intervened when people were out on the land.

"The Katzie Book of Genesis"

Members of the Katzie continue to live at the eponymous winter village site (Qéy̓ayéy) on the banks of the Fraser River. Prior to the massive colonial resettlements of the later nineteenth century, the Katzie's traditional territory could be found in the marshy lowlands and points of higher ground between the Fraser River in the south and Pitt Lake to the north. The antiquity of the winter village is disputed (Boas 1894; Duff 1952:248), but historical maritime charts firmly place the village at its current location by 1860, and it was likely located there shortly after the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Langley was established in 1827. By the 1880s the settlement was home to ten different households that maintained a total of eighteen longhouses on the site (Sartles 1955:8-10).

In 1930 a Katzie elder, Old Pierre (Thalhecten), told the longest and most comprehensive origin story ever recorded in Halkomelem to ethnographer Diamond Jenness (1935) (Bierwelt 1999:75). Titled by Jenness "The Katzie Book of Genesis," this essentially sustained chronology of origins details how the present landscape is indebted to the works of the mythical ancestor Swaneset, the star people, and the islands still known as Tseách̓ secluded (the hole). His second stone struck the side of the mountain, knocking off a fragment that became a hill, to-day called [Yi'yel] (the stone), because he had not intended to hurl it thither. The third stone missed the mountain altogether and fell near Swaneset Island; it is the hill, 200 feet high, that we call [Th'éy̓a'kmyqe] (the level place that offers a good camping-ground). The fourth stone also missed and became the hill called Tc̓eč̓ (bay), just below Gillies' Quarry. The fifth stone struck Sheridan Hill half-way up its face and knocked the upper portion north of Ashington Point, where it became the hill known as Xwamá's (the mark for generations to come). The sixth stone knocked away still another portion of the mountain, giving rise to a hill, north-east of the last one, known as [Pénas] (derived from the middle). One stone he omitted to use; it still lies where he left it—a hill between Louette River and Sturgeon Slough. (Old Pierre, quoted in Jenness 1935:16)

Although Xwamá's would further change the landscape, Swaneset is clearly charged with the more Herculean effort of shaping its physical form. Metaphorically linking the constellation of place names with the actions of their ancestor, the story appears to offer an unambiguous connection between the mythical past and the present world, a view that Sartles (1955:8-11) suggests implicated Katzie identity in a shared use and perception of this space.

Despite the different context of narration, an interview at the behest of an ethnographer, the story is still indicative of a tradition that encouraged a common vision of cultural origins. Varying stories or versions of events likely lived for supremacy over time, aptly illustrating how historical truths are rhetorically consumed at particular historical moments. Cristina Bierwelt demonstrates how the context of the telling of the Katzie Book of Genesis helped it achieve the status of a "preserved" and "true esoteric faith" of the Katzie people. In a revealing piece of narrative deconstruction, Bierwelt's
The Katzie Book of Genesis and the Landscape

Family groups returning from the village to their traditional spring fishing grounds marked the end of winter, a time of replenishment that brought with it renewed dialogue between people and places. For the Sqawitscheh, a household normally resident at the Katzie winter village, it would have been time to travel north to the sloughs at the outlet of Pitt Lake in the shadows of the Coast Mountains, where its members traditionally camped to catch white sturgeon (Surtees 1990:462). Between Squaxin and Pitt Lake were low-lying wetlands and a series of navigable channels that since prehistory afforded access to more remote parts of the valley north of the Fraser River (fig. 3.4). Cedar dugout canoes, probably the shoal-drafted variety suited to poling in rivers with shallow depth and narrow beam, provided conveyance for the household and their belongings (Surtees 1990:462). Canoe travel also presented a particular type of mobility well-suited to collection.
Old Pitt's story began to take physical shape, revealing itself to the travelers through its tangible embodiment in the landscape.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, European observers described this landscape as woodland prone to flooding, sweeping "graciously from the very edge of the river towards the distant line of forest and mountain" (Douglas, quoted in Collins 1973). Dominated by drained farmland, primarily pasture and cranberry operations, the contemporary landscape is a vastly different place from the wetlands described over a century and a half ago, yet its relative openness still provides clues about how one's vision might have been directed to and settled on places of importance. The undulating terrain, the defined river channels and sloughs, as well as the gentle rocking of the canoe, conditioned and enabled different ways of seeing. The stoved landscape faded in and out of view with some features holding the eye for a time while others remained obscure.

Toward the mountains, evergreen-clad Sheridan Hill (Sam'één) rose out of the marshlands (fig. 5.3). When not obscured by marsh grass or willow stands, it would have been visible for much of this journey. As depicted in the inside telling, Sheridan Hill was at one time the tallest mountain in the world, assuming its present mounded shape with gentle eroded slopes only after Swaneset chartered it with its slung stones. For the accomplished traveler, however, it may have been more significant for its height above the floodplain, a beacon orienting household members in the wider landscape and reminding them of the distance still to travel. Significantly, even when high clouds veiled the surrounding mountains, reducing them to a muted backdrop—a common occurrence on this wet coastline—the stark outline of Sheridan Hill would have constituted a constant landmark of relatively low elevation.

A conduit through the marshlands from the Fraser River, Katskie Slough terminates at the westward flowing Alouette River (Sa'issilth). At this point in the journey, canoes would have been carried downstream in the direction of the setting sun through a landscape marked by the annual cultivation of wapato, probably the work of different households (Spurgeon 2003:248). After a short passage of a few kilometers, the Spawatselh would have left behind the more restricted waterways as they entered the wide Pitt River and continued their journey upstream. With Sheridan Hill visible to the east a short distance from the river bank, the hilltop Xwam'a'man (The Mark for Generations to Come) likely began to command attention, an island clad in evergreens rising above the marsh, created when Swaneset's fifth stone took a colossal chunk out of Sheridan Hill (fig. 5.3).

Other topographical features vied for attention at this stage of the voyage: the mountain Sa'yamš̱ above Mtno Creek, looming over the west bank of the Pitt River, for example. Xwam'a'man and its hedge of trees were also close enough to afford a more intimate view. An outpost of dry land, particularly during the late spring when the surrounding lowlands were inundated, this place may have served as not only a material affirmation of historical truth but also a place to rest and gather supplies. Indeed, given the high incidence of woodworking artifacts found in this waterlogged environment, including celts, maals, wedges, and hand abraders (Hammond 2006:12), it may have offered one of the most accessible places for bark stripping and wood preserving. These materials would have been routinely required for making and repairing vital equipment such as fishing nets.

Further north along the river, with Sheridan Hill at their stern and Xwam'a'man at their bow, travelers would see a sturgeon slough (Sé'etsraw), a place well regarded for sturgeon fishing where Swaneset found his sling stones, coming into view on the eastern bank. Stories of the recent past extolling sturgeon as long as canoes captured there and divided among the best fishermen. It was also an important summer camp for a different Katskie household (Suttles 1955:10), and as an intermarriage between households was common, the people who camped here may have been regarded as close kin, presenting an opportunity for interaction and dialogue before continuing to the lake. Upstream, P'ten (Derived from the Middle), another low hill, emerged. Created by the sixth sling stone but much smaller than Xwam'a'man, its evergreen crown would have been just visible to the east,
howering over marsh grass that covered the flooded banks, a sign perhaps that the journey was nearing its end. Also at this point along the watery pathway, the soaring thousand-meter wooded ridge of S'ar'amadi may have garnered attention, the steep slopes of its evergreen maude rising almost vertically from the opposite river bank, literally overwhelming testimony to Swanesuer's world building and possibly invoking discussion about its own origins.

Near the headwaters to the lake and within sight of the household fishing grounds, the closing acts of Swanesuer's endeavors might have been seen to conflict with the geographies germane to everyday life as these came to compete for attention. On the downstream side of what is today called Siwash Island sat the tiny islet of Taimadi (The Chip), the remains of Sheridan Hill's former peak. And on the west bank of the river was Thaimidi (The Level Place that Offers a Good Camping-Ground), where the third stone came to lie. However, as Sutcliffe's map and ethnographic notes clearly indicate, places and activities of greater consequence to the rhythms of life on the lake could also be found here. There was Shrivaleswa, for example, a sacred Xes'id transformed into a prominent cemum plant. She controlled the weather at this place, and people who wanted rain or sun approached her with requests and bestowed gifts of dried salmon.

There was also the old crabapple tree where the river met the lakeshore. People who are in touch with the unseen world believe that this tree is where the spirits of the dead live. Perhaps more significant to the journeys of the people was the promise of a new season on the lake and cooperative forms of labor that would bring people together in ways that cut across broader social differences. In addition to the renewal of relations with others who could not make their way there were ritual observances to be paid to the ancestors, which the Shuswap believed to be their antlers (Inuk). Among the gender-specific chores of repairing set and travel nets (Sutcliffe 1955:109), all these activities helped the storied landscape of world building aside, at least for a time.

**Discussion**

My *place*ing of the details of sensorial experience are derived from an imperfect record: it is nevertheless possible to observe significant differences in the storied landscape as presented in oral history, what I have called tribal discourse, and the ways the landscape was experienced. This is because "cosmologies are not just abstractions intellectual entities, but have practical consequences through informing peoples' actions and helping them to make sense of changing circumstances." (Golden 1990:6) At Howard Murphy's (1951, 1995) scenes, the landscapes are not simply a different or signpost for past events. Rather, people assimilated knowledge about the past sedimented in place according to their subjective experience (Murphy 1995:176) that shaped how the landscape was seen. Storytellers at winter gatherings guided audiences' interpretations of the landscape, but on the ground people were exposed to variables beyond the storyteller's control, becoming in these contexts the authors of their own histories. At finer scales of resolution, this could give rise to very personal meanings, most of which are difficult if not impossible to uncover. However, looking at the social category of the household, which remained fixed and worked together, enables some firmer conclusions based on how these groups connected with and lived in certain places.

The pathways of the annual round may have been part of an inscribed household route that in itself offered a personal sense of belonging different from the authorized tribal history. Traveling from place to place, the course of this cycle was not a random process, but a historically constituted act. Its rhythms were linked to the changing seasons, the times followed and places visited in accordance with pathways laid down by geological ancestors. Given the reified form of mobility practiced between winter
and summer settlements and the multiple locations visited along the way, it is not surprising that such journeys had symbolic dimensions. Pathways were not just places. As Boender (2004) argues, landscapes-on-the-move and places-in-between could be as evocative as places with more formal histories and social roles. Travel along these sinusoidal lines through sloughs and along rivers had its own material quality unsolar as it defined parameters of interaction between different scales of social grouping and the land.

Each household group living at the Karzze winter village had a different seasonal pathway. The one I have attempted to sketch for the Kwakwaka'wakw not only render these events in the story but created a partial account of Swanseter's endeavors. Other named features, including the hills Yi'ye (The Wrong Side) and Sisikoks (The Hill from which Swanseter Cast His Stones), lay outside of the seasonal boundaries of this conduit. A plan view of these movements might be expressed by a wandering line radiating out from the winter village, only to fall back on itself late in the year, signaling a return to the Fraser River. Other households, each with its own traditional pathways, engaged in similar activities so that the pattern on the map began to resemble the thick looping patterns of unravelled string, with the occasional knot tied at the places where people camped and came together for certain activities. In this way, varied and sinusoidal routes enabled situated readings of the storied landscape, unlike the metaphorical thick bold line of Elman Service’s Peninuweh Cooper Indians where everyone follows the same well-trodden pathway (Sahlins 1987:37).

Social distinctions based on the embedded patterning of seasonal movements would have had a significant impact on house groups, which spent much of the year away from aggregated village life. Traversing the land from one place to the next, they internalized the events as revealed in Old Pierre’s story in very different ways, reworking and reinvoking the framework of the story. For those whose lives played out over this space, the storied landscape was at once familiar and different, and the patterning of movement would have become an important parameter for thinking about the landscape and its history (Seid 2002:757). Accordingly, identities became affiliated with different pathways, erecting social boundaries between insiders and outsiders. This is not to suggest that the annual round exclusively determined the character of interaction with the landscape. Numerous events could cause routine patterns to shift. Marriage, for example, usually but by no means rigidly patriarchal (Duff 1952:79; Sutcliffe 1995:269), gave impetus to the splicing of lines of movement and the joining of others.

The Aboriginal Landscape and the Wider World

The introduction here is not of course to cage the broader social boundaries the performance of storytelling mediates. While attempting to emphasize the openness and flexibility of the storied landscape, I am aware of its firmly grounded aspects that provided a sense of stability in times and places where it mattered. Agency, which facilitates the reworking of the social fabric, is not necessarily intentional or autonomous, so representations of the world are not inevitably grounded in personal desire. Because people are to a certain extent wedded to deeply embedded relations of social acceptability, limitations on how we see the world are only to be expected (Brock 2001:661). On this note, it should be mentioned that despite household seasonal patterns of movement negotiating the storied landscape in various ways, the striking feature of Sheridan Hill (Sakw’at’at), visible across much of the lowlands, appears to have been a conspicuous reference point common to the different household pathways during at least some part of the year. As the place where Swanseter came down from the sky world to make everything right for people of the present age, it may have been seen as a symbolic anchor for a broader sense of Karzze identity that reinforced the tribal discourse reproduced at winter gatherings.

The Karzze Book of Genesis demonstrates how and why stories that provided ambiguous evidence of the past—stories that “everybody knows”—(Grinnell 1907:55–60)—may have been construed and internalized in ways not entirely consistent with tribal history. Away from the more formal settings of the winter village, away from the times and places of storytelling in which a select few attempted to carefully reproduce the canon, other rhythms of movement created conditions for localized and situated understandings of place, giving rise to new interpretations of the prevailing social order.
By paying closer attention to the narrative details of the telling and by considering Sturdey's (1955) own observations in addition to the accounts of fur traders, I suggest that the Kanie Book of Genesis may be a reworking of earlier traditions, masking more complex changes in the landscape itself.

Old Pierre's narration begins by identifying the different mythical ancestors that came down from the sky world and the named landmarks by which their descendants, as they were known. There was Swanset, who descended from the sky world at Sun Wep'et (Sheridan Hill), and his descendants, who gathered below it at Secrissaw (Sturgeon Slough). "He Who Dwells Above" also created two additional ancestors, Xwepsetcet and Thilhitec. Xwepsetcet was created at Tythese (Port Hammond), whose name remained with Old Pierre. No longer held any meaning for the Kanie (Jennis 1955:12). The origins of Pierre's household lie with the third ancestor, Thilhitec, who descended from the sky world of Swapsisstcet (Pit Lake), where he transformed his daughter into a sturgeon for the use of generations to come (Jennis 1955:12). Thilhitec's feats of world building are curiously few though and seem pedestrian in comparison with Swanset's achievements.

Although the tradition recorded by Jennis mentions only three founding groups, all of which Swanset eventually gathered together at the Kanie village, two decades later Sturdey interviewed Old Pierre's son, Simon Pierre, who revealed no less than six separate families who had settled together in eighteen different houses by the 1880s. In addition to the eponymous house groups of Secrissaw (Sturgeon Slough), Tythese (Port Hammond), and Swapsisstcet (Pit Lake), Sturdey (1955:10) recorded the names of the other seven (along with their summer camp sites):

- Tsýaim (Munro Creek)
- Sprôte (On the North Aisouette River, a short distance above its junction with the main stream)
- Saanina'imm (On the Aisouette at the mouth of the North Aisouette)
- Asa' n' sáana'sá'ilm (On the Aisouette a half-mile above the mouth of the North Aisouette)
- Sspetmaru (On the hillside northeast of Kanie)
- Tity'satam (On the hillside northeast of Kanie)
- Xwepsetcet (At the mouth of Yorkson Creek on the south bank of the Fraser)

According to Simon Pierre, the heads of these families were identified with the preceding eponyms, and most of them kept houses there during the early summer and fall (Sturdey 1955:10). Jennis, also among the inhabitants of the winter village, noted in his book that the winter village was an amalgamation of at least two and perhaps several communities that shared separate spiritual traditions (Jennis 1955:10). Importantly, however, in contrast to Swanset, Thilhitec, and the little-known Xwepsetcet, the Kanie Book of Genesis makes no mention of the origins of these groups.

To shed light on the aggregate composition of the Kanie village during this time, as well as the conspicuous absence of mythical ancestors for seven other households, we turn our attention to broader changes in the social landscape that had occurred generations before. Jennis notes that a pandemic and the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company's Hamilton Post of Port Langley. Using a number of sources, Sturdey (1955:10) suggests that the Kanie were actually of relatively recent arrival, an inference based on two pieces of evidence. First, the origin tradition does not mention the landscape around the Fraser; it concentrates instead on the geography to the north, on the sloughs and channels on the south of Port Langley. More importantly, no other ethnographic record of the village exists, and this fact of the Fraser appears to have been claimed by the Kwakwaka'wakw (Daile 1921:14), although the Kanie may have occupied this area during earlier and smaller fishing seasons, as alluded to in the origin story and documented ethnographically. This argument finds additional support in references to the Kuries in the 1848 Fort Langley Journal, almost certainly the Kanie, who were described as "a week's drive up Pitt River" (Daile 1921:14). Nevertheless, by about 1860, they were firmly established on the lands of the Fraser River (Sturdey 1955:30).

Research has for some time now recognized the considerable impact of the fur trade on Native residence patterns. In the Fraser Valley, these peoples took advantage of the new commerce, relocating their villages in order to engage in trade. Shortly after the establishment of Fort Langley, the Kwakwaka'wakw, for example, moved up river and settled mainly in Kaneset Creek, across the river from the HBC post. When the fur was sworn a few miles up stream in 1859, the Kwakwaka'wakw also moved, returning to a site on McMillan Island, a shorter paddle across the water (Daile 1921:14). Carbon (2001c), gathering evidence of village migrations throughout the valley, has recently confirmed this movement.

Trading opportunities were not the only factor influencing decisions to relocate. Smallpox threatened the Fraser Valley between 1828 and 1834, massively impacting population (Carbon 1996b; Harris 1995:39) and destroying entire villages. Survivors were often forced to abandon their settlements and take refuge with kin. Little evidence about settlement patterns within Kanie-
territory prior to the outbreak of smallpox is available, yet catastrophic population loss appears to have encouraged a comprehensive resettlement of these groups that remained, former winter settlements—almost certainly the same eponymous sites the individual Katzie households visited in summer and fall—were partially abandoned. By the time fur traders reached the valley in the early nineteenth century, only one or two villages had been established in Katzie territory, as documented in the Fort Langley Journal. This pattern was followed by a secondary migration to the north bank of the Fraser River most likely after 1830 when trading opportunities with the HBC at Fort Langley were established.

With the foundation of the village on the banks of the Fraser, the Katzie origin tradition appears to have mirrored another kind of social transformation. The narrative depiction of Swaneset as the unrivalled creator of the Katzie world may constitute a masking of the deeds and histories of other mythical ancestors held in great reverece by their own descendants. Apart from the ancestor Thalhewan, the totemic voices of other households are conspicuously absent, although a closer analysis suggests clues to their whereabouts. In a number of instances, Old Pierre disparages the existence of characters who apparently lacked intelligence, telling Jenness, for example, that when the ancestors came down from the sky world, “Xwethepecen and his group [of descendents] at Port Hammond were too foolish to contribute anything for the benefit of mankind after them.” Similarly, he observes that “of the people that surrounded Thalhewan, some were so stupid that he made them set[s] [stream or worthless people] and divided them into three groups” (Jenness 1935:52). Who were these people? A compelling explanation suggests that they were the remnants of households decimated by smallpox, forced to seek shelter with more affluent relatives and other groups who had remained more or less solvent.

For kin groups and their histories, the repercussions of these events would have been devastating. High mortality rates would have threatened the ability of these groups, the primary units of socio-economic reproduction, to maintain their own oral traditions, totemic relationships, and other forms of inherited property. Communities that remained strong in these conditions—undoubtedly the descendants of Swaneset and probably those of Thalhewan at Port Lake—were able to promote their own traditions. Consequently, a larger, yet less populated, tribal territory appropriated the founding stories of what were once smaller and differentiated social groups (see Sutcliffe 1955:1:2). In fact, much ethnographic work illustrates how institutionalizing an origin charter can reinforce social or political agendas among a heterogeneous group (see Fokin 1992). This process may have occurred out of necessity, not as an intentional form of reterritorialization, since many households would simply have had fewer resources available to them, including their own storytellers. Given these reduced conditions, it seems likely that by the time of village aggregation in the nineteenth century, those who had forgotten their history were encouraged by the more powerful in society to remember their particular version of events.

The argument elaborated here suggests that oral traditions are a form of history that cannot be read in a simple chronology, although their narrative structure may exhibit certain chronological elements (e.g., McLaren 2005). Moreover, efforts to interpret these narratives within a Western dichotomous framework of temporality may damage our understanding of Native societies. Lymes (1997:393) maintains that aboriginal conceptions of time would be more appropriately understood as stretched out over space, comprising a core and a periphery rather than a strict linear sequence. The core represents the sphere of human activity and historical events, the periphery, social contexts where interaction with non-human beings occurred. Accordingly, extraordinary beings of often mythical proportions could be encountered in the periphery during winter dances, for example, or rites of puberty where frenzied initiates could interact with this liminal world. Following Morphy (1993:326), who posits a similar conception of temporality among Aboriginals in Australia, I maintain that we should see myths not simply as evidence of spiritual continuity but as illustrations of the very ways in which this continuity is constructed (see also Bierwert 1992:24).

The Katzie Book of Genesis indicates a progressive sequence to Myth Age events that links the present and the past. Yet the myth privileges certain spatial relationships while effacing or blurring historical details. For instance, the significance of totemic geography and its relationship with more powerful kin groups is emphasized over the disparate migration histories of different households to the banks of the Fraser River. In Old Pierre's telling, the establishment of the winter village happened early in the Myth Age when beings were still very much in a plastic state (Jenness 1935:11), whereas historical and ethnographic accounts, as indicated earlier, suggest a much more recent village codensation. Indeed, "the very capacity of the system to mask history means that it has been able to accommodate change, in particular change in the groups that occupy the land and in the composition of groups that are formed" (Morphy 1994:2:36)."
Conclusions

In the last two chapters I have argued that the Aboriginal landscape was not an abstract phenomenon divorced from the subjective experience of place but rather a medium through which social worlds were actively constructed. People mobilized the character of the landscape and the inhabitation of land to express their identities and social identities that resolved themselves at different scales. These interactions spoke of connections between kin and ancestors, but they also spoke of differences whose implications promoted new perspectives on the prevailing social order, influencing Native culture to appropriate the world in novel ways.

This discussion must also be situated in the broader context of history, particularly European involvement on the coast and how different forms of contact shaped the social landscape. First contact with Europeans did not take the form of face-to-face encounter but of disease—devastating transmissions that in many places killed more people than they left unharmed. While it is commonly accepted that this pestilence greatly harmed Native culture (see Carson 1996), these events arguably had unintended consequences that also created the basis for new kinds of social categorization (Gosden 2004:86). As I argued in chapter 4, the loss of family members to disease affected people's ability to tend the land, impeding the growth of successful forests with memories of more recent ancestors. Similarly, the consequences of smallpox and the advent of the fur trade reworked the social geography in material ways, giving rise to new conceptions of identity (Carson 2004:4).

Places and people existing on the so-called margins of civilization often evoke simplistic stereotypes, such as notions of timeless continuity and an inability to change without outside help. This is a common result of syntheses that attempt to generalize about the "Other." For many newcomers, Europe in general and Britain in particular represented the center of the world, a progressive and civilized nation that sought to stamp order on a far-flung "frontier" of the world untouched by history. I contend that conceptions of history are far more complex than this monolithic and, from a Native perspective, highly prejudiced view of the world suggests. Yet if we accept that the storied landscape was, unlike popular European caricatures, a contested place, then we must also consider whether European perceptions of the Northwest Coast and the Fraser Valley were actually as unified as they were made out to be. It is to this story that I now turn.

Ambiguity and Geographic Truths

The preceding three chapters examined some of the ways that Aboriginal peoples perceived, interacted with, and lived through the landscape during the interface of European contact. At this point I look at how Europeans viewed some of these same spaces of interaction and how their own interests emerged in the appropriation of the Fraser Valley. Chapters 6 and 7 examine how exploration and mapping constructed geographical knowledge, one of the earliest activities that legitimized the Northwest Coast in the "civilized" world. This chapter concentrates on the early period of mapping, beginning in 1792 when the valley and its adjacent lands were first placed on a chart and continuing to the middle of the nineteenth century when this area became an important place in the geography of the fur trade. Chapter 7 extends my analysis to the end of the century, when cadastral surveying helped define the Fraser Valley as a coherent and civilized space in the geography of the British Empire.

Native people formed ideas about their world through stories about the embodied experience of places and pathways that made up the natural world. Many of the first Europeans, in contrast, observed the landscape through the detached mode of the cartographer. Explorers guided by Enlightenment ideals attempted to redraw cartographies to democratize space in a rational and objective ordering of space. Using the technology of the map, explorers atomized the landscape to scale models that they brought home to others could see and understand from afar. Europeans came to know the Northwest Coast as a simple line on a map that was at once an image on a grand scale mimicking a previously unknown, uncertain place with a new sense of geographic unity.

Continuing the line of inquiry I have developed in the previous chapters, I contend that the history of mapping does not reveal a ground truth practice or a compartmentalized way of understanding. David Harvey (1987)
of colonial desires, whereas for Aboriginals it was the firmly rooted place of their ancestors.

For all the compelling detail that Strange cites in this study, her premise, which places relationships that crosscut this divide, is less persuasive. I have argued in this chapter that social identities could not be linked predominantly to rooms, as she seems to suggest, but were engendered by multiple relationships, relations of similarity and difference grounded in varied contexts of social interaction where a community's or an individual's sense of belonging came into question or was threatened (Jenkins 1997:54). To be sure, where white interests focused on appropriating land for productive investments, Indigenous people were demoted as inferior and incapable. However, other forms of categorization at different scales of social life also operated in the social space of the valley. Identity for those living and working in the contact zone hinged on divergences and ambiguous senses of being, animated by changing relationships in the colonial landscape and entangled social formations that allowed people to move forward in the world.

A View from the Ground

From high above the Fraser Valley, one may view its topographies, gaze at its settlements, and observe the network of roads that ties everything together. From this lofty distance, the world appears uncomplicated, transparent, and nearly ordered because a mode of detachment, physical or intellectual, can impose a deceptive measure of simplification; with closer proximity, the view begins to reveal greater complexity. This book has attempted to bring a remote perspective down to earth. Throughout this text, I have been concerned with a more intimate history of the landscape and of the people who fashioned it in both mind and matter.

Drawing on diverse and sometimes eclectic sources, from archaeology and ethnography to cartography and history, I have explored the ways that both newcomers and Native groups came to understand the Fraser Valley and its varied textures over the first century or so of cultural contact. Volatile cultural exchanges that occurred in the wider context of European expansion in the Northwest form the background for a study that attempts to trace some of the ways in which the landscape was transformed and perceived. Following a number of different pathways, I have sought to understand how people used the landscape, how they worked upon it, and most importantly, how they made it reflect their own sense of place in the world as well as that of others. Whether imaginative or practical, these perceptions had real consequences insofar as they shaped society in interesting and often ambiguous ways.

Approaching history from this angle has also meant a significant departure from more conventional plotlines. While my analysis begins in what is often termed the proto-historic period, prior to the European incursions of the later nineteenth century, the broader history of this period is in many respects colonial, and one of my most important themes is the social discourse of colonialism and the built landscapes, objects, texts, and theoretical frames.
that have served to sustain it. To the extent that colonization is often implicated in a larger project of representing, subjugating, and territorializing peoples and places, the thematic issues I have dealt with here can be seen as part of a growing body of work that seeks to "write back" from the colonial margins (Blancard 1999; Clayton 2002).

As this present historical juncture, we are probably more aware than ever before of the power asymmetries and social injustices of this period. As I have argued, however, we can end up neglecting the everyday details of social life as experienced in the contact zone by focusing on the big issues, such as how the encomienda of the Northwest Coast, determined to an extent the development of society during this period and how imperial desire, capitalism, and the emergence of commodity markets began to shape the landscape. An awareness of the bigger picture is vital, but attempting to read the permutations of place through such broad frames of reference can result in rather predictable polemics, histories that homogenize patterns across time and space and reduce complex issues to black-and-white caricatures.

One of the most enduring narratives involves the progressive social and cultural development of Aboriginal and settler societies based largely on different groups harnessing peripheral landscapes, intensifying their economic production of naturally abundant resources such as food plants or wood for emerging commodity markets. While such correlations may help to answer broader systemic questions like issues of long-term change, they tend, as I have argued, to completely miss the ongoing shifting social production of the landscape. The control that Natives and newcomers wielded over nature was not necessarily a clear case of core-periphery economics but was entangled with interesting and novel values, some of which complicate and contest grand narratives.

Similar arguments can be made about the way we think of the history of these cultures and their reciprocal effects. Instead of a more simplistic picture of core transforming the passive periphery whereby European forms of culture replaced over Native ones, or vice versa, a dialectic on resistance, we should see this period as defined more by the politics of give and take. This view does not entail a simple blurring of cultures and their ways of seeing, nor should we disregard the often unequal relationships at this time. It requires instead an acute attention to the new categories of being that formed around relations of opportunity, desire, and power (Gordon 2004).

If we can reveal the connections between people and the material conditions of the landscape, including existing human geographies and relations of power, then we can see how identities both united and fragmented according to different lines of questioning. While Hudson's Bay Company traders could be abstractly mobilized as conquerors of the wilderness and symbols of European expansion, colonial surveyors—compensations of a perceived indigenous—would have seen them as little better than the Native "landowners" of the forest whom they lived. This is partly an issue of the scale at which different modes of social interaction are resolved (Hedstrom 1992). Developmentalism's major emphasis has been varying scales of analysis, examining the network of linkages between people and the import of landscape in diverse social settings.

As I have argued, local-scale negotiations of the Aboriginal world landscape were, for example, crucial to identity formation at the level of the Native family unit and kin groups, although they were not immune to broader influences. Indeed, the devastation of smallpox combined with the impositions of new European trading alliances in the Fraser Valley and other parts of the coast gave momentum to the shifting of values. With the establishment of the colonial landscape and its disciplinary interventions, new and more permanent, albeit never continuous, types of identification emerged and crossed the valley. In this context, membership among the Squamish grounded in varied forms of resistance as well as a desire for a better future, favoring the creation of social ties on levels not previously experienced.

The issue of scale underlies other important themes I have addressed. The spatial and temporal history of the Fraser Valley as socially experienced cannot be divorced as an abstract concept from the social networks that upheld it. From a spatial point of view, this means we can define the valley as something that was both produced and consumed. For European explorers such as Vancouver, the Northwest Coast was successfully packaged as an artifact of imperial possession and a space that amply supported commercial opportunity. In this regard, it inspired a generation of commercial ventures to the region, in the mapping of the coast had real social consequences. Still, the geographic stability constructed by this and later forms of mapping was not necessarily accepted in other social arenas. For traders and later settlers, whose experiences were mediated by less-than-absolute conditions on the ground, the landscape was riddled with ambiguities.

A similar logic applies to our understanding of temporal experiences. From the perspective of the Victorian world, the global advance of Europeans became a self-congratulatory story of collective upward growth that replaced the disorder of wilderness with the order of civilization. While this view had a significant degree of purchase among settler society, it was not the perception or experience of all. In fact, the practices of land survey and forest clearance often encouraged forests to grow back, greatly complicating the trajectory of progress and in some cases marooning early pioneers in a culturally constructed wilderness.
These questions are vital to understanding how the remarkably complex cultural geography of the coast and its many valences of expression have emerged in more recent times. This process is fundamentally dialectic in nature; we forge ahead by drawing upon events and their material signatures to create new forms of synthesis whenever tensions or questions of similarity and difference are felt—challenging the categories we invent to make sense of them. Often people encounter and act upon very different material conditions for diverse reasons. Attempting to track these concepts through time and space is difficult, and sometimes we lose sight of what we started with. Frequently glossed over in our pursuit of the grand narrative, these understudied issues are, nevertheless, a crucial part of the history of the landscape.

Critically, if we are to achieve the right balance between generalizations and nuanced complexities of place, we need to move beyond single-scale discussions of how people came into contact with the land and with others, which when read together often homogenize the experience of the contact zone. Because the politics of social and cultural encounter were realized in very particular ways in the Fraser Valley, moving this research agenda forward requires more comparative work on culture contact and colonial power structures in varied areas of the Northwest Coast and beyond. For example, the experience of colonialism differed farther north on the coast, where economic patterns appear to have exhibited a more traditional character well into the twentieth century (Martindale 2006).