

**Making Place:
Community Tourism at Xat'sull Heritage Village**

by

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Abstract

Scholars often frame cultural tourism in terms of the host/guest relationship between communities and the tourists who visit them. In this thesis, I explore the relevance of the host/guest framework when discussing tourism at Xat'sull Heritage Village (XHV), a small community-based cultural tourism site located in the interior Cariboo region of British Columbia and managed by the Xat'sull First Nation. Throughout, I work to complicate the host/guest dynamic, arguing that a nuanced understanding of tourism at XHV requires acknowledging the role of the land, and in particular the site of XHV itself, as agentic. Ultimately, this thesis examines the notion of Xat'sull Heritage Village as a site where connections between people are made, but also as a site that is in itself inherently powerful and connected to the people who inhabit it. I argue that acknowledging human connections to the land in a tourism setting can be a powerful act, facilitating cross-cultural understandings and helping to correct the damage done by the centuries of colonial violence and oppression First Nations communities have endured.

Preface

This thesis is based on fieldwork I (Madeline Moore) conducted in July and August 2015 at Xat'sull Heritage Village. I am entirely responsible for the research and writing of this thesis. My thesis supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Kramer, reviewed several drafts of the thesis and provided content suggestions. My second committee member, Dr. Patrick Moore, reviewed a full draft of the thesis and provided editorial suggestions.

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Introduction

Scholars who study cultural tourism typically identify two groups of actors in a tourism enterprise: hosts, who perform an “Othered” identity, and guests, or tourists, who travel to the home or workplace of the hosts for the purpose of experiencing that Otherness (See, for example, Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Cohen 1993; Smith 1989). When I began my fieldwork in July 2014 at Xat’sull Heritage Village (XHV), a community-based cultural tourism site run by the Xat’sull (Soda Creek) First Nation on the Soda Creek Reserve 35 kilometers north of Williams Lake, in the Cariboo region of interior British Columbia, I was interested in the dynamic between the “hosts” who share their Secwepemc culture and “guests” who come to learn about that culture. However, my attention quickly turned to a third agent that complicates this relationship: the site of XHV itself. XHV is not merely the backdrop for the relationship that develops between tourists and hosts, it is an actor in and of itself. This thesis will explore the notion of Xat’sull Heritage Village as a site where connections between people are made, but also as a site that is itself inherently powerful and connected to the people who inhabit it.

My analysis relies primarily on two bodies of scholarly literature: the field of tourism studies, and the work of scholars who have examined the role of the land and concepts of space and place in the Pacific Northwest. I also acknowledge that understandings of cultural tourism cannot be divorced from the history of colonialism, inequality, and oppression that underpin the lives and social interactions of many First Nations people. Therefore, I will first discuss the relationship of colonialism to cultural tourism and the emergence of “community-based” cultural tourism approaches that are often thought to counteract this relationship.

Second, I will outline what I see as the three key issues presented in cultural tourism literature: authenticity, commodification, and the host/guest relationship.

It is this final issue that I have chosen as my focus. For the body of my argument I will work to complicate the host/guest dynamic in my discussion of tourism at XHV by employing space and place analyses that acknowledge the role of the land. While dichotomies like the host/guest dynamic are convenient ways to construct reality and they usually carry some truth, they are reductive. The importance of the land to many Indigenous peoples (Notzke 2006) cannot be overlooked in an evaluation of cultural tourism that highlights Indigenous culture. Examining the role of the land in tourist interactions is thus a potentially indigenizing way of looking at tourism. By emphasizing the importance of place, we acknowledge and begin to understand what a local community's perspective might be. We open up the discourse surrounding tourism, providing the opportunity for Indigenous, local, community voices to make themselves heard. Ultimately, Xat'sull Heritage Village does not merely exist as a staging ground for people to make connections with one another, the site itself is inherently meaningful and agentive.

Cultural Tourism, Colonialism, and Communities

Like many communities that engage in cultural tourism, the Xat'sull First Nation has a long history of political and social inequality. Many scholars and Indigenous activists argue that First Nations people experience a relationship with Canada that can be termed “internal colonialism” (Gonzalez Casanova 1965; Thomas 1994), whereby they experience continued inequalities relative to other members of the nation-state in which they reside (Alfred 2009; Coulthard 2007). Daniel Francis (1992) has written of the tenacious image of “the Indian” in popular Canadian culture, which has reinforced colonial perceptions of Aboriginal people as culturally inferior, as fated for extinction, or as otherwise unequal to non-Aboriginals. This pervasive caricature informs touristic images of Aboriginal Canadians. British Columbia in particular has a long history of Aboriginal people “as tourist attractions” for outside visitors (Townsend-Gault 2011). Some scholars use the term “contemporary colonialism” to refer to the continuance of these structural inequalities which first manifested themselves during the initial colonization of Canada by Euro-Canadian settlers (Alfred 2005; Tuhiwai Smith 1999).

In scholarly literature, cultural tourism is often associated with these discourses of colonialism (see, for example, Bruner 2005; Nash 1989; van den Berghe and Keyes 1984). Traditionally, outside tour “brokers” manage tourist/community relationships, selling tour packages to tourists who then visit communities expecting certain types of experiences (Bunten 2015; Cohen 1988; Nuñez 1989; Salazar and Graburn 2014). The tourist/community relationship, often termed the “guest/host” relationship, becomes framed in terms of self/other and everyday/exotic dichotomies in which the host is compelled, by economic necessity, to perform Otherness for a Western audience in search of “authentic” experiences (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Cohen 1993; Smith 1989; Sofield and Birtles 1996). Implicit in these traditional tourism roles of broker, host, and guest is the

maintenance of structures of power and inequality (Cheong and Miller 2004), replicating and reinforcing preexisting colonial relationships. The tourist's desire to experience cultural difference drives the industry, which under a traditional tourism model overwhelmingly benefits outside brokers economically to the detriment of the local communities upon which tourism is imposed.

However, many tourism experts believe that small-scale community tourism operations that facilitate individual participation can, in the words of development anthropologist Michael Cernea, “empower people to mobilize their own capacities [and] to be social actors, rather than passive subjects” (Cernea 1984:191). In community-based tourism, communities *are* the brokers and are in control of how the tourism operation runs. This approach can provide a decolonizing framework for navigating tourism and the performance of culture because it focuses on community needs, as determined by the community itself, rather than solely those of the tourist. "Successful" community tourism is not necessarily defined by economic independence, cultural revitalization, or other factors outside researchers may highlight; it is subjectively determined by the goals of each community. Success is often distinguished by the community's sense of ownership of the venture; local people are most knowledgeable about their community's cultural assets and can identify the approaches that are best in line with their priorities (Richards and Hall 2000, Manyara and Jones 2007). In theory, then, this leads to a more rewarding experience for both tourist and host.

I argue however that in practice even the most local, community-managed cultural tourism enterprise, like Xat'sull Heritage Village (XHV), is vulnerable to the “contemporary colonialism” that scholars argue pervades Indigenous existence. The choices communities

make regarding cultural representation are often responses to the history and continued existence of colonialism. This colors the ways in which hosts and guests interact with one another at cultural tourism sites like XHV. While Theron Nuñez argues that the host/guest relationship is “almost always an instrumental one, rarely colored by affective ties” (271), I argue that XHV demonstrates otherwise. Hosts and guests affect each other in ways that reflect—and reflect upon—colonial realities.

The unique way in which XHV operates facilitates this affective relationship. Xat’sull Heritage Village maintains neither geographic nor temporal separation between the touristic and the everyday, the visitor and the local. The tourist site is always open for tourists to enjoy, even when community events take place there. Likewise, community members are welcomed and encouraged to use the site and participate in tourism activities. Throughout this thesis I will explore the ways in which this merging happens, the consequences it has for both tourists and community members, and their resultant opinions.

How Do Scholars Frame Discussions of Cultural Tourism?

In this section, I will present three overlapping categories of analysis that I have identified in the scholarly literature on tourism: 1) cultural tourism as the negotiation or performance of authenticity, 2) cultural tourism as cultural commodification and 3) cultural tourism as a network of relationships between hosts and guests. I will outline some of the key arguments each type of analysis brings to cultural tourism discourse. My fieldwork during the summer of 2014 at Xat'sull Heritage Village convinced me of the validity and importance of this third category of analysis in particular: the focus on tourism as a host/guest relationship. I quickly learned that notions of cultural commodification and authenticity are of little importance to the community members who involve themselves in tourism activities at XHV, except insofar as authenticity and commodification influence or are influenced by host/guest relationships. I have chosen to present all three categories, however, to illustrate how the scholarly literature on community-based cultural tourism remains fixated on power and inequality. While power and inequality are relevant considerations, especially considering the legacy of colonialism that still resonates with many communities engaged in cultural tourism, they often preclude more nuanced understandings.

Without denying the relevance of authenticity and cultural commodification to a robust understanding of cultural tourism's causes and effects, I posit that focusing on cultural tourism in terms of the *relationships* hosts and guests form with each other provides richer opportunities for exploration. Such an approach allows for interpretations that do not overly privilege discussions of power and inequality, leaving open the possibility of alternatives that more accurately convey communities' perspectives.

Cultural Tourism and the “Authenticity” Problem

Tour brokers, tourists, and host communities often emphasize the authenticity of their experiences, and yet it is remarkably difficult to define what, exactly, an authentic cultural experience entails. For example, the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia’s “Authentic Aboriginal” label certifies the authenticity of “Aboriginal tourism products”, which includes the “quality of the visitor experience” (Destination British Columbia 2014) yet does not delineate the ways in which a quality experience is thereby authentic.

Geographer and cultural historian John Taylor suggests that this is because “there are at least as many definitions of authenticity as there are those who write about it...Authenticity has become the philosopher’s stone for an industry that generally seeks to procure other peoples’ “realities”” (2001:8). If authenticity is, then, inherently subjective, what value do labels verifying authenticity have?

Scholars who study cultural tourism have long emphasized the authenticity question because, despite its ephemeral nature, it is of a critical importance to those who are involved in tourism activities (See, for example, Cohen 1988). Why is this? Dean MacCannell, a pioneer of the field of tourism studies, blames a failing of “modern society”:

The generalized anxiety about the authenticity of interpersonal relationships in modern society is matched by certainty about the authenticity of touristic sights. The rhetoric of tourism is full of manifestations of the importance of the authenticity of the relationship between tourists and what they see: this is the *very* place the leader fell...this is an *authentic* Tlingit fish club...” (1973:14).

Because tourists seek out authentic cultural experiences away from home, tourist providers attempt to provide them. Following this logic, “authenticity” in tourism is more truthfully a commentary on what is missing in tourists’ “modern” lives rather than a meaningful reflection on the lives of community members who share their culture. “Authenticity” becomes pre- or anti-modern; thus making it impossible for First Nations to achieve this in

the present; “authentic” cultures are fixed in the past. In this sense, authenticity is therefore a reflection of tourists’ expectations and perceptions.

The act of viewing cultural tourism primarily as a negotiation or performance of “authenticity” for a modern tourist audience is, then, inherently problematic (Bunten 2008; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). As Nicola MacLeod, a scholar in the field of tourism studies, points out, tourists often ascribe to notions of *objective* authenticity, which assume that “real” tourist experiences exist, despite their full awareness of the generally inauthentic, commodified nature of tourism (2006). What tourists actually want, Priscilla Boniface and Peter Fowler argue, is “extra-authenticity”, a “simulation of life ways as [they] would wish them to be” (Boniface and Fowler 1993:7). This denies the reality that cultural identities are socially constructed and are often “not fixed, but poised, *in transition*, between different positions, which draw on different cultural traditions at the same time and which are...increasingly common in a globalized world.” (Hall 1992:310).

This is not to say that only tourists value authenticity. In general, the authenticity of a cultural tourism experience is equally important for host communities as it is for tourists (Notzke 2006:147). Jennifer Kramer (2006) points out one example: in Canadian First Nations communities, authenticity, as defined against an ideal Westernness, creates a hierarchy “within and between” peoples that serves political goals (58). However, in discussions of cultural tourism, authenticity is primarily qualified in terms of the *tourist’s* expectations, and it is up to the hosts to negotiate the ways in which they choose to present their culture in a satisfyingly authentic way.

To combat what Edward Bruner (1994) perceives to be a largely unproductive discussion surrounding the nature of authenticity, he suggests a redirection by asking “who

has the authority to authenticate?” (400). This approach refocuses attention away from the tourist’s desires and towards a more practical discussion that reflects the needs of host communities. Considering that communities engaging in cultural tourism often have histories of exploitation and cultural appropriation, “control over...participation in tourism is sometimes the difference between continued colonization and exploitation, on the one hand, and empowerment, on the other” (Bresner 2014:136). Ultimately, it is difficult to untangle cultural “authenticity” from discourses of power and inequality.

Cultural Tourism as the Commodification of Culture

Kramer (2006) defines commodification as “the creation of a relationship with an object via the spending of money” (36). To better reflect the nature of cultural tourism, this definition can be expanded to include relationships not only with objects, but also with *experiences* or *identities*. This is a deceptively simple definition; discussions of cultural commodification in tourism are anything but.

Many scholars argue that cultural commodification and cultural authenticity are inherently at odds, claiming that commodified performances of culture often lead to a loss of the original meanings and significance of traditions (Andereck et al 2007; Manyara and Jones 2007; Greenwood 1989; MacCannell 1976; Yang and Wall 2009). According to this logic, tradition is therefore incompatible with market consumption.

This assumption may be superficial, however. Laurie Kroshus Medina (2003) offers an alternative perspective, presenting evidence from her research on tourism in an ancient Maya city in Belize to argue that commodification may provide new opportunities for communities to “access” their culture:

“tourism has revalued, in certain contexts, traditional Maya knowledge that most young Succotzenos lack. Unable to access this knowledge by “traditional” methods, tourism workers have turned to the writings of essentialist Mayanist scholars as an

alternative means for acquiring such “essential” cultural information [that] accords with tourists’ expectations of a generalizable culture that can be packaged and purchased through transactions” (364).

Commodifying culture for the tourist market has not, in this case, facilitated the loss of traditional knowledge and identities, but has instead revitalized them and made them more accessible to younger Mayans.

John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff provide a complementary argument. They present cultural commodification as a logical outcome of neoliberal capitalism. By combining the value neoliberalism places on entrepreneurial behavior with the complex identity created when distinct ethnicities are located *within* nation states that do not represent their interests, identity and entrepreneurship become linked (2009:5). Thus, when Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups engage in cultural tourism and commodification, they are responding rationally to the demands of a globalized, neoliberal world by offering the only “valuable” resource they have: their culture.

This argument is by no means at odds with discussions of cultural authenticity. Comaroff and Comaroff posit that the creation of the concept of authenticity is a strategic economic and political response by Indigenous groups to colonial enterprise. They claim that cultural processes evolving from contact between Indigenous groups and colonial powers “[were not] simply a matter of First Peoples responding to colonial economy and legality. These peoples were often quick to seize the initiative, sometimes in straitened circumstances, thus to produce novel sources of value” (2009:60-61). They cite several examples to support this claim, including the “authentic” moose-hair embroidery of the Huron that was a product of the circulation of styles and souvenirs between Indigenous groups in eastern North America and settlers, and the “Plains Indian” dances that first became known as “traditional”

or customary” when they became popular in Wild West shows staged across the USA and Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. (60-61).

Ultimately, the Comaroffs ask, “who initiates the process of commodification?” (71). Like Bruner’s question, “who has the authority to authenticate?”, this approach reminds us that power and authority are situated within complex webs of relationships. Often, cultural tourism analyses that focus on cultural authenticity and commodification emphasize relationships of inequality at the expense of nuanced understanding of the realities of communities that choose to engage in tourism. If these concepts are legitimate ways to discuss culture and tourism, then the individuals who are a part of that culture must be the ones in charge of defining them (Taylor 2001).

Cultural Tourism as a Relationship between Hosts and Guests

The third major analytical framework I have identified in scholarly studies of cultural tourism was first outlined by Valene Smith in her groundbreaking 1989 volume *Hosts and Guests*. When cultural tourism is framed in terms of the relationship between guests/tourists and host communities, much of the contentious nature of the other two analytical frameworks can be avoided. This opens up space in which to discuss *how* and *why* tourism is relevant to those who create and experience tourism activities.

Most basically, an understanding of the host/guest relationship is essential to the smooth functioning of a cultural tourism venue. Dennison Nash, a pioneer of the anthropology of tourism, reminds us that because cultural tourism inherently involves contact between people of different cultural backgrounds, problems of communication can create significant issues (1996). Thus, an understanding of the way in which guests and hosts interact with one another is not only of theoretical interest, but is a practical necessity.

Because confusion and misunderstanding are likely, particularly in situations where hosts and

guests come from markedly different cultural backgrounds, many anthropologists who study tourism have turned to Erving Goffman's dramaturgical interpretation of social interaction (Goffman 1959) as a way to better understand the way hosts and guests mediate their relationships (see MacCannell 1976; Nuñez 1989). Hosts, and to a lesser extent tourists, are always "on stage", observed by an audience of sorts. The relationship between the two groups is, following this logic, not only dialogic, but also performative.

Implicit in the touristic host/guest relationship is often the delicate negotiation of what Goffman terms "front" and "back" areas, tourist presentation and everyday behavior, touristic spaces and community spaces. A common strategy to mediate these tensions is the creation of two physically different spaces: a touristic area in which culture is performed, and community areas for "everyday life". Cultural centers and museums serve this purpose by physically limiting where a tourist can go and what they can experience. Many communities involved in cultural tourism do this. One example of this geographic separation strategy is the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre, run by the Osoyoos Indian Band in southeastern British Columbia. Katie Bresner (2014) notes that the Osoyoos maintain the Cultural Centre as a way to control the tourist gaze; by setting boundaries as to what tourists see and what they do not, the Osoyoos Band can present a carefully curated image of their culture, keeping their "everyday lives" separate from tourism. The Cherokee Nation in North Carolina employs a similar strategy with its Oconaluftee Indian Village, which guides visitors on an exploration of the history of the Cherokee people (Beard Moose 2009), although tourism in the Cherokee Nation is so widespread, particularly during the summer months, that keeping touristic experiences separate from the everyday lives of Cherokee people is, Christina Taylor Beard Moose claims, a constant concern.

Another approach that many communities employ is to separate tourists temporally: at certain times important sites are open to the tourist public, and other times they are closed to them for the exclusive use of a community. The Hopi Nation of northeastern Arizona employs this strategy to limit outside access to sacred dances (Pearlstone and Babcock 2001). The Hopi Nation has long been plagued by a constant influx of outsiders interested in Hopi culture, especially its spiritual aspects (Richland 2009) but many Hopi advocate allowing tourists to witness some cultural events in order to sensitize and educate them about Hopi culture. Allowing tourists access at certain times while banning them at others balances these two aims, giving importance to both the “back” and “front” spaces that are so critical in host/guest relationships.

In review, these three analytical categories used in cultural tourism—authenticity, commodification, and the host/guest relationship—are useful in theoretical discussions of the implications of tourism. However, framing these conversations in terms of how hosts and guests relate to one another provides the most meaningful reminder that these theoretical implications have practical consequences. Theory describes and impacts reality, but hosts and guests do not exist solely in the realm of theory. They are *real* people living *real* lives, people for whom complex theoretical issues may have little meaning. In comparison, personal relationships between people and places are always meaningful. I will argue this by presenting examples from my research at Xat’sull Heritage Village. In the following sections, I will introduce my fieldwork at XHV before beginning a discussion on the importance of personal relationships in tourism there.

Methods

Over a period of five weeks in July and August 2014, I lived on-site at Xat'sull Heritage Village on the Soda Creek Reserve near Williams Lake, BC. I volunteered my time at the site in whatever way was needed, mainly helping with event setup and cleanup. Throughout my stay, I engaged in participant observation of tourism activities and the daily workings of XHV.

The majority of my days were spent sitting and talking with XHV staff or tourists on a variety of topics and I got to know several people on a personal level in this way. I also conducted 20 open-ended interviews with three groups of people: XHV staff, community members who participate in community events at XHV, and tourists who visit XHV. I kept detailed fieldnotes which chronicle my personal feelings, observations, and informal conversations. It is a combination of these fieldnotes, interviews, and my overall impressions that serve as my data for this discussion on cultural tourism at XHV.

An Overview of the Xat'sull Heritage Village Site

Xat'sull Heritage Village (XHV) opened in the summer of 1994, the brainchild of Bettina and Thomas Schoen, an immigrant couple from Germany with a longstanding interest in First Nations culture. According to Soda Creek community members, the Schoens had initially expressed interest in founding what they termed a "Native Village" in Nuxalk Territory in the Bella Coola area. However, in the words of one Soda Creek elder, "in Bella Coola they just weren't ready for it." Negotiations with the Soda Creek Band began in 1992 and continued for several years; a small but vocal minority strongly protested the project, for two opposing reasons: that 1) opening the Heritage Village would be akin to "selling culture", the idea of which caused some people significant discomfort, and 2) that there was, in fact, no "culture" to share with outsiders, and therefore any cultural tourism operation in the community would be a sham. This is a reference to the damaging effects of a long history of the oppression of Secwepemc cultural beliefs and lifeways. Eventually, though, the Band, led by the supportive Chief Lenny Sellars, approved the project. Cheryl Chapman, a community member with a long history of involvement at XHV, described the community's involvement throughout the planning stages:

[The Schoens] went away and they worked with community members to design the Heritage Village. It was on a four by eight [foot] sheet of plywood, and they made little pithouses and little teepees and everything and it was all built with our youth. And they brought it back to the community members and asked them what they thought...

According to Cheryl, community members were central to the development of the Heritage Village. She remembers days when the Band office closed so that its employees could participate in constructing the pithouses or in developing protocols with elders regarding what stories were appropriate to share with tourists. During that time, she says, "there was a lot of really good community buy-in".

Another community member, Mike Stinson, recalls that his involvement in the development of XHV stemmed from a desire to become more connected to his community and culture:

None of the kids [at Soda Creek] knew me because I grew up in town. I heard word that they were trying to build this place, so I knew nobody, so I figured I'd come down here...we started digging holes [for pithouses]...I came down here and I liked what they were doing because as a kid I never got to learn my culture.

Like many other community members, he was excited by the opportunity to “learn his culture”, not simply share it with outsiders.

This building and negotiation process took several years. An official opening ceremony was held on June 1, 1996. Members of the Navajo Nation flew to British Columbia to participate in the festivities, and one community member remembers over 2000 people in attendance that day. The Schoens are no longer involved with XHV, partly because, as Mike explains, “to see two non-Native people so into culture and actually teaching some of our own people about our own culture that we didn't have a clue about was very odd.” While many community members like Mike were excited to learn “about the good parts of our culture” and were not concerned with the fact that the Schoens were non-Native, for others this was problematic.

The site experiences much less tourist activity now than it did during the 1990s. However, today nearly everyone seems to agree that the community as a whole either actively or passively supports XHV, and that many of those who were originally skeptical of the project now “come here and love it”.

The community’s choice of location for XHV is significant, the result of long deliberation. Cheryl remembers that the community deliberated on the appropriate location, taking into account archaeology sites and other significant locations that people did not want

to be disturbed. The community eventually decided to build XHV on a natural “bench” of land partway down a steep hillside, overlooking the Fraser River rushing below. It is one of the river’s narrowest spots, and rocky canyon walls rise at a steep angle out of the river on the other side. It is impossible to forget the power and presence of the natural world while at the site. Rockslides across the river were common during my stay; I witnessed one that was so large as to topple a tree, roots and all, and send it crashing into the water below. But XHV also has a varied and rich history of human occupation. An archaeological field school at the site conducted in 2000 by the University of Northern British Columbia, uncovered arrowheads and other tools estimated to be over 4500 years old, according to community members who participated. XHV staff members often share this information with tourists, cynically remarking that despite such archaeological findings, the Canadian government still does not formally recognize traditional Xat’sull territory.¹

The site is well-known as a traditional fishing ground, and is arguably the most popular fishing site in the area. It has also at times in the past been used as a community garden. From my conversations with community members involved with XHV, in the years prior to its use as a cultural tourism venue the site was a weedy field, used only by fishers as they traveled through it to reach the river, and by partiers who considered it an ideal location to drink uninterrupted. (As one man reminisced to me, “It was a gong show here back then”.) The site’s relationship with people is thus varied, but always meaningful.

In 2010 the Band hired Miriam Schilling as the Band’s economic director. Miriam oversees operations at XHV, and her involvement marked the end of a long period of

¹ While Xat’sull Heritage Village is located on the Soda Creek Reserve and is therefore recognized by the Canadian government as Xat’sull land, traditional Xat’sull territory encompasses a much larger area beyond Reserve boundaries.

stagnation at the site. All community members with whom I spoke credited her with helping to reignite the community's interest in XHV; several people who had been active at the site in the 1990s have since returned to work as tour guides. Miriam is originally from Germany, and many staff members express hope that she will be able to reform relationships with European tour operators, who directed European tourists to XHV during its busiest years in the 1990s. European tourists comprise the majority of the visitors to XHV, as they have throughout the site's history. From Miriam's perspective, the fact that so many Europeans visit the site in comparison to local visitors has to do with the popularity of Native North American cultures in the European public imagination, which has led to a "genuine, real, true interest to learn about different [First Nations] cultures". Tourists' genuine interest in learning means that

a lot of comments we hear [from tourists] is that people especially enjoy seeing real people. It's not just a staged performance, which can be really nice sometimes too to go back to those traditions, but it is, I think people really find it very interesting to actually meet the real people, not just a sort of museum where, yeah, you want to learn about the old times too, but it's also very interesting to see what's happening right now.

She acknowledges the importance of historical understandings of culture, but cites "real people" and "what's happening right now" as what makes XHV appealing and unique.

Cheryl agrees with Miriam that what makes XHV "special" is that tourism at the site teaches tourists that Secwepemc culture is contemporary and tied to actual people. In her words,

This is what really happened at Soda Creek precontact, contact and today, there's the reality of what it is. However, we all see it, feel it, experience it from our own authentic perspective. That's what people want to hear. They want to know what it was like for me growing up at Xat'sull.

For Cheryl, what XHV has to offer is a connection to her community's past, its traditions and

lifeways, through the “authentic perspective” of community members’ individual interpretations.

Today, tourism activities include tours (both self-guided and with an XHV guide) of the pit houses, teepees, drying/tanning racks, sweat house, summer hut, and fishing spot on the Fraser River, all of which are permanent features of the site. Community members also hold craft workshops and visitors may participate in pit cooking demonstrations which culminate in a lunch of "traditional" foods. Some activities are occasionally available upon request, such as sweat house ceremonies and fishing demonstrations. Many of these activities are also offered at community events.

The summer that I lived at XHV, the site was staffed primarily by members of the Phillips family. Ralph Phillips, an elder who has worked at XHV for several years, works at the site most days. His granddaughter Brandi Phillips is the site manager and has worked at the site for two summers. Three teenagers also worked at the site over the summer. Several other community members are contracted throughout the summer to provide catering services and to lead workshops and other events. From my discussions with staff and other community members, employees at the site tend to vary from year to year, but Ralph is a mainstay.

At the time of writing, there are plans to create a series of hiking and biking trails throughout the Soda Creek Reserve. These are for the primary use of Reserve residents, but are also part of a plan to expand tourism activities to reflect the growing popularity of ecotourism in the Cariboo region. A zipline, gift shop selling locally made goods, and the reopening of the Band’s restaurant are also planned expansions.

Connecting, Learning, and Healing at Xat'sull Heritage Village

In this section, I will examine Xat'sull Heritage Village as an inherently meaningful, agentic site that fosters connections between people, and between people and the land. Edward Casey's distinction between space and place is useful in this analysis, whereby space is a neutral "tabula rasa" upon which people act, while place is subjective, existing only through people's relationships with it (1996:14). I find anthropologist Michael Harkin's (2004) interpretation of this space/place distinction particularly effective: "unlike "space", place has intentional qualities, not mere extension. Place is a dwelled-in locus of human activity and intentionality and is imbued with subjectivity, including the ability to act" (390). Following this interpretation, I explore XHV as a *place* that acts and is acted upon by memory, history, and the people who move within it. More specifically, I focus on Brian Thom's assertion that "the experience, embodiment, and meanings of place engaged by people powerfully influence the kinds of relationships that are experienced within and through these places" (2005:12) to argue that connections made between people within the place of XHV—and *with* the place—help individuals and the community understand and work to overcome the challenges of a colonial past and present.

Decolonizing Notions of Land Possession and Use at Xat'sull Heritage Village

It is important to remember, as Henri Lefebvre (1991) reminds us, that space is a contested social product. In Canada, the ways in which European settlers have long employed land policies to marginalize and exclude Native² people (and their conceptions of space and place) have, in many senses, "erased aboriginal territory" (Larsen 2006). No land

² I have chosen to use the term "Native" for the remainder of this thesis when referring to First Nations people, because it is the term most widely used for self-reference by the Secwepemc community members with whom I interacted during my stay at Xat'sull Heritage Village.

treaties were ever negotiated with the Secwepemc people, including the Soda Creek Band, by the British Crown, Canadian Government, or the Province of British Columbia. Yet today, only small patches of land out of a vast swath of the Cariboo-Chilcotin region that makes up Secwepemc traditional territory are formally recognized as belonging to the Secwepemc people. (The Soda Creek Reserve, for example, is only one mile square.) Very few records exist to explain this discrepancy; there has been a quite literal and unexplained erasure of Xat'sull territory (Palmer 2005). These aggressive colonial land policies, which Cole Harris (2011) describes as following a narrative of “assimilation or difference” with regards to the hegemonic Eurocentric culture, have had brutal consequences for the Secwepemc people. Community members describe a lack of employment and educational opportunities, geographic isolation from urban centers, drug and alcohol problems, and sexual and physical abuse, among other difficulties, as direct results of a history of forced assimilation and the theft of land and culture. Keeping in mind this history, and the contemporary land claims struggles Native communities—including Soda Creek—now endure, I would like to explore the way in which Xat'sull Heritage Village contributes to discussions about what land possession means and how this “assimilation or difference” narrative, which continues to affect Native people, is addressed at the site.

Soren Larsen (2006) has written about memory as an empowering, legitimating strategy that Native people use to assert (or reclaim) their authority over the land (315). While Larsen's focus is on public policy, using the term “authority over the land” in the context of the pursuit of political sovereignty, this concept can be scaled down and used when examining the implications of sharing memories of the land in the context of host/tourist relations at XHV. Xat'sull Heritage Village is a meaningful site in large part

because of the memories community members have of that place that connect them to the past—and, possibly more importantly, because they share those memories with others.

Cheryl articulates her understanding of tourism at XHV in terms of the connections people have with the past through the stories they tell:

It's about the place, it's about the people, and it's about the story... The stories, the history, the traditional ways of doing things, with our fishing, our berry-picking, our medicine gathering and the plants that we eat, all happened at the Heritage Village. That's the authentic sort of cornerstone of Xat'sull, of Soda Creek. Maintaining that through the realistic stories, the history, the actual authentic story of Xat'sull and who we are comes right from there. So it's easy to be authentic at Xat'sull, it really is...because they're our stories from that place...

For Cheryl, Xat'sull's "authenticity" is inherent to the site itself and to the connections that people have with it. The site imbues people's stories with meaning, and vice versa.

Edward Casey argues that the colonial oppression of Native people has been accomplished by systematic "deplacialization", the destruction of culturally meaningful landscapes (1997:xii). Thus, it follows that when Native people actively seek out emplaced experiences and share emplaced memories in their traditional territories, they are engaging in a decolonizing effort to reclaim and strengthen their connection to the land. In her work on oral histories in Athapaskan communities, Julie Cruikshank has noted that telling stories about the land, and in meaningful locations, can be a way to engage with larger social and historical issues (2005). At XHV too, stories often serve as social and historical commentary. The XHV site fosters meaningful discussions between community members, and between community members and tourists, about belonging, land possession, colonialism, and traditional land use. In the following section, I will focus especially on the construction of Xat'sull Heritage Village as a sacred site through the sharing of memories and the forming of interpersonal relationships.

Connecting with Place, History, and Memory: XHV as a Sacred Site

Nearly all community members and many tourists with whom I spoke expressed the belief that the site is sacred or spiritual in some way. As one teenage staff member put it, “It's one of the most beautiful places I've ever been to. It's just got a vibe that you can't ignore.” There are burial grounds nearby, and during my stay, community members repeatedly asked if I had seen or heard “things” during my evenings alone at the site. Some community members shared with me their own stories of spiritual encounters. These are the spirits of ancestors, believed to be benevolent or benign so long as the people visiting the site “have good intentions”, otherwise an invisible force chases them away. Tourists, too, frequently expressed to me a “feeling” they had when visiting the site. “From the first moment” he arrived at the site, one tourist told me that “it took my breath [away]. So beautiful, so beautiful. So calm and so, I feel at home.” Some tourists were visibly affected by this feeling; one woman began to cry as she described the peacefulness and “spiritual nature” of the place. I can also attest to a certain peaceful presence I felt from the moment I arrived. The longer I stayed, the more I was struck by this affect, and the more grounded and connected I felt to the land itself. I came to think of the presence of spirits as a metaphor for the power of place—and THAT place in particular—to remind us, as Harkin does, of the inseparability of place consciousness from historical consciousness (2004:391). Hundreds of generations of ancestors reside there, watching over the land and the people in it. Xat'sull Heritage Village is a place that, above all, reinforces (or in some cases creates) a historical consciousness for those who dwell temporarily or permanently within it.

I met an elder one afternoon who illustrated for me the importance of place in the grounding of human experience in history and human connections. This elder has a long relationship with XHV. He worked there as a tour guide in the 1990s, and feels a special

connection to the site. In his words, he is “half-White, half-Native” and has found a connection with his Native heritage at XHV. The day I met him he had come to deliver a load of spruce branches he had cut in his spare time to cover the frame of the summer house model on display at the site. Ralph Phillips, another elder who works at XHV, called me over to where the two of them, and a younger staff member, were sitting, evidently having already explained what I was doing at the site. Without introduction, this elder began talking about the site’s historical importance, frequently gesturing to the landmarks he was describing. The old wagon road up the mountain, now overgrown, was once one of the Hudson Bay Company’s routes for stagecoaches and, later, miners headed north. The open space in the center of the site was also the location of two battles that figure prominently in traditional stories, one with the Tsilhqot’in and the other with the Cree. A rawhide string bridge used to span the Fraser River, connecting this land and its people to the land across the river. The poplar grove that marks the entrance to the site is also a traditional burial ground, the significance of which this elder learned as a child, when he and his friends were severely chastised by their parents for crossing through it on their way home one evening. The whole site has spiritual significance, he explained, but its most sacred spot is a rock that juts out over the water where “you can go to pray, but only for others”, because “sharing is caring. That’s what this place is about”.

His narrative took a darker turn as he described the devastating effects of smallpox on the community, his explanation for the gaps in his knowledge of the area. “There used to be four thousand people living right around here, on both sides of the river” he said, “but then because of smallpox, by 1919 the census just said “Soda Creek: 120”. No other communities existed around here anymore. We lost a lot.” I was immediately reminded of

the Stó:lō elder Sonny McHalsie's similarly sobering remark on the effects of smallpox on Stó:lō culture (2011:107), which speaks to the historical commonalities of many Native communities in the region.

A tourist to the site, born and raised in Williams Lake, spoke to me of the grounding effect learning about the smallpox epidemic had had on him. A long conversation this tourist had with an XHV staff member during a past visit:

...was quite interesting because [the staff member] went into the numbers of people that had died on this side of the river and the other side of the river when smallpox came through. It was a pretty alarming figure to realize how many people had actually died from that right here. You know, you hear of the smallpox epidemic and you sort of think of Mexico and South America. You don't really think quite so much of the Cariboo. And that was one of the things that I found seemed pretty startling. And it was not long ago!

This tourist noted that this conversation reminded him how little he knew about his “own area”, and his own shallow understanding of history in a place so close to his home.

Larsen (2006:317) argues that Dakelh notions of “territory” serve to connect memory and place. After listening to the elder's and tourist's stories, I believe this rings true for the Soda Creek community as well. This elder's stories legitimate not only his Secwepemc heritage, which is particularly important to him because he is part White, but they also demonstrate his authority over the land, marking it as territory belonging to his people, even if that territory is not formally recognized by the Canadian government. I came to realize the value of place in affecting how this elder shared his connection to the territory with me. I could see what he saw, smell the air he smelled, and hear the sounds he was hearing—many of the same sensations his ancestors also experienced which affected their own interactions with the land and with each other. It was a powerful lesson in what it means to dwell in a place, to come to see, as Keith Basso (1996:54) explains, that the lived experiences of

people, and the relationships those people form, are how space acquires meaning. In other words, how space becomes place.

I was fortunate to be invited to a training of the teenage workers the band employs during the summer as assistant tour guides at XHV and as members of the maintenance crew. Cheryl Chapman led the training. She shared her experience as a tour guide and manager of XHV in the 1990s and, later, as an employee of Aboriginal Tourism BC, with the teens. “Tourists want to know about your connection to the land”, she told them. “Most tourists are disconnected from the land base” and visit because “they want to experience the connection we have”. Two exercises Cheryl led during the training emphasized the importance of this connection to the land. When the students introduced themselves, they were asked to explain where they were born, and where they and their families were from. All were Native, and most were Secwepemc, but not all were originally from Soda Creek. The students then discussed among themselves what it meant to them to “be from somewhere”. Following this discussion, the students broke into teams and were asked to brainstorm and draw their ideal communities. Cheryl explained to the students that this was important “because where we come from is linked to where we’re going.” Interestingly, most students included opportunities to learn traditional knowledge from community elders in their drawings of their ideal communities. They also drew trees, plants, and animals that signified for them their traditional territory. This was in sharp contrast to the ideal community that I drew—when I presented my drawing of a library and books, one student laughed and said “you should have drawn an elder, or the woods!” I found this comment intriguing because it illustrated for me that, at least at face value, Cheryl’s training successfully helps youth integrate their connection to the land with a positive view of their heritage and their communities. Then,

when the teens share their stories and explain the importance of their own connections to the land, Cheryl's hope is that tourists will come to an understanding of "how we live within the land, not exploit it"—and be encouraged to do the same.

My experience at the site suggested to me that most tourists bring with them a sincere interest in practicing environmental stewardship. They do, in fact, want to experience a connection to the land. What tourists often do not realize—and what can, at times, become a rather emotional learning experience—is that the connection the community has to the land, and the authority they exert over it, does not come from a conservationist ethic so much as from a deep connection to history that emplaced knowledge brings. I saw this firsthand as I listened to the elder talk to me about the history of the XHV site, often with tears welling in the corners of his eyes. The stories he told were important to him because they happened to him, to people he knew, or to his ancestors—and they happened in the very place where we sat and talked.

Coming to understand the power of this connection to history, place, and people can leave an imprint on those who do not have that same connection. I met a tourist during my stay for whom learning about this connection had been especially powerful. To paraphrase his words, “you sit here and you think about how they [community members] are sitting in the same place as their grandparents and their grandparents and on and on for generations. It's got to feel pretty crazy to know they are all there looking after you in this place. You can't just leave a place like that.” For him, the connection that community members had talked about and shared with him was more than a connection to nature, it was about a connection to people, the spirits and memories of whom still inhabited the land. And it was about his *own* connection to the people who had shared those stories and encouraged him to

feel comfortable during his stay at XHV. Because of that, he explained to me, XHV was now a very special place to him, and he had a new respect for what it means to “belong” in a place, as community members belong at XHV.

As I continued to talk with this tourist, we began a discussion of the profound disconnect we both perceive many people in the dominant colonial culture have with their past and, therefore, with the land itself. For example, neither this tourist nor I know the names of all of our great-grandparents, much less anything about their lives. Because my family is spread throughout the United States and his lives all over Canada, neither of us will ever know what it is like to have the deep-rooted, personal connection with a place that comes with a life lived on the same land as our ancestors. I highlight this discussion not only because its content is relevant to the topic at hand, but because it shows how XHV facilitates connections with people (like my connection with this tourist, his connection to the community members who shared their stories with him, and my connection with those same community members), that in turn foster new understandings about the relationships people have with place.

To what extent do these connections create what so many people call the “sacredness” of Xat’sull Heritage Village? Many tourists do not seem interested in forming personal connections at all—at least not when they first arrive. They refer instead to the site’s natural beauty: the spectacular sunsets, the bald eagles soaring overhead, the rushing of the river. Michael Harkin has observed the way that many environmentalists conceive of nature as sacred, and certain places as “shrines of wilderness”, reflecting attitudes that “constitute a secular religion, one predicated on natural, rather than artificial, sacred spaces” (2004:394). Often, tourists at XHV appear to follow this same “secular religion”, using

language that suggests a belief in a divine presence inherent in nature: they have come to “commune with nature” or to “become one with the Creator”. They may or may not associate their belief in this divine presence to “Native culture”. The XHV website suggests an awareness and acceptance of this attitude, inviting tourists to “experience physical and spiritual rejuvenation by reconnecting with Mother Earth” (2015).

Some tourists identify themselves as environmentalists in much the same way as Harkin constructs them, conceiving of nature as largely acultural, while others, for example, express an interest in Shamanism, which they define as a pan-Indigenous religious and healing practice predicated on a profound connection with the natural world. These tourists have come believing that the sacred or spiritual feeling they experience at XHV is inherent in nature—but they often leave profoundly affected not by nature itself, but by the connections they have formed with community members and staff. Members of the tourist group interested in Shamanism, for example, began their weeklong stay by seeking solitude and enjoying the natural beauty of XHV, but as the week wore on many of them began to spend time with community elders and staff members, often sitting and conversing with them for hours on end about spirituality in their personal lives. Summing up her experience, one member of this tourist group explained that conversations with elders at the site was one of the most memorable experiences of her visit:

I appreciated very much to work with the elders... They have a lot of deep connections. It was very touching to listen to their stories of life because they had a hard time to find back to their roots, to get in touch with their tradition...I appreciate that they share their lives, and not just, “this is the tradition we do.” So, they tell us a lot of their biography, which brings you back to their roots and the travels they've had, instead of, “OK, this is how we do it.”

Like others travelling with her, this tourist expressed her pleasant surprise to have had these personal interactions, which she had not expected before arriving. For many staff members,

this personal connection was important as well. Roxanne Pop, one of XHV's teenaged staff members, remarked to me that "it was just like you could sit down with them and they'd really start asking about how it is to be down here [at XHV] and, like, everything. It wasn't just about my job. It was actually about me personally and I think that was really nice, just being able to get on a personal level with them."

When it came time for the group to leave, everyone was visibly moved. One staff member was in tears as he said his goodbyes, thanking the tourists for what they had shared with him, and many of the tourists were crying as well, remarking on what an extraordinary experience it had been for them to get to know the staff personally and talk about matters that were of such importance to them. Almost invariably when I talked to tourists at the *end* of their visit—whether they stayed for a week or an hour—they emphasized the connections they had made with the staff or other visiting community members as the most memorable part of their visit. One woman, who had stopped at XHV because she heard the "views from the lookout were great" told to me as she was leaving, "what they shared with me was really moving. It was really personal. I won't be able to forget this place."

Connecting to the Land, and the "Ecological Indian" Stereotype

Many tourists arrive at XHV with a preconception of Native peoples' inherent respect for and ability to "live with" the land. This is a common theme in cultural tourism in Native communities (Bunten 2008) and reflects the well-worn "myth of the Ecological Indian" (Krech 1999). This is, perhaps, a misleading portrayal of modern-day life on the Soda Creek Reserve, where recycling is half-heartedly practiced, ATV off-roading is a popular pastime, and many young adults are eager to pursue careers in the mines nearby or in the oil and gas industry. Nevertheless, as Shepard Krech III observes, First Nations peoples are often constructed as "the original ecologists and conservationists" (2005:78), whose presence

signifies to tourists “a link with romantic ideas of the past, of authentic traditional cultures existing in harmony with the landscape” (Harkin 2004:395). This expectation of Native people’s active engagement with the land sometimes has the potential to reinforce stereotypes, inducing disappointment or even anger in tourists when it is unmet, but it can also be a decolonizing educational tool.

Often, during site tours or ethnobotany walks, tourists ask questions about traditional plant use. Not infrequently, when the tour guide does not know the answer to the tourist’s question, she or he will respond with a discussion of residential schools and other government policies that contributed to the loss of traditional ecological knowledge in the community. Two TripAdvisor reviews published online in July 2014 suggest that some tourists respond to this message negatively. One warns potential visitors that “if you go, do not have high expectations of learning much about the culture” because “the people were not well informed of their own culture.” Another review implies that the social studies unit “Canadian Natives Long Ago”, which the reviewer recently taught to their children, was of more value than the visit to XHV: “our group was told they lost their culture because of the government and therefore we didn't learn how they lived...So needless to say it was disappointing and I was hoping to bring my school-aged children there but there was nothing for them to learn about” (TripAdvisor 2014).

For those visitors who cling to the notion of an Aboriginal identity frozen in the past, fixed and immovable, the messages they receive during tours or other activities may not meet expectations. However, every tourist with whom I personally spoke responded positively to messages of the community’s struggles with colonization. Many were shocked and surprised but glad to learn an angle of history about which they had previously known little. One

German tourist I interviewed explained that she and her Dutch partner appreciated learning about the community's colonial history because it gave her a more balanced perspective than she had previously:

I really liked [learning about colonialism] because we are here [in Canada] for the first time and we've heard lots of stories from...mostly the White people, and you hear a lot of bad stories about that [Native people] are criminals and they don't do enough and they abuse the system and blah blah blah, so it's nice to hear the other side. To see where it comes from. Because that's what mostly [White people] don't talk about a lot. In a museum you can read that [Native] kids were taken away and they had to go to school where they weren't allowed to use their language but still it doesn't feel the same as if a Native person really tells you. And you see that the outcome is that a seventy-year-old Indian person doesn't speak the Native language. That says something, I think.

This tourist contrasts the educational value of her experience at XHV to a museum, concluding that the personal interaction with Native people at XHV is a more effective counterbalance to the one-sided understanding of the effects of colonial history she had received from White people she has met. Other tourists were more familiar with the history of cultural suppression the community has long faced, but supported the work of the staff and community members who are actively working to teach both Native and non-Native individuals about the uses of plants and the importance of respecting what the land has to offer.

Interestingly, tourists often refer to their time at XHV as “ecotourism”, presumably in reference to the compelling natural landscape around them. Equating a Native cultural experience to an ecological one speaks not only to how tourists perceive Native culture, but to how they perceive nature as well. The romanticization of the wilderness in much Western discourse as a timeless, empty space with human occupation “edited out” contributes to the way tourists talk about the land (Braun 2002; Harkin 2004), especially when they first arrive at XHV. These tourists have often included a stop at XHV to enhance a vacation road-

tripping through western Canada, through a landscape they almost invariably described to me as enjoyable because it is “natural”, “remote”, or “the frontier” with “no people” around. One German tour guide told me that she advertised her tour of British Columbia and Native cultural tourism sites as a trip for “crazy people who want to follow me into the bush”. This is unsurprising given Charlotte Townsend Gault’s observation that Canada has long perceived itself (and been perceived by others) as “uninhabited wilderness” (2011:549). Interestingly, the XHV website reflects this theme, presenting the site as simultaneously “unspoiled” yet part of a long relationship with the Soda Creek community. The website’s homepage welcomes tourists to the XHV, where “the Majestic Fraser River runs alongside the Xat’sūll Heritage Village...and has played an integral role in the community throughout the years. This unspoiled region is home to a wide array of plants, fish, and wildlife – each perfectly adapted to this unique environment” (2015). These sentences are among the first that visitors to the XHV homepage read. That XHV’s natural setting is introduced before any discussion of cultural activities implies that, at least officially, XHV staff recognize and accept that many tourists visit the site because of its ecotourism potential.

Thus, despite the sincere interest tourists express in learning about Native culture, it makes sense that this interest usually lies primarily in what they believe to be a deep connection Native people inherently have with the land. They may express dismay or confusion that the staff and other community members are not more “environmentally minded” when, for example, they use Styrofoam cups and paper plates to serve snacks and meals. However, with the exception of the online reviews I discussed earlier, this dismay is directed not at the individuals themselves for failing to provide the ideal experience, but

rather at “the system” or “the government” for removing Native people from their Native environments and severing their connection with the land.

Sometimes, the stories that XHV staff tell about the history of colonialism prompt this antagonism towards “the government”. For Ralph Phillips, these sorts of conversations about “the government” have helped him process his community’s colonial history:

I think for myself the best part that I got out of [working at XHV] was how we as people, we look at what the government did to us. They took our land, they took everything from us. They took our culture and our spirituality away, and then they give it back, *but they still didn't give back our land.* (emphasis added)

While such a reaction can be problematic in that it positions Native people as lacking the agency to create and define their own connection to the land, I also found that using a nebulous “government” as a scapegoat for a lost connection to the land often brings staff, community members and tourists together, uniting them in a common cause. I participated in or overheard numerous prolonged conversations—sometimes lasting long after the staff were supposed to leave for the day—about land use, the environment, Native/non-Native relations, and politics.

Therefore, I ask if this stereotype (which many members of the community ascribe to and perceive as complimentary) can actually help address an overwhelmingly negative colonial history of deplacialization of Native landscapes. Non-Native tourists who visit the site are usually eager to learn from their Native hosts about the land, because, as one community member put it, “they crave that connection”. This can be an empowering message for community members. Every staff member expressed to me how much they valued their job at XHV because it allowed them to work outdoors, and they also explained that their appreciation for their natural surroundings had increased since they began working with tourists. According to one elder, referring to the natural beauty of the site, “you kind of

forget. Personally...I didn't care until I saw how much it means to them [the tourists]". This same elder frequently reminisced to me about an instance a few years ago where a group of young adults, participants in the Sustainable Living Leadership Program, talked with him about the water samples they were collecting as part of the program's goal to increase awareness about the health of the Fraser River watershed. "Talking with those young White people made me cry", this elder said, "because that's what we're supposed to be doing. We're supposed to be taking care of the land. We can do it, and we need to start. All of us together." Thus, XHV, as the place where interactions between hosts and tourists occur, influences not only those interactions, but interactions with the place itself. Tourists and hosts learn from one another about the land and what it means to take care of it.

This mutual learning experience is perhaps especially meaningful given that Native/non-Native relations are often fraught with discord, particularly in the Williams Lake area. Many community members are frank about the racism that they endure when they visit town, and tensions between local non-Native land owners and the Soda Creek Band surrounding land claims issues run high. But at XHV, Ralph told me, things are different. He "used to be really racist towards White people" until he began to work at XHV and get to know the tourists who came to visit. They are generally respectful and want to learn—and they teach him a lot, too. He explained to me that

You're fighting through this stuff, and working here, you know, when I first started out I always looked at it that the Native people were the only ones that were really screwed by the government. They did a lot of bad things to us, you know. And one of the things that I did find out when working here in these last three years it's really been something. Because before...I was more interested in talking to the people about what went on [in our colonial past] and try to get them to see some of the stuff that we had to go through. And in this last two to three years here it's been really good because what I've learned is that the same thing happened to people all over the world. The government ripped everybody off. It wasn't just us.

When I asked how this understanding has affected the way he perceives local Native/non-Native relations, particularly with regards to land claims, he responded: “we all want the same things. They don’t want to take things away from us, they just want to live and be happy.” The bitterness and anger he carried with him for years as a result of institutionalized racism is no longer the driving force in his life, as he claims it once was. He has “moved forward”, and is actively working to encourage other community members to “see things how I do”. Of course, not everyone agrees with this sentiment, but I believe it speaks to the power of XHV to influence not only those relationships between hosts and tourists that last for the duration of a one or two day visit, but also its ability to change the way an individual views Native/non-Native relationships on a much larger scale.

Cracks in the Façade?

The land has the potential to forge connections with people and repair past damage, but histories of power imbalance and abuse can never be erased. For many community members, this means a constant aura of bitterness and mistrust, despite the acknowledged benefits XHV can bring. Cheryl Chapman cites a chronic lack of trust among members of her community as a limiter of the success of XHV and other community projects, as well as a reason she was initially hesitant to allow me to interview her:

There's a reality that we live with and that is a lack of trust. Over the years since Contact there's been dislocation, expropriation, disconnection, community members were ripped from their families, from their cultures, from their traditional ways of doing things and were told that they were not good...[So] we don't trust that what we're sharing is going to be respected and honored. Residential schools taught that to generations of our community members. Trusting people resulted in horrible abuses. So my mother doesn't trust, my grandfather didn't trust, my grandmother didn't trust. So I was raised not to trust, and for good reason.

This mistrust, rooted in memories of abuse and betrayal, means that not all community members see XHV as a place of healing and connection.

An especially interesting event occurred at the end of my first week visiting XHV that revealed underlying tensions not always evident in the daily workings of the site. On the last night of a week-long visit from a German tour group, a prominent community member arrived to meet the tourists and give a talk about Native cultural heritage. She set up a projector and screen in the pithouse, and gave a lengthy PowerPoint presentation outlining the systematic genocide of Native people and providing multiple examples of unacknowledged appropriation of Native culture, including chocolate, canoes, and the Iroquois federal system of governance. Ultimately, the presenter argued, Native people need to be free to govern themselves in order to escape an overwhelmingly negative history.

Many members of the audience, which included the tourist group and XHV staff, perceived a decidedly harsh and accusatory tone to the presentation, which was designed for an audience with no prior knowledge of colonial oppression of Native peoples. Many tourists were visibly upset after the presentation, not because of the information they had been given—most explained to me that they were already aware of this history of appropriation, at least in general—but because they believed that the presenter was unaware of their genuine interest in Native culture and their desire to be culturally sensitive. Some staff members were likewise frustrated, feeling that their attempts to educate and connect with the tourists throughout the past week had been undermined. From one staff member's perspective, the presentation was evidence of XHV's importance. He saw the presentation as a manifestation of misplaced anger, which some community members chronically struggle to manage. From his point of view, the site can provide a valuable service; for him it has provided opportunities to “see where the anger comes from” and communicate with tourists in what he feels is a more productive manner.

Yet, from my point of the view, many of the tourists who were so upset by the presentation missed what to me was its key element: the presenter adopted the tone she did for a reason. For the presenter, connecting with tourists was of less importance than establishing a rationale for her desire for self-governance. That she chose to interact with the tourists in this way, taking time out of her busy schedule to give her presentation, suggests to me that XHV provides multi-faceted opportunities for education. Discomfort can itself be a valuable learning experience; I sat with the tourists and staff members over dinner while we engaged in an in-depth conversation about the presentation and our responses to it. Mistrust and miscommunication were cited as reasons for people's negative reactions towards the presentation. The presenter did not trust the tourists to respect and honor her culture, and the tourists misunderstood the message she was attempting to send.

Brandi Phillips, XHV's site manager, notes that while most tourists are respectful, she has had some "bad experiences" that suggest the presenter's mistrust in tourists was not without merit. She describes one particularly unpleasant interaction:

We had that one...group and I was talking about [colonialism] and the tour guide was translating for the group of Germans that she had with her and it was like she was just trying to shut me down and she didn't even want me to talk about it. But then she was going off with her notions...she's like, asking, well, so all of you guys just intermarry through all the other Nations or whatever. And I'm like, well some do, but my son's dad is White. And it was almost like she had a heart attack or she went into shock or something. Because they have, I guess, their notions over in Germany and they don't really know that. It was kind of scary for me, how much people don't know. Or how much they think they know and that's what they want to believe. So then I'm just worried about what my son's going to have to grow up with too.

Brandi worries about this tourist's attitude not only because it makes her job as a tour guide more difficult, but because it reflects unpleasant realities about racial stereotyping. When I wondered aloud whether Brandi thought this tourist's response may have been related to her lack of exposure to First Nations people and culture, she responded,

Well, I can kind of see it too, because they're living in this place where they don't see many First Nations people. That's how I think of it. Whereas we're a small town and you kind of don't see many Black people. So I kind of figure you can tie it in. We have our preconceived notions from TV and whatever you hear. So yeah, I can see where they're coming from now.

During my time at XHV, I spent much of my downtime with Brandi, and this response reflects the character and content of many conversations she and I shared. For Brandi, I gathered, working at XHV is a constant learning opportunity, and she thoughtfully incorporates the things she learns from her experiences with tourists, elders, and others into not only the tours she gives, but her outlook on life as well. She actively resists being stereotyped, and is unafraid to correct tourists' misunderstandings of her or her community. Ultimately, I see both this presentation and Brandi's anecdote as evidence that XHV is very much needed by community members and tourists alike to continue providing opportunities for communication and learning that help to rectify past wrongs, as well as current problems.

Front/Back

XHV has a variety of purposes and meanings: educational, spiritual, social, economic, political. It is precisely this versatility that, I believe, makes it a successful community venture. A return to Goffman's discussion of "front" and "back" spaces in tourism enterprises provides a possible explanation for XHV's versatility. Throughout my time at XHV, I noted a lack of separation between activities and spaces intended for tourists, and those for staff and other community members.

A small office space, in which staff store cleaning and office supplies, paperwork, and a refrigerator for holding snacks and catered meals, acted as the staging area for the preparation of tourist activities, but this space was by no means closed to tourists. When staff members were in the office, the door was always open, and tourists were free to enter and browse the photos and newspaper clippings displayed on the wall, or have a look at the large dip net hanging in the corner. Brochures of other area attractions lined a set of shelves, mingling with feathers, river stones, and examples of handicrafts created by staff members during workshops.

On slow days with few tourists, staff members generally sat at the large, covered picnic area at the site, chatting with me, with each other, or simply enjoying the relief the covering provided from the brutal summer sun. Craft workshops and tourist meals took place at the picnic area, but the area was used for more informal visitors as well. One church group from Quesnel, for example, had an arrangement with the staff to use the space in the evenings for picnics after the staff members had gone home. They paid a fee for the use of the picnic area, and cleaned up after themselves before heading home. Community members also used the picnic space during the time I was there; for example, a group of mothers

interested in the local Head Start program met with the program's leader at this picnic area one morning.

This mingling of tourists and community members in no way suggests the community's inability to control who visits XHV and when. Rather, it is a deliberate strategy. According to Miriam, increasing community involvement in XHV, particularly in tourism activities, is one of XHV's priorities. "Cultural days" at XHV are intended specifically to promote the interaction of community members, local visitors from the Williams Lake area, and visitors from farther afield who are XHV's typical tourists. I interviewed Miriam during one of these cultural days, and she describes the program as

a really nice...combination because it gives people from all angles an opportunity to visit and mix and maybe do a craft together. You sit next to each other and learn something that you're all interested in or you join a tour or even just to sit there and enjoy a meal. People still ask and say, "hey, where are you from? What do you do?" So you get conversations going that are really not part of what we offer but it just happens and I think that's what people do enjoy. People from this community have told me, man, it's so fun, I met somebody from Israel the other day and there was somebody from Australia and all over and they're excited to meet these people and vice versa, you know. So that part is just something that I think, yeah, that this place is really nice for without saying you have to actually take part in anything specifically. Technically you can just show up and hang out and experience that part.

In opposition to the common construction of cultural tourism as a performative act, whereby one group performs culture for another in a one-way exchange of information, Miriam emphasizes tourism's dialogic nature at XHV where "people from all angles visit and mix". Interestingly, though, she comments that these sorts of interactions are "not what we offer" yet "what people do enjoy"—and what she and XHV actively promote. Her perspective reflects the notion that tourism is, in some way, formalized and performative, as in guided tours. If, as Miriam states and as I observed, the informal interpersonal interactions between tourists and community members are not "tourism", then what is actually occurring at XHV?

Is XHV successful, and if so, is it a successful *tourism* site? Or does its success lie elsewhere?

The Mount Polley Mine Disaster: Honoring the Land and Celebrating Community in the Wake of Tragedy

On August 4, 2014, a tailings dam breach at the Mount Polley Mine outside of Likely, BC flooded adjacent Hazeltine Creek and contaminated nearby Polley Lake and Quesnel Lake. The breach, which occurred on traditional Xat'sull territory, has been economically and emotionally devastating for many members of the community, but has also become a point of solidarity for many.³ On August 10th, my second-to-last day at XHV, I attended a community meeting about the mine disaster. Held at XHV, it was attended by band members, the chief of the nearby Williams Lake Band, and a few tourists, including participants of the Sustainable Living Leadership Program, who were visiting XHV during their annual month-long voyage down the Fraser River. Soda Creek's Chief Bev Sellars explained to those in attendance that although the dam breach occurred in traditional Secwepemc territory, because that land claim is not officially recognized by the Canadian government, it will be difficult for the community to seek remuneration for the damage done. The palpable anger following the disaster rests in large part on the environmental destruction caused by the mine breach and its direct effects on local health and livelihoods. Much of the

³ On November 19, 2014, the Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw (NStQ) Leadership Council (comprised of the Xat'sull, T'exelc, Tsq'escen' and Stswecem'c/Xgat'tem First Nations, near Williams Lake, BC) announced the adoption of a comprehensive mining policy that applies to "all existing, proposed, and future projects that involve or impact on its lands, waters, and rights" (Northern Shuswap Tribal Council 2014). The policy, a collaborative effort between the NStQ Leadership Council and the BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council, reflects longstanding frustration with what many First Nations people feel is a profound lack of respect afforded them and their traditional territory by industry and the Canadian government. At the time of the announcement, the then-current Xat'sull Chief Bev Sellars provided a cogent rationale for the policy: "Since colonization it has been the government's and industry's way or the highway. That has to change. We are taking the lead in promoting safer and more accountable industry practices in Northern Secwepemc Territory" (Northern Shuswap Tribal Council 2014). It is important to note that the Mount Polley mine disaster, which initiated the development of this policy, did not occur on land formally recognized by the Canadian government as belonging to any Secwepemc Nation. The policy boldly asserts the Secwepemc people's claim over their traditional territory and their "responsibility for stewardship" by demanding government and industry conduct business according to NStQ rules (Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw Leadership Council 2014:2).

meeting focused on concerns about the contamination of drinking water and the health of the salmon in the river. But I also detected an undercurrent of sadness and fear for the ongoing loss of personal connection to the land, feelings that this disaster has amplified. One elder from the Williams Lake Band lamented the loss of medicinal plants which only grow in the affected areas, and the resultant devastation to the cultural education program she facilitates for children.

While the meeting was somber, it also contained a powerful message about the solidarity of the community, and the importance of supporting others, both Native and non-Native. The Soda Creek Band sent its own grief counselors to comfort distressed non-Native residents of Likely who had also been affected by the disaster, and the Musqueam Band near Vancouver had been sending salmon to Soda Creek band members who could no longer fish the polluted waters. Several members of the Sustainable Living Leadership Program voiced their concern and support for the community, thanking them for their hospitality during such a sorrowful time.

That the community chose to hold the meeting at XHV is a powerful statement of the importance the place holds for so many. The meeting could have easily been held in the community meeting hall. In fact, the meeting hall would have been a more convenient location for many. I never heard anyone explicitly address the choice of venue that day, but people's words and actions speak to the place's power to strengthen the bonds between people and remind them of the healing power of the land. It was what people needed in this time of tragedy: to be, in one community member's words, "out in the territory." An elder who works at XHV gave a speech in which he emphasized the importance XHV on his life, because of "all the things that happen here and all the people" that he meets, that remind him

of the importance of his community's role as stewards of the environment. Others emphasized the "power" of XHV for the way it connects people to the land and facilitates sharing between community members and visitors alike.

Later that evening, I walked down to the rocky fishing site overlooking the Fraser River with a community member and a tourist who had been staying at XHV for several days. This community member had brought sage to burn, and her drum. The three of us sat on the rocks as she sang and drummed a song in mourning for the mine disaster, but also, she said, "to celebrate what we have." She encouraged us to join her in singing, and later performed a smudging ceremony with the sage. The three of us then sat in silence, contemplating the moment. This was perhaps the most memorable experience I had during my entire stay. It encapsulated for me what I had learned during my time at Xat'sull Heritage Village: it is more than a tourism site, it is a place to explore what it means to belong and to connect with others and with the natural world. And it is, in the words of one elder, "sort of like therapy" for the damaging effects of colonialism on everyone's lives, both Native and non-Native. As Cheryl Chapman eloquently states, at XHV "it's about building those trusting relationships. It's all about relationships. All the way around, whether it's the relationship to the grass, the dirt, the trees, the salmon, whatever. Or other people. It's all about relationships. So, building that trust in those things. The future of Xat'sull and the Heritage Village is about those relationships."

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