

**RELATIONAL NATIONS: TRADING AND SHARING ETHOS FOR INDIGENOUS  
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ON VANCOUVER ISLAND**

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores how Indigenous conceptualizations of being and place influence the food trading and sharing behavior of Indigenous people on Vancouver Island. **Chapter 1** utilizes critical theory to explore how historically and contemporarily Indigenous nations and people practiced a relational politics where political activity and subjectivity is nested within the tenets of relationality, respect, beneficial reciprocity, and responsibility. **Chapter 1** demonstrates that Canada utilized science and rationalism to assert sovereignty and jurisdiction over Indigenous lands, nations, and people. This process altered Indigenous conceptualizations of political subjectivity. **Chapter 1** conducts a theoretical exegesis of state conceptualizations of sovereignty, which reveals how food-based politics can be alternately conceptualized and enacted. That is, I argue for a relational politics oriented explicitly towards recognizing, learning from, and incorporating the concerns of the most vulnerable members of Indigenous communities – human and nonhuman – as a mechanism for relational self-determination. In **Chapter 2** I analyze the trading and sharing practices of 14 Indigenous people in rural and urban Vancouver Island using an Indigenous research paradigm, qualitative research methods, and critical theory as a mode of analysis. **Chapter 2** demonstrates that Indigenous trading and sharing behavior is influenced by ancestral conceptualizations of place and that enactment of these place-based worldviews changes to fit the social context in which Indigenous people find themselves. Indigenous trading and sharing behavior enables Indigenous people to fulfill relational obligations to community, each other, and their non-human kin. Hence, food trading and sharing is a mechanism for relational politics and is used by Indigenous traders and sharers to engage with, cope, and overcome dominant conceptualizations of political subjectivity. In

**Chapter 3**, I reflect on what I have learned from Indigenous traders and sharers, and situate their stories and propositions within a broader dialogue with Indigenous and non-Indigenous social theorists on the meaning of relationships, value, and political subjectivity.

## **Preface**

My contribution to all three chapters includes conceptualization, fieldwork design, data collection and analysis, and writing of each chapter. Portions of Chapter 1 were worked on with Dr. Hannah Wittman and Dawn Morrison for a methodological primer called “Decolonizing Working Relationships.” Johnnie Manson was first author of this document, and in charge of data collection, data analysis, and writing the manuscript. This paper has not been submitted for publication, but rather is meant to be a methodological primer for researchers conducting research with Indigenous communities. Portions of Chapter 1 also appeared in a non-peer reviewed working paper, part of the University of British Columbia, Institute for Resources, Environment, and Sustainability (IRES) Working Paper Series, entitled “Being Indigenous: Propositions from the margins” which I co-authored with my mother, Dorothy Manson, and of which I was the main author in charge of data collection and analysis, and writing the manuscript. The initial idea behind researching “Indigenous food sovereignty” on Vancouver Island arose out of work I had conducted with Dr. Hannah Wittman and Dawn Morrison and was part of a larger project, in association with the British Columbia Food Systems Network (BCFSN) Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS). That project was entitled: “Re-vitalizing the Grease Trails.” Regarding Chapter 2, research design, data collection, analysis and writing of the manuscript were conducted solely by myself: Johnnie Manson.

Conceptualization and writing of chapter 3 was conducted solely by J. Manson. Drs. Terre Satterfield, Hannah Wittman, Dawn Morrison, and Dr. Sarah Hunt provided comments, suggestions, and feedback on all three chapters. Ethics approval was obtained from the

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this study / story to Allison Felisha Gallic (April 18, 1986- - September 20, 2014), my Tla-o-qui-aht family), you and all the anarchists and punks in my life. Allison, you and I were family, linked by the union of my brother Johnson and your sister Vicki, the lives of our nieces, Mariah and Jaidah, our love of fish, and our common origin in creation. You lived this story and your presence haunts these pages.

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# Chapter 1: Sovereignty, Food Sovereignty, and Indigenous Food Sovereignty

## 1.1 Introduction and Context

In Canada, Indigenous<sup>1</sup> communities are understood to be food insecure (Fieldhouse & Thompson 2012; NFPPSC, 2003). Food security can be understood as “a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2001, in Wittman, Desmarais, & Wiebe, 2010, p. 3). Scholars argue that Indigenous food insecurity is associated with the inability of Indigenous people to exercise food sovereignty (Elliot et al., 2012). Food sovereignty can be described as “the right of nations and peoples to control their own food systems, including their own markets, production modes, food cultures and environments” (Wittman, Desmarais, & Wiebe, 2010, p. 2). Recent studies (Elliot et al., 2012; Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013) have demonstrated that Indigenous communities see the problem associated with access to food as one of food insecurity *and* food sovereignty. Indeed, at one meeting regarding Indigenous food insecurity, an urban indigenous elder exclaimed “traditional foods should not be a privilege (for the wealthy) but should be available for all” (Elliot et al., 2012., p. 6). As Elliot et al., (2012, p. 6) notes, Indigenous people made connections between lack of control over natural resources and their lack of access to traditional foods.

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<sup>1</sup> Indigenous is a broad term which seeks to politically collectivize the experiences of original inhabitants of areas that have been colonized by European Settlers (Smith, 1999). According to Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 7), the term is politically useful in that it “internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of some the world’s colonized people”. Hence, in Canada, the term Indigenous would refer to people such as the Nuu-chah-nulth (Atleo Jr., 2009), whereas in New Zealand it would refer to the Maori (Smith, 1999). The term Indigenous is frequently being used not only to “internationalize” the experiences of the colonized (Smith, 1999), but also as a domestic, and even individual, descriptor for the identity of the colonized people of Canada (see Alfred, 1999 and Wilson 2008 for examples). This paper will be using the term to refer exclusively to Indigenous people of Canada, as opposed to other. Other terms, such as First Nations, Aboriginal, and Native American are used in the academic literature on Indigenous people. However, for the sake of consistency, I will be solely using the term Indigenous.

The relationship between Indigenous people trading and sharing food and the sovereignty of Indigenous nations has been shown to be historically and contemporarily important for the creation, promotion, and maintenance of lifeways that Indigenous people consider to be culturally important (Turner & Clifton, 2009). Historically, on Vancouver Island, such trading and sharing of food facilitated the development of Indigenous nations which had complex social, political, and economic cultures which were *explicitly* guided by Indigenous worldviews (Turner & Clifton, 2009). It allowed for the management of ecosystems according to the tenets of Indigenous concepts such as Hishook-ish-tsawalk, which produced ecosystems that were sustainable and resilient (Trosper, 2003). Today, Indigenous communities on Vancouver Island can be understood as food insecure and not food sovereign (Turner et al., 2013). Dawn Morrison, director of the British Columbia Food System Network's (BCFN) Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS), conducted work with Indigenous communities on Vancouver Island, and in the interior. Out of this work arose an Indigenous conceptualization of food sovereignty, which includes several themes (2011, p. 100)

*1) Sacred or divine sovereignty:* Food is a gift from the Creator ... Indigenous food sovereignty is ... achieved by upholding our sacred responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food; *2) Participation:* Indigenous food sovereignty is ... based on "action", or the day to day practice of nurturing healthy relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food. *3) Self-determination:* refer[ring] to the freedom to respond to our own needs for healthy, culturally adapted Indigenous foods [and] freedom from dependence on grocery stores or corporately controlled food production, distribution and consumption in industrialized economies.

Under such a conceptualization, Indigenous people can be understood as people who are food sovereign if they are able to fulfill relational obligations to the land, water, animals, and each

other. Indigenous communities are food sovereign, yet in a very constrained manner. This means that Indigenous nations and people practice food sovereignty according to the tenets outlined above, however, legal restrictions regarding harvesting practices – rooted in colonial conceptualizations of land, water, and animals, enacted through policy – can constrain their ability to fully enact these principles.

In rural communities on Vancouver Island, employment in the resource sector is often touted as *the* solution to Indigenous people’s “lack of food security” (c.f. Silver, 2014). Yet, this employment is often tied to corporations who dispossess Indigenous nations of their lands, waters, and resources (Schreiber & Newell, 2006; Silver, 2014). These industries, which infringe upon Indigenous national sovereignty and jurisdiction, are only beholden to the jurisdictional demands of the state actors (Schreiber & Newell, 2006). Furthermore, these industries – who do not have sovereign authority – nevertheless, negotiate with Indigenous nations as though they do. This is not surprising if we note, as Saskia Sassen (1996) has, that the state has dispersed sovereignty among government institutions and sub-state actors as a way to produce economic efficiency and value. However, the consequence of this on the surface would seem to be the sacrificing of the nation-to-nation relationship between Indigenous nations and Canada. Yet, it is important to note, that the relationship between Canada and Indigenous nations, while founded on the principles of nation-to-nation engagement, is paternalistic (Alfred, 1999; Coulthard, 2014). This is particularly true given Canada’s divestment of its fiduciary responsibility toward Indigenous nations onto corporations (Schreiber and Newell, 2006; Silver, 2014). Indigenous nations want the nation-to-nation principles which are the foundation of treaties between Indigenous nations and Canada (Alfred, 1999; Wright, 2003) to be honored and to inform their

contemporary relationship (Alfred, 1999; Coulthard, 2014; Wilson, 2008). This is related to Indigenous food insecurity because it limits Indigenous access to their territories and it is related to food sovereignty because Indigenous people are not being negotiated with as though they were sovereign actors who had a right to develop an equitable relationship with actors who are utilizing their territories.

In urban environments, Indigenous people are active participants in the wage economy (Peters & Anderson, 2013). This is an important point, as part of this research is conducted in major urban centers on Vancouver Island. Wage labour is an important component of what it means to be Indigenous. Yet, equating wage labor with lack of resilience does not do justice to the fact that Indigenous people have since contact engaged with some sort of economy with Settlers – whether it was trading and sharing of goods and services (Coulthard, 2014) or participation in the wage economy in Fordist<sup>2</sup> (Menzies & Butler, 2008) and Neoliberal eras (K. Brown, 2011). I would like to add that not only are Indigenous people “food insecure” and denied “food sovereignty”; but because of the inequitable political, social, cultural, and economic relationship between Canada and Indigenous nations, Indigenous people are *poor* and *dispossessed* of their land and associated human and nonhuman *relationships* which were and are necessary for their physical, cultural, and political survival (c.f. Coulthard, 2014). This inequitable relationship constrains Indigenous people from inhabiting a ‘mode of being’ they deem appropriate in whatever social context in which they find themselves.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Young (2008, p. 8), a Fordist economic mode of production in regards to natural resources can be defined by “large-scale industrial development of ... natural resources ... environmental and economic stability ... [and] dispersion of production across [a given region].”

Hence, in this study, my overriding concern is how the act of trading and sharing of food is utilized by Indigenous people to engage with the social contexts in which they find themselves and in turn how the social contexts in which they find themselves influences their trading and sharing activities. My concern is not how does trading and sharing contribute to Indigenous food sovereignty as either a concept or a material outcome, but rather, how does Indigenous trading and sharing in rural and urban environments contribute to the ability of Indigenous people to live their lives according to modes of being that *they* deem appropriate. To accomplish this task I need to understand the social context and relationships which inform how my relations trade and share food in a variety of social contexts.

### **1.1.1 Conceptualizations of Place and Indigenous People**

In this section I will outline several phenomenological, anthropological, and Indigenous conceptualizations of place and relate them to Indigenous governance, territory, and identity. Place as a concept is linked to how Indigenous people conceive of food. That is, how Indigenous people conceptualize and enact their worldviews in a variety of social contexts expressed broadly as place. Such conceptualizations follow the insights of scholars of phenomenology who have pointed out the distance that people create between their subject position and the material world, as juxtaposed to how dwelling and bodily intention or practice, are used by people to transcend this distance (Miller, 2001, p. 60). Hence, a phenomenological space can be thought of as an experienced and embodied interaction with specific geographic places (Elkington & Gammon, 2015, p. 3). Thus, phenomenologists place emphasis on the “particularity of specific places, and attempt[s] to identify the ‘basic elements’ or ‘constituents’ of place, and so arriving at the

essences of places, as lived” (Elkington & Gammon, 2015, p. 3). For Indigenous people the practice of dwelling in a specific territory – land for which Indigenous nations claim authority and jurisdiction – is crucial to their political, social, physical, cultural, and spiritual survival (Memmet & Long, 2002), especially given that Settler governments have consistently deployed the concept of *Terra nullius* to demonstrate that Indigenous people were not “inhabiting” or “using” land they claimed as their territory (Mawani, 2005; 2002a). Indigenous conceptualization of place have been defined as both a specific geographic space, most commonly as Indigenous nation’s territory, which has been inhabited since time immemorial.

In general, place is not only about embodiment and dwelling but can be understood as something that is mediated by ideas on how to practice and dwell in specific places (Elkington & Gammon, 2015), including the varied and contested economic, social, political, and cultural values that reside in and reference places (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013; Coulthard, 2014). Place, place-work and place-making in general can thus also be thought of as rooted in ethics and morality and as an ideological and embodied engagement with geographic space (Miller, 2001). For Indigenous people, land can be understood as “resource central to [Indigenous nations and people’s] material survival, land as identity, constitutive of who [Indigenous people] are as people, and land as relationships” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 62). So, Indigenous understandings of the land can be understood broadly as land which is physical land, comprised of soil, trees, and animals (Coulthard, 2014). Yet, land for Indigenous people is also is a living entity, which carries with it an “ontological framework for understanding relationships” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 60). These ontological frameworks are broadly speaking guided by the tenets of relationality, respect, beneficial reciprocity, responsibility, and recognition (R. Atleo, 2004, 2011). Simply put, the



land, water, and animals are understood as the product of divine creation – i.e., the Creator. It is the responsibility of Indigenous nations and people to recognize and respect that fact the land is our relations. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of Indigenous nations and people to engage in relationships with the land, water, and animals in such a way that is beneficially reciprocal. As Coulthard, (2014, p. 61) notes such a view of the land meant that: “Ethically, humans held certain obligations to the land, animals, plants, and lakes in much the same way that we hold obligations to each other. And if these obligations were met, then the land, animals, plants, and lakes would reciprocate and meet their obligations to humans, thus ensuring the survival and well-being of all over time.” Hence, for Indigenous people land is not only a physical space which can be used as a commodity, but carries with it Indigenous conceptualizations of the appropriate way to conceive and interact with each other and nonhuman relations (R. Atleo, 2004). As Altamirano-Jimenez (2013, p. 54) discusses, for Indigenous people “a collective ethos and responsibilities in place are central to Indigenous peoplehood and nationalism.”

As mentioned earlier, Indigenous access to the land, water, and animals is limited and defined by Settler law (Borrows, 1997) and according to Settler ideas of the appropriate way to perceive and interact with the natural environment (Alfred, 2009; L. Simpson, 2011). Hence, Indigenous conceptualizations and enactments of place can be thought of as constrained, existing in tension with colonial spatial imaginaries. Yet, I would like to stress that Indigenous place-making activities are at once an intellectual engagement with the worlds and teachings of their ancestors, past, present, and future, as they are about *being*, living life, as an Indigenous person in place (c.f., Atleo, 2011; K. Brown, 2010; Cordova, 1997). Hence, this paper argues that conceptualizations and enactments of Indigenous-place-based worldviews are not only practiced

where the ancestors of Indigenous people dwelled (i.e., the territory of their Indigenous nations); they also inform how they engage with the social context in which they find themselves.

### **1.1.2 Place-making and Indigenous People**

Place-making is generally understood to transformation of geographic spaces into places (Miller, 2001; Pink, 2008; Jones & Evans, 2012). This transformation can be done through physical activities, such as construction of physical sites (Donofrio, 2011), or engagement with the physical sites in such a way as to create normative understandings on the appropriate way to perceive and interact with a given place (Coulthard, 2014). Place can also be ephemeral in nature, meaning that people construct places and this construction of place soon disappears, replaced by another understanding of place (Pink, 2008; Jacobsen, 2009; Moretti, 2008a). This is done through the transportation of conceptualizations of place-based sociality to other places (Miller, 2001). Indigenous place-making activities include acts such as narrative about a place / taking place within a place, ceremonies, acts of governance, hunting, fishing, and gathering, and dwelling (L. Simpson, 2011; Coulthard, 2014). These practices work to affirm Indigenous national sovereignty over their territory. This is important because Indigenous nations are very concerned with establishing sovereignty and jurisdiction over their territory. Hence, activities such as hunting, fishing, and gathering, and land-based Indigenous spiritual and ceremonial practices have been utilized by Indigenous nations historically and contemporarily as a way of asserting sovereignty and jurisdiction over their territories (R. Atleo, 2004, 2011; Borrows, 1997). These actions can be described as Indigenous place-making actions. This is important if we remember that Canada currently holds jurisdiction over this territory and Indigenous nations

merely have right and title over this territory, and that this is something which Indigenous nations contest (Borrows, 1997).

Linking place only to *how* it functions to affirm and reaffirm Indigenous national sovereignty over a given specific territory can be problematic. For instance, Indigenous people in this study often lived and engage in trading and sharing activities which are located in the territories of other Indigenous nations. Indigenous people engaging in trading and sharing activities in this situation are *being* Indigenous in the territory of another Indigenous nation and territory which is imagined as “Canadian”. This poses a challenge insomuch as almost all of the Indigenous traders and sharers of food in this study were highly mobile and had spent a large portion of their lives in both rural and urban environments. I argue in the second chapter of this thesis that Indigenous place-based trading and sharing activities work to assert Indigenous sovereignty over their specific territories in nebulous ways. For instance, members of Indigenous nations delivering fish to their urban relations works to connect them to their nation, reaffirm the nation’s relational obligations to members which live outside of their ancestral territory, and transcend dominant notions of community and political membership. It is the argument of this study that Indigenous people take place with them to make Indigenous place in other social contexts. Food trading and sharing can help mediate the tension between inhabiting a social context detached from one’s traditional territory, allowing traders and sharers to be social in a way that is informed by their place based worldviews (c.f. Miller, 2001).

Yet, Indigenous people inhabit a nation which has distinct conceptualizations of place and sociality (Coulthard, 2014; Miller, 2001). In thinking about the land, place, and ideology in

Colonial Settler states the land and conceptualizations of community, territory, and nation is generally understood by critical scholars as guided by the tenets of capitalism (Alfred, 1999; Coulthard, 2014) and conservation (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013; Million, 2013), as well as by dominant ideas on sociality in general (Miller, 2001). In this sense land is seen as:

- 1) A commodity<sup>3</sup>, which needs to be managed according to the tenets of resource management (Campbell, 2003; Sandlos, 2001) from which resources can be extracted for the benefit of the nation, corporations, and individual workers (Coulthard, 2014).
- 2) A scarce commodity that needs to be “conserved” to maintain its biological integrity.
- 3) An aestheticized wilderness that people can enjoy from a distance (Elkington & Gammon, 2015) – i.e., as landscape – or engage with according to dominant understandings of conservation (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013).
- 4) Or as an empty space (Razack, 2002) waiting to be filled by Settler communities and people who will either engage with the land as a commodity, a scarce commodity / conservation area, or an aestheticized wilderness.

If various ideas of place is rooted to ideology regarding territory and sociality, then place can be thought of as also linked to memory, embodiment, and imagination regarding territory and sociality (including subjective conceptualizations of the past, present, and future) (Miller, 2001; Pink, 2008). Hence, Indigenous people’s place-informed sociality does not exist in isolation from Settler conceptualizations of place and sociality, but is, as I argue in this study, experienced

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<sup>3</sup> Commodity can be defined as (Menzies, 2011, p. 136) “something that has been produced by human labour, then which is exchanged for commodities in a free market. Money is a special type of commodity that allows for the universal translation of other commodities, such as food, clothing, fish, and boats into comparable units.”

alongside Settler conceptualizations. Hence, I argue that Indigenous people experience place *dialectically*. This means that Indigenous people experience place according to their own conceptualizations of place and dominant conceptualizations of place. Hence, Indigenous people think there is an appropriate way to perceive and interact with the land, water, animals, food, and each other as informed by their worldview, *and* they exist in a context which has imposed upon them dominant ideas about the land, water, animals, food, Indigenous identities, community, family, and individual identities. Indigenous people also necessarily use kinship, storytelling, and trading and sharing activities to mediate the contradiction of living in a world which constrains their ability to fulfill their relational obligations according to their Indigenous worldviews.

### **1.1.3 Place-Making and Power**

Place is also laden with power dynamics (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013); and is materially and discursively constructed, creating different types of place (i.e., work-place, national park, *terra nullius*) (Hoeschler, 2003; McGaw, Pieris, & Potter, 2011; Pink, 2008). Who gets to decide what constitutes meaningful and correct conceptualizations and enactments of place is a function of material and discursive power (Hoelscher, 2003; L. Simpson, 2004; Nadasdy, 2005). This does not mean that those whose ideas of place differ from dominant ideals and enactments of place cannot engage in place making activities (Moretti, 2008b). What it means is that those with “incorrect” conceptualizations and enactments of place are constrained in their ability to conceptualize and enact place according to ideals they think are important (Moretti, 2008b, p. 67). For Indigenous people this means that acts such as “fishing out of season” (Coulthard, 2014) or “cutting nets” or fish-farm pens (Schreiber & Newell, 2006) which are located within their

traditional territories are seen as inappropriate ways to engage with a specific place, which has rules of conduct, and associated sanctions, such as fines and imprisonment, which are dictated by the settler State. Indigenous nations see such acts as not only promoting the sovereignty of their Indigenous nations but also of being a good relation to their human and nonhuman relations by fulfilling their relational obligations to them. Hence, state sanctioned place-making activities are in contradistinction to Indigenous place-making activities.

#### **1.1.4 Indigenous Perspectives on Land, The Water, and Food: Relation or Commodity?**

There are several discourses on the appropriate way to perceive and engage with the land, water, animals, and food in Indigenous communities. For example, some Indigenous people perhaps, only think of and engage with food in a commoditized fashion. This illustration is reasonable to assume but also speculative in large part due to the paucity of literature on contemporary Indigenous labourers. One can imagine a scenario where a young Indigenous person works in a grocery store and never discusses or engages with food in a relational manner, and for whom food is only commodity. For this young Indigenous person a “preference for more pragmatic and less abstract perspective” (Miller, 2005, p. 14-15) regarding food is actually a necessity of working in an environment which allows little time for contemplation and where the main objective of their interaction with food is to treat it as a commodity that needs to be sold. Such an understanding of food could affect how this Indigenous person conceives and engages with food outside of their workplace.

Another perspective on the land, water, animals, and in essence, food is found in the words of Nishnaabeg elder Robin Green-ba stated to Leanne Simpson (2011, p. 141): “we should be

gentle as possible with our mother, and that we should take the bare minimum to ensure our survival. He talked about how we need to manage ourselves so that life can promote more life.” According to this view, the land, water, and animals should be thought of in a relational manner with no room for accrual of surplus in the name of profit.

Sto: Lo commercial fisherman Ken Malloway thinks there is nothing wrong with earning a profit from fishing and he justifies this claim using his knowledge of Sto: Lo social structural and cultural mechanisms for acquiring and distributing food (K. Brown, 2010, p. 27). As Malloway notes (K. Brown, 2010, p. 28) not everyone in his community should have access to the money he makes from fishing because “everyone has equal opportunity, but some fish harder than others and some have better fishing spots. We [Sto: Lo] are not communists.”

Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014, p. 172), informed by his Dene worldview and communism, advocates for a mixed economy which discusses and engages with animals, the land, and water as relations while organizing economic models which are democratic in their “production and distribution through Indigenous cooperatives and possibly worker-managed enterprises.” All of these diverse perspectives are tied to social, economic, and cultural claims about the appropriate way to perceive and interact with food. The last three examples are explicitly informed by Indigenous worldviews *and* their identities as: an elder giving a lecture in a science class (L. Simpson, 2011), a Sto: Lo commercial fisherman who wants to earn a profit from fishing activities, and Marxist Dene scholar who is writing for an academic audience (Coulthard, 2014).

It is my argument that each position advocated above is in general a function of discourse on the appropriate way to think about and engage with the land, water, and animals, and food. Each discourse produces knowledge on the appropriate way to think, talk, and interact with the land, water, animals, and food. This knowledge and discourse is in a reciprocal relationship with each person's subject position. Thus, the food as relation or food as commodity discourse, which is found in Indigenous communities (K. Brown, 2010), is deeply tied, in the above example, to Indigenous people's identities as urban workers, elders, commercial fisherman, and academics. Hence, all of these perspectives are tied to how Indigenous people engage in place-making activities in a variety of social contexts, which affects what they perceive is the appropriate way to perceive and interact with the land, water, animals, and food

### **1.1.5 Research on Indigenous Food Sovereignty**

Critical Indigenous scholars argue that the contemporary colonial relationship between Canada and Indigenous nations is rooted to dispossession of Indigenous land for development of the Settler state, communities, and capitalist economy (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Alfred, 1999; A. Simpson, 2011, 2014; L. Simpson, 2000, 2004), transformation of Indigenous nations into racialized populations (Lawrence, 2003; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Monaghan, 2013; Rifkin, 2009, 2011) and elimination (Krieken, 2004; Wolfe, 2006, Morgensen, 2012). This process constrains the ability of Indigenous nations and people to maintain their territory and resources, which are necessary for sustenance, identity formation, and enacting physical, communal, and spiritual relationships (Coulthard, 2014, p. 62). The food sovereignty literature, with a few exceptions



(Desmarais & Wittman, 2014; Grey & Patel, 2015; Fieldhouse & Thompson, 2012), has ignored how contemporary colonial dispossession<sup>4</sup> constrains the ability of Indigenous people to engage with their philosophies and cultural practices, producing communities that are food insecure and not food sovereign.

In general, the literature which discusses ways of promoting Indigenous communities which are food sovereign tend to make several assumptions about Indigenous people: 1) The actions of rural hunters and gatherers are explicitly informed by Indigenous ontologies (see Nadasdy, 2005, 2007); 2) That Indigenous urban people have either an ontology that has been *worn* away by neocolonialism (see Cidro & Martens, 2014; Coulthard, 2014); 3) That many urban and rural Indigenous people either want (see Fieldhouse & Thompson, 2012) or need to be “taught” Indigenous ontologies (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005) and related practices (Cidro & Martens, 2014) in order to traverse and overcome the neocolonialism. Yet, especially in regards to urban Indigenous people, the literature tends to be *instrumental* in nature. What I mean by this is that it seeks to find ways to deliver services to Indigenous people, which can be used to overcome neocolonialism. Yet, I think that the literature, with a few notable exceptions (Lawrence, 2004; Peters & Anderson, 2013) has not demonstrated fully not only *how* Indigenous people are constrained by the social context in which they find themselves, but how they *engage* with it.

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<sup>4</sup> Contemporary colonial dispossession can be understood as a process where Indigenous nations are dispossessed of their lands by Settler states, corporations, and other land-based actors, via mechanisms other than force (Corntassel, 2012). Such mechanisms include treaties with Settler governments and economic agreements with land-based actors which allow them access to Indigenous lands in exchange for Indigenous people limiting access to their lands (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013).

Furthermore, previous research and analysis has done a poor job of understanding if and how Indigenous ontologies are conceptualized and enacted in *a variety* of social contexts, i.e., both in rural and urban and activist and non-activist contexts. Much of this, as Hokowhitu (2009) notes, is because the literature on Indigenous people tends to focus on the inequitable nation-to-nation relationship between Indigenous nations and people and the Settler state. In my view, much of this research is informed by high-level and abstract theorizations on Indigeneity. While I recognize the value of such abstract theorizations, I concur with Daniel Miller (2005, p. 14-15) that “we might find that those who strive for more abstract resolutions, as in philosophy, tend to denigrate others as deluded, vulgar, or simplistic in their preference for more pragmatic and less abstract perspectives. Philosophy can become simply a tool for describing others as false or stupid.” Hence, taking my cue from Dian Million (2014), I believe that it is of critical importance for Indigenous scholars and academics to not only *theorize* about Indigenous people, but to understand Indigenous people’s mental and embodied existences *as* theory. In my view, the only way that this can be done is to “mediate between the poles of philosophy and practice” (Miller, 2005, p. 14). This is done by placing the lives of Indigenous people in context and engaging in empathetic encounters with them (c.f., Miller, 2005). Hence, the research question this study is interested in answering is:

How do Indigenous worldviews (expressed as being and place) influence trading and sharing practice and how do Indigenous trading and sharing practices effect Indigenous conceptualizations of being and place?

It is hoped that answering this research question will broadly inform current scholarship, activism, and community and governmental policy in relation to food sovereignty. In particular, this thesis seeks to articulate and understand Indigenous and non-Indigenous conceptualizations

of sovereignty as sovereignty and governance associated with sovereignty is the context in which food trading and sharing by Indigenous people occurs. This thesis also seeks to understand the way in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous conceptualizations of sovereignty infuse the food trading and sharing behavior of Indigenous people.

## **1.2 Methodology, Situating the Research and Researcher**

The theoretical lens that will be informing my analysis will be critical theory. Broadly, critical theory can be understood as social theory that is “critical of the current way society is organised and seek[s] to provide reasons for why it ought to be changed and organised along different principles or different institutions” (Barry, 2007, p. 11). So, critical theory describes how social institutions and social relations are largely centered on a struggle over the terms of social life, situated within a given mode of production, which encompasses “two interrelated social processes: the resources, technologies, and labor that people deploy to produce what they need to materially sustain themselves over time, and the forms of thought, behavior, and social behavior that *both condition and are themselves conditioned by productive forces*” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 65). Critical theory also examines the ways in which this struggle over the terms of social life is produced and produces dominant discourse and images concerning race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability (Spade, 2011, p. 50).

My role as a researcher is informed by my background as an Indigenous person. I am from the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, a Nuu-chah-nulth nation located on the west coast of Vancouver Island. I am also a researcher with a varied background in the social and natural sciences, which ranges from salmon aquaculture to working for Indigenous lands and resources departments. I

have spent large portions of my life as a poor Indigenous person living in mainly urban environments, though I have lived at “home” for extended periods of time. Finally I am a researcher, who is slowly becoming part of the academic class, who has been exposed to varying ideas on what constitutes knowledge, land, and the varying ways that people perceive and interact with it. All of these things play a large role in my interaction with my relations.

When conducting qualitative work that is practical and transformative in nature, one runs the risk of being critiqued as “biased” in favour of the people with whom one is conducting research (Hale, 2012; Lyon-Callo, 2008). This critique is especially levelled at people conducting research for and with “marginalized” populations (Lyon-Callo, 2008). Yet, while “objectivity” has been shown to be a good value for examining physical phenomenon (Galison & Daston, 2008), it is not an appropriate value for qualitative work where the goal is to understand the subjective experience of individuals (Lyon-Callo, 2008). Objectivity is based on the value of organizing and observing a given phenomenon hierarchically (Lyon-Callo, 2008), amputating the self from the project to produce neutrality (Galison & Daston, 2010), and finally analyzing the given phenomena through the lens of objectivity. Noting his research with homeless populations, Lyon-Callo (2008, p. 23) notes “not only is such an approach impossible to maintain, but attempting it would also have decreased the willingness of people to take part in the study.” I would also like to add that researchers who level such critiques at researchers engaged in activist research tend to have no qualms with conducting research which they say will contribute the improvement of “society” or “academic knowledge.” This type of research in my mind is activist research in that it is broadly speaking advocating for the improvement of society in general. All I am doing is advocating for the improvement of society in particular.

My experiential interaction with my participants and how I interpret these interactions is informed in large part by the fact that I know these people and in many cases am related to them. How I engage with these people can either strengthen or weaken relationships between us (Shawn Wilson, 2008). Hence, for me it is important to employ methodologies informed by Indigenous concepts of relationality, respect, beneficial reciprocity, and responsibility (R. Atleo, 2004; Steinhäuser, 2002; Weber-Pillwax, 1999, 2001). Such concepts have been mobilized by Indigenous researchers (Hart, 2010; Kovach, 2005; Porsanger, 2004) to produce an Indigenous methodology, where “the relationship with something (a person, object or idea) is more important than the thing itself” (Shawn Wilson, 2008, p. 73). According to Shawn Wilson (2008) this paradigm is driven by Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. An Indigenous ontology posits that there are multiple realities (Wilson, 2008; R. Atleo, 2004). An Indigenous epistemology – or how we Indigenous people know what we know about reality – posits that these realities are not representative of a concrete truth that can be uncovered (Shawn Wilson, 2008), but rather are representative of relationships used to inform how Indigenous people understand and engage with reality (R. Atleo, 2004; Simpson, 2000). As Shawn Wilson (2008) notes, “from an epistemology and ontology based upon relationships, an Indigenous methodology and axiology emerges.” An Indigenous axiology posits that what is worth studying is what can contribute to the strengthening of relationships among relations (Shawn Wilson, 2008; Porsanger, 2004). This ensures that researchers are accountable to their participants, the ideas generated during the research process, and to themselves. Hence, moving forward, I will be using the term “relations” instead of participants.

### **1.2.1 Methods**

The research for this project was conducted in six communities located on Vancouver Island.

These communities were Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Tofino, Opitsaht, Ty-Histanis, and Esowista.

The communities of Nanaimo and Port Alberni are major cities on Vancouver Island; Nanaimo is located on eastern Vancouver Island and Port Alberni being located up a long inlet on the central west coast of Vancouver Island. The community of Tofino is a small town located on the central west coast of Vancouver Island. The communities of Opitsaht, Ty-Histanis, and Esowista are Indian reserve communities of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation. Nanaimo is located in the ancestral territory of the Snuneymuxw. Port Alberni is located in the ancestral and unceded territories of the Tseshaht First Nation and the Hupacasath First Nation. Tofino is located on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation. All interviews conducted on the reserve communities of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation were done with the permission of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation Chief and Council. Originally, it had been my intent to classify Indigenous people into a rural / urban divide. But as stated in the introductory portion of this chapter, this rural /urban divide is problematic for theoretical and practical reasons. The theoretical reasons for this is that a rural/urban distinction works to denaturalize the fact that Settler cities are found within the ancestral and unceded territories of Indigenous nations, and works to facilitate the false notion that Indigenous nations and people do not inhabit urban environments. Succinctly: city does not equate to Settler only and rural does not equate to “Indigenous.”

Fourteen Indigenous people were interviewed via an open ended, face to face conversation, lasting approximately 45 minutes to two hours. Purposive sampling was deployed, because this study was specifically interested in interviewing Indigenous people that were engaged in food

trading and sharing activities. I engage in trading and sharing activities. As such, recruitment was accomplished by requesting to speak and work with Indigenous people within my own extended relational world who are known traders and sharers of traditional and non-traditional food. All relations in the study self-identified as Indigenous. This broad category includes Inuit, First Nation, Metis, non-status, and non-status off reserve Indigenous people. I protect the identities of all people in this study, by using anonymous names or pseudonyms. Some of the activities that the traders and sharers are conducting are frowned upon – i.e., illegally trading fish, shellfish, and other food.

The study sought to obtain a sample that was divided evenly along gender lines. However, due to scheduling conflicts and unforeseen circumstances, five female and nine male Indigenous traders and sharers were interviewed. No trans or two spirited Indigenous people were interviewed as part of this study. As well, a broad socio-economic background was sought for this study. I used the concept of social class to gauge the socio-economic background of these participants. I chose social class as a concept for two reasons: 1) I did not want to specifically ask Indigenous traders and sharers how much money they made, which is not only a taboo question to ask, but also, asking such questions of low income working class Indigenous people can lead to “self-blame” and “self-marginalization” (see Lyon-Callo, 2008, p. 83-84 for an example of such a process); 2) Because social class as a concept allows me to acknowledge the way in which Indigenous people can and do use a mode of production – kinship – as a way to organize their engagement with the dominant economic system (K. Brown, 2010; Menzies & Butler, 2008; Menzies, 2011).

For the purpose of this study, trading refers to the exchange of food for other goods, services, or money. Sharing refers to the act of either: one way distribution of food – i.e. giving away – or the distribution of food by a collectivity without the expectation of receiving goods, services, or money in return. Furthermore, this study was not interested in studying specific “trading networks.” Rather, what I wanted to understand was the multiplicity and complexity of how Indigenous people engaged with food in a variety of social contexts. This was largely theoretically driven. As noted in an earlier section, I believe that movements, such as food sovereignty and Indigenous food sovereignty, should acknowledge, recognize, and be accountable to the concerns of the most vulnerable members of our communities, that is, those who are most impacted, marginalized and often silenced by inequitable state systems and axes of power.<sup>5</sup>

To get as broad a composition as possible, three categories were developed for Indigenous people engaged in trading and sharing activity: Elders, people that self-identify as traders and sharers, and people that don’t self-identify as traders and sharers, but who trade and share food. Elders were chosen from my personal experience as an Indigenous person with two living in rural environments and two living in urban environments. Relations were given the option to be paid for their time with an honorarium and also received a gift for engaging in the research process. This was done as a way of honoring the time and energy it took to engage in the research process. It was also meant to be a decolonizing mechanism, which recognized the

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<sup>5</sup> See page 66 of this study for more discussion of structural inequity.



impoverished circumstance some relations lived in and giving credence to the simple fact that some people need money to eat food. Not all relations took an honorarium, but all took a gift. Conversations were organized around a set of thematic questions, which included: 1) What is community? 2) What is home? 3) What is family? 4) What are some of the reasons you trade and share food? 5) Do you think there is an appropriate way to trade and share food? I specifically avoided questions which I felt would lead my relations to feel they had to “prove” how authentically Indigenous they were (Greensmith, Giwa, & Wolfe, 2013). I did this for several reasons, practical and theoretical. I thought discussions on what constitutes family, home, and community would be a broad enough point of entry for the participants to discuss topics such as way of being. Thematic questioning, as opposed to having relations answer specific questions, were chosen because of my chosen research paradigm and my intimate relationship with many of my relations and allowed for a more conversational tone to be embraced. Simply put, thematic questioning allowed me to engage with my relations as relations by facilitating a conversation rather than specific answers. Furthermore, as Lyon-Callo (2008) notes, utilizing an engaged – one where the researcher acknowledges that they are engaging in research which seeks to alter the social context in which marginalized populations find themselves – can be affective. Marginalized populations tend to be highly stigmatized and pathologized, meaning that during the interview process, participants will often give researchers answers to questions with the intent of avoiding further pathologization and stigmatization (Lyon-Callo, 2008). By acknowledging that I was “on the same page” so to speak with my relations, it was the hope as in Lyon-Callo (2008, p. 167) that voicing my opinions in a conversational tone would create “a forum for new understandings and possibilities to emerge and become visible.” This hope was not only reserved for those who agreed with my opinions, but those who disagreed as well.

All interviews were conducted in a place of my relations' choosing. Interviews were recorded using a digital recording device and were transcribed verbatim. From these interviews emergent codes were also developed. Emergent coding was chosen so as to allow for maximum amplification of participant voice during the research process. These codes were a combination of descriptive and analytical. Analytic memos were also taken after each interview, and combined with the transcribed interviews, helping to further deepen my analysis.

### **1.3 Relational Politics and State Sovereignty**

This study is principally interested not just in food sovereignty as it normally theorized, but also in sovereignty itself and how this in turn is expressed in and relevant to Indigenous worldviews (expressed as being and place) as they influence, infuse and govern trading and sharing practice. Indeed, as they become fundamental to *being sovereign* and not solely food sovereign. I am also interested in how ancestral conceptualizations of place are related to the ability of Indigenous people to live in a way they deem to be culturally appropriate – i.e., their self-determination.

To answer this question I have to tackle the issue of sovereignty head on, precisely because state conceptualizations of sovereignty intrude so fully upon the actions of Indigenous people on a daily basis, effecting how they are able to articulate and perform their identities in this context (Alfred, 1999; Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013; A. Simpson, 2014). Hence, in this section I will be looking at the concept of sovereignty as it has been articulated by critical Indigenous and non-Indigenous theorists.

Sovereignty is a concept which runs through the lives of Indigenous people on a day-to-day basis; it's a concept that I have to think about when I ask my relations questions. Simply put, "Will this question I am asking have an impact on the sovereignty of my or my participant's Indigenous nation?" To paraphrase Audra Simpson (2014,) it's the concept which Canada uses to try to subdue us Indigenous people, what we use to stay alive as a culture and distinct Indigenous polity and which makes us Indigenous people act in seemingly illiberal, contradictory, and sometimes downright awful ways. So what is sovereignty? Well, for one, it is concept largely distinct from Indigenous conceptualizations of government. This is important to acknowledge. Let me begin with as Mark Rifkin's definition of state conceptualization of sovereignty (2011, p. 17), which as a concept is concerned with "indicating the separateness of political entities, the legitimate exercise of authority by national governments over the territory claimed by them as the nation, and the non-interference in the domestic affairs of such nations by foreign powers." Under Section 35(1) of the Canadian Constitution (1982) Canada holds supreme sovereignty over land and recognizes Aboriginal right and title to this land (Borrows, 1997). Section 35 is not recognition of Indigenous sovereignty, but recognition of Indigenous rights and title to the land contingent upon Indigenous nations' "reconciliation of the pre-existence of [A]boriginal societies with the sovereignty of the crown" (Canada, 1996 in Borrows, 1997, p. 42-43).

But why is sovereignty as a concept so important? And furthermore, in Indigenous communities, why is it the source of such contestation? What are the implications of dominant conceptualizations and practices of sovereignty? Indigenous studies scholars have demonstrated how the concept of sovereignty is applied by the Canadian state to Indigenous nations and how

Indigenous nations utilize this concept along with their own form of relational Indigenous governance (Alfred, 1999; Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013; Coulthard, 2014; A. Simpson, 2014; M. Rifkin, 2011, 2014).

In the following sections of this thesis I want to demonstrate that scientific rationalism was used by the Canadian state to promote Canadian conceptualizations of state sovereignty while dismantling Indigenous forms of governance. However, I want to funnel this gigantic topic down to my everyday life, right here, right now as a researcher. I want to learn from this topic so I can be a better researcher / activist / relation.

I intend to demonstrate that state imposition of dominant conceptualizations of land, water, animals, family, and gender are closely linked to expropriating Indigenous lands, changing the composition of Indigenous nations, communities, families, and people, and also instituting a form of political subjectification<sup>6</sup> that Indigenous people have and continue to challenge. This political subjectification differs dramatically from Indigenous forms of politics, which existed pre-contact.

I am *explicitly* concerned with how the concept of sovereignty is understood and enacted by the most vulnerable relations within our Indigenous communities who are inequitably impacted by colonial power relations, including women, youth, LGBTQ2S people, poor and working class

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<sup>6</sup> Subjectification, in the case of this study, is that which is not considered an object, that which is considered worthy of political consideration and engagement with as though they were a political being (Agamben, 1998; 2005).

Indigenous people, as well as the land, water, and animals. In short I am concerned with how sovereignty as a concept and practice affects the lives of my friends and relatives whose existence is on the “margins.” Hence in the first chapter of my thesis section I intend to demonstrate that state application of science<sup>7</sup> and rationalism<sup>8</sup>:

- 1) Transformed landscape from relational to commodity and aestheticized wilderness, de-subjectifying<sup>9</sup> the landscape and water.
- 2) Transformed animals from relations with whom Indigenous nations had political relationships to commodities and objects – i.e., it desubjectified animals.
- 3) Collapsed disparate Indigenous nations into the category of “Indian” making them into racialized populations.<sup>10</sup>
- 4) Instituted hetero-patriarchal institutions and conceptualizations of family and gender, which transformed Indigenous communities from relational to relational-biopolitical, de-subjectifying women and LGBTQ and Two Spirit members of our communities.

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<sup>7</sup> Science can be thought of as mechanism for understanding for understanding the world, a form of knowledge. Science as a form of knowledge requires, “Judicious experiment” and irrefutable proof” ... which ... are inextricably intertwined ... [Scientific] [d]eclarations ... [are] subject to confirmation by others ... and subjected to possible refutation” (Rossi, 2000, p. 3).

<sup>8</sup> Rationalism can be thought of as a “methodological approach [for understanding the world] which may imply a philosophical position on what social explanation is and how it ought to work, the nature of which may be debated” (Fearon & Wendt, 2002, p. 52).

<sup>9</sup> Working from the above definition, de-subjectification means the process by which subjects are transformed into objects (c.f. Agamben, 1998; 2005). This is done, all the time, with the classic example being academic research, with Greenwood, Giwa, & Wolfe (2013, p. 134) noting that, “Both qualitative and quantitative research function as tools of colonial oppression, producing Indigenous peoples as objects of inquiry.”

<sup>10</sup> This is a form of re-subjectification, with the process being, for example Indigenous Subject Precontact → Object of Inquiry → Racialized “Indian” Subject / Object. According to Agamben (1998) & Foucault (2003), because of the totalizing nature of the natural sciences, we are all at once subjects and objects. I.e., we are political subjects who are also considered biological objects. The implications of this fact are devastating – with Agamben (1998) using the Nazi concentration camps as a prime example of the inherent danger of being at once considered a subject and object. I.e., people stripped of their political significance can during times of crisis be reduced to objects which can be killed or politically marginalized in the name of the health of the sovereign.

5) Through usurpation of Indigenous land, and creation of “urban” versus “rural”

Indigenous populations, Indigenous people who live in urban environments or “outside of home” were desubjectified.

Working from these observations I make four claims 1) State application of science to the natural environment had the consequence of creating new political subjectivities within Indigenous communities while de-subjectifying a large portion of Indigenous communities. 2) This process of de-subjectification and re-subjectification has consequences for how Indigenous people engage in relational politics broadly speaking. 3) Indigenous people have tried to transcend state sovereignty by through practice of relational politics and utilization of state conceptualizations of sovereignty; 4) This form of relational politics needs to be extended to recognizing, learning from, and incorporating the experiences of the most vulnerable in our communities if we Indigenous people are going to truly be self-determining agents. These claims will be used to inform my analysis in chapter two of this thesis.

### **1.3.1 Relational Politics and Self-Determination**

When discussing Canadian state sovereignty and Indigenous people, it is also important to discuss traditional forms of Indigenous politics. This is because traditional forms of Indigenous politics are found in indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, which remain at the core of modern Indigenous governance (Schreiber, 2010; A. Simpson, 2014). Instead of focusing on a specific worldview associated with a specific Indigenous nation, I will be giving a broad overview associated with many nations, a technique utilized successfully by Shawn Wilson (2008).

Indigenous forms of politics are *rooted to* Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies<sup>11</sup> (L. Simpson, 2008), which some have articulated as “worldviews” (R. Atleo, 2004). I say the phrase *rooted to* because regardless of whether or not Indigenous people publicly display and enact ritual and ceremony associated with their worldviews, their kinship lines are inextricably tied to these worldviews, and hence, so are their individual identities (R. Atleo, 2011). In turn, these worldviews fundamentally shape historic (L. Simpson, 2008) and contemporary forms of Indigenous governance (Schreiber, 2011). Hence, it is important to recognize that not only do Indigenous people still utilize their worldviews to comprehend, apprehend and manage the world in which they find themselves (Morrison, 2011), but that these worldviews are tied to all Indigenous members, as a political force – nationally, geopolitically, biopolitically – and as a force of contestation and negotiation, rejection or acceptance of what is currently possible in reference to food and well beyond (A. Simpson, 2014).

The fact that Indigenous forms of governance are structured around specific Indigenous worldviews is proof of their stability and adaptability. That being said, Indigenous worldviews are relational, and are guided, broadly speaking by the Indigenous concepts of relationality, beneficial reciprocity, respect, recognition and responsibility (R. Atleo, 2004, 2011; L. Simpson, 2000, 2004, Shawn Wilson, 2008). These concepts help Indigenous people understand and interact with fellow community members, nonhuman kin, and the spirit world (R. Atleo, 2004; L. Simpson, 2000). These concepts are taught to Indigenous people through stories (R. Atleo, 2004), ceremonies (R. Atleo, 2004; Shawn Wilson, 2008), and land-based teaching and learning

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<sup>11</sup> Ontology can be understood as “the theory of the nature of existence, or the nature or reality”, which posits the question “What is real?” (Shawn Wilson, 2008, p. 33). Epistemology can be understood to mean the theory of how “we come to have knowledge, or how we know we know something”, which posits the question “How do I know what is real?” (33).

practices such as hunting, fishing, and gathering (Nadasdy, 2005; L. Simpson, 2004, 2008).

According to the Nuuchah-nulth hereditary chief and scholar Richard Atleo (2004), for the Nuuchah-nulth of the west coast of Vancouver Island, these concepts are illuminated and crystallized in the Nuuchah-nulth word Hishook-ish-tsawalk, which roughly translates to “everything is one (R. Atleo, 2004). According to Richard Atleo (2004, p. 29), when enacting Hishook-ish-tsawalk, the Nuuchah-nulth recognized home and community “as natural to creation, with only the quality of relationships left to be determined.” Hence, for the Nuuchah-nulth people (R. Atleo, 2004, p. 30) “the primary purpose in life is to create, maintain, and uphold relationships.” Other examples of Indigenous worldviews rooted in relationality, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility are provided by Leanne Simpson (2008) in her work concerning the Nishnaabeg term Bimaadiziwin, which roughly translates to “the good life.”

Spirituality is an important component to Indigenous identities and relational politics. According to the Ktunaxa, *ʔaknumuɕtitit* (the law of the land), “is grounded in the fact that all things are connected and must be kept in balance. It is also the foundation of our spirituality” (Firelight Research Group, 2011 p. C27). For the Nuuchah-nulth, maintaining relationships with the spirit world is an important part of comprehending and enacting reality (R. Atleo, 2004). Connection between the physical and spiritual was conducted through ceremonies such as *oo-sum-ich*, which translates roughly to the words: “vision quest that is careful” (R. Atleo, 2012, p. xi). Such ceremonies sought to communicate between “the human, the animal, and the divine” (R. Atleo, 2004, p. 85) through “acknowledgement of and acceptance of the inherent polarity in creation rather than through its denial” (91). Insights achieved through the *oo-sum-ich* ceremony enabled Nuuchah-nulth people to develop spiritual protocols that allowed them to interact with other



animals (87-88), each other (90), and conduct politics (88-89) in a respectful, responsible, and beneficially reciprocal manner. Spirituality is not simply, therefore, an individual act, but communal and political (R. Atleo, 2004; A. Simpson, 2007).

On the communal level, examples of enactment of Indigenous worldviews and relational politics include the Nuu-chah-nulth practice of family members living together in a big house (R. Atleo, 2004). In the big house individuals were allowed “maximum freedom in making his or her own choices in life, in determining his or her own road through life, providing these choices do not violate group rights” (R. Atleo, 2004, p. 56). Contemporary examples include the suite of behaviors associated with Kluane hunting, such as allowing hunters maximum agency in the process of learning how to hunt (Nadasdy, 2003). This process, which Shawn Wilson (2008) calls an Indigenous principle of non-interference in teaching and learning, recognizes and respects individuals as products of creation (R. Atleo, 2004; Shawn Wilson, 2008). Hence, it is seen as disrespectful to assume that individuals cannot learn what they have been taught (R. Atleo; 2004; Nadasdy, 2003; Shawn Wilson, 2008). After a successful hunt, Kluane people distributed meat amongst community members (Nadasdy, 2003). Though there were no specific rules governing how the meat was distributed, in general meat is distributed according to Kluane understandings of the process of mutual exchange (Nadasdy, 2003, 2007).

Richard Atleo (2004, p. 59) notes that for Nuu-chah-nulth people, “the sacredness of common origin determines the basis of relationships between diverse life forms.” Thus, it is understood that existence is composed of one essence, one spirit, as opposed to the stereotypical view that Indigenous people assumed that “humans have one life essence or spirit and the bears another”

(R. Atleo, 2004, p. 61-62). To make the relationship between animals and people substantive, protocols were developed (R. Atleo, 2004; L. Simpson, 2008). These protocols were enacted through ceremony and treaties, and describe the expected roles of Indigenous people nonhuman kin, and the spirit world (R. Atleo, 2004; L. Simpson, 2008). Furthermore, it was understood that such protocols were of necessity to Indigenous people, but not necessarily a necessity for animals (L. Simpson, 2008). Hence, Indigenous worldviews enable a relational understanding of nature to be conceptualized and enacted (R. Atleo, 2004; Nadasdy, 2007; L. Simpson, 2008). Examples of such protocols include the Nishnaabeg word *Gdoo-naaganinaa* (L. Simpson, 2008). *Gdoo-naaganinaa* is Nishnaabeg word for “Our Dish” and

Refers to a pre-colonial treaty between the Nishnaabeg and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This is the inclusive form, as opposed to the *ndoo-naaganinaa* “our dish (but not yours).” *Gdoo-naaganinaa* is a symbol of our shared ecology and territory in southern Ontario (L. Simpson, 2008, p. 39).

This protocol was informed by Nishnaabeg and the Haudenosaunee worldviews (L. Simpson, 2008). Specifically, for the Nishnaabeg, it was informed by the philosophy associated with the term *Bimaadiziwin* (L. Simpson, 2008). Hence, the tenets of *Gdoo-naaganinaa* are also found in a protocol the Nishnaabeg developed between themselves and their nonhuman kin, which was dictated by nonhumans:

Honour and respect our lives and our beings, in life and in death. Cease doing what offends our spirits. Do not waste our flesh. Preserve fields and forests for our homes. To show your commitment to these things and as a remembrance of the anguish you have brought upon us, always leave tobacco leaf from where you take us. Gifts are important to build our relationship once again (L. Simpson, 2008, p. 34).

Hence, Simpson illustrates the ways in which relationality, beneficial reciprocity, respect, and responsibility interact to inform how Indigenous people understand and enact their identities. The protocol discussed above outlines the expected responsibilities of Nishnaabeg and nonhumans that will enable the maintenance and enhancement of their relationship. It is the responsibility of the Nishnaabeg people to “not waste flesh” and “preserve fields” (L. Simpson, 2008, p. 34). In return, Nishnaabeg people will receive the sustenance associated with consuming their nonhuman kin. The nonhuman kin receive gifts from the Nishnaabeg in return for “the anguish you have brought upon us” (L. Simpson, 2008, p. 34). This process must be enacted in a way that respects the fact that both humans and nonhumans are part of a larger process of life and death.

In short, the animals must be respected because of their common origin in creation (R. Atleo, 2004; Shawn Wilson, 2008). Hence, all of creation is part of Indigenous identities (R. Atleo, 2004). Thus, for Indigenous identities to be developed, maintained, and promoted, Indigenous people must be allowed to enact creation according to Indigenous worldviews. Hence, Indigenous identities are not only rooted to their worldview, but also rooted to a politics of self-determination. It is only in negotiating appropriate protocols between relations that Indigenous identities can be enacted according to the tenets of beneficial reciprocity, respect, and responsibility (R. Atleo, 2004). It is only through achieving a balanced relationship between relations that harmony can be achieved (R. Atleo, 2004, 2011). These protocols can be seen as enactments of Indigenous legal systems, which see personage extended to the land, water, and animals and enshrined in place-specific worldviews such as Hishook-ish-tsawalk (Atleo, 2004; 2011, p. 101-102). Contemporary examples of these protocols are found in the framework of

Indigenous governance themselves, with nations such as the Kluane (Nadasdy, 2003) and the Nuu-chah-nulth explicitly seeking to address the concerns of nonhuman relations in intergovernmental resource management and land negotiations.

In closing, Indigenous people must be able to access their land, water, and nonhuman kin, so as to meet their responsibilities to creation (R. Atleo, 2004) and to enact the laws of their territories. Currently, Indigenous people have very limited access to land, water, and nonhuman kinfolk (Alfred, 2009; L. Simpson, 2004). Furthermore, this access is defined mainly according to colonial Settler terms of what constitutes the appropriate way to comprehend and apprehend reality (Alfred, 2009; L. Simpson, 2004). Indigenous identities, knowledge, and politics have been denied legitimacy by the colonial state. This affects how Indigenous nations and individuals constitute and enact their identities.

### **1.3.2 Colonization**

One cannot talk about Indigenous sovereignty without talking about colonization. Before colonization, Indigenous people inhabited free and sovereign nations (Alfred, 1999; Simpson, 2008) with their own longstanding systems of law and governance. Colonialism changed that, creating a state whereby Indigenous people were subordinate to the British Crown and then the Canadian state (Lawrence, 2003). Colonialism is a process, still occurring in Canada, specifically in British Columbia where much of the province has been settled in lieu of formal treaties (Alfred, 2009). Colonialism has been described as a process that guides the economic, political,

social, and cultural relationships between Indigenous people, colonial governments, colonial Settler<sup>12</sup> governments, and Settler populations (Alfred, 2009; Osterhammel, 1998). This process is understood and enacted through European and Euroamerican understandings of politics, economics, society, and culture (Alfred, 2009). Hence, colonialism is a process whereby one people's way of life, that of European and Euroamerican Settlers, is imposed upon another through "institutions and policies [developed] by European imperial and Euroamerican settler governments towards Indigenous peoples" (Alfred, 2009, p. 45).

Colonialism can be seen as a process that is geographically fixed<sup>13</sup> (Osterhammel, 1998) and spatio-temporally indefinite and fluid (Alfred, 1999; Morton, 2004; Simpson, 2004; Smith, 1999). It is geographically fixed in that the economic, political, social, and cultural relationships between colonial governments and the colonized find their locus in the colony (Osterhammel, 1997).

For all the complexities of colonialism, it is, according to Cole Harris (2004), an amazingly simple process centered on ownership of land – of grabbing land as part of the imperial expansion of the British crown and its Canadian counterparts (Smith, 1999). In Canada, the Colonial process has been aided by laws and policies – such as the *Indian Act* and the BC Treaty Process – which enabled expropriation of Indigenous lands for the benefit of Settler populations

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<sup>12</sup> Not all colonized countries had large settler populations. Countries such as Canada, the United States, and New Zealand, did. Hence, colonial Settlers refers to the population of Europeans that settled these countries, and modern day descendants, as well as non-European immigrants (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> This is not meant to imply that borders are themselves fixed as many nations around the globe are fighting over constitution of a given border (W. Brown, 2010).

(Alfred, 2009). Colonialism is also spatio-temporally fluid, in that the nature of the relationship varies by time and space (Alfred, 1999; Morton, 2004), and by the material needs of the colonizers and colonized at an individual, local, domestic, and international level (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013; Morton, 2004; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Cole Harris (2004) notes that it is difficult for one discipline to encapsulate how colonial power operates in regards to Indigenous nations and people. Rather, Harris (2004, p. 179) argues that a clear understanding of colonial power necessitates looking at it from multiple theoretical perspectives. Hence, for Harris, it is important to understand colonialism as a violent project, a capitalist project, a discursive project, and as a population management project – all aimed at “*making* native space” and labour to create and benefit the settler nation.

Colonialism in general has allowed for expropriation and management of Indigenous lands (Harris, 2004; Razack, 2002), the creation of racialized Indigenous populations, who are subject to management by the colonizer (Mawani, 2005; Lawrence, 2003; Sandlos, 2001), and the creation of dominant, scientific-rational understandings of the natural environment (Campbell, 2003; Nadasdy, 2003; Sandlos, 2001; Wilson, 2008). All of this has been accomplished through delegitimizing Indigenous notions on: appropriate use of the land, distribution of wealth extracted from the land, and Indigenous worldviews about the relationship between the land, the metaphysical, and community (Alfred, 1999; R. Atleo, 2011; L. Simpson, 2004; Nadasdy, 2003), which I will be discussing in the following sections.

## **1.4 State Sovereignty**

### **1.4.1 Critical Theory and State Sovereignty**

Going back to the earlier definition of sovereignty, sovereignty can be thought of as a concept which is concerned with “indicating the separateness of political entities, the legitimate exercise of authority by national governments over the territory claimed by them as the nation, and the non-interference in the domestic affairs of such nations by foreign powers” (Rifkin, 2011, p. 17).

Within the critical tradition there is a range of conceptualizations of sovereignty as a concept from liberal / republican theorists (see Arendt, 1970), right-wing statist theorists such as Carl Schmitt (McCormick, 1997), and Marxist theorists (see Benjamin, 2009). Some theorists argue that absolute sovereignty does not exist, due to the erosion of domestic sovereignty by globalization (W. Brown, 2010; Shaw, 2008). Other theorists argue that state sovereignty has merely changed in formation and performance, such as Saskia Sassen (1996: 29-30), who argues that “Sovereignty and territory, then, remain key features of the international system. But they have been reconstituted and partly displaced onto other institutional arenas outside the state and outside the framework of nationalized territory ... sovereignty has been decentered and territory partly denationalized.” Others have noted that sovereignty as a concept has always been eroded due to the contradictory nature of the concept (Krasner, 1999). Indeed, the logical contradictions of sovereignty as a concept has been the subject of intense study from political theorists such as Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, and Giorgio Agamben, to name a few (Jennings, 2011).

Here, I am going to have an extended engagement with the ideas of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben because both have conceptualizations of sovereignty that I think have implications for how Indigenous political membership is conceptualized by the state and Indigenous people and

also offer critical insight into how Indigenous nations, activists, and food sovereigntists in general can and do replicate systems of dominance when they engage in state conceptualizations of what constitutes a valuable political subject. Foucault (1990, 1995, 2003) argues that the age of the sovereign is over and that we have gone through ages associated with societal disciplinary power and biopower. As Foucault (1995) notes, in states organized according to the tenets of feudalism, the king was the sovereign entity whose rule was legitimized by God. According to Foucault, such a social structure entailed that the ruler was a subject and that the people beneath him were objects, with God existing outside this social structure. Importantly, for Foucault (1990, p. 136), the sovereign “exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring.” Hence, it was the sovereign who exercised the power to “let live” or “let die” (p. 136). For Foucault, the advent of modern democratic states signalled the end of sovereignty and shift towards a form of state governance concerned with exerting “a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (p. 137). This shift in state governance, from “right of death to power over life” (p. 136-137) occurred, for Foucault, precisely because of the advent of liberal democratic states, which saw all objects become equal subjects, and where sovereign authority became governmental authority that was distributed among the constituents of the state.

For Foucault (1990), part of this process is what he refers to as biopower. According to Foucault, the guiding ontology and epistemology of biopower is biology. By this Foucault means that as the state allows for the clinical and objective creation of the subject, he or she thus becomes a biological object (Foucault, 1990; Agamben, 1998). Furthermore, biology enables the creation of



the normal and abnormal citizen (Foucault, 1990, 1995, 2003). Hence, the state becomes heavily concerned with the overall health of individuals and populations. Biopower refers to the ability of the state to harness discourses around sexuality, racial identity, and land to people which can be managed according to technologies of rule, such as identification documentation (Spade, 2011), or the law, such as the *Indian Act* (1867) (Harris, 2004) and the subjugation of Indigenous peoples to Canadian law as ‘Indian’ subjects. What I have learned from Foucault (1990) is that biopower matters for Indigenous sovereignty in that Indigenous people are transformed from political subjects according to relational terms to subjects according to liberal democratic conceptualizations of subjectivity, where people are at once political subjects / objects. Such a transformation is in contradistinction to an Indigenous worldview where everyone is a subject (R. Atleo, 2004, L. Simpson, 2011). In a colonial context, biopower didn’t just turn people into populations but turned nonhuman kin into commodities and biological entities. Indigenous people have resisted this process through the enactment of their relational conceptualizations of politics, which are rooted in concepts such as the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of Hishook-ish-tsaawk.

Agamben (1998) agrees with Foucault’s conceptualization of biopower, but disagrees that sovereign authority has disappeared. Rather, sovereign power, for Agamben is now found among its constituents. To describe how modern democratic states still exercise sovereign power, Agamben describes the political projects of the Aristotle, which consisted of a distinction between mere biological life (*zoe*), or bare life, i.e., politically insignificant life and politically valuable life (*bios*). Inhabiting the space between *bios* and *zoe* is the obscure figure of *Homo sacer*. In ancient Roman law (an extension of Greek law), *Homo sacer* was a man punished by

the sovereign, was allowed to be killed but not sacrificed. Only those whom existed within the realm of society could be sacrificed. Hence, *Homo sacer* existed outside of the realm of society. Thus, *Homo sacer* is a person that has been *reduced* to bare life.

How is *Homo sacer* stripped of politically significant life and reduced to bare life? Through a mechanism called the state of exception. Through utilization of the state of exception the sovereign claims the authority to reduce a person to bare life, to strip them of their subjectivity, in the name of the public good. In modern conceptualization of sovereignty, the nation and its subject / object constituents *are* the sovereign. Hence, reducing people down to the state of exception is a collective act. Agamben (1998) argues that the foundations of sovereignty are sovereign power and bare life. The sovereign exists outside the juridico-political framework – as he is able to declare the state of exception – while being included in the juridico-political framework by virtue of his ability to declare the exception. It is the sovereign that is able to decide the exception, and it is the sovereign who is able to decide what constitutes political life and what constitutes bare life. Those reduced to bare life are the mirror of the sovereign because their existence outside the law, in a permanent state of exception, is legitimized by the law.

Hence, for Agamben (1998), sovereignty is found among the subjectivity that has been dispersed among the citizenry. And since biopolitical regimes use biology to make distinctions between the normal and abnormal subject / object, it will follow that they will be forced to make decisions with what to do with individuals who compromise the overall health of a given sovereign state. The outcome of this is the creation of bare life with political rights (Agamben, 1998, 2005). This is the fundamental paradox of sovereignty in modern liberal democratic state: since the state is

the sum of its parts, it too is merely bare life with political rights (Agamben, 1998). Hence, any abnormality – which is at once a member of the sovereign state while existing outside it – can be reduced to politically insignificant life through the declaring state of exception. Far from being “exceptional” the ability to be reduced to politically insignificant life via the state of exception, according to Agamben, is ever present because use of the state of exception has become *normalized*. Hence, it would seem that the concept of sovereignty, far from being a political concept is, in reality, an “anti-political concept” (M. Smith, 2009, p. 105) which “can suspend ethical and political norms in a state of exception” (M. Smith, 2009, p. 109).

Yet, the problem with Agamben, which he has addressed in his essay “What is a Paradigm”, is the fact that when he “corrects” Foucault’s discarding of sovereignty as a concept he also bypasses Foucault’s critical insights – which is that biopolitics as an expression of sovereignty is associated with the rise of science and associated technology (Behrman, 2013). By tracing biopower back to *Homo sacer* Agamben ignores how multiple conceptualizations and enactments of sovereignty have risen and fallen from the time of *Homo sacer* to the present (Behrman, 2013). Yet, what Agamben provides critical theorists is a valuable insight into the ways in which state conceptualizations of what constitutes value mean that, at times, people can and have been reduced to objects devoid of political significance. The consequences for Indigenous nations, people, and political alterities practicing sovereignty is that if Indigenous people or political alterities engage in activities which threaten the overall health of the nation state they can be reduced to bare life. Yet, the relationship between Canada and Indigenous nations is not merely one-way; rather, however unbalanced it may be, it is reciprocal (R. Atleo, 2011). Indeed, all of Settler states can be thought of as a space of exception for Indigenous

people because we Indigenous people have been turned into ‘Indians’ in order to subsume us into Settler politics on terms that contradict our relational worldviews and don’t threaten state sovereignty (Rifkin, 2009). Yet, as the next section will demonstrate when we enact our Indigenous laws and our own self-determination we don’t see ourselves as beings reduced to a subject / object frame that allows us to be reduced to bare life. We see ourselves as Indigenous relations.

Indigenous people have been forced to enact biopolitical conceptualizations of sovereignty. An example of such a reductionist enactment is found in the blood-quantum politics played out in Indian country, whereby the sovereignty of an Indigenous nation is questioned and so used to justify the suspension of relational politics and the reduction of certain members of Indigenous communities and members to “non-status.” Furthermore, for Indigenous people, animals, by their very nature in Settler society are viewed as mere commodities and biological entities, thus exist in a space of exception.

#### **1.4.2 Indigenous Studies, Relational Politics, and State Sovereignty**

Within the critical Indigenous studies scholars there also exists a broad range of engagement with the concept of sovereignty. Critical Indigenous studies scholars have engaged with the concept of sovereignty and how it functions in the process of decolonization (Alfred, 1999), how it structures Indigenous governance (A. Simpson, 2014), and how it shapes the nation-to-nation relationship between Indigenous nations and Settler states (Coulthard, 2014; Rifkin, 2014). What follows is an engagement with this literature.

Scholars such as Taiaiake Alfred (1999), rightly, as demonstrated earlier in this section, argue that traditional Indigenous governing structures differ dramatically in their concept and practices from that of Settler states. Sovereignty, according to Alfred (1999, p. 79) is an “inappropriate concept” that carries with it conceptualizations and practices of power that are at odds with Indigenous conceptualizations and enactments of politics. Yet, Alfred (1999, P. 79) notes that Indigenous deployment of the sovereignty concept has been effective in that it allows for Indigenous “critiques of the state’s imposition of control. By forcing the state to recognize major inconsistencies between its own principles and its treatment of Native people, it has pointed to the racism and contradiction inherent in settler states’ claimed authority over non-consenting peoples.” Alfred (1999, P. 81) notes that there is a tension between the use of sovereignty as a mechanism to advance Indigenous claims, Indigenous conceptualizations and enactments of politics, and Indigenous ability to utilize sovereignty without the sufficient capacity to do so. Hence, the Settler state continues to recognize the rights of Indigenous nations to “be sovereign” while ignoring the fact that Indigenous nations lack the capacity to “be sovereign.” According to Alfred such a relationship between the colonized and colonizer, based on recognition according to the terms set out by the colonizing state, forces Indigenous states to inhabit a “colonial structure and mindset” that is inherently destructive. Furthermore, Alfred makes the cogent observation that when Indigenous people engage with colonial Settler governments on Settler terms, such as through the *British Columbia Treaty Process*, Indigenous people and culture are capable of being co-opted by Settler governments. This is because they give “legitimacy” to the false notion that land claims occur on land that Canada owns. In short, Indigenous nations are *recognizing* the sovereignty of the Settler state over Indigenous territory.

It has also been argued that Indigenous nations that utilize sovereignty for emancipatory purposes do so through the politics of recognition and accommodation (Coulthard, 2007; Simpson & Smith, 2014). As Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (2014, p. 10) note, claims by Indigenous nations for political sovereignty – which is an amalgamation of relational politics and Canadian politics – are often actually oriented toward “gaining recognition from the settler state and perpetuating its life, interpreting the small token of recognition as justice.” Simpson and Smith (2014, p. 10) note the appeal of the politics of recognition. This politics of recognition in a sense is centered on the argument that the colonial settler state misrecognizes Indigenous people. Therefore, the politics of recognition seeks to position Indigenous nations within the realm of interest groups worthy of consideration in the realm of politics. It strives for obtaining allowances from the state in the hopes those allowances will lead to more capacity to enact self-governance. Furthermore, as Simpson and Smith note (2014, p. 10) the very fact that the settler state exists in the same colonial composition with the same colonial juridical and normative powers, it has the ability to “retract whatever limited forms of recognition it grants and never actually has to question itself or even consider its own history very deeply.” Hence, as Indigenous scholars note, state conceptualizations of sovereignty, which find their manifestation in the politics of recommendation and accommodation, are harmful as they replicate the inequitable relationship between Canada and Indigenous nations (Coulthard, 2014). For Indigenous nations, to be sovereign and self-determining nations means being able to fulfill relational obligations to the land, water, animals, community members, and self according to the tenets of their Indigenous worldview (Atleo, 2011; Coulthard, 2014).

Yet, for Indigenous scholars such as Audra Simpson (2011) sovereignty is real, has deep meaning to Indigenous nations and people, and is all that is left of once strong and thriving Indigenous nation states. Hence, sovereignty as a concept and as it applies to Indigenous nations should be protected and understood robustly. Simpson (2014) argues that Indigenous nations experience and practice multiple nested forms of sovereignty. This means that Indigenous sovereign authority – rooted in traditional relational forms of politics – over their territory and people can and does exist within a sovereign settler state. Thus, in Audra Simpson’s conception, sovereignty is strategically employed and negotiated over (Simpson, 2011, 2014). Indigenous nations utilize state conceptualization of sovereignty while seeking to build, maintain, and propagate forms of governance that Indigenous people deem culturally appropriate (Simpson, 2011). Here, Simpson makes the valuable linkage between sovereignty, membership, and Indigenous identities. Indigenous sovereignty and identities are rooted to tradition – a philosophical underpinning that guides their modern interactions with the Settler state and Indigenous nation members (Simpson, 2014). It is the existence of these contradictory notions of sovereignty and the self that means that Indigenous people *must* negotiate over *exactly* who is included and excluded from Indigenous conceptions of the nation and the self. Hence, for Simpson, Indigenous people are engaged in a politics of refusal – a politics that insists on the viability of Indigenous forms of governance and the refusal to have their forms of governance subsumed by that of colonial-Settler society.

Mark Rifkin (2011) makes an important contribution to discussions around sovereignty in that he notes that Indigenous conceptualizations of sovereignty are inexorably tied to Indigenous and state-forms of kinship. Indigenous people, as outlined in the previous section, do have a distinct

conceptualization of family rooted to Indigenous concepts of relationality, respect, beneficial reciprocity, and responsibility. Mark Rifkin's (2009, 2011, 2014) work is crucial in understanding the way in which state and Indigenous conceptualizations of what constitutes *as political*, what constitutes *political subjectivity*, and what constitutes *subjectivity* are connected to the term sovereignty. Yet, what Rifkin does not address is the ways in which animals have been stripped of their subjectivity and the impacts this has on Indigenous peoples ability to practice nested sovereignty. In short, as outlined earlier, scientific-rationalism has been used as a way to transform nature into biological entities and commodities. Regardless, the power in Rifkin's (2011) formulation of sovereignty is that he acknowledges that it is a biopolitical process in which both Indigenous people and the Settler state engage.

I have learned many things from these scholars in regards to the concept of state sovereignty. Alfred (1999), Rifkin (2009), and Audra Simpson (2014) have demonstrated that the European conceptualization of sovereignty is distinct from traditional forms of Indigenous governance (Alfred, 1999), which are *kincentric* (Atleo, 2011; Rifkin, 2011). Furthermore, Indigenous nations can and *do perform* a nested sovereignty as outlined previously. Indigenous nations do adopt and utilize dominant conceptualizations of family, and reformulate their own conceptualizations of kinship to fit dominant conceptualizations of Indigenous kinship as a strategy to engage, cope, and resist the imposition of state conceptualizations of sovereignty over their territory and people, and to ensure their survival as distinct nations and people and to promote their sovereignty over their territory and people (A. Simpson, 2014; Lawrence, 2004; Rifkin, 2011). Yet, what Audra Simpson and Taiaiake Alfred both do not mention – at least explicitly – is that when Indigenous nations and people practice sovereignty and self-



determination as defined by Settler nation states, whether the focus is on the land or not, they *are* at times engaging in a form of biopolitics (see Rifkin, 2009, 2014). I am agreement with political theorists such as Scott Marratto (2014) and Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez (20132011) who argues that sovereignty is performed. Such an observation allows for the recognition that state sovereignty can be both geopolitical (concerned with establishing authority over a given land), and biopolitical (using discourse and associated technologies of rule, such as the law, to coercively establish control over a given population). Hence, recognizing that sovereignty is performed allows for the recognition that state sovereignty is not just concerned with maintaining territorial integrity, but it is also concerned with producing commodities and profit (Coulthard, 2014) which will allow the state to cultivate and produce certain kinds of life (Agamben, 1998; Arendt, 1985; Foucault, 1990). Hence, sovereignty is a concept deeply associated with production and value – economic value, political value, territorial value, and biological value. Hence sovereign states can be seen as producers, consumers, and determiners of value. This means that how the state performs sovereignty varies by the scale at which sovereignty is being performed (Sassen, 1996) and by which actor the state is engaged in political relationships with (c.f. W. Brown, 2010; Altamirano-Jimenez, 2011). Hence, at one scale it can seem that the state is a non-sovereign actor, who is beholden to the forces of neoliberal globalization (see W. Brown, 2010), an absolute power which sacrifices politically insignificant life in the name of the health of the state (see Agamben, 1995), or a militarized hegemon deeply concerned with protecting its territory, which causes it to violate the intranational (see A. Simpson, 2014) and international sovereignty (see Chomsky, 2000) of other polities. But for Indigenous people, it's always been about the land and institution of dominant conceptualizations of land, family, gender, and community as a way to access our land. The

consequence of Settler colonialism has been the institution of a politics that *de-subjectifies* certain members of our communities and creates new political subjectivities in its place.

Indigenous nations and people are aware of and resist this process using politics rooted to their relational worldviews.

### **1.4.3 Transformations: Science, Land, and Political Subjectivity**

In this section I will demonstrate the way in which transformation of Indigenous territories from relational to the current configuration was done using the tenets of science and rationalism.

Science and rationalism were the dominant mechanisms by which Indigenous peoples were and are dispossessed of their territories (Campbell, 2003; Harris, 2004; Sandlos, 2001; L. Simpson, 1999). Science and rationalism were and are the dominant ontological and epistemological lens by which Settler society conceptualized itself (c.f. Agamben, 1998, Foucault, 1990), by which Settler society sought to reorder Indigenous society (Lawrence, 2003), and by which Settler states sought to assert sovereignty over Indigenous territories (R. Atleo, 2011). The ontology and epistemology that allowed for the reorganization of Indigenous society was and continues to be scientific rationalism (in particular the law) (Lawrence, 2003; L. Simpson, 1999) and in particular biology and the law (Morgensen, 2011; Rifkin, 2014). Both scientific rationalism and biology, it has been argued (Agamben, 1998, 2005; Foucault, 1990) are not only the guiding mechanism that informs modern expressions of state power / sovereignty, but *are* expressions of state power / sovereignty. This argument is very useful in analyzing the way in which science, rationalism, and law was used to dispossess Indigenous people of their lands *and* to assert Settler sovereignty over these lands. Furthermore, science and rationalism transformed political subjectivities within Indigenous communities from relational to liberal democratic.

#### 1.4.4 From Relations to Commodities and Populations

In this section I seek to demonstrate the way in which Indigenous lands, water, and nonhuman kin are transformed from relations to commodities and populations. To do this, I am going to be using the work of Shawn Wilson (2008), who wrote about the various phases of research on Indigenous people, as an analytic framework. I seek to contextualize Wilson's findings to environmental research and Indigenous people to demonstrate the ways in which scientific-rationalism and biology were *expressions* of state sovereignty over Indigenous territories. The first stage of research concerning Indigenous people in Canada can be defined as the *terra nullius* phase (1770-1900) (Shawn Wilson, 2008, p. 45). *Terra nullius* as a concept continues to be perpetuated by Canada to this day, through its denial or marginalization of Indigenous forms of governance over their territory and people (Shawn Wilson, p. 47). The colonial-imperial concept of *terra nullius* envision(ed) Indigenous inhabited space as uninhabited space (Shawn Wilson, 2008; Razack, 2002a) because Indigenous people possessed "barely human status" (Allen, 1988, p. 80). The concept of *terra nullius* allowed for the transformation of Indigenous people as inhabitants of their lands to (highly racialized) wards of the state (Razack, 2002b; Rifkin, 2014). Indeed, colonial-Settler identity was linked to colonial-Settler notions of space, i.e., colonial-Settler transformation of nature into agricultural / industrial land, were representations of progress and modernity; Indigenous people and their economic practices were the antithesis (Razack, 2002b). Such representations, linked to a teleological conceptualization of nationhood and society provided the justification of appropriation of Indigenous lands and the subsequent paternalistic practices by the Canadian state towards Indigenous nations and people (Sandlos, 2008).

The second stage of research concerning Indigenous people and their lands saw a shift whereby Indigenous people and their economic practices were explicitly seen as an impediment to industrial development (Shawn Wilson, 2008, p. 47). During this time, industrial capitalism, operating under a Fordist paradigm, began to “hyper-commodify” land, water, and animals to make them not only things that can be exploited<sup>14</sup>, but also things that can be “productive”<sup>15</sup> and “produced”<sup>16</sup> at a large scale (Healy, 2009; Volpe & Shaw, 2008; Sandlos, 2008). Here, Indigenous people began to engage in these economies on a large scale, as fisherman and cannery workers in particular (Menzies & Butler, 2008).

The third stage of research (1940-1979) concerning Indigenous people and their lands began to view Indigenous people as ecological “usergroups” (Campbell, 2003, p. 160) and the land as a thing that needed to produce things, such as commodities and ecological services, and thus be preserved (Sandlos, 2008). Indeed, during this timeframe, as Sandlos (2001) notes, resource management practices associated with the Canadian Wildlife Services managers were characterized by technocratic discourse and by discourse that aestheticized “wilderness” as pristine and worthy of preservation. Furthermore, both the scientific technocratic and aestheticization of wilderness discourses were in direct opposition to the Indigenous hunting techniques and views on nature, which saw nature as the foundation for sustenance *and* a set of

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<sup>14</sup> By exploited I mean things, such as natural resources, that can be harvested for economic gain (Foster, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> And by productive I mean things, such as fish, which are managed in such as way so as to increase yield (Morrison, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> And by produced I mean things, such as water, ecosystems, populations of animals, which can through processes such as enhancement of a stock of fish through hatcheries, be “produced” as though it were a commodity (Meffe, 1992).

relations with whom Indigenous people were engaged through mutual exchange (Campbell, 2003; Sandlos, 2008). Thus, Indigenous people were considered incapable of managing wildlife because their worldview was seen as bloodthirsty, unrestrained, and not based on “empirical” observation (Campbell, 2003, p. 161). Finally, this stage of viewing Indigenous people as “usergroups” had dire consequences for Indigenous people, namely, that their use of the land was further de-nationalized. Hence, Indigenous people were further posited as wards of the state whose actions had to be controlled in order that the pristine wilderness in which Indigenous people inhabited could be efficiently managed (Sandlos, 2001, 2008).

The fourth stage of research conducted on Indigenous people (current) seeks to “integrate” and “incorporate” Indigenous views on the natural environment into resource management frameworks (Nadasdy, 2003, Sandlos, 2008), and other institutions such as universities (Shawn Wilson, 2008). This research reconfigures Indigenous worldviews as “knowledge systems” that can “challenge” modernity (Cruikshank, 2005) or give observational data that will allow for a more holistic management of natural resources (Nadasdy, 2003). As Leanne Simpson notes (2004, p. 373) scientific inquiry on traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) focuses on how it “might be useful to scientists, and how to integrate it into Western scientific frameworks to facilitate environmental management and problem solving,” or aspects of traditional ecological knowledge “similar to data produced by the scientific method.” Hence, TEK as a tool to guide science is rarely considered in these studies (Cruikshank, 2005; Nadasdy, 2003). Such views degrade the voices and practices of our relations – past, present, and future – as voices that are not worthy of the authority to speak about what is important to them (Deloria Jr., 1992). Again, research is used as a disciplinary apparatus to manage Indigenous dissent while leaving colonial-

Settler claims to legitimacy over the affairs that concern and impact Indigenous people unchallenged (Sandlos, 2008). Research under this model claims to seek to promote equitable power sharing among Indigenous nations and Settler states (Sandlos, 2008) without ever explicitly making mention of the ways in which colonialism impacts the ability of Indigenous people to engage in co-management regimes and the ways in which it effects the ability of Indigenous people to cope and adapt to a changing social-ecological systems (Cameron, 2012).

Yet the link between the transformations of the land from relational to scientific-rational had a broader implication than limiting Indigenous access to land according to their worldview. It fundamentally delegitimized Indigenous conceptualizations and enactments of relational politics (R. Atleo, 2011, p. 84-85). And here is the link between transformation of conceptions of land and animals and transformation of kinship relationships that critical scholars on governance-to-governance management of natural resources do not address (Nadasdy, 2003; Campbell, 2003; Sandlos, 2001, 2008). In short, environmental scientific-rational discourse and practice works to *strip* nonhuman entities of their political subjectivity. Hence, when Indigenous people engage in resource management activities as defined by the state, they effectively delegitimize their relational mode of politics, by denying the political subjectivity of animals, in order to be taken seriously.

#### **1.4.5 From Relational Nations to Racialized Populations**

State conceptualizations and enactments of sovereignty and capitalism are not merely about commodifying and making the land productive, but they are about *classifying people* and making these *classified people* productive (Arendt, 1985; Foucault, 1990; Agamben, 1998). The state,

utilizes discursive technologies of rule such as the law, which in practice becomes materialized through violence (Harris, 2004), everyday socio-legal relations (Alfred, 1999), and day-to-day practices of Indigenous people themselves (Rifkin, 2011). Together these mechanisms worked to collapse Indigenous nations into populations of racialized “Indians” (Haney Lopez, 1994; Rifkin, 2014) and imposed upon Indigenous people dominant conceptualizations of sociality. All of these things were naturalized through assimilation and degrading of our Indigenous worldviews, through practices such as banning the potlatch (Atleo, 2011), or the standardization and stratification of Indigenous nations and people to create identities (and reorganization of communities) along patriarchal lines (Lawrence, 2003).

Pre-contact there was no such thing as “Indian,” “Indigenous,” “Native American,” rather, as Taiaiake Alfred (2009) notes, Indigenous people inhabited discrete Indigenous nations, who had their own conceptualizations of peoplehood which were linked to land-based ontologies and epistemologies (R. Atleo, 2004; Simpson, 2008). Upon contact, these Indigenous nations engaged with Settlers in multi-faceted ways, often inter-marrying with Settlers and engaging in a trade system which was largely reciprocal in nature (Coulthard, 2014; Lawrence, 2002; Mawani, 2005).<sup>17</sup> In Canada, the shift from a fur-trade economy to an industrial capitalist economy fundamentally altered the relationship between Indigenous nations and Settlers (Coulthard, 2014; Menzies & Butler, 2008). This change in relationship was linked to a broader shift from colonial to nation state forms of governance (Lawrence, 2003), and part of a broader trend among nation

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<sup>17</sup> I might add that trading practices were still linked to dominate conceptualizations of Indigenous people as being *something* distinct from Settler nations and populations.

states whereby “the breakdown of the feudal order had given rise to the new revolutionary concept of equality [among constituents], according to which a “nation within the nation” could no longer be tolerated” (Arendt, 1985, p. 11). Here, Arendt is discussing the “Jewish” problem that began to become a source of irritation for emerging European nation states. Yet, in North America, the burgeoning nation states of Canada and the United States also faced their own “problem” which needed to be answered – the Indian problem. In both instances the problem was investigated and solved through the deployment of science.

The advent of the nation state in Canada and the United States meant that Indigenous people were collapsed into a gendered and racialized categories known as “Indian” (Lawrence, 2003). This term had existed as a colloquialism for Indigenous people before the advent of the nation states in Canada and the United States, however, its codification into law was expedited by processes of state formation (Rifkin, 2011). The process which informed this codification was scientific-racism, which saw Indigenous nations organized and standardized according to dominant conceptualizations of what constitutes the morphological and lifeway characteristics of a given race (Haney Lopez, 1994).

In 1850 Canada “passed legislation which allowed for the creation of Indian reservations” (Lawrence, 2003, p. 7). This legislation contained the first loose definition of Indians (Lawrence, 2003). This legislation contained the first loose definition of Indians (Lawrence, 2003). Following this legislation, Canada passed the *Gradual Civilization Act* (1857) and the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* (1869). According to Bonita Lawrence (2003, p. 7), the *Gradual*



*Enfranchisement Act* created a “provision for the conversion of reserve lands into alienated plots in the hands of men who would cease to be Indian upon enfranchisement.”

The *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* created “municipal” governments for Indigenous nations that were known as bands and were given the right to participate in democratic elections (Milloy, 1983). However, these elections were limited to allowing male “Indians” of a given band to vote for male chief and councillors. Furthermore, the time and legitimacy of band elections were determined solely by the Canadian government. While it did allow Indian bands jurisdictional control over some areas of concern, this control was very limited and restricted (Milloy, 1983). The *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* stipulated who exactly was a “status” and “non-status” Indian (Lawrence, 2003, 7). Such a definition allowed Indigenous women that married a white man to be stripped of their Indian status, while also allowing white women that married Indigenous women or men to be granted Indian status (Lawrence, 2003). Finally, the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* was the first legislation, which rigidly defined what constitutes an Indian, Indians being those people that contained “at least one quarter Indian blood” (Dickason, 1992, p. 251, in Lawrence, 2003, p. 9). The implication of such a practice is that the population of Indigenous communities decreased over time (Lawrence, 2003). Here, concretely we begin to see Indigenous nations “collapsed,” as Ian Haney Lopez (1994) calls it, into racialized identities.

Hence, it is in the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* and the subsequent *Indian Act* (1876) that Indigenous people became “racialized” wards of the state. The *Indian Act* utilized much of the same governing mechanisms as the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* (Lawrence, 2003). The institutionalization of a patrilineal form of state sanctioned and funded Indigenous governance

finds its genesis in the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* (1869) and the *Indian Act* (1876). The *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* (1869) created a provision that allowed for transformation of property from communal holdings into plots of land that were legally held by male members of Indigenous nations, who according to Lawrence (2003, p. 7) “would cease to be Indian upon enfranchisement.” Furthermore, the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* established governments on reserves, known as band councils. These band councils were established with the purpose of allowing Indigenous nations the right to create and participate in their own democratic processes. However, only men were able to vote and run for elected positions on band council. The *Indian Act* stipulated who was and was not Indian (Lawrence, 2003). Prior to 1985, Indigenous women in Canada have been disenfranchised of their identities by section 12(1) of the *Indian Act* (Lawrence, 2004). Indian women still lost their status if they married a white man, and white women could still obtain status by marrying Indigenous men. Indigenous women protested such discriminatory legislation, leading to an amendment to the *Indian Act* – *Bill C-31* (1985). This amendment allowed for Indigenous women that were disenfranchised to reacquire their lost status (Cannon, 2011). Hence, it is through the *Indian Act* that Indigenous nations were re-organized along patrilineal lines. Though *Bill C-31* (1985) set to make amends for this discriminatory section of the act, many women still have trouble regaining their Indian status (Lawrence, 2003).

Yet, Indigenous people were not merely regulated juridically. Indigenous people were subject to disciplinary power. Disciplinary power, according to Foucault (1990, p. 139) is the "*anatamopolitics* of the human body". For Foucault (2003, p. 249) disciplinary power "centers on the body, produces individualizing effects, and manipulates the body as a source of forces that have

to be rendered both useful and docile." Disciplinary power is utilized through the organization of space, time, and the behaviour of people by state institutions, through discursive measures, and what Foucault calls "sub-institutions" (Foucault, 2003, p. 249). As Sherene Razack (2002a, p. 10) notes "it is from Michel Foucault that many of us learned to think about the production of subjects in space ... Foucault believed that the organization of space was fundamental in any exercise of power. Andrea Smith (2014, p. 211) notes that normalization refers to "prisons, medicines, and other technologies of the body" which produce normative assumptions about health such that "in order to be a healthy person, there are rules that any healthy person would like to follow." Such rules enable the production of discourses that center on the "norm." This norm is the axis around which the behaviours of subjects revolve (Foucault, 1995). How individuals are judged is according to how much their behaviour deviates from and approximates the norm (Foucault, 1995). Indeed, according to Andrea Smith (2014, p. 211) "those that challenge social norms become not so much outlaws as sick or deviant." These ideal norms cannot be achieved in day to day life, which generates according to Dean Spade (2011, p. 105) "a lifetime of self and external policing that keep us occupied with our personal reform efforts." Hence, disciplinary power functions at the individual and social level (A. Smith, 2014).

I would like to contextualize Foucault to a colonial settler setting, one concerned with the creation of racialized subjects, the elimination of Indigenous nations and peoples, and the usurpation of Indigenous land for the benefit of a settler population. Discourses about Indigenous people and their lifeways have always been intimately tied to discourses about the land. Furthermore, these dominant settler discourses have always been attached to non-discursive forms of power (Coulthard, 2008). Hence, discourses about Indigenous people have always been

attached to the economic and military apparatus of the state (Coulthard, 2008; Harris, 2004). In short, Indigenous people of Canada have been subject to the discursive, coercive, and material formations of power. The reason for such a formation wasn't to "normalize" Indigenous people, but rather to present Indigenous people as anomalies, which existed outside of society (Rifkin, 2009). This creation of the Indian subject, whose subaltern status as outside of the law legitimizes and naturalizes colonial settler society, while simultaneously denaturalizing Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty, is crucial to the creation and maintenance of the colonial Settler state (Rifkin, 2009).

For Indigenous people, the imposition of hierarchies of race, gender and class were central to dispossession and punishment for deviating from the white hetero norm was astounding. In Canada, Indigenous children were apprehended by the state and forced to attend residential schools. Here, Indigenous children were subject to "strict discipline and constant surveillance over every aspect of their lives; and cultural expressions through language, dress, food, or beliefs were vigorously suppressed" (Kirmayer, et al., 2003, S17). Indigenous children who attended residential schools, such as my late grandparents Carol and Oliver, had the "Indigenous" physically disciplined out of them (Alston-O'Connor, 2010). Jean Barman (2011, p. 256) argues that governmental policy of residential schools meant that Indigenous children were schooled "not for assimilation, but for inequality." I would like to modify Barman's comments and state that Indigenous children who went to residential schools were schooled to be *assimilated* into colonial settler society as *unequal* subjects whom were told that they were never to be Indigenous, but also, that they could never be white.

Such dramatic interventions into the lives of Indigenous people have had reverberations which can be felt in our communities even to this day. One consequence is, as Dian Million (2013) notes, that Indigenous men and women are subject to different discourses when it comes to Indigenous culture and practices and sovereignty. Simply put, Indigenous governmental organizations portray men engaged in cultural acts as nation builders and Indigenous women as healers. Million (2013) links such discourse to the disenfranchisement Indigenous women faced via the implementation of the *Indian Act* (1867) and Bill C-31. Here, women are presented as victims of historical and contemporary colonial violence. Hence, since they have been dispossessed of their historical leadership roles, which have been filled by male nation members, and their entrance back into the communities via Bill C-31 has caused a rupture within some communities, it has been argued by Indigenous organizations that Indigenous women need to use culture to heal. As Million (2013) and Altamirano-Jimenez (2013) note, Indigenous feminist organizations have resisted such discourse, noting how it lauds men and pathologizes women, leaving the patriarchal structures of dominance within their communities in place.

Furthermore, institutionalization of Euroamerican ideals of conjugality also meant the erasure of Indigenous gendered subjectivities, such as that of Two Spirit people (Greensmith, Giwa, & Wolfe, 2013; Rifkin, 2011). These people inhabit a gender which is rooted in Indigenous conceptualizations of community, family, and home, and transcends the binary of male / female (Greensmith, Giwa, & Wolfe, 2013), reflective of diverse conceptions of gender that arise within specific Indigenous worldviews.). In large part, the erasure of Indigenous conceptualizations of the body was informed by scientific conceptualizations of the body / mind distinction (Hokowhitu, 2009). Such erasure has had dramatic consequences for how gender is perceived

and performed in Indigenous communities, and how the lives of two spirit people are valued in Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Indeed, Two Spirit people themselves seem to be living lives that lack political significance in Indigenous communities, queer communities, and Canadian society at large.

Science and rationalism was utilized as a mechanism to disrupt Indigenous conceptualizations of kinship as practiced between human members of a given community. In 1850, Canada “passed legislation which allowed for the creation of Indian reservations” (Lawrence, 2003, p. 7). First, the creation of reservations was aided by science, particularly law and geography, which allowed for the creation of bounded territory (Harris, 2004) in which to contain Indigenous people and their land claims. Indigenous reservations in British Columbia are very small, often not large enough to support the population of a given Indigenous nation (Harris, 2004). Furthermore, there are often limited economic activities occurring in Settler towns adjacent to Indigenous communities (Lawrence, 2004). Indigenous people are often pushed into large Settler cities in search of work. Hence, Indigenous urban citizenry inhabit a space that has been dominantly conceptualized – literally – as existing outside of the realm of Indigenous governance (Lawrence, 2004; Razack, 2002b). Indigenous urban populations constitute an “abnormality” which is included in the political body of the Settler state, and an “abnormality” which is tenuously included in the body of her Indigenous nation.

Science and rationalism allowed for the incursion of the state into the lands of Indigenous people and the disruption of relational practices between Indigenous people and their nonhuman relations and members of their communities. As I will demonstrate later, the difference between

Indigenous relational politics and state formulations of politics is centered on subjectivity and value. Simply put, who counts as a subject – let alone political subject – according to an Indigenous worldview, who counts as a subject according to a statist worldview, and what are the consequences for Indigenous nations who practice forms of self-determination which mirror that of colonial settler states?

To close this discussion of ‘sovereign subjects’, the state’s imposition of dominant conceptualizations of subjectivity has (and continues to) disrupt Indigenous theorizations regarding political, communal, and familial organization and structure (R. Atleo, 2011; Rifkin, 2014). The result of this disruption is the transformation of political structure, from one concerned with being responsible to relations to one concerned with maintaining nationhood in the face of colonial onslaught, which has had dramatic consequences (Rifkin, 2011; A. Simpson, 2014).

### **1.5 Beyond Bare Life: Food and Political Alterities**

Those of us who seek to formulate and enact political alterities are by definition engaged in sovereign and self-determined acts which are in contradiction to state conceptualizations of those articulated, imposed, and enacted by the state. It is our performance of these sovereign acts or events that not only highlight *our own* propositions on how life does and should work, but also challenges the state’s way of being. As Dean Spade (2011, p. 108) notes, “When activists form consciousness-raising groups that encourage people to question standards about how they see their own bodies and identities and replace those norms with other ideas that they consider better they are engaging with [and challenging] the disciplinary mode of power.”

Food sovereignty has been discussed as a way of challenging state dominance over food production systems, basically over life itself. Moving back to the definition of food sovereignty earlier in this chapter, food sovereignty is “the right of nations and peoples to control their own food systems, including their own markets, production modes, food cultures and environments” (Wittman, Desmarais, & Wiebe, 2010, p. 2). Such a definition is in stark contrast to that proffered by proponents of the neoliberal food production model, who argue that issues of food shortages, crop failures, and environmental degradation are the function of “shortages and market failures” (Wittman, Desmarais, & Wiebe, 2010, p. 1). Furthermore, proponents of the dominant neoliberal production model argue that issues of poverty, hunger, and lack of participation in a given food system can be rectified through entrepreneurship, personal responsibility for one’s own actions, and self-empowerment / improvement (Alkon & Mares, 2012). Hence, systemic issues which led to communal and personal food insecurity such as privatization of public services, deregulation of processes associated with capital accumulation (Workman, 2009), upward distribution of wealth (Duggan, 2003), and implementation of policies that allow for accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2009), are obscured or normalized (Alkon & Mares, 2012). Hence, food sovereignty as a concept is deeply concerned with challenging the neoliberal economic activities of the state, which threaten the ability of communities to assert authority and control over their food systems.

Indeed, the food sovereignty movement evolved in response to dominant neoliberal economic, social, cultural, and political discourse and practices related to the production of food (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Wittman, Desmarais, & Wiebe, 2010). The food sovereignty movement is



concerned with providing a “critical alternative to the dominant neoliberal model for agriculture and trade” as well as demonstrating that food sovereignty is “directly linked to sovereignty and justice” (La Via Campesina, 1996 in Wittman, Desmarais & Wiebe, p. 3). Hence, the food sovereignty movement can be seen as creating an “alternative” mode of discourse and action regarding food, one in opposition to neoliberalism. Food sovereignty is a political alterity. This political alterity does not necessarily challenge state sovereignty (M. Smith, 2009), but rather seeks to establish a sort of nested sovereign entity that works within nation states (Iles and Montenegro, 2014).

Yet, food sovereignty as a concept is contextual. For instance, Indigenous people in Canada are not as concerned with creating alternative modes of agricultural production, such as organic farming (Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013). That being said, Indigenous communities have expressed a great deal of concern over authority and control of resources and services associated with food within their territories (Morrison, 2011; Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013). Furthermore, Indigenous communities have articulated their desire to have their worldviews drive the process of food sovereignty (Elliot et al., 2012).

Hence, Indigenous food and people in Canada take a different approach to the concept of food security and food sovereignty (Gray & Patel, 2015). Let us revisit the work of Dawn Morrison (2011). Dawn Morrison’s work as director with the BCFSN WGIFS has enabled her to interact with Indigenous Elders, harvesters, and community members in British Columbia. Through her work with the Morrison has been able to articulate the four main principles “that guide Indigenous people who are striving to achieve food sovereignty.” These principles were

identified by Indigenous “Elders, traditional harvesters and community members” (Morrison, 2011, p. 100). As mentioned earlier these four elements are

*1) Sacred or divine sovereignty:* Food is a gift from the Creator ... Indigenous food sovereignty is ... achieved by upholding our sacred responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food; *2) Participation:* Indigenous food sovereignty is ... based on “action”, or the day to day practice of nurturing healthy relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food; *3) Self-determination:* refer[ring] to the freedom to respond to our own needs for healthy, culturally adapted Indigenous foods [and] freedom from dependence on grocery stores or corporately controlled food production, distribution and consumption in industrialized economies; *4) Legislation and Policy:* Indigenous food sovereignty attempts to reconcile Indigenous food and cultural values with colonial laws and policies and mainstream economic activities. It thereby provides a restorative framework for policy reform in forestry, fisheries, rangeland, environmental conservation, health, and agriculture as well as rural and community development.

Food sovereignty as advocated by Dawn Morrison (2011) is associated with a traditional Indigenous philosophy that places importance on relationality, beneficial reciprocity, respect, and responsibility. Indeed, three of the four main principles of Indigenous food sovereignty, that food sovereignty is of sacred and divine origin, that it is participatory, and rooted in Indigenous self-determination; these principles closely resemble articulations on Indigenous worldviews. The third and fourth main principle of Indigenous food sovereignty acknowledges the impact of governmental economies and policy on conceptualizing and enacting Indigenous food sovereignty. Thus, Indigenous food sovereignty can also be seen as a discourse on the proper way in which to conceptualise and interact with the natural environment, and as a challenge to and rejection of sovereignty as conceptualized by the state. This discourse, rooted in Indigenous worldviews, is a politics of refusal, but also a politics of negotiation. It is in the fourth point, concerning the need for transformative policy, which acknowledges that different discourses on the proper way to conceptualise and interact with the natural environment do exist and have been

imposed upon Indigenous nations and peoples. These different discourses need to be engaged and negotiated with. Therein lay the common ground between Indigenous food sovereignty and the larger food sovereignty movement: both are political alterities which have to engage with the Settler state to be able to put into practice their ideas on the appropriate way to perceive and interact with society, the land, water, and animals. As well, Indigenous food sovereignty proponents have to engage with other members of their community as different perceptions on food, sovereignty, and Indigeneity do exist. Yet, where food sovereignty and Indigenous food sovereignty differ is in relation to the concept of sovereignty. Indigenous food sovereignty is part of a larger movement of Indigenous cultural revitalization / resurgence (Gray & Patel, 2015) which seeks to decolonize the relationship between Settler states and Indigenous nations. Take for instance Dawn Morrison's (2011, p. 97-98) views on sovereignty and Indigenous food sovereignty:

Describes, rather than defines, the present day strategies that enable and support the ability of indigenous communities to sustain traditional hunting, fishing, gathering, farming and distribution practices, the way we have done for thousands of years prior to contact with the first European settlers ... We have rejected a formal universal definition of sovereignty in favour of one that respects the sovereign rights and power of each distinct nation to identify the characteristics of our cultures and what it means to be Indigenous.

Morrison's statement on rejecting Settler definitions of sovereignty is in keeping in line with the broader cultural resurgence movement among Indigenous nations and people; as we have seen, such movements see sovereignty as articulated and practiced by Settler states as harmful and detrimental to the process of decolonization (Alfred, 1999; Altamirano-Jimenez, 2011; R. Atleo, 2011; Coulthard, 2014; Rifkin, 2011; Simpson & Smith, 2014; Turner, 2006). In short, state sovereignty has been imposed upon Indigenous people and is something they have no choice but

to challenge and engage with if they want to ensure the survival of their national and individual identities as Indigenous people. In the food sovereignty literature, with a few notable exceptions (Gray & Patel, 2015; M. Smith, 2009) the concept of sovereignty is not interrogated, nor, more importantly, the impact of how state conceptualization and practice of sovereignty on food systems is not analyzed. In short, Indigenous food sovereignty seeks to challenge the way valuation process associated with sovereignty, highlighting the fact that Indigenous people do and still do place high value on processes which produce outcomes which are high in relational value – i.e., that allow for the development of relationships which produce balanced and harmonious outcomes (Corntassel & Bryce, 2013; Gray & Patel, 2015).

Yet, I do not want to draw definitive lines between one form of political alterity being “better” than the other. I think there is value in *recognizing* the intrinsic value of lives of our members of communities right here, right now (i.e., Million, 2013), as well as the actions of past activists (i.e., Graeber, 2002) / ancestors (i.e. Benjamin, 2009; L. Simpson, 2008). There is value to such affirmative actions that shouldn’t be denied; there is value in recognizing the intrinsic value of our lives regardless of whether or not the state sees it as having political, economic, or biological value (Agamben, 2005; Chomsky & Foucault, 2011; Graeber, 2013; Spade, 2011). Our stories, our lives are worth more than what the state says they are worth, always have been, always will be.

Yet, abstract conceptualizations around discourse, stories, and performance are not, in my mind, enough to overcome certain material barriers that inhibit our ability perform sovereignty – to live our lives – according to ways we deem appropriate. Our ability to perform sovereign acts is

centered on the fact that life chances are structurally distributed and individually acquired (Spade, 2011). I am in agreement with Dean Spade that we need to understand how structure operates to produce outcomes which make vulnerable and at risk members of our communities and movements – such as racialized people, women, working class and impoverished people, LGBTQ and Two-Spirit people, the disabled – more vulnerable to insecurity, abandonment, and dramatically shortened life spans.

According to a Nuu-chah-nulth worldview (R. Atleo, 2004, 2011), it is disrespectful not to recognize the context in which one's relations live. Like Dean Spade (2011) I believe that social movements often *do* ignore the context in which the most vulnerable members our communities find themselves, often in the name of advancing the claims of “the movement.” Part of the problem is that when movements engage with sovereign state actors, they often do so utilizing the recognition and accommodation paradigm as a means to achieve social change (Alfred, 1999; Coulthard, 2014; Spade, 2011). Such a paradigm is quite favorable to people who have economic, gender, political, social, cultural, ability, and status privilege (Spade, 2011), whom the state already *recognizes* as having life that is *of value* to the project of state sovereignty. These people are easily co-opted into doing the service of the state while at the same time claiming to work in service of vulnerable members of our communities.

Co-optation occurs when leaders of movements serve to promote the interests of themselves and other similarly privileged people at the expense of those whom the state has deemed “valueless” (Alfred, 1999; c.f. Lyon-Callo, 2008; Spade, 2011). Recognizing when co-optation is occurring means moving beyond looking for the stated intent of our governments, institutions, and our own

community leaderships and looking at how our institutional and movement practices function to produce certain outcomes which can be both negative and positive (Lyon-Callo, 2008; Spade, 2011). This is important because, as critical theorists have demonstrated, the politics of recognition and accommodation work to merely re-entrench the systemic inequalities that social movements and Indigenous nationalist movements sought to transcend (Coulthard, 2014; Spade, 2011).

One way we can move past this process of co-optation is by always *recognizing* the context in which the most vulnerable members of our communities find themselves and *recognizing* that regardless if they contribute to our movement, their lives have intrinsic value, due the common origin we share with them in creation (c.f. R. Atleo, 2004) Yet, I think the way in which Indigenous people, such as youth, women, LGBTQ2S, the disabled use their worldview in concert with their agency to resist being reduced to bare life. I think this fact needs to be better recognized and valued by society, Indigenous nations, and activist movements. Many of our relations inhabit contexts that are not of their making, where structural and interpersonal violence is the norm. Hence, to avoid reducing certain members of our communities to lives that lack value and to recognize that their lives do have value, I argue that any effort we undertake to practice alternative forms of sovereignties or self-determination should explicitly be directed at recognizing the value of, learning from, and incorporating the concerns of the most marginalized into our movements (c.f. Agamben, 2005; Spade, 2011).

Many Indigenous people and people who seek to create political alterities desire recognition of the value of their lives from the sovereign state (Coulthard, 2014; Smith, 2014; Spade, 2014).

Part of this reason is because, as Sarah Hunt (2014, p. 29) notes “strategically, it does not seem that outright rejection of all forms of recognition are politically viable, especially for those of us working in institutions such as universities where we are required to navigate around disciplinary norms.” I agree with Hunt (2014) that Indigenous academics are forced to seek out recognition by the academy on its terms. For instance, upon completion of this thesis I will be granted *recognition* by the academy of the *value* of my work, but also in a sense, my value as a person. I need this recognition if I want to continue to be an academic working within the academy. I want to push Hunt’s observation further and state Indigenous people who work in institutions like the academy often work with *people* with whom we more or less have an *affinity*. Hence, part of the reason I speak in a language that enables people to recognize who I am and what I am saying is because I want to have a *good relationship* with these people. To have a good relationship with “dominant system academics” (Shawn Wilson, 2008, p. 44) means talking and acting according to the context in which our relationship is occurring, i.e., the academy.

Furthermore, I do not talk academically only because I am forced to talk academically or because I want to have a good relationship with my academic relations but because, to be honest, I enjoy talking academically. Talking academically makes me feel good about myself and I allow myself to feel good about being able to talk academically because I want to have a good relationship with myself. As Stan Wilson (1995) observes for an Indigenous person to have a good relationship with the self they must recognize the context in which their self-relationship is occurring. Hence, to have a good relationship with the self in an academic environment is different than having a good relationship with the self at a concert where I flail in a wild frenzy to an anarcho-punk band covering my favorite Crass song. Recognizing myself as relation

enables me to engage in relationships in a positive way, it gives me confidence to talk to people in different ways in different contexts. Self-recognition is self-respect (Stan Wilson, 1995).

I try my hardest to follow the teachings of my Tla-o-qui-aht mother and grandparents<sup>18</sup> which is to engage in relationships with people, myself included, starting from the context in which we are found not from the context in which I think I they should be found in. Sometimes I forget these teachings, but regardless, my actions do constitute a form of *self-recognition* as advocated by Coulthard (2014) which is an entirely different form of recognition than advocated by the Settler states and the academy. The focus is on creating balanced and harmonious relationships versus recognition being “granted or “accorded” a subaltern group or entity by a dominant group or entity” (Coulthard, 2014 p. 30-31). In short, I am *being* a Tla-o-qui-aht academic as opposed to hoping that Canada or the academy *recognizes and grants me permission* to be a Tla-o-qui-aht academic. Yet, I would like to remind you that I do agree with Sarah Hunt (2014, p. 29) that, strategically it does not makes sense for Indigenous academics to reject academic recognition. I would just like to add that relationally, rejecting all forms of recognition in an academic environment does not make sense if the end goal is to seek balanced and harmonious relationships in all of the relationships in which I am engaged.

So it would seem that in the academic environment I am practicing a form of nested sovereignty as outlined by Audra Simpson (2014). Yet I take the lessons I learned from Indigenous scholars and my relations seriously. If the academy or people who *work* in the academy in anyway seek to

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<sup>18</sup> And from what I’ve read, this ideas is what other Indigenous people have taught their relations (Nadasdy, 2003, p. 102-103; Shawn Wilson, 2008, p. 43-44).



dominate or coerce me into being *not* Tla-o-qui-aht, I will refuse their actions in the name of my sovereignty and seek out other people, institutions, etc., with whom I can engage in a fruitful relationship.

Part of the reason we Indigenous people seek state sanctioned forms of recognition is because of the reasons Hunt (2014) outlined above, i.e., we are constrained actors operating in dominant systems. However, I also think part of the reason we seek state sanctioned forms of recognition is we have mystified how power functions within a politics of sovereignty and self-determination (c.f. Marratto, 2014). We assume that power is a *thing* that the state has and we don't. Therefore, we assume that if we ask the state to recognize us as political entities worthy of consideration when conducting affairs of the state, somehow, we will have power that we have always been lacking. I think that our Indigenous normative understandings about what constitutes the appropriate way to comprehend and interact with each other, the land and water, the cosmos, and our nonhuman kin, which produce our identities, our relationships, and our resistance to colonial domination, represents a form of power – the power to conduct politics where the final goal is to be *good relations*.

Scott Marratto (2014) notes that sovereignty is associated with a truth that is always to come, one waiting to be discovered. It is at this point that I would like to draw lessons from what Marratto and Walter Benjamin (2009, Thesis IX) and state that when we are engaged in radical politics, we would be wise to not get too focused on whether or not our actions will produce a definitive outcome, a utopic society as it were. Using the goals and aspirations of our movements as mechanism to devalue the actions of those that came before us actually naturalizes the

teleological conception of community that our activist communities work so hard to challenge. Richard Atleo (2004) argues that from a Nuu-chah-nulth perspective the point of existence is to engage in relationships which are rooted in respect, beneficial reciprocity, and responsibility. Hence, we have to respect the diverse ways in which we exist right here and right now to do this, while being mindful of our obligations to our past and future ancestors.

Yet, this abstract theorizing can be a non-humble form of politics – it makes it seem like I have all the answers, like I know everything. I have learned from Richard Atleo (2004, 2011) the importance of humility when acquiring knowledge. Indeed, as Shawn Wilson (2008, p. 38) notes operating from an Indigenous paradigm means recognizing that knowledge “belongs to the cosmos of which we are all a part,” and as such we “researchers are merely interpreters of this knowledge.” Hence, one could with pride and hubris reduce social movements, philosophers, and those on the “margins” to discrete objects or merely academic curiosities. As well, theorizing endlessly makes it also seem as though I am an expert on Indigeneity. I am not an Indigenous philosopher. I don’t have “traditional ecological knowledge.” I am willing to learn from Indigenous philosophers and Indigenous people who have specialized and valid knowledge about how to *be* with the environment (Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2000; L. Simpson, 2004). But those aren’t the only people I’m willing to learn from. I’m willing to learn from all my relations. I’ve been criticized by Indigenous people, from allies of Indigenous people, and from people who aren’t allies of Indigenous people for learning from people who “aren’t real elders” and white continental philosophers “who don’t know what it means to be Indigenous.” I understand the logic that informs such a criticism but must politely reject this criticism in the name of my intellectual sovereignty and out of respect for the common origin I share with all my relations,

Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who too have experienced living in this world and have valid knowledge on how it operates.

That being said, I think too much theorizing has been done on Indigenous people – especially in regards to who we were and who we ought to be. My problem is this – do people know who we are? Do people who advocate that we look back to our traditions (i.e., Alfred, 1999; Coulthard, 2014; L. Simpson, 2011) know who we *are* right here, right now? How do they know we aren't already looking back to our traditions to guide how we engage with the world in which we find ourselves? It is tempting for me to use abstract theoretical propositions to answer the question “who should we Indigenous people be?” Yet, I am more concerned with learning from Indigenous people to answer the question “who are we?” Hence, taking my cue from Daniel Miller (2005), I return to the world and words and experiences of my participants, who, from here on in I will be calling my relations. To do this I will be putting their propositions on life in dialogue with my other relations who too have propositions on life, such as Michel Foucault, Glen Coulthard, Audra Simpson, and Daniel Miller to help answer the question “who are we?”

## **Chapter 2: The Secret Language of the Gift: Place- Based Ethos of Indigenous Food Trading and Sharing in Coast-Salish and Nuu-Chah-Nulth Territory**

### **2.1 Cultural Resurgence**

Moving forward, I ask you, reader, after that long workout in critical theory, to kindly recall that I was looking to answer a simple research question, which is:

How do Indigenous worldviews (expressed as being and place) influence trading and sharing practice and how do Indigenous trading and sharing practices effect Indigenous conceptualizations of being and place?

I also ask you to remember where this study took place, which was on Vancouver Island, the territories of the Coast Salish, Nuu-Chah-Nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw peoples. Remember we are talking about Indigenous people who trade and share food.

In the last chapter I demonstrated the way in which Canada utilized science and rationalism to reorganize Indigenous nations and people according to dominate conceptualizations of race, community, family, and gender. I also demonstrated that such transformations worked to desubjectify certain members of Indigenous communities and resubjectify other members of Indigenous communities. Yet, what the previous chapter also demonstrated was that Indigenous conceptualizations of being and place still *inform* the governmental practices of Indigenous nations hence. This form of relational politics has been theorized on by a lot of Indigenous

scholars (Alfred, 1999; Coulthard; A. Simpson, 2014). Yet, I think that the literature on this form of relational politics has not been investigated too well in regards to Indigenous people who do not talk or perform in ways that scholars or activists understand to be representative of “being Indigenous.” In a way, I think research has worked to desubjectify certain members of our communities – as people whose political value is intrinsically found in their common origin in creation – resubjectify them to fit the needs and aims of research. Such resubjectification can be seen in the way in which Indigenous people are *only* presented as highly immobile agents, who are nothing more than victims of circumstance beyond their control (Hokowhitu, 2009).

Yet, I think to move past the desubjectifying nature of research, it is important to use as a heuristic device the idea that *being Indigenous* is informed by ancestral place-based knowledge that is carried with Indigenous people to other places and so too will change according to the *place* in which they find themselves. Also recall that I conducted research in urban *and* rural environments. Hence, I need to understand how the concept of being Indigenous occurs in urban and rural environments.

Urban Indigenous people as described in chapter one of this thesis, are said to inhabit an “inauthentic realm” of Indigeneity. Yet, this distinction between rural and urban is outdated because it does not recognize the mobility – intellectual and physical – of Indigenous people who live in urban contexts (Cornthassel & Bryce, 2013). Further, it does not recognize the Indigenous territories that underlie Canadian towns and cities. Indeed, the fluidity with which Indigenous people in this study transcended this rural / urban divide makes such a distinction almost impossible to justify. For instance, several relations lived in cities for years, but also had lived in rural environments for years. Conversely, several rural dwellers had lived in the city for years

and had just moved back “home.” Furthermore, several of my relations who lived in the city for years had a strong connection to “home”, through regular contact with band administrators, email and phone conversations with relatives, and regular visits with family members who were “passing through town”. Some relations lived in urban environments and rural environments at the same time because, in the case of Nanaimo and Port Alberni, some reserves were close to town. As such, the distinction between rural and urban – at least in this study – was hard to parse apart.

Such a distinction between rural and urban has been argued as significant (Andersen, 2013) to insignificant in the formation of Indigenous identities (Corntassel & Bryce, 2013). Andersen (2013) argues that urban Indigenous people have a “distinct” identity, which is separate from their rural counterparts. Yet, in the context of this study, I think this is not the case. Part of this is related to the relative proximity of “home” to the city. Another reason is the mobility associated with the act of trading and sharing food, which often necessitates “going home” to harvest plants, learn ceremonies, and converse with Indigenous knowledge holders (Corntassel & Bryce, 2013). Hence, utilizing the concept of “rural” versus “urban” Indigenous as an identity marker for this particular group of Indigenous people, in mind, is inappropriate. Rather, what this study did demonstrate the importance of context in shaping Indigenous identity and food based practices. Hence, when I talk about urban versus rural Indigenous people, I am really describing the social context – rural versus urban – in which Indigenous people find themselves or conduct the

majority of their trading and sharing activities.<sup>19</sup> This means that Indigenous people who are considered rural were not necessarily only those people who lived in the Tla-o-qui-aht communities of Ty-histan-is, Esowista, or Opitsaht, but could also be people who conduct the majority of their trading and sharing activities in rural environments.

Several scholars have advocated that academics move past idea that there is a “danger in recognizing Indigenous worldviews” influencing contemporary Indigenous behavior (Fredricks, 2004; Lucero, 2014; Laliberte, 2014). I agree with this literature, particularly in regards to the need to “recognize how Aboriginal people draw on their cultural heritage and their experience of colonialism to make sense of their place in contemporary society” (Peters, Maaka, & Laliberte, 2009, in Laliberte, 2013, p. 112). It is here that I turn to the work of Shawn Wilson (2008), who has noted similarities in aspects of worldviews across Indigenous cultures, from which I would like to draw upon. I, like other Indigenous scholars (C. Atleo, 2009; Menzies, 2013; Shawn Wilson 2008) understand that Indigenous worldviews are informed by place-specific interactions with the environment, and thus are unique and distinct. Yet, I recognize that Indigenous worldviews share several commonalities (Menzies, 2013; Shawn Wilson, 2008). These commonalities include guiding principles of relationality, beneficial reciprocity, respect, and responsibility (R. Atleo, 2011). For Indigenous people, this was and is an appropriate way of being. With this thought in mind, let us do a quick recap from discussions above of what an Indigenous worldview entails.

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<sup>19</sup> Since these interviews have taken place, several relations have moved “to the rez” or “to the city.”

### **2.1.1 Recap of Indigenous Worldviews**

Historically and contemporarily Indigenous ways of living was conveyed through embodied interaction with one's relations – the land, water, spirit world, nonhuman kin, and humans (R. Atleo, 2004; L. Simpson, 2011). This way of living was and is conveyed through ceremony, art, and through narrative (R. Atleo, 2004; Million, 2014; L. Simpson, 2011). Embodied and narrative interactions were and are the mechanisms Indigenous people use to achieve outcomes that strengthen and maintain the relationships in which they are currently engaged (R. Atleo, 2011; Shawn Wilson, 2008) and to assert sovereignty over their territories (Coulthard, 2014). Indeed, as Richard Atleo (2004, p. 30) notes, for the Nuu-chah-nulth “the primary purpose in life is to create, maintain, and uphold relationships.”

According to such a worldview, all our relations – including nonhumans – had to be honoured and respected. According to Richard Atleo (2004, p. 59), the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of Iisaak is a mechanism used to help people recognize that “the sacredness of common origin determines the basis of relationships between diverse life forms.” This concept of respect has been noted in other Indigenous cultures such as the Kluane (Nadasdy, 2003), the Ktunaxa (Firelight According Research Group, 2011), and the Anishnaabe (L. Simpson, 2011) to Atleo, such a recognition, linked to practice, is crucial to establishing a relationship that is beneficially reciprocal. There are certain responsibilities associated with being engaged in a relationship based on respect and beneficial reciprocity. According to Hishook-ish-tsawalk, it is important to recognize who one's relations are. In the case of Tla-o-qui-aht people, all our relations are all of creation (R. Atleo, 2004). This is because all of creation is the product of the Creator. Hence, when entering a relationship with our relations – human and nonhuman – it is the responsibility of those engaged



in a relationship to seek *balance and harmony* (R. Atleo, 2011). Thus, relations must engage in relationships that are beneficially reciprocal for both parties involved, i.e., a relationship of mutual exchange. Respect, or *Iisaak*, is one mechanism for achieving balance and harmony (R. Atleo, 2011). *Iisaak* recognizes the divine origin of creation. When conducting oneself according to the principles of *Iisaak* it is demanded of the individual to treat one's relations with care because of our origin in common creation. Associated with *Iisaak* is therefore the responsibility to ensure that the common origin of our relations is recognized, understood, and protected and maintained. In this section, the majority of my analysis is informed by Richard Atleo (2004, 2011). This means that I will be using Nuuchahnulth teachings and knowledge to analyze the words of my Indigenous relations – not all of whom are Nuuchahnulth. However, other scholars (C. Atleo, 2009; R. Atleo, 2011; Coulthard, 2014; Altamirano-Jimenez, 2011; Menzies, 2013; Shawn Wilson, 2008) have utilized Indigenous worldviews – broadly understood as rooted to Indigenous concepts of relationality, recognition, respect, beneficial reciprocity – to analyze the words of Indigenous people who may or may not be associated with a given nation's articulated worldview.

### **2.1.2 Recap of Indigenous Place**

For Indigenous people, lands or places are a locus for social, cultural, economic, and political behavior (R. Atleo, 2011; Coulthard, 2010; L. Simpson, 1999, 2011). Place can be thought of as geographic space that is imbued with multiple and contested social and cultural values (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013). These values, which can also be thought of as ideals (Miller, 2001, p. 109), are situated within a geographic space where different political, economic, social, and cultural activities occur (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013). Thus, place can be thought of as a

geographic space where multiple and contesting social, political, economic, cultural, and individual ideals are mediated through in situ experience and activity (Cruikshank, 2005; Miller, 2001; Pink 2008). Place is an important producer of subjectivities and subjectivities are an important producer of place (Hoeschler, 2003; Malpas, 1999; Miller, 2001; Moretti, 2008a). I chose a certain intellectual inclination in my analysis of place – *a dialectical one* – one that highlights the intellectual engagement with place based on my understanding of Indigenous people and how they utilize their worldviews to engage with the social world. As Miller notes (2001, p. 109) humans [such as Indigenous people of Australia] who must submit to [a] previously objectified world – a distance that cannot be reconciled by mere experience ... don't need to be phenomenological because their ancestors were." Place is thus also rooted to memory, embodiment, and imagination, i.e., it is rooted to subjective conceptualizations of the past, present, and future. Thus it may or may not be expressed as embodied interaction with a given geographic space (Cruikshank, 2005; Medina, 1998; Moretti, 2008a; Pink, 2008). Thus, place can be seen as mobile and taken to other place to construct Indigenous places in a different geographic context (Miller, 2001).

### **2.1.3 Recap of Indigenous People and Place-Making**

Since place is rooted in memory and imagination, place can and is transported by people to *other* places / geographic spaces, which can and does re-start the process of place-making (Miller, 2001; Moretti, 2008a; Sampson & Gifford, 2010). Place-making can be understood as the transformation of geographic spaces into places (Miller, 2001; Pink, 2008; Jones & Evans, 2012). If we understand that places are mobile and can be made, we can understand that place can be thought of as a geographic space that provides people with an ethical framework as a real

and imagined/conjured anchor or physical site, which guides their normative understandings of the world (Coulthard, 2014; Miller, 2001; Moretti, 2008a). Mechanisms for place-making include construction of physical sites, such as the 9/11 memorial in New York (Donofrio, 2011), urban slums (Hoelscher, 2003). But as place is mobile, ephemeral constructions of place are also a given, such as performing place-based narratives in a different place (Jacobsen, 2009; Moretti, 2008). Indigenous place-making activities, to be certain, are related to specific practices, such as participating in ceremony and trading and sharing traditional food (Coulthard, 2010; Nadasdy, 2003). However, I also want to take heed from Cordova (1997) who notes that *being* Indigenous is what makes people Indigenous as opposed to “knowledge” in the traditional western sense. Hence, Indigenous place-making activities are at once an intellectual engagement with the worlds and teaching of their ancestors, past, present, and future, and are about *being*, living life, as an Indigenous in place (c.f., Atleo, 2011; Brown, 2010; Cordova, 1997).

It has been argued that this normative understanding of the world has been worn away by colonialism, but nevertheless, there remains a salient feature of contemporary Indigenous anti-colonial activism (Coulthard, 2014, p. 60). As mentioned earlier, Indigenous access to the land, water, and animals is limited and defined mainly according to Settler terms of the appropriate way to perceive and interact with the natural environment (Alfred, 2009; L. Simpson, 2011). Hence, Indigenous conceptualizations and enactments of place can be thought of as constrained. Nevertheless, I would like to add to Coulthard’s (2014) observation on grounded normativity and place, and state that Indigenous conceptualizations of place, whether it is “taking place” to the UN to fight for Indigenous rights (Muehlebach, 2001) or taking Navajo conceptualizations of

place to play country music at a country western bar (Jacobsen, 2009), remain a salient feature of contemporary Indigenous life.

## **2.2 Results and Discussion: Part I: Thinking About Home.**

### **2.2.1 Where Are You From?**

To understand how conceptualizations of being and place are enmeshed in a reciprocal process with Indigenous trading and sharing behavior, it is important to understand what my relations mean when they talk about “home.” Home, from my understanding, is talking about “the rez.” Yet, the rez is also the ancestral territory of my Indigenous nation. It is the place where my mother was raised and taught to be Tla-o-qui-aht. Home is full of spirits and lessons that I carry with me wherever I go. Home is a place imbued with Tla-o-qui-aht values, which as chapter one demonstrated, affected how I engage with institutions such as the academy. With that being said, in this section I seek to understand whether Indigenous trading and sharing is informed by Indigenous ancestral place-based understandings of home and community, that is, Indigenous ideas of place. Thus, in this section I discuss the conversations I had with my relations around home, community, and family. I wanted to understand precisely how my relations defined home, community, and family, and what implications, if any, this had on how they traded and shared food. Asking questions about home, community, and family allowed me to situate urban Indigenous traders and sharers as people who engage with the social context in which they find themselves, allowing for me to acknowledge the multiplicity of Indigenous experience (Million, 2013) that occurs right here, right now (Hokowhitu, 2009). Like Daniel Miller (2001, p. 108) I think it important to recognize the way in which “the intellectual engagement people construct with the materiality of their worlds and the social and institutional forms that mediate their

encounter.” In short, I am interested in the way in which people think about home, how this concept of home is mediated through the act of trading and sharing food, and how variety of social and cultural contexts. This section is thus concerned with the way in which people think about home, in a conversational sense, i.e., their ideas on home. I am trying to understand and demonstrate that when Indigenous people are talking about home, they are talking about a specific place which affects their sense of *being*. The questions I asked about home were very simple and basic: what are home, community, and family to you? These questions in of themselves produced rich conversations. Part of this line of questioning was based on my own experience as an Indigenous person who constantly referred to “home” as being the reserves, which are located on my ancestral and unceded territory. And here was part of the tension of asking about “home,” “family,” or “community” especially when asking people who I am related to or who I am friends with: often they would give me quizzical looks as if to say, “You know what all of these things are, why should I tell you?” Often times I would have to make reference to the fact that I was doing a study, at which point they would laugh and begin to tell me what home was. Other times I would not ask questions at all, instead engaging in long conversations about culture. This points to an important observation by Pink (2008) that when researchers engage in research about place they themselves are active participants in the construction of place. My presence in this study was an important element in the way in which people talked about, narrated, told stories about home.

For relations in this study, family, home, and community are interconnected. Patti is an Indigenous elder who lives in the city, is on income assistance, and is physically disabled. Patti's Indigenous nation delivers food fish to her, which she shares with "family."<sup>20</sup> Patti also goes to foodbanks where she "gathers" extra food for her family and shares with those who ask her for help, such as her daughters and sons. Patti told me she does this because she knows her children are often too ashamed to go to foodbanks, so she goes for them. Here, Patti (personal communication, March 11, 2015) describes her idea of what constitutes home:

*Johnnie:* What do you mean by home?

*Patti:* Family at home. Seattle, anywhere on the island, they are family regardless of how many miles that are between us. They'll always be family. Family is the most important ... I miss home sometimes.

*Johnnie:* What do you mean by home though?

*Patti:* [My Indigenous community].

Another relation, Poly (personal communication, March 22, 2015) an Indigenous activist who lives in a rural environment, and who shares traditional food with members of her community also has similar conceptualizations of home

*Johnnie:* What do you think of when you think of family and community?

*Poly:* I was just talking about this a few days ago with a co-worker who is non-native. Who's asking me what's the difference between [your Indigenous community] and the [Settler town]. What's different about it? And I was saying, it's just a totally different feeling when I drive down the road. I'm related to everybody, even the people I'm not related to, we have really long ancient ties ... and we are all from this place. We are connected to this land in a whole different way than some person that is just visiting. Even if they are here for ten years that seems like visiting. ... You know, a ten year visit.

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<sup>20</sup> Indigenous people engage in "food fisheries. Under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy, Indigenous communal right to fish is limited to those associated with food, social, and ceremonial practices (FSC) (Glavin, 1996). Recent court-cases, i.e., *Ahousaht vs. Canada*, have said that FSC includes the right of Nuu-chah-nulth nations to sell fish communally. Nevertheless, the right to sell fish situated within the realm of FSC. Indigenous nations who catch fish communally often deliver "food fish" to community members who live inside and outside of their ancestral territories.

Patti and Poly acknowledge home as falling within unceded ancestral Indigenous territory (i.e., both acknowledge place as being situated within a specific geographic area). Both also recognize that home is a geographic space that is relational in nature – i.e., it is a community comprised of relations. Furthermore, both are discussing the way in which the practice of being a relation mediates their *ideas* on what constitutes home in contradistinction to colonial understandings of home. Furthermore, both are discussing home in ways which transcend spatial and temporal boundaries. For Patti, home is anywhere family is located, which is at *home* or in distance places such as Seattle or anywhere on Vancouver Island. For Poly, home is not just “living at home” but also tied to her ancestors who once lived at home. Indeed, as Richard Atleo (2004) notes, Nuu-chah-nulth conceptualizations of home took into full account that Indigenous people inhabited a realm which was spatio-temporally fluid and expansive, but which also had definitive boundaries. Hence, Indigenous nations did have specific boundaries which demarcated their territory, but, since kinship was a mechanism for establishing balanced and harmonious relationships, community could also encompass where one’s relations were. An example of this is marriage between two people of different nations (R. Atleo, 2004). Hence, Patti and Poly are both conceptualizing home in a way that is consistent with ancestral conceptualizations of home. Such a conceptualization of home is fundamentally different from a nuclear and privatized version of home that the Canadian government tried to institute on Indigenous people (Rifkin, 2011). Hence, Patti and Poly can be seen as not only challenging dominant conceptualizations of home and community, but coping with and transcending these conceptualizations by using ancestral conceptualizations of place to inform how they understand and practice the concept of “home.”

### 2.2.2 Who is your family?

But what does it mean to practice Indigenous forms of relationships? In short, who is one's family? Sid (personal communication, April 3, 2015) a commercial fisherman who also shares fish he catches recreationally with his community, describes family in this way:

*Sid:* Family is people that pull together, we are there for each other. Help each other out when we are down, we have our ups and downs. But family, we stick together, we always stick together.

*Johnnie:* ...are you just talking about your specific family?

*Sid:* No, no, no. I'm talking about the whole community. I was brought up that way, we are all one.

Hence, Sid describes the *whole* community as family. This expansive definition of family is clearly rooted to Indigenous worldviews, such as the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview of hishook-ish-tsawalk, which, roughly translated, means "everything is one" (R. Atleo, 2004, 2011). Hence, community is where relations reside. And if all one's relations reside in a community, then it would only make sense that the whole community is one's family. This conceptualization of community is mediated by relationships, as noted by Poly (person communication, March 22, 2015):

I lived [in a Settler town] for over ten years. At times I had no idea who my neighbours were ... And uhm, and then, when I moved back home ... I lived with my dad for a while and it was like every once and a while someone would knock on the door randomly and it would be, "Hey, we have leftover clams."

For Sid and Poly, community is envisioned as family. This vision of family as community is linked directly to Indigenous conceptualizations of the appropriate and proper way to perceive and interact with each other. Acts such as dropping in unannounced to share clams are seen as an act of relationality, which strengthen bonds between relations. As Richard Atleo (2011) notes, the act of giving gifts and eating with each other was and remains a mechanism of recognizing



and engaging in relationships of mutual exchange with one's family. Furthermore, when *community members* get together to feast they are engaging in the same process outlined above. Hence, relation acts such as dropping off clams to family members function to create an *expansive* family.

To further elucidate this point, I want to talk about a young Indigenous trader and sharer named Viktor. Viktor receives food fish from his Indigenous nation, which he sells. Viktor also works part-time in the service industry. Viktor (personal communication, March 14, 2015) has a very broad conceptualization of family, which is related to "how he was brought up."

*Johnnie:* So, what I wanted to ask, because you talked about family growing up close and you talked about how, you know brothers and sisters are your cousins ... Why is it that you call your cousins brothers and sisters?

*Viktor:* ... It almost feels like a traditional aspect, right? I don't know who told me where it came from, I just grew up knowing that my mom's brothers and sister's kids are my brothers and sisters. Just cuz that's was how close we were going to be. I just remember my mom saying "that's your cousin so and so, but you'll call that so and so your brother and sister because that is how close we are."

Sid, Poly, and Viktor's expansive definition of family find resonance in other Indigenous nations, as noted by the late Sioux anthropologist Ella Deloria (in Rifkin, 2011 p. 181) "By kinship all Dakota people were held together in a great relationship that was theoretically all-inclusive and co-extensive with the Dakota domain ... Before going further, I can safely say that the ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative." Here, the Indigenous idea of "being a good relation" is used as mechanism for Sid, Poly, and Viktor is mechanism to extend their notions of kinship, which sees cousins transformed into brothers and family into community. Again we see how ancestral conceptualizations of the appropriate way to be are associated with ancestral territory and

understandings of place-based cultural teachings which inform how contemporary Indigenous people conceptualize and enact Indigenous forms of sociality, such as kinship / family. Here, family is understood as “expansive.” Such conceptualizations and enactments of family transcend dominant conceptualizations of the privatized and nuclear family, and have been observed in contemporary Indigenous communities (Nadasdy, 2003; Rifkin, 2011). Hence, Indigenous traders and sharers are practicing a form of nested self-determination as observed by A. Simpson (2014), which on an individual level involves forming networks of people who collectively enact communal self-determination and find ways to connect individual and communal scales.

### **2.2.3 Food and Responsibilities**

The scholarship on Indigenous hunting and trading practices is vast (see Nadasdy, 2007). So too is the literature on why they hunt the way they do. For Indigenous people in this study, gathering, selling, and distributing food was not just something that was done without any consideration. Rather, these acts of trading and sharing were informed by a larger place-based worldview. In particular, the concepts of respect and responsibility were major factors in how Indigenous people in rural and urban environments conceptualized trading, but especially the act of sharing.

For instance, as Lou (personal communication, March 22, 2015) discussed:

*Lou:* We always say respect, that's not respecting elders when selling it. Respect is when you give to somebody, that's respecting. You sell it, that's not what you call a respect. I like it when they just give it eh?

*Johnnie:* Yeah, and don't expect anything in return eh?

*Lou:* Yeah, that's what our people used to say... “You share with your people. What you catch, you share with your people.”

For Lou the act of sharing one's catch with one's relations is a fundamental act of respect. Yet, the respect that Lou, and other Indigenous people like the Kluane hunters (Nadasdy, 2003), discuss is not the same type of respect that Settlers deploy when they talk about respect, nor generally how Settlers understand Indigenous forms of respect, which according to Nadasdy (2003, p. 81) is often understood as "just a synonym for the injunction against wasting meat." Yet, for Lou, respect is rooted to the notion that people in his community have certain obligations which they have to meet in order to be good relations. Selling fish to elders is not a respectful act. Rather, the act of giving to elders is a respectful act. Similarly, Viktor recognizes that to be a good relation he also has certain obligations that he has to meet. Here is Viktor (personal communication, March 14, 2015) talking about why he shares his fish with his family and why he helps family clean fish:

*Viktor:* [T]he way we're are brought up, it's not just help your elders, to be honest. It's help out anyone who needs help. You don't just stand there when someone is struggling. You get over there and help out.

*Johnnie:* Do you expect anything for helping them out?

*Viktor:* No.

*Johnnie:* No? How come?

*Viktor:* It's just not expected when you help someone you don't ... it's one of those, if, they are brought up the same way you are brought up, chances are if you need even the tiniest bit of help they are going to be there.

Here both Lou and Viktor are discussing the concept of giving – whether it is fish or assistance in life in general – without expecting anything in return. Nadasdy (2007) expounds on the concept of the gift in great detail. His focus was primarily on remote hunting communities in the Yukon. In his study, the concept of the gift refers to the way in which Indigenous hunters and gatherers see animals as nonhuman kin, as animal-persons, in which they are in a relationship of mutual exchange. As Richard Atleo (2004) notes, such a view of kinship is simply rooted to the

fact that according to the worldview of Indigenous people such as the Nuu-chah-nulth animals share a *common origin*. Since animals and humans are the product of divine creation, they must engage in a relationship based on mutual exchange, i.e., one rooted in respect, beneficial reciprocity (R. Atleo, 2004; L. Simpson, 2008; Nadasdy, 2007). As Richard Atleo (2004, p. 20) notes, “The purpose of creation is to foster wholeness or community, for that is the natural order to existence ... this purpose is not restricted to human communities: it applies to all created beings.” Yet, in Indigenous worldviews it is recognized that mutual exchange is not something that just occurs, but has to be developed and maintained through various means such as dialogue, social interaction between communities, cultural interactions between community members, and protocol (R. Atleo, 2004, Gombay, 2014; Nadasdy, 2003, 2007; L. Simpson, 2008). Indeed, as Nadasdy (2007) notes, this mutual exchange is structured differently across Indigenous territories (i.e. coastal versus interior or northern).

Throughout this study people engaged in trading and sharing activities continually referred to food as gifts. Relations in this study continually referred to the need to be grateful, honor, or respect the gift. How relations did this varied according to the context in which they found themselves. Some relations engaged in ceremonial practices to pay respect to the gift. Other participants paid respect to the gift by engaging in behavior, informed by their placed-based ontology. Note the words of Penny (personal communication, April 3, 2015), a rural male commercial fisherman who also engages in harvesting and sharing activities

*Johnnie:* Any kind of favorite memory about hunting or fishing ... that you want to talk about?

*Penny:* Usually when we go out fishing we usually are out before daybreak ... we usually make coffee and breakfast. We have our portion and we always save a portion and put it

out on deck ... For the spirits [of the fish] out on the water ... We usually say a prayer for them and, yeah, praying ...

*Johnnie*: Is that an older practice as well?

*Penny*: It's just something we've always done.

*Johnnie*: Family?

*Penny*: Yup.

Here, Penny (personal communication, April 3, 2015) is talking about leaving a gift for salmon.

Penny also leaves a gift for animals he hunts.

*Penny*: [W]hen we go out hunting, we usually put out tobacco.

*Johnnie*: Oh yeah?

*Penny*: Yeah, it's similar to fishing, but for us it's tobacco while hunting.

*Johnnie*: So, is that, is that a gift as well?

*Penny*: Yeah, it's just a way of saying, thank you to what's coming to us.

*Johnnie*: Ok. Ok. So why do you have to do that? Why do you have to give thanks?

*Penny*: I think it's important that we give thanks to what's being offered to us. Like the animals are giving themselves to us as nourishment.

*Johnnie*: And is that a way to pay them back.

*Penny*: Yeah. It helps their spirit go out.

*Johnnie*: Ok. Ok. So you give gifts whenever you hunt?

*Penny*: Yeah.

Here, Penny is discussing the concept of the gift as it has traditionally been understood in anthropological and Indigenous studies literature (see Cruikshank, 2005; Nadasdy, 2007; L. Simpson, 2008). In the first chapter of this thesis I described the spiritual protocols Indigenous people used to engage in acts of mutual exchange with animals. I also discussed the ways in which these protocols were still being practiced in a variety of social contexts. Here, Penny is explicit – the animal is *giving itself* to him as nourishment and this not only needs to be acknowledged, but “paid back” so that their spirit may leave its body. Hence, what is crucial is that Penny recognizes the animal – fish or ungulate – as a relation. Like the protocol in observed between the Anishnaabe and animals (L. Simpson, 2008), Penny is acknowledging that the animal gave the gift of its life so that he may survive. As such, he has a *responsibility* to pay it

back – the engage in an act of mutual exchange (Nadasdy, 2007; L. Simpson, 2008) – so that the spirit of the animal may leave, i.e., so that it won't suffer anymore (L. Simpson, 2008). It would seem that Penny's story, which is very beautiful and for me, heart-warming, also fits within a broader narrative about rural Indigenous hunters and gatherers being more "in tune" with the language of the gift (see Nadasdy, 2003, 2007 for explicit arguments on this point). Yet, Penny is a person who has spent half of his life living in the city and half of his life living in rural environments. So, the question of whether his ruralness or urbanness contributes to him being more willing to practice the gift is moot.

Yet there are consequences for not recognizing the importance of the gift, as noted in the following conversation with Paul a rural commercial shellfish fisherman who shares fish that he catches recreationally with his Indigenous community. Paul (personal communication, April 3, 2015) talked about how much fish he gave away in a manner which was at once nonchalant and full of pride

*Paul:* I've been giving away fish since I was born ...

*Johnnie:* [C]an you walk me through what you are doing what you are sharing?

*Paul:* ... So we'll sit there on the dock and fillet it all. Whoever comes along and just give it away.

*Johnnie:* Ok. How do people know how to get it? Do you tell people?

*Paul:* We just tell them as they are walking down the dock.

During the interview Paul (personal communication, April 3, 2015) expressed frustration at his relations for throwing away the gift of fish he is giving them.

[Paul's Relations]: "We don't understand why you are not giving us fish." [Paul]: "The reason we are not giving you fish is because of what you did with the last fish now. Because you fucking tossed it out in the garbage!" Yeah, they like it, but they don't know how to deal with it. That's a problem with our people.

At first I thought Paul (personal communication, April 3, 2015) was getting upset at his relations for not knowing how to fillet the fish, which I took as an entry point to talk about processing fish. Paul clarifies matters in the following conversation

*Johnnie:* I think that would help a lot. To teach them [to process the fish], because I think there is a lot of shame in [Indigenous] communities about not knowing how to process. Big deal if you don't know how to process!

*Paul:* Nah, it's just the smell.

*Johnnie:* They don't like the smell you think?

*Paul:* Yeah, they don't like the smell. It's just the smell. They don't like it.

Notice here how Paul makes the decision not to give fish away to people who throw it in the garbage. Remember that Paul is not a commercial fisherman and this is not *extra fish*. This is fish that Paul caught for himself and the community to share. Also remember that Paul *processes the fish* for his relations. So, in effect, all his relations have to do is literally take the fish from him, put in their fridge and eat it. Now one could argue that Paul is bitter because his relations are *wasting fish* because they don't like the smell of it. I would argue that Paul feels as though he is being disrespected by his relations. Hence, like the Kluane hunters in Nadasdy (2003), Paul begins applying rules of mutual exchange to his relations. Paul's relations are not recognizing or respecting the fact that he is giving them a gift, nor are they fulfilling their part of the deal by eating the fish, therefore, he stops giving them fish. Hence, what might seem like a selfish and bitter act by Paul is actually Paul enacting the laws of mutual exchange (Nadasdy, 2003) or balance and harmony (R. Atleo, 2004). Here, Paul sees an imbalance in the relationship between him and his relations and seeks to correct it by refusing to give his relations fish. And knowing Paul like I do, chances are that his refusal to give certain relations fish is only a temporary thing.

Though Penny (a commercial fisherman), Viktor (a person who sells his food fish), and Paul (a man who fishes solely to share his fish) each undertake distinct economic activities, what links all three is that these activities are *rooted to* Indigenous conceptualizations of the appropriate way to engage with human and nonhuman kin, i.e., they are rooted to an economy of mutual exchange. Now, this is not to say that all their economic activities are rooted to an economy of mutual exchange. However, in the instances when they are confronted, so to speak, with a *thing* that is once understood to carry salience as a relation and as a commodity they engage with that *thing* in a way that is relationally driven. This is self-recognition in an almost unconscious sense because they were *raised* to be Indigenous, and these teachings permeate from home and inform their behavior, which changes to match the context in which they find themselves. Hence, Penny, Viktor, and Paul are practicing an embodied form of self-determination which refuses to sacrifice responsibilities to one's relations in service of dominant conceptualizations of how individuals ought to behave, which state that individuals ought to behave in an entrepreneurial, individualistic, and self-responsible ways (Lyon-Callo, 2008; Spade, 2011).

#### **2.2.4 Food and Recognizing Your Family**

According to Richard Atleo (2004, 2011) for the Nuu-chah-nulth people to live a life according to the tenets of relationality, respect and beneficial reciprocity, it is the responsibility of people to recognize who their family is. So far, how Indigenous traders and sharers in this study have talked about home and family has been consistent with this statement. Yet, not every participant was informed by an ethos rooted in relationality, respect, beneficial reciprocity, and responsibility. For Zachary (personal communication, March 11, 2015), the reason he initially engaged in the act of selling fish was simple:



*Johnnie:* [W]hy [did] you trade and share ... mainly because of money?

*Zachary:* Yeah, yeah.

*Johnnie:* And it wasn't like a cultural kind of thing?

*Zachary:* No.

Zachary has been selling, trading, and sharing salmon since 2007 (Zachary, personal communication, March 11, 2015). When Zachary first began selling fish he did not know how to properly clean or store fish. It was Zachary's interaction with his father-in-law and his father-in-law's immediate and extended family – who are all Indigenous – that helped him develop the technical skills required to be able to sell salmon:

*Zachary:* [My father in- law] is always trying to show me how they [clean fish] and every time I try I can't do it as fast as them.

*Johnnie:* You make a big mess, hey?

*Zachary:* Yeah (laughs).

*Johnnie:* But, um, so they just mainly joke around with you.

*Zachary:* Yeah ... but they also at the same time ... walk me through how [to clean fish] properly ... so I don't get hurt ... or ... waste the fish.

As we see above, Zachary is beginning to be inculcated in Indigenous forms of sociality.

Zachary's father-in-law patiently and gently walks Zachary through the process of cleaning fish.

According to Richard Atleo (2004) the process of teaching and learning requires patience and respect for the individual engaging in the learning process. Such a process has been noted in other Indigenous cultures as well (Nadasdy, 2003; L. Simpson, 2011). This process culminated in Zachary (personal communication, March 11, 2015) being eventually exposed to Indigenous ceremonial practices associated with trading and sharing of fish:

*Johnnie:* [E]xplain, what you guys talk about when you're fishing.

*Zachary:* [L]ike when we're cleaning the fish or whatever?

*Johnnie:* When did he teach you teach you about the cedar wood thing? Where were you?

*Zachary:* We were at his house, cleaning fish. And he asked if I knew [leans in mimicking his father-in-law's speech pattern] ... [lowers tone of voice to whisper] what our ancestors used to do with the fish when they were done with them. I said no. He said

his grandpa told him that ... when we were done with the fish, put it on the cedar branches and put it back in the water. And say thank-you.

Here we can see how Zachary's father-in-law clearly links, the act of trading and sharing fish, the act of acknowledging and giving thanks to the salmon for the gift of its life, to the acts of his ancestors. As we saw earlier, with the rural trader and sharer Penny, such an act is a way of acknowledging the salmon as a relation with whom one has a responsibility. This act made Zachary curious about his own heritage. Later in the interview, we see Zachary (personal communication, March 11, 2015) acknowledge and claim this heritage as his own:

*Johnnie:* So just give me a story, any story, about a typical day, before you were taught that?

*Zachary:* I don't know. I'd like help clean and I wasn't into learning about what our ancestors did ... After I was told what they would do with the fish ... that's when I started getting involved, and asking questions ... I want[ed] to know ... what [his ancestors] did with [the salmon]. How they enjoyed it.

It was this sociality which enabled Zachary's father-in-law to impart place-based knowledge to Zachary. Yet, as Zachary noted, his father in law was very patient with Zachary. He never tried to dominate him. He joked around with and he teased him. This is known as a concept of non-interference, but as Nadasdy (2003) notes non-interference can be more broadly understood as the Indigenous concept of respect. Again, I want to reiterate this point because I think it is important as Richard Atleo (2004, 2011) notes, for the Nuu-chah-nulth respect, or Iisaak states that it is our *responsibility to recognize* that we all share a common origin. As such, when teaching others how to engage with the world, we must do so in such a way that not only respects the common origin of creation, but also respects the fact that each individual has their own form of agency which should be respected (R. Atleo, 2004; Nadasdy, 2003). As such, when approaching individuals, one should engage with them starting from their own subject positions

as opposed our own subject positions (Nadasdy, 2003). This is what is happening with Zachary and his father-in-law. Through the kind act of teaching while joking around, Zachary was taught in such a way that afforded him maximum agency in the learning process (L. Simpson, 2000). In short, Zachary's father in-law respected him as individual who was capable of learning how to process fish.

This had dramatic consequences for Zachary. For Zachary, this moment was a pivotal moment. Here, it would seem that Zachary is being taught the "proper" way to be Indigenous, which in turn causes him to think about and articulate his Indigeneity in ways that are immediately comprehensible and apprehendable to people like me. Yet, the catch here is that Zachary in the first interview I did with him (October 22, 2014) refused to talk about any cultural aspect of the act of fishing. Furthermore, Zachary's father-in-law when conveying this knowledge to him did so in a secretive manner. What makes Zachary and his father in-law so secretive about performing the gift? The secretive manner in which Zachary's father in-law could be linked to Indigenous conceptualizations of humility (Atleo, 2004, Nadasdy, 2003). Yet, as Verna St. Denis (2007) notes, cultural revitalization is a double-edged sword. Though it has the power for self-affirmation it can also be used as a disciplining tool which can induce in Indigenous people shame – the shame to acknowledge and practice Indigeneity because it is frowned upon in Settler society (Jackson, 1998) and because mis-practice is frowned upon in Indigenous communities (St. Denis, 2007). Zachary and his father in-law could be secretive about performing the gift out of humility or shame.

Poly, like Zachary, too was on the receiving end of a gift. Unlike Zachary, Poly can be described as a person who is well-immersed in Indigenous cultural practices. Poly speaks her Indigenous language, has been taught the oral history of her Indigenous nation by her elders, and engages in land-based harvesting practices that are explicitly informed by her Indigenous worldview. Indeed, Poly is deeply aware of the Indigenous trading and sharing history, so much so that she is able to explicitly link seemingly mundane acts of trading and sharing back to that of her ancestors (Poly, personal communication, March 22, 2015):

Our grandpa used to go out and get salmon and give it all away ... I think some of that still happens in some ways. Like when I was in search and rescue it was mostly with non-native people, but there was a couple of other [Indigenous people] there. And one of them ... always brought smoked salmon and ... explicitly shared it with me because we're relatives. [I]t was like this little underground thing going on ... we had a different connection than all the other people in that group.

Note the way in which Poly draws a connection between the trading and sharing behavior of her ancestors and those of the other Indigenous person. As noted earlier, for Indigenous people, the act of giving away fish is informed by a larger place-based worldview which explicitly states that it is the duty of Indigenous people to distribute fish among relations in order to facilitate the development of strong relationships and fulfill relational obligations in place. Here, Poly is making an explicit link to the actions of her ancestors and mundane acts of trading and sharing which occur in the mundane setting of lunch time. Unlike Zachary, Poly is not *explicitly* performing acts of that can readily be identified as Indigenous. Rather it is here that Poly makes an explicit link to the actions of her ancestors and mundane acts of trading and sharing, which occur in the quotidian setting of lunch time. Poly is on the receiving end of a physical gift.

What are we to make of these two acts of trading and sharing? It is here that I would like to turn to the words of Poly (personal communication, March 22, 2015) to help answer this question:

I still see [sharing of food] a lot of places. Like, our families are really important. I know now that we say "I'm from this [Indigenous nation] and that person's from that [Indigenous nation] and, that person is from that [Indigenous nation]." But more important than that is who is our family are.

For Poly and the Indigenous people in this study, the act of trading and sharing is explicitly rooted to not only utilizing place-based worldviews to engage in trading and sharing activities; Indigenous people engaged in trading and sharing activities are also informed by the need to *recognize who one's relations are*, which enables them to interact with people who they are trading or sharing with *as those they are* one's relations. In both Poly and Zachary's case their sociality was informed not so much by *their* conceptualizations and enactment of place, but by the fact that *other* people recognized them as Indigenous and initiated a process of mutual exchange which was rooted in their place-based worldview. Indeed, as Richard Atleo (2011, p. 80) notes, "over time [for the Nuu-chah-nulth] it was learned that gift giving and recognition promoted balance and harmony between beings, that it obeyed what might be called the laws of the positive side of polarity." Furthermore, Richard Atleo (2011, p. 81) is key to address the way in which these acts of recognition and gift giving were altered to meet the many "social, political, and environmental situations," in which Nuu-chah-nulth people found themselves, and as a way to address issues "of relationship."

Here, the process of recognition and mutual exchange was made to fit the social context in which Zachary and Poly were situated. It was this process of recognition and mutual exchange that enabled Zachary and Poly to engage in acts that critical Indigenous scholars say is necessary to

be Indigenous, which is they are both consciously thinking about and acting in a way that is Indigenous (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Coulthard, 2014; L. Simpson, 2011). The fact that others *recognized* that both Zachary and Poly, as Indigenous people capable of *recognizing* and *accepting* the significance of receiving gifts – whether these gifts were knowledge about the placed informed ancestral ceremonial practices or a serving of smoked salmon – means that both Zachary and Poly were seen by their relations as Indigenous. Hence, Zachary and Poly, like the other Indigenous traders and sharers in this study, are engaged in a form of relational politics when they recognize and others recognize them as relations and engage in mutual exchange. This form of politics, while nested in the contemporary liberal democratic state of Canada, finds its roots in older conceptualizations of politics. These politics focus on the relationships and obligations entailed in those relationships because of ones shared heritage in creation. These politics are rooted to and practiced in their specific Indigenous places. Hence, all of the Indigenous traders and sharers in this study thus far have utilized ancestral conceptualizations of place to engage with the social world in which they find themselves, with this engagement changing to match the social context in which they find themselves. This is self-recognition, this is self-determination.

### **2.3 Remember Your Family: Trading and Sharing of Food as Place-Making and Relational Politics**

This section will be outlining the way in the colonial transformation of familial relations has reverberated out to impact the ways in which contemporary Indigenous people conceptualize and practice trading and sharing of food. There are several implications for speaking of or analyzing Indigenous notions of family as nuclear and privatized: 1) Indigenous kincentric political

structures are conceptualized and engaged with as though they are merely symbolic (c.f. Nadasdy, 2007); 2) Indigenous kincentric political structures are erased (Rifkin, 2011). As the previous chapter demonstrated the politics of kinship is alive and well among Indigenous traders and sharers.

This section is concerned with the way in which the process of contemporary colonial dispossession enables and constrains the ability of Indigenous people to engage in relationships according to their Indigenous worldviews, and how Indigenous traders and sharers utilize their place-based worldview. Indigenous traders and sharers in this study discussed three factors that impacted how they practiced trading and sharing: 1) Perceptions of relational loss; 2) Money and technology; 3) Gender.

### **2.3.1 Place and Perceptions of Relational Loss**

[H]istory is not simply a science but also and not least a form of remembrance ... What science has “determined,” remembrance can modify. Such mindfulness can make the incomplete (happiness) into something complete, and the complete (suffering) into something incomplete.

-Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 2002, p. 471.

The interview responses in this section were again related to questions around home, community, and family. However, I did not explicitly intend to talk to these traders and sharers about what they feel they have “lost.” In short, I know these people, I didn’t want to make them upset, I want to have a good relationship with them after this study is done. Thus, since I know every single trader and sharer in this study the way in which I asked questions was done with this in mind. I had a set of key-words developed before the interview. These key-words, themes, and

behavior to watch for that were associated with trauma, which included “residential school, abuse, violence, crying, upset, etc.” During the interview, if any of these keywords, themes, or behaviors occurred I would stop the interview and say, “I am not here to ask you questions that will lead to you feeling upset or traumatized. Do you want to continue with the interview?” A few times during the interview, people stated that what they were saying was important and that they wanted to be heard. At other points, we took a break and resumed discussing trading and sharing, often leading to the traumatizing topic to be dropped. Regardless, it is not the purpose of this study to put the personal pain and misery of my relations on display. Rather, it is the purpose of this study to find out simply – how do Indigenous people engaged in food trading and sharing conceptualize the act of trading and sharing and what effect does this have on their ability or inability to trade and share food?

Indigenous people in this study reflected on a general sense of loss of connection, which I am calling relational loss. This loss was a source of great frustration, psycho-social engagement, and finally a site of articulation and enactment of Indigenous conceptualizations of Indigeneity. Here, Indigenous people talked about the feeling of “having lost something” and demonstrated that they were able to “fight through” that feeling of loss. Cultural acts of remembering how and why food was traded the way it was, recounting to me how they traded and shared food, and how they think food should be traded and shared, were mechanisms for transcending and dealing with this sense of relational loss.

As demonstrated in the previous section, Indigenous traders and sharers in urban and rural contexts can articulate Indigenous worldviews and this does influence how they conceptualize



family, community, and home in place. Yet, they are also confronted with a dominant conceptualization of family, community, and home which has different spatial-temporal configurations. Such a confrontation makes them perceive they have lost connections to their relations. Yet, it is important to recognize that both dominant and Indigenous conceptualizations of family, home, and community are not *static* configurations that are not enmeshed, but rather are made and remade on a day to day basis, themselves becoming entangled (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013). This is where memory and imagination come into play.

I think starting out broadly about how Indigenous people deal with trauma or loss will help us understand how this affects their food trading and sharing practices. For instance Dotty (personal communication, October 26, 2014), a rural trader and sharer, notes how she deals with loss and trauma

... I have a lot of trauma to heal too. And I have a diagnosis of PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] ... one of the things that people misunderstand about PTSD is there can be a tribe of people who go through things together and if the trauma is witnessed, you can move on from it. And ... the reason people get traumatized is when ... they experience something and somebody says that they have to get over it - it never happened or nobody can relate to it.

Here, Dotty is making an explicit link between her diagnosis of PTSD, its effect on the broader community, and the relationship to society at large. Dotty is able to make these connections, due in large part to her education – in western and traditional medicine. Yet, more importantly, Dotty is making a link between a *whole tribe* of people's trauma being recognized and healing. She talks about the importance of bearing witness to the trauma as an act of healing.

As Indigenous rural elder Kameron (personal communication, March 22, 2015) notes, how Indigenous people in his community dealt with loss

Kameron: [Y]ou know, when someone dies you go over and visit with their family and sit with them. And it's, uh, and it's like bringing a medicine to them. Just being there ... You are helping them ... Even if you don't say anything. Sit there. Be there. And so now ... what I've seen in the difference in the way our people die, or deal with death. The loss of mourning openly the way our people do. For example I go the cemetery to acknowledge the people that are there. To acknowledge them. It used to be a part of the ceremony. The deaths of neighbours. And so, those kind of things are, really different. People are usually too distraught to be cooking. And so what a lot of our teachings say is just bring them food. Bring them food.

Like with Dotty, how Indigenous people in Kameron's community deal with the loss was to acknowledge that there was loss and to acknowledge that other relations were suffering.

Furthermore, like Dotty's example, relations had a certain obligation to make sure the relations suffering from trauma from the loss caring for them. Because there worldview states that it is the whole community who is experiencing this loss. Yet, in Canada, as Leanne Simpson (2011) and Glen Coulthard (2014) both note, the idea of Indigenous individuals and communities healing from trauma inflicted by the Canadian state through Indian Act policies is linked to an overarching discourse that for Indigenous people to properly heal from they must first "get over the past." In short, this loss is not even recognized as loss.

How does this relate to trading and sharing of food? Bluntly put, Canada doesn't even acknowledge that when Indigenous people lost land they lost relationships. So how Indigenous traders and sharers deal with this loss is by engaging in what Melissa Caldwell (2011, p. 111) calls, "deliberative invocations of comparative temporalities." For instance Lou (personal communication, March 22, 2015) talked wistfully and at times bitterly about the things he had lost and thought he had lost, for instance: "I listened to our elders ... I worked at [a cannery]. I used to ... help them ... [T]hat's where there was houses and that's where they used to get our

seafood and what not eh? ... [W]e had a big family. We *do* have a big family... Now we don't do that." The *that* that Indigenous don't do anymore is live as a family at the site of the cannery because there are no permanent dwellings at there anymore. Such feelings of loss and bitterness in the face of change have been observed have been known as an important site of identity construction, where reality does not consist of one, but a "multi-temporal reality where change is not necessarily unidirectional but rather a proliferation of possibilities "then" and "now," "here" and "there." Hence, this tension between memory and embodied reality is space where Lou articulates his identity. Notice mid-sentence how Lou begins to draw definitive lines around family as it used to be – which was big – and almost begins to say that family has gotten smaller. Almost. Lou corrects himself, using Indigenous conceptualization of family which he uses to overcome the spatio-temporal configurations of family that have at once been imposed upon him and from my knowledge of Lou, which he quite enjoys. Here, Lou utilizes his ancestral place-based teachings to recognize that even though they don't all live together anymore, his family is still big.

But also I don't want deny the legitimate reasons Lou feels the sense of relational loss. As Anna Tsing (1993, p. 154) notes, "How do people become aware that they are strangers in their own lands? Someone must make them so. Sometimes they are forcibly removed. Sometimes they are reclassified." As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Indigenous people were both forcibly removed and reclassified. Lou is articulating and practicing a form of Indigeneity in the present day that is once enabled and constrained by the fact that he inhabits a society that has drawn definitive lines around what constitutes Indigenous identities, social, cultural, and economic practices (K. Brown, 2011; Menzies, 2011). Going back to the opening epigraph by Walter

Benjamin (1999), Lou lives in a society which has scientifically determined and legally codified what races – i.e., Indigenous people – should look like (Haney Lopez, 1994), what family should look like (Foucault, 1990), and what constitutes the appropriate way to engage with the environment (Sandlos, 2001, 2008). These “facts” have made Dotty, Kameron, and Lou unhappy. Yet, it is through remembrance and imagination that Dotty, Kameron, and Lou turn the “complete” (their unhappiness) into something incomplete, which could or could not be happiness, but regardless, enables them to deal with loss in a relational and Indigenous way.

Similarly, there exists the way in which Settler colonialism has altered how Poly conceives of and practices and her relationships, producing within in her a sense of loss. Remember earlier that for Poly, home is where family are located. Yet, note in this section how paradoxically, for Poly (personal communication, March 22, 2015), Settler communities within her traditional territory *do not* constitute home. “Really [that Settler town] is on our traditional territories, so by all rights I'm just as home there as I am anywhere. But, really, like, living among our own community again [is home].” For Poly, home can be at times a very specific set of relations with shared orientation to her ancestral territory, which contradicts her earlier statement from the previous section where she stated that home and community was expansive, encompassing other distinct Indigenous nations. Yet, Poly is not being inconsistent from her earlier statement and actions. Here, as in the example from the previous section, Poly (personal communication, March 22, 2015) links the act of sharing food with home, “[W]hen I moved back *home* I lived with my dad for a while and it was like every once and a while someone would knock on the door randomly ... it would it would be, "Hey, we have leftover clams." [or] “Hey, we've got leftover fish,” ... [J]ust really, really different.” Here, living among one’s own community again

for Poly is not simply living next to people whom one has identified as being part of a community. Rather, community is associated with a certain type of sociality, one linked to the Indigenous concepts of relationality, respect, beneficial reciprocity, and responsibility. For Poly, Settler towns are a symbolic and real example of Settler presence. Hence, though Indigenous people do live in the Settler town, for Poly there is not enough of a *certain type* of interaction between kin for her to call it home.

Poly is discussing ways in which historic and contemporary colonial dispossession has altered how she *practices* relationality. Dispossession was made possible not only by physical usurpation of land, but also by the creation, maintenance, and promotion of Settler place-based sociality (McGaw, Pieris, & Potter, 2011; Morgensen, 2012; Razack, 2002; Rifkin, 2011, 2013). This Settler place-based sociality is a function of material (Alfred, 1999; Coulthard, 2014; Harris, 2004; A. Simpson, 2014) and discursive (Million, 2013, Moreton-Robinson, 2006) configurations of power situated within the neocolonial relationship between Settler states and Indigenous nations. Indigenous social acts, such as dropping in unannounced to drop off clams, are a function of an Indigenous place-based worldview, which sees community as family and family as community, which is in contradistinction to the privatized and nuclear understanding of family within Western society (Emberley, 2001; Rifkin, 2011). For Poly, Settler sociality and dispossession has altered the natural *and* cultural landscape. Such an alteration constrains her ability to engage in place-making activities, such as the development, maintenance, and promotion of kinship bonds and networks between *all her relations*, within the town now found within her traditional territory.

Yet, for people living away from their traditional and ancestral territories, living in the city, perceptions of relational loss are felt more deeply. Unlike Poly and Lou, Suzie, an urban Indigenous elder who trades and shares food fish she receives from her Indigenous nation, is physically disconnected from her ancestral territory. Let's start Suzie's (personal communication, March 15, 2015) story off with her thoughts on food and home:

*Johnnie:* What [do] you think about when you think about those two words: culture and traditional foods.

*Suzie:* Home. Home as in the traditional sense.

Later in the interview, Suzie (personal communication, March 15, 2015) reveals her ambivalence to the thought of "community"

*Johnnie:* Uhm, so do you see yourself as a part of ... [the] community?

*Suzie:* I don't think so.

*Johnnie:* No? What do you see yourself as?

*Suzie:* They call me city folk.

*Johnnie:* Do you see yourself as a member of [your Indigenous nation]?

*Suzie:* Not really.

Yet, later in the interview Suzie (personal communication, March 15, 2015) is explicit in that she *does* see herself as a member of her Indigenous nation and with this comes certain obligations that her Indigenous nation has to fulfill, "[People] think nobody deserves this, or we don't deserve that. But I deserve everything, because I'm [a member of my Indigenous nation]. I go over people's heads [to get what I want]." I think it is important to place Suzie within the same context as Poly and Lou. Suzie too perceives that she has *lost* something. The thing she thinks she has *lost* is her Indiogeneity. In large part this is due to the fact that urban environments are conceptualized and engaged with by academics, activists, and the public at large as a Settler place devoid of Indigenous presence (Coulthard, 2014, Lawrence, 2004; Razack, 2002b).

Furthermore, as noted earlier, Indigenous urban citizenry inhabit a space that has been dominantly conceptualized – literally – as existing outside of the realm of Indigenous governance. Hence, Suzie exists as an “abnormality” which is included in the political body of the Settler state, and an “abnormality” which is tenuously included in the body of her Indigenous nation. On an individual level Indigenous people also deploy ancestral conceptualizations of kinship to resist being reduced to politically insignificant life within their own communities (Rifkin, 2011). So we can read Suzie’s comments as follows: “I know where my home is, home is my Indigenous nation. Other people see me as something distinct, as someone that is not a member of my Indigenous nation. Maybe I’m not a member of my Indigenous nation. No, I am member of our Indigenous nation. You have to take care of me. It’s your responsibility to take care of me. I’m entitled to be looked after.” Suzie is invoking Indigenous concepts centered on relationality to combat her marginalization as “city folk.” As mentioned earlier, conceptualizations of place can and are transported to other places (Caldwell, 2011; Miller, 2001; Hoeschler, 2003; Katz, 2002). Once in other places, people engage in place making activities which reconstitute their sense of place within a new place (Gordillo, 2011; Pierce, Martin, & Murphy, 2011). Hence, Suzie is *inscribing* Indigenous conceptualizations of place in an urban environment when she engages with her worldview to make claims to what resources she feels she is entitled to.

So what to make of Lou, Poly, and Suzie’s seemingly disparate comments? For one, all three perceive that they have lost connection to their relations or relationships which they feel are vital to their sense of self and wellbeing. It is my contention that the process of dispossession of land and associated inscription of Settler sociality has affected not so much Lou, Poly, and Suzy’s

general conceptualization of home, but rather how they “practice” home and construct Indigenous place. Indeed, according to Richard Atleo (2004, p. 29), for the Nuu-chah-nulth, “home and community are perceived as natural to creation,” with “only the quality of these relationships to be determined.” Hence, for Lou, Poly, and Suzie, the quality of their relationships is something that has been determined, is being determined, and will be determined in large part by the tension between the perception that they lost *something* and that they need to recover it, and their place-based kinship practices which they use to try to recover *it*.

### **2.3.2 Money and Technology**

Money had a visible impact on the ability for participants to engage in trading and sharing activities. Money was needed to purchase equipment to harvest plants and animals, to travel to harvesting sites, to process harvested plants and animals, and to deliver harvested foods to relations and customers. Money is obviously important. I would like to work from Daniel Miller’s statement in the epigraph as a guiding principle in this section to demonstrate that Indigenous people in this study were both enabled and constrained by money. Every single participant thought and felt that money played a structuring role in the act of trading and sharing of food. Participants discussed how money, their jobs, and the financial capacity of others affected not only how they conceptualized trading and sharing, but how they practiced it. It is my hope to demonstrate that the *tension* between participating in a capitalist economy and relational economy is itself an important producer of Indigenous subjectivities.

One strange and interesting result that came out of this study was the fact that engaging in the act of catching fish and selling it as a commodity actually worked to bring Indigenous traders and



sharers closer to their nonhuman kin. Take, for instance, Penny's story. Remember earlier how Penny discussed how he explicitly engages in acts that are meant to acknowledge that he is engaged in a relationship of mutual exchange with the salmon he is catching. Yet, Penny also makes a living by *selling* fish. Also remember that when Penny fishes or hunts, he gives a gift as a way of recognizing the gift that the animal gave him – its life. Thus, for Penny the act of selling fish does not negatively affect his ability to fulfill his obligations to his salmon kin on an interpersonal level.

Yet, the commodification of fish on a broader scale does affect as Penny's ability to fulfill his obligations to his salmon kin. Penny seeks to mediate the contradiction of being in a relationship of mutual exchange with salmon on the one hand and the demands of the commercial fisheries on the other hand by offering his services in the act of environmental stewardship: "We've mentioned to [Fisheries] for years that in order for us to sustain our own livelihood in fishing we need to rebuild our own stocks, rivers and creeks ... we even told them that us as fisherman can go out there and help with that sustaining [the fisheries]" (Penny, personal communication, April 3, 2015). It would be tempting to view Penny's offer to help rebuild stocks as that solely of a commercial fisherman trying to sustain his livelihood, which it is. Yet, if we remember Penny's words about seeing salmon *as* kin we must also see his offer as an act of kinship. Penny, like the Kluane hunters in Nadasdy (2003), must *restate* his need to fulfill his relational obligations to his kin in such a way that he thinks resource managers will understand and in ways he thinks I will understand. This is because as Nadasdy (2007) notes, Indigenous people's claims that they see animals as kin are often treated as though they are speaking purely in symbolic terms. Indeed, later in the interview Penny (personal communication, April 3, 2015) acknowledges the power

dynamics at play in the act of speaking one's mind on issues of social importance "I think there are a lot of people out there that have a lot to say. But they can say it in, in closed quarters. But once they get into groups they kind of want to shy away from speaking. Cuz they're afraid of what they think is the repercussions of what others think."

Hence, Penny also has to mediate the contradiction between his knowledge that salmon are his kin with Settler sociality, which states that only humans are capable of being kin. Hence, Penny's deployment of the language of sustainability is a way to express concern for his salmon kin. Yet, Penny's engagement with the economic activity of fishing is at once dispossessing him of the ability to meet his reciprocal obligations to his salmon kin while at the same time allowing him to engage with his kin. It is also forcing him to conceptualize and enact kinship in ways that meet he thinks will allow him to meet his obligations to his salmon kin as well as sustain his livelihood as a fisherman.

Similarly, Viktor (personal communication, March 14, 2015) has no qualms selling fish he receives from his Indigenous community because

The way I think about it is it's now mine. It's going to help me get through the year. It's given to me to help me get through the year. The winter ... so ... what ... I do with it as I please that's my business. I don't sell all of it either. If there are people that appreciate it ... I'll clean, it prepare it for them, and bring it over. And I'm like "Here, I have an extra fish. You guys want it?"

Here, we see Viktor state that he has the right to sell his food fish. Yet, Viktor situates this right to sell his fish in ownership of the fish once he receives it and a broader responsibility he feels that his community has to make sure that he and his family can be well off for the year. And as a

caveat, he links his individual health – acquired by selling fish – to be able to enact his responsibilities to take care of others in his community that need food. Now it is true that Viktor might be ambivalent to the fact that he has to sell fish, yet he has been exposed to the discourse that he shouldn't sell fish as he notes “My mom tries to give me heck for it.” Hence, the tension between doing something that at times is frowned upon in Indigenous communities, i.e., selling fish (K. Brown, 2010), is still something that Viktor has to deal with.

Jackson (personal communication, March 22, 2015), a rural Indigenous commercial fisherman, has no qualms with the idea of selling fish and states that it was elders who told him the importance of being out on the land.

*Johnnie:* Well you talked about elders teaching you how [to commercially fish].

*Jackson:* Yeah it was always the elders - always the elders

*Johnnie:* Yeah it was the elders in general, eh?

*Jackson:* And they always said if you don't use that land you're gonna lose it! ... So what I'm doing is helping our people keep this land.

Going back to Viktor (personal communication, March 14, 2015), who also has to deal with the fact that he has to look after his family, sometimes looking after one's family requires selling fish to buy other things to care for them and make sure that they are healthy.

*Johnnie:* So what do you think the role of traditional foods is for our health?

*Viktor:* Yeah ... I do see it as important. Whether ... we store it for the year and make use of it or, if we end up having to sell some of it just to get other foods to maybe go with or maybe other stuff to provide for the household.

*Johnnie:* That's really interesting, so you're talking about how it can be used to make you healthy not only from just eating it. Can you explain more, you said for other stuff form the household?

*Viktor:* Yeah like, uhm ... sometimes you get so much of it that you don't have room to store it all and there are people in town that would buy your seafood. Or whatever it maybe sometimes. They'll buy it. And you'll end up using that towards like, milk. There's other necessities that you need on a daily basis that you might, that, you know, seafood is not going to provide you. You can't milk a sockeye!

*Johnnie:* You could, but it would taste kind of gamey though. Kind of fishy.

Similarly, Jackson (personal communication, March 22, 2015) also makes a link between selling fish and the need to take care of his family by making sure they know their territory and who they are as Indigenous people

*Johnnie:* So maybe talk about some of the values that go into what you're doing too. A bit more. Like you talked about how it's important for culture now, hey?

*Jackson:* A lot of our people don't realize how important it is to know [their] territory. Lot of them are on Facebook or instead of out *there* getting a strong back. It's important for my kids to know their territory. So do you take them out [when I'm fishing]. That, and just bringing home .. our seafood too [to give away] ...

Viktor and Jackson both spoke to me in a nonchalant fashion about them selling fish. Yet, in their description of selling they reveal how tensions between an Indigenous ethic which says one shouldn't sell fish and the need to care for their family is resolved. This tension between ethics and morality as Miller (2001) notes is a tension all families face in this world. In Miller's study, English shoppers were exposed to a discourse, which said that one ought to shop in an environmentally sustainable manner. Yet this ethic was challenged by the fact that green products were often very expensive and infringed upon their moral duty to care for their family. Hence, shoppers in Miller's study usually appealed to their duty to care to resolve the tension between ethics and morality. Furthermore, the shoppers in Miller's study generally thought that state intervention in the form of making green products more affordable, was the appropriate way to ensure their ability to shop ethically. Unlike the shoppers in Miller's (2001) study, Viktor and Jackson deal with this tension between ethics and morality by appealing to both ethics and morality. Viktor and Jackson both sell and give away fish. Hence, Viktor and Jackson are at once fulfilling their relational obligations to their immediate and extended family and to an ethic

which frowns upon the act of selling fish. In short, the act of selling fish is an important site for the production of Viktor and Jackson's identity as an Indigenous people.

Indigenous people in this study used their Indigenous worldviews, money, and trading and sharing of food as mechanisms for the recognition, development, and maintenance of class-based<sup>21</sup> affinities. Most of the observations related to this insight came from a simple line of questioning: who do you trade and share food with, and why do you trade and share food with them? However, these observations also just naturally came out during the conversation, particularly when discussing worldviews, home, community, or family. Several times during the interview process traders and sharers stressed the *commonalities* of experience with members of the poor Settler working class<sup>22</sup> who Zweig (1999, p. 86) calls "working people who have hit hard times."<sup>23</sup> In short, this is because all of the participants in this study, except for Poly and Buffy who are both working professionals, were poor working-class Indigenous people<sup>24</sup> "who've hit hard times." These working-class affinities, rather than "assimilating" Indigenous

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<sup>21</sup> I am using social class to define what constitutes class (Menzies, 2011), with the class being defined as being comprised of "people who sell their ability to work to an employer in exchange for a wage," (Camfield, 2011, p. 1) who are "connected to one another, by the ways they interact when producing goods and services" (Zweig, 1999, p. 11) and is related to "the power some people have over the lives of others, and powerlessness most people feel as a result" (Zweig, p.11).

<sup>22</sup> The working class can be understood as being comprised of people who share a "common place in production, where they have little control over the pace or content of their work," (Zweig, 1999, p. 11).

<sup>23</sup> The separating of the "poor" and "Indigenous people" from the "working class" obscures the fact that both Indigenous people and the "poor" are still members of the working class (c.f. Zweig, 1999). Being Indigenous and "poor" or being a Settler and "poor" is often more of a function of who has the power over the means of production rather than ability or inability to be a "worker." Furthermore, Indigenous people do work full time, often don't participate in mixed economies as advocated by some Indigenous scholars (Coulthard, 2014; L. Simpson, 2011), and when engaged in the labor force have little or no control over the means of production, hence, they are often working class Indigenous people.

<sup>24</sup> In the case of this study what does differentiate the Indigenous working class from the settler working class is the social mode of production. The social mode of production refers to "the relationships people enter into in the process of production" (Menzies, 2011, p. 137). As Menzies (137) notes, "In kin ordered societies kinship is used to organize the process of production." I prefer the term relational economy over kinship mode of production.

people into the capitalist settler society, were social relationships, which allowed for the articulation and performance of Indigenous identity.

Suzie offers the first striking example of Indigenous-Settler working class affinity leading to an articulation of Indigenous identity. Suzie is on disability. She spends all of her money on food and receives food fish from her Indigenous nation, who deliver it to her in the city. Remember as Suzie tells her story (personal communication, March 15, 2015) that she is an Indigenous elder who lives on disability payments from the province:

*Johnnie:* Why do you share food?

*Suzie:* I share because even though I feel like I am having a hard time, somebody is having a worse time than I am. And they probably need it more than I do. Like this family just moved to Nanaimo three weeks ago and somebody told her that I would help her with food. Somebody on Facebook told her and she befriended me on Facebook. She goes, "Well we just started and we [have nothing]."

*Johnnie:* White family?

*Suzie:* Yeah and I said, "I know where to get you guys some clothes." I said "I know where to get you guys some beds." I got lots of furniture around Nanaimo. So I got them two double beds for starters. And I said, "Sorry I don't have any furniture. She said "Aww, you got us the beds and that is good enough." And we brought the food. And then I gave her a gift card.

*Johnnie:* So why did you uhm, so why do you help out people like strangers and stuff like that?

*Suzie:* Just the way I was brought up ... by my uncle ... was always such a big giver ... I think it is culture.

*Johnnie:* So you are saying it falls back on culture? That makes it easier to share? Can you explain that?

*Suzie:* Just the people that had a good influence on me. About, you know, giving us food when we are hungry. Giving us shelter. Being nice even if they don't have to.

As demonstrated earlier, the "way we were brought up" can also be thought of as "the way we were brought up as Indigenous people." To be certain Suzie's Indigenous worldview is driving her interaction with a fellow poor working class person. Yet, I would argue what is just as important is the fact that Suzie and the settler family with whom she is interacting are both poor

working class people. Both have been exposed to the ravages of capitalist society and both show the similar outcomes – i.e., they are poor.

Other Indigenous traders and sharers in this study also felt affinity for poor working class people, which drove their interactions with them, which in turn made them reflect on their own

Indigeneity. Take Mick (personal communication, March 14, 2015), an Indigenous man that spent most of his life living on an Indigenous reserve, but has been living in the city for the last year:

*Johnnie:* So, what I wanted to ask next is there anything you think that really helps you be able to carve or share food?

*Mick:* Yeah, it's ... expressing who I am through my culture ... Like, the symbol on my back. It represents the community or the family. Like, it leaves my mark so that our people aren't forgotten. You never know even if we are here. And to be able to take that and the same time say, "Well, I learned this from, from [my cousin] and his teachers, [who were his uncles]." You know? Or people that taught me throughout my life how to be and how to do Native art. You know?

*Johnnie:* Yeah, I do.

*Mick:* You know. People have taught me those things [that] I have used ... to help me survive. When it was harder to find a job. You know, there's guys in the lineup in front of you at the temp agency waiting to get two jobs that day or something eh? And, you're stuck there waiting with none, you need to put food on the table or pay the rent ... And you take these skills and this knowledge of your culture and your history and use those tools in order to get by through the day. Not only to help me but to help those around me.

For this study, I could not find any literature on simple topics such as: contemporary Indigenous working class, Indigenous-settler friendship, Indigenous-settler relationships (that wasn't about domination or coercion). In short, Indigenous people are painted as highly immobile beings or too mobile (i.e., they didn't occupy their lands for long enough periods to "claim it as their own" (Mawani, 2005). Furthermore, in a lot of studies on Indigenous people or are represented as though their only positive social engagement in urban environments is with other Indigenous

people (see Peters & Anderson, 2013 for examples). Regardless, I think that Suzie's and Mick's ability to develop affinities with other working class people is driven by two factors – their identity as an Indigenous person and their identity as a poor working class person. This cross-ethnic working class relationship is mediated by Indigenous practices of kinship, which state that one must recognize the context in which other people find themselves (R. Atleo, 2004, 2011). As noted earlier in this chapter by Viktor, the way Indigenous people are “brought up” encourages them, when seeing someone struggling, to not sit around, but rather to help them – without expecting anything in return.

The literature on consumption, from which I also drew, is vast and tends to fall into two categories: those that see consumption as hedonistic, with objects consumed being calcified substitutes for actual relationships, and those that see consumptions as acts informed by relationships (Miller, 2001, 2005). Furthermore, the literature on consumption of immaterial goods – such as technology – is also vast and also tends to fall into the two categories listed above. In this study, technology was utilized by Indigenous traders and sharers to produce, enhance, and maintain connection between family members “at home” but also settler members of the working class with whom they felt affinity. Interestingly, consumption of immaterial goods, i.e., web-based technology, was also an important point for production of Indigenous subjectivities. The literature on Indigenous consumption of immaterial goods such as the internet and cultural resurgence is almost non-existent. Furthermore, the literature which does, ever so briefly, touch on Indigenous consumption of immaterial goods such as the internet, film, and music, tends to problematize such consumption practices as not being “authentically Indigenous” (see L. Simpson, 2011, for such an argument and Million, 2013 for a counterargument).



Regardless, in the case of this study, as illustrated above in the case of Suzie, technology was consumed to not only produce Indigenous subjectivities, but also consumed to further relationships between poor working class settlers.

Patti (personal communication, March 11, 2015) is an urban Indigenous elder who in her own words “loves being on the internet.” I know her very well. I know that she loves to be on the internet to mainly go on Facebook and play Mah-jong. Yet, for Patti consuming the internet is an important way to keep connection with family as she understands it, which is people at home, but also “everyone.” In short, as noted by Miller (2005), the internet has become a space where what it means to be Indigenous can be articulated, and where Indigenous communities can be built, maintained, and strengthened. Patti recounted a story that I found quite touching, to the point I began weeping during the interview. She told me a story of how, during the Christmas season of 2014, the local homeless shelter would *not* be serving Christmas dinner for homeless people. A local community organizer went on Facebook and stated that he would be organizing a Christmas dinner at his house. He was seeking donations of food, money, and time to accomplish this task. Patti saw this request and immediately acted. She cooked up a turkey and delivered it to the community organizer’s house. This fact is made extraordinary if one realizes that Patti is on a fixed income and physically disabled, and herself a recipient of aid during Christmas time.

She had told me this story in the past and I thought nothing of it. I chalked it up to “just what how we are taught to behave during Christmas time.” Reflecting on my own subject position, which can often misrecognize Indigenous behavior as being either “authentic” or “inauthentic” I asked Patti (personal communication, March 11, 2015) to recount for me in detail this story.

*Johnnie:* So how come you shared a turkey with people?

*Patti:* Because, I don't think just of my children. I think of all the homeless people everywhere who don't have family. And [the homeless shelter] couldn't put on their Christmas dinner for the homeless this year. When I found out [from Facebook] that a community organizer [was putting on a dinner at his house] I told [my daughter over Facebook], "Could you please ask [the community organizer] if I could donate a turkey?" Because I had one extra turkey ... I cooked a turkey.

*Johnnie:* So you cooked a turkey? [I made an astonished face].

*Patti:* Yes, I did.

*Johnnie:* How long did that take?

*Patti:* It took about 3.5-4 hours?

*Johnnie:* And where did you get your turkeys from?

*Patti:* I got it from my Christmas hamper.

*Johnnie:* And where did you get the extra one from?

*Patti:* I got it from a secret Santa ...

*Johnnie:* So does it make you feel good to share food then?

*Patti:* It does. I like to share what I can. Someone needs the help I'll do it. It's just how I was brought up.

Here Patti is demonstrating how her consumption of modern technology not only facilitates her connection to her Indigenous nation, but also facilitates her connection to a broader urban community at large, in particular those whom she has developed an affinity. Hence, technology and class become a part of what it means to be Indigenous. It is Patti's lack of money – her position in society as a poor working class person – that has exposed her to Settler working class people in Settler society. It is her Indigenous worldview that makes her think she has a responsibility to aid those who are less fortunate than her. It is her Indigenous worldview, along with dominant discourse of the need to “give” during the Christmas season, informs Patti's decision to share her extra Turkey. It's been noted how Indigenous people's past (Miller, 2001) and present (Miller, 2005; Myers, 2005; Rowlands, 2005) consumption of immaterial goods – such as origin myths and the internet – has been done with the intent of linking Indigenous people to their ancestors and the landscapes that they experienced and to help articulate and perform conceptually and materially what they think is appropriate way to *be*. Like Rowlands

(2005, p. 85) I think scholars should recognize that often for people “self-realization is ... a pragmatic issue rooted in what one can expect from the social relations and contacts available and the demands that can exerted upon them and by them.” For Indigenous people, mobility – the ability to wander unencumbered and learn about the world – was and is prized (Simpson and Smith, 2014). Self-realization is not only linked to “the massive exploitation, loss of life, and extraction of surplus labor,” (Rowlands, 2005, p. 85) or land (see Coulthard, 2014), but rather is related to the ability to be afforded “the capacity to make choices, and the capabilities of self-realization implied therein that would constitute the materialization of an archaeology of freedom.” Patti’s utilization of the internet afforded her the choice play Mah-jong or to fulfill her relational obligation to her Settler relations. Both are important to her.

For Indigenous people, especially urban Indigenous people who live in urban environments detached from their traditional and ancestral territories, dispossession normalized Settler economies, dispossession as a process, and Settler sociality. In effect it *pulled* Indigenous people further away from the place-based worldviews and practices that are crucial to constituting Indigenous identities. Yet, dispossession also *pushed* Indigenous traders and sharers to engage and modify their Indigenous placed-based conceptualizations and practices as a way to *resist* losing connections to their ancestral home, with their human and nonhuman kin, and their culture in general. Hence, acts such as selling food, working, and playing around on the internet were not only a site for the production of Indigenous subjectivities, but were an integral *part* of their subjectivities.

### **2.3.3 Gender and Food Sovereignty**

Out of one preliminary research interviews, it was discovered that one participant made linkages between traditional foods and gender. Hence, two thematic questions were asked to generate discussions which were: 1) What do you think the roles of men and women within your community are in regards to overall leadership?; 2) What do you think the roles of men and women are in regards to trading and sharing of food?

My relations in this study generally avoided answering questions about gender, yet some productive and insightful stories were offered. When asked by me about gender roles in food trading, a large majority of relations in this study often evaded, refused to answer, or gave overly generalized answers to questions posed to them. For example, some noted that the leadership roles of men and women and their roles in regards to trading and sharing was “pretty equal.” Penny stated simply that “There are all types of leadership, political and cultural, some people lead, some people lead by following.” Indigenous rural elder Kameron said he wanted “to take a vow of silence.” Given the rich conversations I had with my relations on various topics in this study I was taken aback by these short, curt, and abrupt responses. Initially, the only way I can read these responses is as practices of what Audra Simpson (2007) calls “ethnographic refusal.”

Ethnographic refusal refers to the times when relations become unwilling to discuss sensitive topics such as sexism (Ortner, 1995; A. Simpson, 2007). While Ortner (1995, p. 190) sees such refusal as “thin on the internal politics of dominated groups, thin on the cultural richness of those groups, thin on the subjectivity - the intentions, desires, fears, projects - of the actors engaged in these dramas.” Conversely, Simpson (2007, p. 77) views ethnographic refusal as a politics in of

itself, the recognition by both researcher and relation that “I know you know, and you know that I know I know...so let’s just not get into this.” Or, “let’s just not say.” Such a politics is linked to not only to the grounded normativity of Indigenous people – i.e., to notions of relationality, respect, beneficial reciprocity, and responsibility – but also to my role as an Indigenous researcher. The relations know I am Indigenous and know I am aware of a lot of the social phenomena occurring in our communities. Hence, ethnographic refusal refers to the participant’s unwillingness to engage in topics that we both know are sensitive.

I think this is what was happening in this study. Everyone I know that is Indigenous *knows* that Indigenous women are denied their rightful place as leaders within our communities. Again, as I noted in the beginning of this section of the thesis, the fact that I knew people in this study very well meant I had to push them on topics, such as home, family, and community, to get a response out of them. And I knew beforehand there was a chance that there would be a non-response from participants. And like Audra Simpson (2007) I myself refused to push on certain topics. These are my relations whom I have to engage with after this study is done. I have a responsibility to that part of relationship too.

I respect my relations’ refusal to talk about the way in which women have been stripped of their leadership roles in Indigenous communities by the *Indian Act* (1867). I understand that talking about such problems can have undesired consequences, such as straining of communal connections, which can have consequences for how community identity is articulated and how the community is mobilized politically (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013; A. Simpson, 2007). However, I would just like to add that this refusal to “talk” about power disparities between

Indigenous men and women is itself a constrained choice made by my relations as a way of that is in large part shaped by the *Indian Act* and Bill C-31.

Yet some Indigenous female traders and sharers did talk about the role of women in our Indigenous communities, such as Poly (personal communication, March 22, 2015)

I think that's, that has to do with a lot of the grief. That's stuck in our throat, you know ... Even then the women would advise a speaker, of what to speak about. They were holding onto our histories and knowledge. And so, I think, yeah, there's, there's a lot of strength that we can reawaken, and I think part of that will be to bring women together and to focus on the positives and what we do want. Instead of marching and saying we don't want violence ... speaking about we want healthy traditional foods, we want our people to respect women, we want our kids to know their relatives ... we want to empower our youth. All these - focus on what we want and let's go towards that.

Here, Poly is acknowledging that Indigenous women had an important role to play in their communities and lost it over time, i.e., she knows her history of loss and oppression. Yet, rather than place the blame on men in her community, she advocates that they focus on what they want to achieve in their communities. This call for a politics of I want is similar to Wendy Brown's (1993, p. 407) advice to people engaged in identity politics to move past the politics of *ressentiment* – the politics of I want – and instead engage in politics of “I want.” I agree Brown's and Poly's. Such a politics, in my mind, recognizes not only who Indigenous people are, but how they became who they are, who they wish to be, and how they wish to get there. It brings us full circle – back to Richard Atleo's (2004, p. 30) observations on the purpose of Indigenous existence being to, “create, maintain, and uphold relationships” (R. Atleo, 2004, p. 30). So, Poly is referencing culture as a way of a way to critique the silence around gendered disparities in power and health in her communities. Indigenous scholars have stated that this avenue of critique

offers a powerful and effective venue for achieving social change within Indigenous communities that is anti-heteronormative (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013; A. Smith, 2005).

Poly (personal communication, March 22, 2015) further discusses the role of traditional foods, as informed by ancestral place-based practices, as a mechanism for decolonization

It's all parts of how we gather, and how we eat, and how we digest, and I've heard that with berries too, um, often higher ranking women were in charge of berry patches that were owned by the families, or owned by them, and it was training for small kids when you went out berry picking. You didn't just go out berry picking in any old place, they're not wild berries. You go to your family area, and there's training to make sure that you always leave some berries for birds, and other species that need it.

Here we see how that for Poly, a healthy community is one that is respectful and recognizes that even the act of gathering and eating contains responsibilities. Hunting and eating are situated within a network of relationships – between the self, the community, the land and animals – with women being responsible for ensuring that rules of relationality were followed.

For Buffy, a rural and urban Indigenous working professional who trades and shares food all across the province of British Columbia, the distinction between the leadership roles of men and women in regards to trading and sharing of food, from her experience is non-existent. Here I asked Buffy (personal communication, March 23, 2015) a general question about what she perceived the roles of men and women in her community to be:

The roles that I've grown up with is pretty, when it comes to collecting is pretty equal. I've gone hunting with my father and my mother. Just alone separately ... It's only my mom has the trap-line license. And she rarely comes out, but she mainly sends me and my dad ... And the girls out to collect. Fishing ... my mom, I know she is perfectly capable. But she has my dad go out and collect [in their traditional territory].

Here, Buffy is equating leadership roles with the ability to *use* territory. Furthermore, Buffy notes the way in which her mother *controls* the trap-line license and coordinates how members of her family conduct the task of harvesting. Hence, far from engaging in the women are using culture to heal while men engage in harvesting to establish Indigenous national sovereignty trope observed in Million (2013), Buffy is witnessing her mother act as a leader. Buffy did not link her mother's role with her Indigenous culture. However, in my mind, Buffy's mother is engaging in an act that sees women take on the act of leading by getting her family out onto the land of their traditional territory. This is embodied sovereignty. And it is being directed by a woman.

Urban Indigenous traders, on the other hand were more than willing to discuss the topic of gender, quite openly. Take for instance Suzie. Suzie received assistance from organizations such as Indigenous friendship centre, which had provided food cooking programs which were *explicitly* informed by tenets of feminism.<sup>25</sup> Such assistance was important in allowing her the ability to accumulate, transmit, and apply knowledge related to food preparation and health (Suzie, personal communication, March 15, 2015), "They taught me how to cook." Relatedly, Indigenous friendship centres also taught Suzie (personal communication, March 15, 2015) general life skills, "I'm dyslexic. That made it hard. In high school they were just passing me because they didn't know what do with me, being dyslexic." The friendship centre provided free adult basic education classes, Suzie (personal communication, March 15, 2015) was taught in such a way that was empowering:

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<sup>25</sup> I know the program[s] Suzie and Patti attended. I know these programs are inspired in large part by feminism. I choose not to reveal the name of the programs to protect Suzie and Patti's identities.



*Johnnie:* So what did [the friendship centre] help with you with? How did they help and how did that make you feel when they helped?

*Suzie:* I walked away with a better understanding of who I was and how strong I can be.

Similarly, Patti (personal communication, March 11, 2015) took cooking and educational classes at an Indigenous friendship centre which too was *explicitly* informed by the tenets of feminism:

*Johnnie:* Ok, so did they uhm, they taught you some skills for cooking?

*Patti:* Yes they did, they taught me how to prepare it and ... things that I could cook with that would be, because I was diabetic that would be great for me ... it was really good.

*Johnnie:* What else did they teach you?

*Patti:* That I wasn't stupid ... not like they told me ... that my voice mattered. That I was important.

Hence, for Suzie and Patti, friendship centres are important because it allows them to access services, which they can use to challenge the notion that they are stupid. The discourse of Indigenous people as physically fragile and intellectually infantile has long been used by Settler governments at various scales to deny Indigenous nations and people, especially women, the right to self-determination (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013; Million, 2013). Thus, with the help of Indigenous friendship centres, Suzie and Patti are able to challenge the notion that the problems they face are of their own making. I know both Suzie and Patti very well and I know that both Suzie and Patti actively coordinate how food is distributed between their relations. Perhaps Suzie and Patti's exposure to feminism has become a site where they are given the capacity to think about, articulate, and practice their Indigeneity. If this is the case, as I believe that it is, then feminism, far from being an ideology which can *weaken* Indigenous communities, is an ideology which provides Indigenous women the tools to become empowered enough to practice embodied self-determination.

Yet, when it came to the leadership role of Indigenous men and women within their respective communities, some participants did become more candid, as noted by Viktor (personal communication, March 14, 2015)

... The way it works in other cultures and stuff, yeah, it's always the male is the head of the family. But it does not seem that way with us. Yes [we Indigenous people] have our eldest of the eldest sons or whatever ... but ... with like, as strong as women are, uhm, they're usually the ones that take the head of the family and uhm ... they keep us together. The way that they keep us together is their communication with as much family as they can to keep everybody informed...

Here, Viktor notes that women in his urban setting are the leaders of the community. Their job is to keep connection to the home, and it is this connection to home that makes them strong. Here we see Viktor resisting the deployment of the politics of refusal and stating explicitly that it is their ability to keep connections, between family, within the urban community, and their ancestral home, that makes women natural leaders.

Indigenous women located in rural environments have more access to the natural environment. How they choose to construct and mobilize their social networks is done mainly in the name of maintaining connection to the land. They associate such practices as being out on the land, with being healthy and with community leadership. Hence, this is also what could be occurring in this study. In short, Indigenous men and women see the act of trading and sharing as a gender neutral act strongly *associated* with Indigenous place-based knowledge, and hence, since both men and women are capable of hunting and gathering, there is no disparity in leadership roles. In urban environment service providers such as Indigenous friendship centres also played a key role in shaping how urban Indigenous traders and sharers engaged in trading and sharing activities. Friendship centres not only taught participants general life skills, but provided a foundation from

which participants could reject the idea that they were “damaged” people. This allows, urban women to take on an active leadership role and urban men actively acquiesced to such a social arrangement. Yet, intimate partner violence occurs at high levels on reserve and in the cities (Alfred, 2009). Thus, I can be certain that Viktor’s genuinely acquiesced to the leadership roles of Indigenous women, I do not think his response is indicative of broader gender relations between Indigenous men and women. Furthermore, I do not believe that food trading and sharing *alone* constitutes an appropriate mechanism for promoting and establishing parity in leadership roles among Indigenous nations and people.

Urban Indigenous women utilized feminist organizations to engage in embodied self-determination. Both urban and rural women utilized different mechanisms to engage in relational politics, which changed to match the social context in which they found themselves.

### Chapter 3: Reflection and Conclusion

This study was a story. It was about 14 Indigenous people who live on Vancouver Island who trade and share food. It was interested in answering the research question:

How do Indigenous worldviews (expressed as being and place) influence trading and sharing practice and how do Indigenous trading and sharing practices effect Indigenous conceptualizations of being and place?

Let me answer you in narrative form. The Indigenous traders and sharers in this study live in a constant state of emergency. Their ability to live a life that they deem culturally appropriate has been undermined by systemic processes of oppression. Some have seen their ancestral homelands ravaged by development. Others live in extreme poverty. Still others feel as though they are “no longer” members of their community. Others feel as though the role of women has been disregarded in the name of “sovereignty.” These people are acutely aware of the fact that the “state of emergency” that their life is situated in is not the exception, but the rule. This rule, of systematic elimination of Indigenous people, sustains the Canadian state. These traders and sharers of food recognize that Canadian ideas of what constitutes family, home, community, gender, relations, and relationships have transplanted Indigenous conceptualizations of family, home, community, gender, relations, and relationships. They know their history of *being oppressed*. Yet, they know *their* history of *being Indigenous*, which is found in the *places of their* relations, which is located in the territories of their Indigenous nations, in the history and teachings of their ancestors and their relations. This Indigenous place-making is expressed

through their relationships with each other, the land and water, and with the food they share with each other. They stubbornly practice a political life that transcends boundaries of inclusion and exclusion and western notions of time and space. They practice a form of politics, which focuses on relationships and responsibilities, which are cemented through practices of *being* Indigenous, such as trading and sharing food. So in a sense, they are bringing into being “a real state of emergency” which improves their position against a state whose ideas of what constitutes politically significant life has no room for Indigenous conceptualizations of what constitutes politically significant life; a state which seeks to eliminate their political and cultural identities as distinct entities, all in the name of “progress.” In short, they are continuing to enact principles of Indigenous laws and worldviews which rupture and challenge colonial norms and power. They are living lives beyond western notions of linear history, which is causing small epistemic ruptures in *all* the relationships in which they are engaged, whether those people – such as the poor Settler working class – are aware of it or not. Their lives as lived right here, right now, have intrinsic value and provide a lot of lessons for those who seek to challenge a state which devalues all our relations – human and nonhuman. This is their story.

But it’s our story too, all of our stories here in Canada, whether we like to admit it or not. I truly believe in my heart that Settlers walk around with shame in their hearts when they see the condition in which Indigenous people live. They walk around with an unacknowledged sickness. As Dorothee Schreiber (2010) notes, the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are inexorably linked to violence. I agree. We have a violent relationship to be certain and this structural and physical violence has reduced many Indigenous people to what Agamben (1998) calls “bare life.” And I think Settlers, to cleanse themselves, to become accountable to

relations and relationships in which they are engaged. They need to look at what Benjamin (1999) calls the catastrophe of history and see that there are pieces of them in there too.

But I shouldn't be so grim. After all, Indigenous life isn't all grim. My major problem with theorists that talk about the totality and pervasiveness of structural systems in the lives of us "little people", such as Foucault (1990) with his disciplinary power, or Agamben (1998) with his *Homo Sacer*, is their failure to realize that not all the bodies are docile, not all life is bare.

Benjamin (2009) advocated for a real state of emergency because he had *faith* that people could challenge the colossus, overthrow it, and create a system not rooted to faulty notions of "historical progress." And he asked that we learn from the oppressed to do it! So, as important as it for Settlers to see the destruction that has been wrought, it is also important to see that despite it all, for Indigenous people there is the triumph of life lived here and now. So look around and see that there are people, real people, who haven't given up on their culture or themselves. I want my relations to watch as people walk that fine line between engulfment and liberation, cooked Christmas turkey in hand and say, "I have an extra gift from the Creator, here you go friend." I want them to see Indigenous commercial fisherman who at once make money off fish while at the same time honoring it as a relation. I want Settlers to see Indigenous traders and sharers use their culture as a way to critique dominant sexist re-imaginings of their community.

This story I've been telling with my relations has made me upset and hopeful and confused. To deal with these emotions I write poetry. I write this poetry with my relations in mind. At times, this poetry seems so bleak, so angry, but I always try and make sure that our lives are present.

Below is an untitled poem I wrote:

A mother and father,  
skinning animals on the porch  
look up to see  
support workers  
who've come to take their brown skinned children away  
    – not enough food –  
        or love – or God –  
they say –

Today  
a 500 year old myth  
shatters when  
we gather  
to sing  
for our re-lations  
for the an-imals  
for the land  
for each other.

It seems Settler researchers, academics, and activists and society at large, like the social workers in the above poem, misunderstands who we Indigenous people are, what we are doing, and why we are doing it. And the consequences for this misunderstanding are mind-blowing. Children are taken away, land is taken away, life is taken away, and sometimes people are pushed to the side in the name of what Zizek (1997) calls a big Other, which can take the form of “the movement,” “progress,” or “sovereignty.” And it seems like the Indigenous people left standing are only left with rubble. And those who are left in rubble are considered without value because they inhabit rubble. My relations in this story persevere, but a lot of them lead an absolutely heart-achingly impoverished life. Yet, despite it all they share what little they have because that’s what their ancestors taught them to do. There’s a valuable lesson about how to live a life with dignity and heart in the face of “things’ ceasing to happen” (Lear, 2005, p. 9)

But my real question is this: is it enough to learn from those that inhabit rubble? Or put another way, “How ought we to live with the possibility of collapse?” (Lear, 2005, p. 9) These Indigenous traders and sharers, many of whom had so little, gave so much. In the face of the possibility of collapse they answered the question Lear (2005) poses with a simple response – by being good relations. This leads me to another lesson I learned in this story: cultural resurgence and decolonization is meaningless without equitable relationships between relations, human and nonhuman, in place. Structure based inequity is a key mechanism for dispossession of Indigenous place (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013), (re)configuration(s) of Indigenous sociality (St. Denis, 2007), and consequently as this story showed, how we Indigenous people conceptualize and practice food sovereignty. If Indigenous people wish to utilize food sovereignty as a mechanism for cultural resurgence, issues of equity needs to be addressed and ultimately resolved, now, not in the future utopic society to come. It's not enough to say to our people that "you need to just want social change and social change will follow from this desire."

The ability to live a life one deems appropriate is, as this story demonstrated, structurally distributed and individually acquired. The ability to *live life* is related to access to material and nonmaterial goods and services. And most of the people in this story went to foodbanks, worked part-time jobs, and yet they still shared because that's what their ancestors told them to do. And they felt good for sharing too. So, why don't we share with them? It is disrespectful not to recognize the context in which people find themselves (R. Atleo, 2011). This means that we have to recognize the agency people have over their lives but we also have to recognize how structures, such as social class, educational status, and gender, constrain the life-choices our relations have access to and affects the life they experience.



I am sorry if the above paragraph sounds angry. Of if I was coming off as, as my mother likes to say, “a-real-know-it-all.” Rather, I was becoming passionate. I don’t know everything, just what I have learned from my relations – Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Their spirits inhabit my humble advice which is as follows: whatever movement claims to be on the side of the “oppressed”, whether it is food sovereignty, cultural resurgence, or the Indigenous food sovereignty movement, should explicitly orient their actions toward addressing and incorporating the concerns of the most vulnerable members of communities into how we conceptualize and practice political alterities. That means being humble and recognizing who one’s relations are, as Poly and Zachary’s Father-in-law did in this story. It means recognizing that just because some people have been devalued by structural and physical violence does not mean their lives lack value.

On the topic of value, there is an exciting field of researchers who have begun to question the way we value life. Some of these researchers engage with deep continental philosophy to proclaim that we need to recognize the value of all human life whether or not it has political value (Agamben, 2005). Others use utilitarian logic to say the uncertainty of sentience is no reason to treat animals in an unethical fashion, and that we have duties to them (Chan, 2011). Still others (Graeber, 2013, p. 238) use critical realism to say “I think we have to place ourselves back in that original tradition: one that understands human beings as projects of mutual creation, value as the way such projects become meaningful to the actors, and the worlds we inhabit as emerging from those projects rather than the other way around.” Other theorists argue how the working class constructs value in means that they devalue the concerns of the dispossessed;

Hence, Marxist anthropologist David Harvey (2birdsswimming, 2009, 5:31-5:47) argues that we need to construct an “Oppositional force of the dispossessed. Workers who are dispossessed of surplus capital in the labour process and people who are being dispossessed of their assets, their rights, through accumulation by dispossession elsewhere.” To be certain each intellectual inhabits a distinct intellectual tradition, but I am more concerned about the broad implications of what they are saying than the specific ways they are saying it. It seems to me these researchers are saying there is something wrong with the way we value *things* and *each other*. My relations in this study said the same thing. The difference between these intellectuals and my relations is that my relations are *forced* to do something about it. They have no choice but to question and challenge the way society constructs values. These traders and sharers have something to offer intellectuals, an example of the resolve and determination it takes to live a life in society that says your life is valueless according to the terms of the state. They show us the resolve and determination it takes to live life according to a different value system, and some of the consequences associated with such an act. In the halls of the academy it’s all about resilience and sustainable development, outside, it’s about life or death. This is truth of which we must bear witness.

But still, I shouldn’t be so grim or judgemental. It’s good that researchers are heading in the same direction as my relations in this story. Actually, the above researchers are my relations. I celebrate them for thinking in such daring and unique fashions. Their lives are now a part of my story, my life. Personally, learning from David Harvey (2birdsswimming, 2009) I think we need to construct an oppositional force comprised of people who question the way life is currently valued by society. This force could be academics, activists, and the people who have been

pushed to the margins. We could get together and feast and exchange stories about our lives as lived and how we would like to change things for the better. Doing such an action would mean demonstrating that we are willing to receive the gift of each other's knowledge. In this study there was of such an act of openness to receive new knowledge. Recall that Zachary was taught a ceremony on the proper way to show respect to salmon for it giving the gift of its life. Zachary acting like a relation to Zachary's Father-in-law meant that Zachary's Father-in-law was willing to recognize him as such and impart upon him the gift of ancestral Indigenous knowledge. Thus, we need to recognize and respect that that we have different ways of going about the world; but we also need to recognise that our lives are heading in the same direction. We need to recognize we are relations so we can learn from each other with open hearts and minds.

We would have to not worry about whether or not our actions will lead to the outcome we desire.

There is power in the actions we undertake. As Slovenian Marxist critic Slavoj Žižek (consumer, 2014; 2:10-2:34) notes:

In revolutionary upheavals ...some utopian dreams take place. They explode. [E]ven if the actual result of a social upheaval is just a commercialized everyday life, this excess of energy, what gets lost in the result, persists not in reality but as a dream, haunting us, waiting to be redeemed. In this sense, whenever we are engaged in radical emancipatory politics, we should never forget, as Walter Benjamin put it almost a century ago, that every revolution – if it is an authentic revolution - is not only directed towards the future, but it redeems also the past failed revolutions. All the ghosts, as it were, the living dead of the past revolution, which are roaming around, unsatisfied, will finally find their home in the new freedom.

Even if our actions as a collective fail, the energy behind our dreams will still be there, sometimes found in stories we tell each other over coffee, sometimes found in the academic papers we wrote. Our energy will still be there, waiting for our ancestors to grab hold of and

redeem, to fulfill our unfilled dreams. Maybe I'm just being a naïve dreamer. However, I think that our dreams too have value.

Anyhow, the second part of the above poem is about celebration. As important as it is to think about a just and future society, we as Indigenous people need to create spaces to celebrate the diversity of experience that is Indigeneity, right here, right now. When we celebrate each other, the horizon of our existence expands. So let us learn from and respect the multiple experiences of all our Indigenous relations, right here, right now, so we can live a life which values the intrinsic value of all our relations, human and nonhuman, past, present, and future.

Klecko-klecko.

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