

**FROM FEASTS TO FACEBOOK AND BACK AGAIN:
TECHNOLOGY, MEDIA, AND BELONGING AMONG URBAN NISGA'A AND
TSIMSHIAN YOUTH**

by

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Abstract

For urban Tsimshian and Nisga'a youth in Prince Rupert, cell phones, cameras and Facebook are among the latest tools used to connect with families and friends across geographical distance as well as address the historical, cultural, and economic gaps created by processes of displacement. Traditional Northwest Coast First Nations' social practices and feasts are expressed in intensely public ways; that visibility construct and maintain their social relationships and communities. Although the youth I met sometimes feel alienated from larger Canadian society as well as from village communities and feast protocols, traditional ideas of public participation embedded in social activities are sometimes successfully remediated to digital technology and Facebook for two reasons. First, public presentation and dissemination have effectively stabilized Northwest Coast First Nations' societies across vast geographical distances for centuries. Second, the continued emphasis on public expression is part of new, creative ways the youth and families I met use mobile digital technology to create an active, somewhat de-localized, community-based support system. It is a response to colonization that creates opportunities to find and manage economic, emotional, and social support. As one result, I argue digital technology and media have become part of a succession of technological practices and tools used to create community, identity, and social stability for young people. By exploring historical practices as they relate to digital technology—some of which was introduced via photography and media production during the course of this research—I explore traditional and emergent modes of public participation that connects youth to their heritage and community, while addressing their unique needs.

Preface

This research is a continuation of my Master of Arts research conducted in 2007 and published in my thesis in 2008. This provided observations and analysis of events over nine years of interactions with the community. This dissertation also references a video I directed in as part of my research in 2007.

Wolowic, Jennifer. 2008. "Research Tools or Collaborative Toys? Cameras and Participatory Research with Youth." Masters Thesis, University of British Columbia.

For Our Street Family. 2008. Directed by Jennifer Wolowic and produced by Charles Menzies. New York: Documentary Educational Resources.

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The data and analysis used in this publication is primarily from my fieldwork in 2011 as well as interviews held in 2014. All of the analysis of the work since 2011 is currently unpublished. I would also like to acknowledge that Karen Taylor helped copy edit the dissertation.

The photographs in the dissertation were created in collaboration between myself and community members in Prince Rupert. I hold the copyright for these images although copies have been shared and given to the Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert and the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Society as well as participants to use as they please.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Preface.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures.....	vii
Glossary	xi
Acknowledgements	xii
Dedication	xiv
Chapter 1: Ketchup and Oolichans: An Introduction	1
1.1 A Moment of Laughter	1
1.2 Prince Rupert	6
1.3 A Note on Language	11
1.4 Photography and Ethnographic Moments	12
1.5 Moments of Technology, Media, and Community.....	20
1.5.1 Technology	20
1.5.2 Media	24
1.5.3 Community	30
1.6 Chapter Outline	34
Chapter 2: “Because We’re Native”: Alienation and Revitalization	37
2.1 Introduction.....	37
2.2 Economic Exclusion	39
2.2.1 Resource Management.....	42
2.2.2 Racial Management	46
2.2.3 Technology Management	47
2.2.4 Outcomes	49
2.3 Alienation of Families and Loss of Cultural Knowledge.....	51
2.3.1 Residential Schools and the Potlatch Ban.....	53
2.3.2 Foster Care	55

2.3.3	Marginalization and Confusion Among the Youth.....	59
2.4	Everyday Experiences of Revitalization and Alienation	61
2.4.1	Moments of Revitalization.....	62
2.4.2	Moments of Debate and Anxiety	64
2.5	Conclusion	67
Chapter 3:	The Media of a Street Family	68
3.1	Introduction.....	68
3.2	Planet Youth.....	70
3.3	Creative Collaborations and Documenting the Street Family.....	73
3.4	An Ad-hoc Peer Support System	82
3.5	Visible Display of the Street Family	87
3.6	Conclusion	96
Chapter 4:	“I’ll Take Facebook Please”	99
4.1	Introduction.....	99
4.2	A Reminder about Methodology	104
4.3	Towards an Always on Facebook in Prince Rupert	105
4.4	Facebook and Present Needs	115
4.5	Emotions and Shared Experiences.....	118
4.6	Social Bonds and Absence.....	125
4.7	Conclusion	130
Chapter 5:	Grease Trails, Trade Beads, and a Facebook 50/50 Raffle.....	133
5.1	Introduction.....	133
5.2	Resonating with the Feast System	136
5.3	Public Protocols and Validation	145
5.4	Trade Beads and New Technologies.....	152
5.5	Conclusion	158
Chapter 6:	“It Shows How We Are All Connected:” A Community Collage	160
6.1	Introduction.....	160
6.2	Collaborations in 2011	163
6.3	Photographs and Facebook.....	173

6.4	Aesthetics and Function of the Mural.....	180
6.5	Viewing the Mural: A Collage of Moments.....	186
6.6	The Mural and the Feast System.....	194
6.7	Conclusion	198
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....		200
7.1	Contributions and Implications.....	200
7.1.1	Facebook.....	205
7.1.2	Digital Photographs	207
7.2	Limitations.....	210
7.3	Future Research.....	212
7.4	Final Thoughts	213
Bibliography		215

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Chrystel during a photo-walk in 2007.....	1
Figure 1.2 Map locating Kaien Island. Map by Google (2016).....	7
Figure 1.3 Illustrated map of Prince Rupert that hangs in the lobby of the city's airport.	7
Figure 1.4 A cruise ship docked in Prince Rupert's harbour. The mall is on the right.	9
Figure 1.5 The Prince Rupert Friendship House Association in 2007.	10
Figure 1.6 Photographs and field notes accumulated during research in 2011.	16
Figure 1.7 Youth and members of the Nisga'a and Tsimshian community in Prince Rupert look at the photo-collage mural we created.	36
Figure 2.1 Desiré and I play for the camera.	37
Figure 2.2 Jade and Chrystel pose for Evan and the camera he held.	38
Figure 2.3 Beatrice tickles Kyle just before a water fight in 2007.	40
Figure 2.4 Beatrice and her daughter at a National Aboriginal Day celebration in 2012.	41
Figure 2.5 Peter, an elder, feeds fish scraps to a bald eagle during his shift at the cannery in 2011.	45
Figure 2.6 Shawn fillets a salmon at the Friendship House in 2010.	50
Figure 2.7 A video still frame of Betsy and her drum in 2011.	52
Figure 2.8 Augusta (farthest right) and her friends create photographs in the street in front of Planet Youth in 2011.	57
Figure 2.9 Naomi poses with her parents after the graduation ceremony in 2011.	59
Figure 2.10 The Gathering Our Strength Canoe Journey arrives in Prince Rupert in August 2011.	63
Figure 2.11 Steven and Jade dance at the Elder's Gathering in Prince Rupert in 2008.	64
Figure 3.1 Steven (looking at the camera) and others sit down for dinner at Planet Youth. ..	70
Figure 3.2 Teenagers hang out at Planet Youth in 2007.	72
Figure 3.3 Evan, Jade, Chrystel and Ryan posed during a collaborative moment on one of our photo-walks.	79
Figure 3.4 Screen shot of Chrystel being interviewed for our 2007 video. The photographs behind her were also some of the photographs created during my research that year.	80
Figure 3.5 A screenshot of the youth writing down their street family for our film in 2007.	83

Figure 3.6 Caryn (front right) and Heather (front left) lead the women of the wolf tribe in a Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers performance in Victoria in 2011.....	85
Figure 3.7 Jack Temple performs with the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers. The headdress and drum he made display his belonging to the raven tribe.	88
Figure 3.8 In 2011, staff and a new cohort of teens watch the film about the street family...	93
Figure 3.9 Members of the street family and Planet Youth attendees lounging at the park in 2007.	95
Figure 3.10 Youth at the teen centre hang out on the couches together watching some of our film footage in 2007.....	98
Figure 4.1 Rose helps Sharon with her mask.....	99
Figure 4.2 Jack advises Kyle while Chrystel's daughter sleeps in his arms.	100
Figure 4.3 Rose teaches Kyle how to draw an eagle for our mural. The phones on the table keep the pair apprised of friends.....	102
Figure 4.4 Heather's family celebrating Easter in 2011.....	127
Figure 4.5 Michael checks Facebook and chats with friends on Facebook Messenger while waiting for the dance group at a hotel in Victoria, B.C.....	131
Figure 4.6 Kyle walks down a street in Victoria wearing his bear skin.	132
Figure 5.1 Leon, Victor and Kristin at the park in 2007.....	133
Figure 5.2 Under the guidance of an elder, Alex and Cody learn how to wash and prepare oolichans for smoking in the summer of 2011.	143
Figure 5.3 When the Gathering Strength Canoe Journey stopped in Prince Rupert for the.	154
Figure 5.4 Rose, Shannon, Julia and others sort raffle tickets for the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers Fundraiser in 2011.	156
Figure 5.5 After the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Society's blessed their new canoe following traditional Nisga'a protocols, Betsy christens it with a bottle of champagne as the final act of the ceremony.....	159
Figure 6.2 In 2011, our youngest participant was Chrystel's two-year-old daughter, who experimented with the camera at dance practice. This is one of the images she helped create.	165
Figure 6.3 In 2011, children including 7 year old Carrie helped create images of feasts and video recorded dance practices and the dance group's trip to Victoria.....	165

Figure 6.4 Teenagers, such as Roger (photographer) and Michael (in the image), continued to take an interest in creating images in 2011 and were encouraged to experiment and have fun together.	166
Figure 6.5 The grandfather of one of the youths at the teen centre, used my still camera to create this photo of the Seafest parade.....	166
Figure 6.6 On our flight back to Prince Rupert from Victoria with the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers, Kyle receives lessons from Rose about drawing eagles and ravens.....	167
Figure 6.7 A week later the outline of the entire mural takes shape in the collaborative space of the Friendship House carving room. Here Kyle creates a scaled version of the design...	168
Figure 6.8 Chrystel and her sister help transfer Kyle's design to the synthetic sign boards.	168
Figure 6.9 Chrystel and her daughter help create the faux wood finish of the mural.....	169
Figure 6.10 Once transferred, Kyle corrected and improved the tribe symbol outlines with Chrystel's help.	169
Figure 6.11 I spent two weeks arranging and attaching the collage of images with help from Chrystel, Rose, Cecelia and others. Occasionally I stood on the table for a better look.	170
Figure 6.12 Ryan signs the mural on display at the Museum of Northern British Columbia in August 2011.....	171
Figure 6.13 Josh lifts his mother up so she can sign the mural.	171
Figure 6.14 Tyler dancing at a National Aboriginal Day Celebration in 2012.	176
Figure 6.15 One of the youth creates a picture of the mural on a mobile phone.....	179
Figure 6.16 The original photograph (left), the photo in black and white (middle). and the final version (right) with the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers in full colour and the audience in black and white. Image taken June 2011.	182
Figure 6.17 I talk with an elder as others point at and discuss a picture of a family member.	186
Figure 6.18 Jack, Rose, and others look at the mural at the Rupert Square Mall.....	187
Figure 6.19 Close up section of the photo-collage.	188
Figure 6.20 Kyle and his long board.....	190
Figure 6.21 The mural hangs in the Vancouver Public Library.	196
Figure 6.22 Kyle holds a camera and creates a picture of his friends and family who, at the same time, are holding cameras and creating images of him in front of his design.	199

Figure 7.1 Clyde works on a project during the carving class in 2011.....	200
Figure 7.2 Verna, Kristen and Shaylene enjoy a ride during a visiting carnival in 2011.....	204
Figure 7.3 An image of Jade in 2007 that the youth chose to title "Disappearing." Beatrice held the camera.	208
Figure 7.4 The Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers invited me to joint them for a group photo during a tour of the British Columbia's Government House during trip to Victoria in 2011.	210
Figure 7.5 Multiple generations of youth hang out on the grass together.	214

Glossary

Words are in alphabetical order. They are in Nisga'a; followed by Sm'algyax in parenthesis.

Adaawak (adaawx): Oral histories of the house

Ayuukhl (ayaawx): Law, social codes of the community

Bi'ip (bip): uncle

Ganada (Ganhada): Raven tribe or clan

Gibuu (Gibaaw): wolf tribe or clan

Gigi (jiji): an informal term of endearment for grandmother (Nisga'a)

Gisk'aast (Gispwudwada): killer whale tribe or clan

Halayt (halaayt): shaman

Lahaal: a game played with sticks or bones

Laxsgiik (Laxsgiik): eagle tribe or clan

K'amksiiwaa (T'kumsiwah): non-native European-Canadians in the area

Nidxaa (niktaa): auntie

Nigwoot (nagwaat): father

Pdeex (pteex): clan; commonly called tribes in Prince Rupert

Sim'oogit (smgigyet): leader of a house

Sumaxs: youth, young people

Wilp (waap): family group; also referred to as a house

Acknowledgements

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Dedication

For the 8th generation. Your parents (the seventh generation), grandparents, and great grandparents were kind enough to let me spend time, create photographs, and discuss their lives with me.

Chapter 1: Ketchup and Oolichans: An Introduction

1.1 A Moment of Laughter

One summer afternoon in 2011, Chrystel, her daughter, two friends, and I sat in a booth at one of the restaurants on the lower level of the Prince Rupert Centre Mall. Similar to many afternoons I spent with them in Prince Rupert, we had no plans, little money, and a lot of time. By then, I had known Chrystel and her friends for four years. When we met, Chrystel was a tiny, bubbly, outgoing 18-year-old who attended a teen drop-in centre in town on a daily basis (Figure 1.1). The two young men were also regulars who had collaborated on our projects to create photographic and video-based visual ethnographies of their youth centre cohort.



Figure 1.1 Chrystel during a photo-walk in 2007.

In 2007, Chrystal was a central figure in what they called their street family. Chrystel offered her friends a safe place to sleep, made them laugh, was empathetic, and provided occasional advice. Her quick wit got her into and out of trouble and earned her the respect of many of her peers, as well as mine. She will always carry the scars of her youth, but treatment, support, and having a baby helped her move past the pains of her childhood. By 2011, her determination, stubbornness, an ability to form allegiances with adults helped her finish high

school. After she became a mother, she attended an Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society's Blade Runners program and entered the workforce.

That afternoon in 2011 we chatted and munched on nachos and French fries. All four of our cell phones were in our hands or on the table. The devices frequently requested our attention as we sat, ate, played games, scrolled through Facebook mobile, listened to music, and swapped SMS texts with others across town every few minutes. Across from me, Chrystel's daughter swiped at one the cell phones and danced in her seat, nodding along as the Black Eyed Peas played from the device's tiny speakers.

After a few inspired dance moves, the two-year-old spotted my French fries. Reaching across the table she popped one into her mouth with a mischievous grin. At that moment, the toddler decided that she and I would share the rest of my French fries. She put both elbows on the table and stood up in her seat to access my plate. I turned the plate around so she could reach the pool of ketchup on its edge. Instead, the child shook her head in disgust.

"She's native, but she's not a *real* native" Chrystel said, responding to her daughter's reaction.

"What do you mean?" I asked

"Well she eats fish. She loves fish."

It was true. A few days before, I watched the toddler run around the beach during a family BBQ. She held small a ten-centimeter-long smelt, called oolichans, in each hand. As I watched, the little girl stopped, stared at the ocean, and bit the head off one of the tiny, salty fish before squealing with delight.

"But," Chrystel interrupted my memory with a smirk, "she doesn't like ketchup!"

Chrystel and her friends laughed together. The toddler chewed on another French fry and stared at her mom, trying to figure out what was so funny. I was also confused. "So eating ketchup makes you native?" I asked.

"Have you seen them? Tons of ketchup on everything!" Chrystel replied.

"And think of chow mein!" Exclaimed one of the young men.

"Would you like some soy sauce with your chow mein?" Chrystel teased.

"So much soy sauce!" The other friend added as he dumped an invisible bottle of soy sauce all over our food. All five of us laughed together this time.

“That’s native!” Chrystel explained as we quieted down.

I remember this afternoon fondly because it was filled with so many of the things I shared with Chrystel and her friends: boredom, humour, love, laughter, family, and ambivalence. This story also hints at their particular relationship with an urban “native” identity that is both inclusive and alienated from their Tsimshian and Nisga’a heritages. Chrystel’s daughter is “native” because she loves oolichans. The fish has an important place in the economy of Northwest Coast First Nations peoples. For many of the youth I met, oolichans and other traditional foods are fond markers of their Indigenous heritage. For others, like Chrystel, they can be symbols of fractured connections to their own families and heritage. Chrystel grew up in foster care and has never had a strong attachment to salted or jarred salmon, herring eggs, or oolichans.

Joking about this reality is one way the youth and the families I met during my research make sense of these fractures as well as how they articulate the events, feelings, and actions that define their identity and how they perceive their Indigenous urban community. At the time, Chrystel’s daughter was both native and not native, because she did not conform to all the symbols of the Prince Rupert’s Tsimshian and Nisga’a community: oolichans *and* ketchup. The humour we shared was a way of mediating this experience. Laughing together united Chrystel and her friends. All three young people understood the seemingly incongruent symbols and could laugh about them. And, together through their laughter they helped define what they thought of as their community.

Sitting with Chrystel and her friends that afternoon also highlights the differences I observed during two different periods of my fieldwork. My fieldwork bridged the few years before and after the period during which mobile digital technology (particularly SMS text messaging and Facebook) became widely accessible to the youth and families in Prince Rupert in late 2009. In 2007, I was introduced to the Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert (Friendship House) via the UBC Ethnographic Field School taught by Charles Menzies and Caroline Butler. My project for the Field School was to work with their teen drop-in centre called Planet Youth (later re-organized and called The Youth Hub) and create a photographic

visual ethnography with the youth¹ who attended the centre. I expanded on the project that year when I returned and created a film as part of my Masters' thesis with Chrystel and others at Planet Youth. In 2011, I returned to expand the visual ethnography and explore the same youth and others' transition into adulthood.

My conversation about community with Chrystel and her friends that day in 2011 coincided with pop music, games, and technologically mediated conversations with others across town. It was a contrast to 2007, when we wandered around town or spent hours draped across couches watching others play pool or video games. In 2007, I only saw one cell phone; now cell phones and other digital media were a main part of the youths' communication practices and experiences with one another. By 2011, cell phones co-existed with the jokes and expressions that mediated and responded to their community's complex history. The timing of mobile data availability as well as my fieldwork provided a serendipitous opportunity to observe and participate in the youths' shifting communication ecology.

My research explores how digital technology mediates the maintenance of connections and community for Tsimshian and Nisga'a youth and their families. During the period of my 2011 fieldwork, I argue social networks, cell phones, and multiple manifestations of digital photographs operated within the larger context of presence and absence—revitalization and alienation—to define the youths' community and their feelings of belonging. Despite being disconnected from many traditional practices, some of the youth I met created new digital practices that resonated and reconstructed Tsimshian and Nisga'a cultural protocols. This dissertation is about the influences that shaped the ways the youth and families I met appropriated Facebook and mobile digital technologies to maintain support systems that respond to challenges created by colonialism.

¹ The teenagers I met interacted with the label of youth by attending drop-in centres called "Planet Youth" and "Youth Hub," through "Youth Councils," and used the label themselves. In order to respect how they choose to reference themselves, I use the phrase "the youth" in this dissertation to identify this particular group. I have chosen to use the definite article, "the" in the phrase in order to make clear that I am discussing a select group of young people—the youth I met—and not a larger population of youth. While I limit my discussion to a particular subset of a group living in Prince Rupert, many of their experiences may be similar to those of other Aboriginal youth in Canada.

Chrystel and her friends had attended the large gatherings and feasts that take place along the Northwest Coast. The feasts, also commonly referred to as potlatches by others along the North West coast, were and are a part of a social system that connected communities and maintained social relationships through public protocols. For millennia, trade, resources, and social status of those in the region were organized, negotiated, and maintained by feasts (Barnett 1938; Bracken 1997; Adams 1973). The youth attend to reconnect with family and observe the protocols of the feasts that define respectful behaviour and procedures within and beyond these gatherings. Acknowledgement and validation of lineages as well as their inherited rights are at the core of the feasts and their social system (Roth 2008). Respect and community validation are learned and performed at these gatherings in order to help uphold their social laws called *ayuukhl* in Nisga'a and *ayaawx* in Sm'algyax² (Nisga'a Lisims Government 2013). Hosts and guests validate resource rights and lineages at these gatherings. Oral histories performed at feasts describe the histories and rights from the perspective of each family. Each family or house is called a *wilp* in Nisga'a and a *waap* in Sm'algyax. The *ayuukhl* (*ayaawx*) provide ongoing guidance for how and why *wilp* (*waap*), territories, as well as spirits and animals are interdependent (Nisga'a Lisims Government 2013).

The *ayuukhl* (*ayaawx*) were, and in some ways still are part of the worldviews of Chrystel, her friends, and their families. While communities have worked to maintain their lineage-centric worldviews, many of the visible systems that support this awareness disappeared for a time due to the potlatch ban, residential schools, and racism that stigmatized cultural symbols and protocols that had organized the area for generations (Marsden 2002). Colonialism and its attempts to destroy central social structures and destabilize Indigenous communities meant that families lost contact with each other as individuals moved to urban centres, such as Prince Rupert in response to the new, imposed social and economic systems. In urban centres, imposed marginalization took its toll on families and the guiding principles of their heritage. As a result, the youth I met know elements of these principals and stories, but the framework through which they could be learned and expressed were not as immersive as they once were.

² Sm'algyax is the name of the Coast Tsimshian language.

Chrystel and her friends are part of the first generation of Aboriginal people in Canada that did not have direct encounters with the residential school system. Instead, they entered their teenage years when cultural revitalization became active and visible in the city of Prince Rupert and elsewhere. The crests of their families as well as tribe symbols, dream catchers, and other markers of Indigenous identities that were once hidden are now worn around town and displayed on cars and the walls of homes. This cultural revitalization is visible in public and private spaces.

By 2011, cell phones and Facebook joined crests and silver jewellery as mediators of identity and community in Prince Rupert. During my research, the photographs we created joined the other modes used by youth and their families to identify and validate their responsibilities to one another. The media were also part of connections to villages, families, and a larger network of Aboriginal communities across the province and beyond. The images shared in this dissertation are a tiny portion of more than 6000 photographs that I created with youth and their families over approximately five years. Digital media practices, I argue, have become infused with and in some ways have re-visualized the values of interconnectedness and respect. The protocols and lineages that govern feast halls have, at least for the youth and families I met, helped revitalize and extend the practice through an online platform that helps make visible the responsibilities and interactions individuals in the community have with one another. Facebook messages can be public statements of respect that mirror the announcements of feast halls. The sharing of text messages and photographs also maintain a location-based, and yet, dispersed system of social and economic support that recognizes relatedness, respect, and the protocols of the community.

1.2 Prince Rupert

To understand the nuances of how youth locate themselves in their community and appropriate digital technology, some context of the city of Prince Rupert is needed. Prince Rupert is accessible, but isolated. To arrive by car, drivers follow Highway 16, which runs laterally across the middle of British Columbia from Prince George to the coast. The city is about 50 kilometres from the southernmost point of Alaska in traditional Coast Tsimshian territory. About half way from Prince George to the coast, the highway meets the Skeena River and follows the waterway as it cuts through the towering mountains. Finally, after crossing an almost

invisible bridge to Kaien Island and rounding Kaien Mountain, the highway arrives at the centre of the city and disappears into one of two main streets with a sharp left turn.

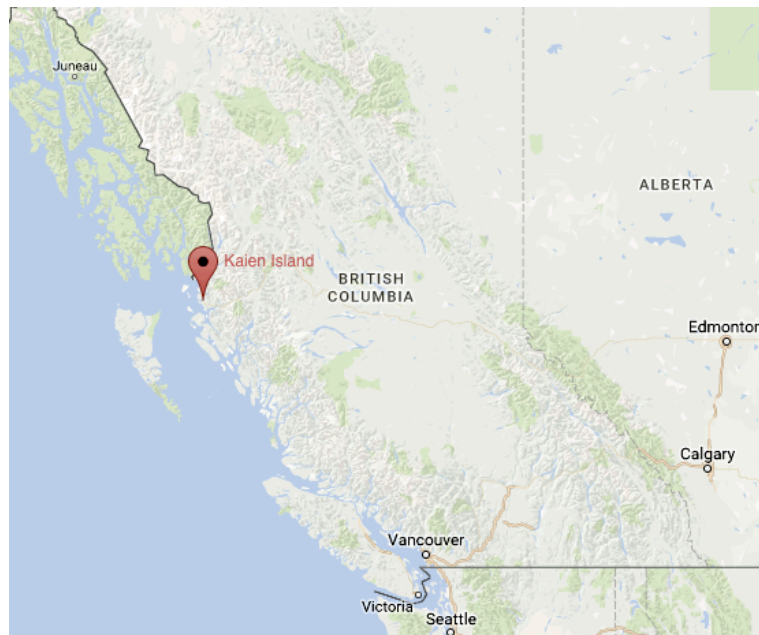


Figure 1.2 Map locating Kaien Island. Map by Google (2016).

Arriving by passenger plane provides a beautiful view of the glaciers and islands that make up the inland passage and proves why Elders I met say, “there is power in this land.” The airport is on an island across the harbour and requires a bus and a ferry to get into the town. As they wait in the lobby for the bus to load, people often stop to look at a map of the city (Figure 1.3). The map was created over two decades ago, but not much in the city has changed.



Figure 1.3 Illustrated map of Prince Rupert that hangs in the lobby of the city's airport.

The harbour has a history as a transportation and trading hub, even before railroad barons built and incorporated the city of Prince Rupert in 1910 (Leonard 1996). For thousands of years, water routes and footpaths through the mountains connected goods with communities from the coast into the interior. Canoes travelled up and down the Skeena River, throughout the inland passages, and transported goods to and from inland and other areas (Gibson 1991). Today Prince Rupert is an urban hub for First Nations villages in the area. During my research, approximately 65 percent of the city identified as having First Nations heritage (BC Statistics 2009). The city also has groups who trace their family background to East Indian, East Asian, Ukrainian, Norwegian and other European countries.

Many agree that Prince Rupert is a city fighting population and employment decline. Several people I met enjoyed telling stories about the boom times. For example, one night during the 2011 hockey playoffs, a fisherman sitting next to me at the bar boasted as we sipped our beers, “In those days, you’d see \$50 bills on the floor of the bars and no one would care. There was that much money going through here.” Another day a senior union member at told me, “Back then we’d do 1 million pounds of fish a day!” when he described working at the largest salmon cannery in the world. “Now we’re lucky if we do a fraction of that.” To make matters worse, in 2015, the owners of the largest cannery in Prince Rupert announced they would be ending canning production (McElroy 2015). The union estimates that 300 people, most of whom identify as First Nations, will no longer be employed (Stueck 2016).

The city tried to create a tourism industry, but today the main focus is on international trade with Asia. The six year-old Fairview Container Terminal provides jobs, but these positions have not helped a majority of the city’s population. One cold February morning in 2011 for example, I watched with others from the windows of the Nisga’a Hall, as people lined up for blocks and waited all day in the snow for the opportunity to apply for a job at the port. I was told they were not waiting to apply for a job, but for the *opportunity* to enter a raffle so they could apply for the few openings that year. This striking scene made visible the lack of jobs in the city.



Figure 1.4 A cruise ship docked in Prince Rupert's harbour. The mall is on the right.

There are places of refuge in the city for First Nations youth and their families in the city. For many Indigenous residents, the Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert (Figure 1.5) and the Nisga'a Hall are the physical centres of their urban First Nations community. These places exemplify what Renya Ramirez (2007) described as the *native hub*: urban gathering spaces that allow for “flexible and fluid” Indigenous identities that maintain connections between reserves and urban centres. Writing about the Silicon Valley context, Ramirez argues that native hubs help create an awareness of transnational urban Indigenous identity. She observes that “the hub, rather than focusing on displacement, emphasizes the urban Indians’ strong rooted connection to tribe and homeland” (Ramirez 2007, 12). In the context of the Northwest Coast, gatherings and feasts, often held in these spaces, are examples of activities that produce and maintain relationships throughout the area and stretching across the province and into Alaska and Washington as well.



Figure 1.5 The Prince Rupert Friendship House Association in 2007.

In 2007, when I began attending the teen drop-in centre at the Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert, called Planet Youth, one of the youth at the centre asked if I was doing another survey. At the time, I was confused, but I later learned they were referring to the McCreary Centre Society survey on Aboriginal, marginalized, and street involved youth that had been conducted the year before (Saewyc et al. 2008). The results of the survey were published the following year and 76 youth in Prince Rupert participated. The survey found that across British Columbia around 60% of street involved youth witnessed violence at home or were the victims of abuse. Almost half also experienced a shortage of food, and one in four Aboriginal participants reported feeling racially discriminated against in the last year. BC Statistics (2009) has reported that Prince Rupert's School District 52 had the fourth highest number of at-risk youth in the province based on the number of 18 year-olds that do not graduate from high school, the number of young people on income assistance, and crime rates for the area. They also identified that 8.3% of the region were receiving income assistance (BC Statistics 2009).

After reading a report I had written for our 2007 project, one youth indicated that he disliked being identified as at-risk, but after a moment of reflecting he said, "well, I guess we are, when I think about it." Findings from the McCreary survey suggest that challenges at home and the fact that their friends hang out on "the streets" were reasons youth gathered and hung out

on in places such as street corners, or sidewalks for long periods of time. Based on my conversations with youth, they chose to attend the teen centre for similar reasons.

1.3 A Note on Language

Many of the youth that attended Planet Youth identify as having connections to more than one First Nations. Although Prince Rupert is located in the Coastal Tsimshian territory and the Sm'algyax language is taught in the school district, I often heard Gitxsan and Nisga'a phrases spoken as well. In this dissertation, I have stayed consistent with how these words were shared with me. When not part of a quote, I provide the Nisga'a words followed by the Sm'algyax word in parentheses, in order to provide some consistency. Both the Nisga'a and Sm'algyax translations are also listed in the glossary.

In addition to providing Sm'algyax and Nisga'a translations, I use the terms "Indigenous," "Aboriginal," and "First Nations." It is important to note that these terms were not used by people of the area to identify themselves before colonial expectations were imposed upon them. With colonialism, these words have become part of how the Tsimshian and Nisga'a youth describe themselves. For example, when I asked Kyle how he would identify himself, he replied, "First Nations. Nisga'a. I live in Prince Rupert and I'm Canadian. But, usually I say I'm from Kincolith. First Nations goes ahead because I hear it more, I guess."³

I follow the guidelines provided by the Strategic Alliance of Broadcasters for Aboriginal Reflection (SABAR) in their "Key Terminology Guidebook for Reporting on Aboriginal Topics" (SABAR 2012) to advise on my use of "Indigenous," "Aboriginal" and "First Nations." Following this guide, I use "Indigenous peoples" when discussing people who have occupied the area "since time immemorial" (SABAR 2012, 5). I refer to the Indigenous community of Prince Rupert to emphasize a group of people whose heritage was rooted in the area long before Europeans and others established a presence. When I use the phrase "Aboriginal people," I am

³ I also heard "Indian" used among the group; usually in jokes or derogatory comments such as "Indian time." I heard, "native" used to describe collective experiences such as in the vignette I provide in this chapter and the next. It is being re-appropriated to define membership, strength, and defiance against colonialism. Neither word, I came to understand, should be used by non-Aboriginal people.

referring to the larger group of Aboriginal people in Canada whose experiences are similar. This is useful for referring to historical shifts and consequences, as well as responses to colonization that affect peoples across Canada.

“First Nations” describes members of a particular nation such as Tsimshian or Nisga’a and includes their Status and Non-Status members. I use Tsimshian or Nisga’a when referring to those who define their membership in either of these two First Nations. Other times I use First Nations to identify the membership that may include these two nations as well as others. Most of those I met in Prince Rupert trace their heritage to more than one First Nations so the term helps identify these multiple relationships. The phrase “First Nations” also helps remind the reader that these members are connected to political groups who continue to own and have never ceded their territory or right to self-determination.

1.4 Photography and Ethnographic Moments

This dissertation is structured around a series of moments, such as the afternoon of oolichans and ketchup that I provided at the beginning of this chapter. They are used to explore the historical, contemporary, and shifting modes of belonging and community that are important because they reveal how practices may shift in context and form, but often find ways to retain their binding principles. Other moments I describe in both text and image are small points of incongruence that open interesting discussions about how cultural values have been maintained and changed with the introduction of new technologies. Both photography and text are limited, but both offer vivid means to think about how technology, media, and community inform and help produce strategies that retain social bonds.

I also use these moments to recognize the impossibility of proposing to understand the entirety of the youths’ experience. I align with Tim Ingold (2014), who argues that fieldwork based on participant observation is a process of encountering and learning that is limited, but valuable. In his words, “to practice participant observation, then, is to join in correspondence with those with whom we learn or among whom we study, in a movement that goes forward rather than back in time” (Ingold 2014, 390). Thus, my method is participant observation, photography, and historical analysis. My media are ethnographic texts and photographs, which I use to create space for new and ongoing conversations.

This dissertation is a mediated narrative of my particular experience of fieldwork, production of photographs, and exploration of digital media use in the community. Photography, John Collier (1986) reminds us, is an abstracted constructed medium that is intended to draw our attention to particular elements of any selected moment. He wrote that “photography is a process of abstraction; we never construct anything approaching a complete document. In any practical sense, photography is very selective” (Collier 1986, 25). Photographs are inherently incomplete, but offer a recorded trace that our senses recognize as mimetic.

A written narrative is a different medium, but it can be a similar process of abstraction. First used by Gilbert Ryle, Clifford Geertz (1973) adopted the term “thick description” and made it almost synonymous with anthropological knowledge production. Thick description is a written recorded trace that acknowledges multiple layers of potential meanings, structures, and elements in the moments described. Photographs and my field notes are my recorded traces of moments during my fieldwork. Like the photographs, this ethnography, as a whole, is an abstraction of these experiences.

Anthropology, the founding discipline of ethnography and thick description, is sometimes singled out as having participated in the colonializing, destruction, and unfair treatment of other groups of people (Lewis 1973). In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda T. Smith first mentions anthropologists when she states that “although many Indigenous writers would nominate anthropology as representative of all that is truly bad about research, it is not my intention to single out one discipline over another” (1999, 11). Yet, with this sentence, she does single out anthropology; shackling the discipline to its imperialistic past. It is a noteworthy connection and one to remember in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. I recognize that my privilege and the practice of anthropology should be considered in relation to colonialism (Robben and Nordstrom 1995). I often introduce myself as a visual anthropologist. The title describes my interdisciplinary approach of thinking with and through visual media to discuss cultural exchanges and mundane experiences that shape how we understand our world and ourselves. Using this title also allows me to recognize that I am fortunate to have had the equipment, as well as the time for fieldwork, creating media, and thinking in the abstract (Sanford 2006). It also identifies me as an outsider with an European heritage who engages in a practice of documenting, reproducing, and distributing other peoples’ experiences. Focusing on

conversations and prioritizing the requests of those who agreed to participate is important for not repeating histories of research connected to the unfair representation and treatment of Indigenous peoples.

I agree with Smith (1999, 28) who argues that “Indigenous peoples want to tell [their] own stories, write [their] own versions, in [their] own ways, for [their] own purposes.” Kristin Dowell (2013), Faye Ginsburg (1993, 1994) and others have explored the important role of Indigenous media. The appropriation of mass media by Indigenous peoples around the world functions slightly differently in each context and includes many different kinds of voices (Alia 2011). In Canada for example, government funding and opportunities has created the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network where Indigenous producers, storytellers, actors, and journalists tell their own stories and help shape and define what it means to be First Nation in Canada (Roth 2008). Elsewhere Indigenous media makers are strategically creating and circulation mass and digital media to revitalize languages and push back against oppressive social structures (Ginsburg 2008).

Amongst the important work of Indigenous media creators, I also believe there is a space for cross-cultural projects alongside encouraging and developing Indigenous research and media. Both can exist when engagement is careful, respectful and based in dialogue (Denzin, Lincoln and Smith 2008). The photographs, film and photo-collage mural created during my research are an example of a creative collaboration between the youth, their families and myself, a non-Indigenous researcher. Our media and this dissertation is an important example of the kinds of respectful relationships required to produce intimate portrayals of Indigenous youth and their families. Our project also exemplifies how such a collaboration can be valuable for the community, even if they are not the ones to initiate the project.

My approach follows scholars such as David MacDougall (1991) who reflects on who “owns” the stories told by filmmakers and anthropologists. I am also heavily inspired by Jean Rouch (2003) who coined the term “shared anthropology” to describe his ethnographic filmmaking approach (Henley 2009). His methods tried “not to theorize about people in such a way as to introduce a gap between observer and observed, but to try and ask good questions, the answer to which will open up new questions” (Rouch 2003, 143). I have approached my work with this in mind. My fieldwork focused on creating conversations with community members

while also producing written, photographic, and video media in ways that enabled those I met to appreciate and take ownership.

My methodology and inductive process focused on participant observation as pioneered by Malinowski (1922) and Spradley (1980). With a camera constantly draped around my neck or in my arms, I became recognizable at particular events and spaces in the city. My participation with the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers and with groups of youth led to introductions to their families and spontaneous conversations that added insight to my research. In 2011, many youth and adults who signed consent forms to be photographed and video recorded did not volunteer for formal interviews, but agreed that some of our spontaneous conversations during dance group activities, gatherings, meals, or walks around town could be included in the analysis. To maintain a process of ongoing consent (Tri Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans 2014), I found myself interrupting the flow of conversation to verbally ask if I could quote what had just been said or include a particular event in my analysis. Sometimes I followed up with further questions to explore topics and incorporate the thoughts of others. These conversations were part of my participation in the community. Some participants agreed to their inclusion in analysis immediately, while others asked to see how it would be used before they gave consent. Most participants gave permission to be identified by name, but a few requested pseudonyms or to be completely de-identified. Other descriptions or quotes I de-identified because of the sensitivity of their topic. Drafts of sections of this dissertation were shared with identified and de-identified participants included in these pages. They were invited to offer comments on the analysis or to remove themselves from the project.

During the six months of on-site fieldwork in Prince Rupert during 2011, I created 297 pages of single-spaced typed field notes, numerous hand-written notes, and thousands of co-created photographs. Consent forms for photographs and video recordings circulated at Planet Youth in both 2007 and 2011 as well as at carving classes and the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers rehearsals.⁴ Additional consent forms were used for interviews. In 2011, sixty-six

⁴ In 2011, I was invited to participate and create media with the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers. Many of the youth I met in 2007 were members and the dance group introduced me to the youths' friends and family. Gitmaxmak'ay means "rainbow" and references the frequency of rainbows in Prince Rupert.

members of the community agreed to be photographed or recorded, adding to the forty youth who agreed to be part of the original photography and video projects in 2007.

In 2007, I conducted interviews with 12 youths and created over 25 hours of video recordings with a group of 40 youths. In 2011, I conducted additional interviews with 13 participants, five of whom were from the group of youths I had interviewed in 2007. Four other youths and four adults also added their thoughts during these formal interviews. Each were given time to review their interviews and remove portions from analysis. Only one person from the 2007 study and one person from the 2011 study requested that small portions of their interviews be removed. Transcribed interviews and field notes were coded to identify quotes and encounters related to digital technology, community, Facebook, photographs, and feasts.

This dissertation is an intimate project, localized around the perceptions and experiences of a handful of youth; which means it has some limitations. My encounters with youth at the teen centre and beyond are not representative samples of Aboriginal youth in Canada nor are they representative of every youth in Prince Rupert. The intimacy, however, provides a unique longitudinal perspective over more than seven years of participant observation and conversations that help identify some of the motivations, responses, and adaptations of new technologies that may be occurring in similar communities.



Figure 1.6 Photographs and field notes accumulated during research in 2011.

The analysis of the youths' experiences and my commentary on the mediating role of digital technologies is informed by observations and interactions with their group of peers as well as their larger community in Prince Rupert and at events in both Victoria and Vancouver. In addition to interviews, secondary historical sources are used to inform connections across multiple centuries to propose underlying influences on more recent activities. In social science research, this process of mixing of methods and data to support analysis is called triangulation (Denzin 1970). In this project, the triangulation of interviews, observations, photographs, and historical texts as well as other ethnographies are used for my analysis.

I also interacted online with youth and their families using Facebook before, during, and after my 2011 fieldwork. Facebook was an integral part of participating in the community in 2011. I interacted online with youth and their families and these interactions informed my inductive process. Status messages, comments, and private messages, however were not used as data points. Instead, interviews and in-person observations of youth and adults as they used cell phones and Facebook as part of physical social interactions were analysed following the ongoing consent processes I have described. These physical observations provided a means of understanding the technological and human actors while also respecting my relationship with youth and their families. Occasionally, I do include some examples of particular posts from the social network verbatim. In these instances, the individuals provided verbal permission to use the particular status message or post. As mentioned previously, they also had the ability to review drafts of the manuscript. This method of involving study participants in the creation of this dissertation makes the text more than a documentation of the past; it enables a present and future purpose as well.

As a collection of moments, this dissertation is structured with some linear temporal components, but connections are also made in ways that break the linear temporal construction. Moments are represented visually and in text to identify and create connections between individual perceptions and the socio-cultural shifts that influence their potential meanings. Socio-cultural and historical connections are presented in relationship to particular moments in order to locate the youth in their communities while acknowledging that they will never have a singular position. Each chapter includes moments and meanings that unfold, complicate, and shape the chapters that proceed and follow. Individual chapters stretch across different ranges of

history as I explore connections and construct meaning through the moments I share. Recurrent themes, objects, and ideas also appear throughout the chapters of the dissertation; much the way our memories create connections and meanings across moments through the recurrent objects and themes that we perceive as significant.

When thought about in this way, the temporality of moments challenges popular linear conceptions of time.⁵ Miriam Hansen's (1987) analysis of Benjamin's (1999, 2007) discussions of aura helps focus the relationships between media, temporality, and experience as they apply to moments:

An important aspect of Benjamin's notion of the aura is its complex temporality—which inscribes his theory of experience with the twofold and antagonistic registers of memory and history. First of all, leaves no doubt that, being contingent upon the social conditions of perception, the experience of the aura is irrevocably in decline, precipitated by the effects of industrial modes of production, information, transportation and urbanization, especially an alienating division of labour and the proliferation of shock sensations. Yet only in the process of disintegration can the aura be recognized, can it be registered as a qualitative component of (past) experience. (Hansen 1987, 189)

Benjamin's concept of aura, Hansen points out, is created from both social history and individual memory, although the two can seem to be at odds. The individual becomes aware of aura filled moments because the industrial modes of production make such special moments rare and thus perceived as having a meaning connected to a special quality of the past. Benjamin (2007) argues that because aura filled moments connect to an idea of a past, these moments are defined by their temporality; they are framed by socio-cultural temporal shifts that define these moments as having meaning.

To shift from aura to moments and awareness, Sutton (2009, 84) summarizes Hansen's use of moment in her essays on Benjamin arguing that "Miriam Hansen's work on Benjamin and experience emphasizes this: the moment is the sum of experience plus the experience of that experience, a cumulative doubling analogous to the very birth of thought." The moment is defined by a perception that a segment of experience has an additional and possibly abstract meaning—a meaning linked to temporality. This awareness is part of the creation of thought and thus a moment does not exist only in the past. The awareness of what that moment means for

⁵ Theorists who use mechanical and artistic examples to challenge linear conceptions of time include Deleuze (1986, 1989), Innis (1950), and McLuhan (1994).

identity, subjectivity, temporality, or relationships, for example, is the sum of that experience as acknowledged in the present. Meanings of past and present are also part of our imaginings of our future (Husserl 1902, Bergson 1911). The creation of these thoughts that give awareness of these meanings are what separates each moment from our overall experience.

Unlike constructed measurements of a “second” or a “minute,” moments are segments of experience that do not exist outside of individual experience. Moments are defined by a personal awareness or perception that one moment is unique from the next because of the meanings we construct from our perceptions of the past, present, and future. Benjamin’s discussions of aura help us understand that social conditions—memory and history—are part of this process while acknowledging the process is also a present and future activity. Based on Hansen (1987) and Sutton’s (2009) work, I think of moments as a particular segment of experience that is defined by the process of constructing meaning of that experience, as well as the experience itself. Each experience or memory becomes understood as a moment when an individual proposes connections between that moment and their social, as well as individual history. They also connect these experiences to their meanings about their future selves. The production of meaning is part of what shifts a present moment into the past, or separates one memory from another. These meanings are what make some memories easier to remember than others.

In the context of my discussion of First Nations youth, the meanings associated with moments matter because the feast systems of the past co-exist with conscious and unconscious awareness and participation of youth in the community. The past is part of the present and the connections across past, present, and future construct meanings that create moments. For example, Audra Simpson (2003, 142), describes how, in her own Mohawk community, “the past and the present are in a conversation with each other—that culture (and as such, tradition), is a matter of communication, creation and meaning rather than a survival.” The way in which the past and present are in conversation in moments of creation help us understand how youth position themselves in their community and leverage contemporary techno-cultural shifts for purposes that align with their present needs for community, economic, and emotional support.

1.5 Moments of Technology, Media, and Community

This dissertation argues that digital technological practices among the Tsimshian and Nisga'a youth and families that I met respond to marginalization by finding new means of accessing support and re-inventing protocols of the feast system. Throughout the following chapters, particular moments are used to focus on the interaction between technology, media, and groups of people that produce community. The interaction between media, technology, and community after the introduction of mobile digital technologies, highlight the resilience of the youth and their families as well as their use of social media for touching on and reinventing Tsimshian and Nisga'a protocols. Exchanging messages and photographs using digital technology, both locally and over distance, are ways that the youth and families I met appropriated and deployed technology, produced media, and created notions of community that helped manage their colonial experiences and move towards their own definitions of success.

1.5.1 Technology

Within and beyond the activities of the feast system, technology and social practice converge in the thumbs of Tsimshian and Nisga'a youth. Tapping cell phone screens creates a different kind of awareness of a seemingly instantaneous communication across time and space. These taps, I argue, are most effective when recognized in relation to the traditional values of witnessing and participation. Knowledge and social scaffolding provided by the feast system, informs and proposes the outcomes of the youths' text messages, Facebook posts, or photographs.

Heidegger (1977) argues, technology frames how we see the world and each other. The effects of technology are greater than the production and use of cell phones or tools created by humans to accomplish certain goals; technology also influences how we view resources, relationships, and shapes our own knowledge. Heidegger writes,

Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology. (Heidegger 1977,4)

Heidegger argues that contemporary technology creates knowledge about the world that helps humans understand nature as a resource to be extracted and remoulded to human will. His essay remains important because he points out how technology influences our perspectives in ways about which we are not consciously aware. Introduced technologies, such as cell phones, shape our relationships and our perspectives of the world. How these changes occur are the subject of theoretical debate.

Technologically deterministic thinking, such as Heidegger's, argues that technology shapes social structures and cultures. More specifically, technological determinists argue that technology is an agent of social change (Smith and Marx 1994). For example, Shaw (1979) identified Karl Marx as a technological determinist by analyzing Marx's statement: "the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist" (Marx 1977, 202). Marx argued that technologies such as the hand mill or the steam-mill helped create different economic systems. In a more modern context, Moore's Law generally predicts the number of transistors that can be placed on a single chip, will double every year or two" (Mollick 2006: 62). As speed increases and size decreases, technological determinists would emphasize that hard drives are agents of social change. The advancements in computer speed and size determine where we can take our computers, what we can do with them, and how we restructure society around the pocket sized devices of the twenty-first century.

In the following discussion, I use the term "technology" to encompass a wide set of tools and material products humans use to mediate physical and social worlds. I do so to explore the ways in which new digital technologies extend and in some ways transform pre-industrial Indigenous practices and highlight how more recent technologies articulate within larger histories of socio-economic systems. I trace continuity between the recent introduction of digital technologies and older practices rooted in tools and objects.⁶ For example, thinking back to the oolichans and ketchup discussion, ketchup is produced by a different technology, system, and mindset than the tools and knowledge that produce smoked oolichans. The oolichans are smoked or rendered into grease by families who privately sell or exchange them within and across

⁶ Some scholars may identify such objects as material culture (see e.g. Buchli 2002). I emphasize such objects as technology to draw continuity between pre-industrial physical and new digital invented tools used for cultural transmission, continuity, and re-invention.

communities. Thus ketchup and oolichans are part of two different social organizational systems and habits. Both ketchup and oolichan grease exists within this larger definition of technology.

By thinking about the relationship between a set of tools or products and socio-economic relationships, we can see the technologies that produce ketchup are part of changing social habits and global commodity systems of mass produced goods. The trade of oolichans usually exists outside of this larger, capitalist market. And yet, in and near Prince Rupert, these two products and their corresponding socio-economic system co-exist and can be found side-by-side at feasts in Indigenous communities. The youth and families I met access both systems and both sets of technological practices, although the outcomes of colonialism and participation in global economies sometimes makes the technologies and knowledge that guide oolichans smoking difficult to acquire. Technological determinism has its limitations, but it useful for recognizing that technologies have a way of shifting social patterns.

Social construction of technology (SCOT) is a theory that responds to the limits of the technological deterministic line of inquiry (Pinch, Bijker, and Hughes 1987). SCOT theorists would focus on how Chrystel and her friends converse about ketchup and oolichans, and the outcomes of those conversations in order to explain social shifts in relation to technology. Social constructionists would ask how do Chrystel and her friends negotiate the two different products and what do they mean? Summarizing the approach, Brey (1997, 4) writes:

Technological change cannot be analysed as following a fixed, unidirectional path, and cannot be explained by reference to economic laws or some inner technological “logic.” Rather, technological change is best explained by reference to a number of technological controversies, disagreements and difficulties, that involve different actors (individuals or groups that are capable of acting) or relevant social groups, which are groups of actors that share a common conceptual framework and common interests.

Instead of focusing on technology as the inducer of change, SCOT theorists use an agency-centred approach that emphasizes how different groups of people interpret and interact with new technologies (Klein and Kleinman 2002).⁷

⁷ One branch of social constructivism that draws on Actor-Network Theory attempts to respond to critiques that the notion of social construction is too human focused by recognizing the influence of all things in a system (e.g., Callon 1984; Law 1992; Latour 2005; Mützel 2009).

As a way of bridging the two perspectives, some describe the social incorporation of new technologies as the “domestication” of technology (Merete and Knut 1996). Domestication refers to the processes by which the use of a technology is normalized and becomes ubiquitous (Haddon 2011). My observations of technological practices in Prince Rupert show that the adaption of technology among Indigenous youth has less to do with the borrowing or taming of new technology than with the creative combination of multiple influences to produce something new that resonates with heritage and present desires. One of these influences is the “remediation” or the representation of preceding media expressions and their corresponding practices in digital media (Bolter and Grusin 2000). Specifically, the digital technological practices of Tsimshian and Nisga’a youth and their families in Prince Rupert are influenced by contemporary marginalization, ancient social organization, and local remediation.

The concept of domestication also glosses over the trial and error that shapes behaviours with and around technology. To address this gap, Ursula Franklin (1990), an experimental physicist and Canadian Council for the Arts Massey Lecturer, defined and explored the idea of technology as a practice. Franklin (1990, 3) writes, “technology involves organization, procedures, symbols, new words, equations, and most of all, a mindset.” It is the mindset that helps explain why new additions are treated in certain ways. Franklin’s approach eliminates the binary—chicken versus the egg—debate of whether or not technological or social negotiation came first or has more influence in creating change. Instead, Franklin recognizes the process of creating practices through relationships between tools and social behaviours as the defining characteristics of culture.

Thinking of technology as a practice, however, also confuses the differences between technology and the social practices that maintain communities. They are contingent upon one another, but Franklin takes the definition too far when defining technology as a practice. While Franklin’s focus on practice highlights that technology involves a process that is regularly performed and reshaped as skills are identified and improved—a “practice”—defining technology as a practice de-emphasizes technology’s material manifestations. Thus, instead, of looking at technology as a practice my dissertation focuses on *technological practices* to emphasize both the human-digital interactions and the influences that make these interactions effective.

By focusing on moments that reveal the technological practices developed by youth and their families in Prince Rupert, I emphasize technology's connection to material, purposeful objects that are the products of intended human actions and knowledge. The technology used by Tsimshian and Nisga'a people at feasts include the masks, button blankets, different kinds of food stuffs, and cameras. Each technology has become part of their practice during different historical periods. The feast system is a kind of social scaffolding that informs community members of the requirements and practices expected of them. Each technology offers different opportunities and limitations for how people can choose to act with the frameworks of cultural values and social practices that have been effective for centuries.

Knowledge and practices of community members have influenced the incorporation of different technologies throughout Nisga'a and Tsimshian history, including their appropriation of social media. I argue that some awareness of feast protocols and participation in an ongoing support system significantly influences community members' use of social media and technology, even when the youth and their families do not have complete knowledge of the feast system. At the same time, new opportunities to quickly and cheaply communicate across distance have made it easier for marginalized youth to maintain connections with their families and, in some ways, practice elements of their heritage.

1.5.2 Media

For Tsimshian youth and their families living in Prince Rupert, Facebook has created new possibilities for accessing knowledge and relationships. Ilana Gershon (2010,59) writes, "People are not just learning how to manipulate an object when they learn to use a particular medium. They are also always learning what the social expectation might be about communicating through a particular medium." The things we do with technology and with media are shaped by both the opportunities and constraints created by the objects as well as the social expectations of those objects. The technology of Facebook and its role as social media are intertwined.

McLuhan (1994, 7) emphasized the connection between the form of technology that transmits media and its meaning by stating that "the medium is the message." The technological practices that create and interpret a message are part of the meaning. Thus, a medium can be identified as a subset of technologies meant to create communications between people. I align

with the following definition of “media:” technologies focused on the “storage, dissemination, and transmission of (usually human) experience” (Hansen 2010, 294).

The practice of storing, disseminating and transmitting a community’s experience, is why Valerie Alia (1999, 63) writes that Indigenous “feasts, potlatches, and public events of all kinds are important—often central—communications media.” Feasts create spaces for social debate as well as the storage, dissemination, and affirmation of history and contemporary rights. Displays of respect and protocol in the social activities of the Tsimshian and Nisga’a community members that I met are built on the feast structures that manifest and become personalized in the individual statements of gratitude—spoken or written—that circulate between people. Among First Nations communities, media and the public performance have always been important. New digital media, including semi-synchronous communications, are maintaining and translating the messages of the feast into new forms as new ways of managing relationships and responsibilities across greater geographical distances.

I agree that feasts and gatherings are a form of communication media, but they are different from popular conceptions of mass media. They are live performances. Some performance theorists emphasize the distinction between live and mediated performances by relating media to the technologies that allow mediated objects such as photographs, film, and television to be repetitively reproduced and distributed (Phelan 1993, Molderings 1984). Phillip Auslander (1997) argues that the contrast between performance and media made by such theorists is ideological in nature as performance theorists attempted to prioritize theatre of television and film. He writes (1997, 55), “Prior to the advent of those technologies (e.g., sound recording and motion pictures), there was no such thing as ‘live’ performance, for that category has meaning only in relation to an opposing possibility.” The technology became the defining characteristic of mass media, whether the messages were created and disseminated via the printing press, the telegraph, or television.

Performance and media objects are similar in that both are modes of distributable messages of human experience that are often used to generate common ideas and feelings of belonging. Feasts and potlatches are examples of performance and mediating objects working together. Feasts are performances that validate the knowledge and rights of the hosts, and the act of validation is dependent on the distribution of objects. Memories and oral recounting of the

events may not leave visible traces, but the objects exchanged at potlatches and ceremonies are mediating objects used to mark the occasion. Such objects are often considered the traces of the live event, but the relationship between mediating objects and performances can be complex. Indigenous groups group use the objects and performances as symbols to create common meaning of events such as feasts and definitions of their community.

The idea of a few producers controlling the distribution of messages through different technologies has become the defining characteristic of mass media. Social media, in contrast, are digital communication platforms designed to link people and enable them to track their social networks. Although the term came into use in the early 1990s, “social media” didn’t become popular until 2004 with the appearance of Facebook and other blog-based and photo-sharing websites (Bercovici 2010). The term is meant to differentiate a many-to-many creation and distribution pattern from the top-down, few broadcasters form of mass media distribution. The phrase is used to signify internet-based digital interactions and websites that facilitate the creation of an online community and the distribution of user-made content (Dewing 2012). In Prince Rupert, social media facilitated the distribution of messages, feelings and needs of the community as well as the photographs created during our research.

Social media was embraced by Indigenous youth in Prince Rupert to manage the intervals of distance and connection that shaped their lives. Much of our knowledge about social media, however, has come from particular contexts. Often theories of communication using social media are based on research of college attending youth (see, e.g., Hew 2011; Lambert 2013; Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2007; Gershon 2010). A literature of Facebook research published between 2006 and 2012 shows there are numerous studies of the social networking site, but identified the need to expand beyond North American users of Facebook as well as “understand how it complements the offline communication among users and between users and non-users” (Caers et al. 2013, 995). Instead, many researchers focus on youth and their particular identity formation, behaviour, and expression on social networking sites themselves (see, e.g., boyd 2008,⁸ Ling and Baron 2007; Ito et al 2010). In comparison, only a few studies have been published about the use of social networking sites among Indigenous populations (e.g., Bronwyn

⁸ danah boyd prefers that her name not be capitalized.

2010), or explore the development, both social and technological, that lead to the observable behaviours on these websites (e.g. Virtanen 2015).⁹

Most recently in the spring of 2016, a team of anthropologists led by Daniel Miller of University College London, published an open access series of social media ethnographies (Miller et al. 2016). This is an expansion of Miller's (2011) previous project, *Tales From Facebook*, in which he uses vignettes of particular users to argue that people in Trinidad post and interact on the social media site in ways that reflect their own particular cultural values. The expansion project, *How the World Changed Social Media* (Miller et al. 2016) expands on this argument by making comparisons across this groups numerous studies of social media around the world, including China, Italy, Brazil, and other places. Their hope is to add more research on non-western practices to our understanding of online networks and the internet as an extremely localized technology (Miller and Slater 2000). Although I am not associated with their work, this dissertation adds to the literature as another examination of, and argument for, recognizing that the same social media platform is used differently by different groups of people based on local cultural practices, remediation and values.

Miller and his colleagues have made substantial contributions to expanding our knowledge of how social media is used. Their observations and analyses suggest, "that social media may represent an increased, though more flexible, orientation to groups—rather than, as appeared in the earlier internet, a continued rise of ego-centred networked individualism" (Miller et al. 2016, 182). They call this orientation to groups *scalable sociality*. Digital social network tools enable individuals to adjust the privacy and extent of their engagement in the larger social network giving them the ability to participate publicly on different levels of privacy and social

⁹ In the last few years, social media research has exploded in as many directions as there are disciplines of research. There is growing interest in including social media use as part of all kinds of ethnographic research within and beyond the North American mainstream context (Collins and Durrington 2015). A few of these areas include research focused on the relationship between data and privacy (see e.g. Mthulisi and Phillip 2015), social media and work (Gee et al. In Press), as well as using large data to measure how social media use affects self-actualization (see e.g. Deuze 2015) and well-being (Burke and Kraut 2016). My research, relates to research that thinks about how the online behaviours can be intertwined with local face-to-face interactions in ways that build local neighbourhoods and community (see e.g. Afzalan and Evans-Cowley 2015; Dunbar et al. 2015).

interaction. Scalable sociality, as argued by Miller and his colleagues, may describe our shifting engagement with digital technology, but the success of social media platforms is dependent not only on the new tools, but on the social practices that are unique to each location and each group's cultural history.

The energy and focus required to document the kinds of interaction online means that Miller and colleagues' (Miller et al. 2016) efforts to explain the context-dependent influences of these shifts is more limited. For example, they document the kinds of photographs and provide some explanation for why differences may exist, but they do not share very many phenomenological possibilities for why particular practices develop. Locally in Prince Rupert, as I will argue, the engagement with these platforms can be understood as being shaped by the practice of making public statements that are part of the feast system.

My analysis adds to the academic discourses on digital technology use by exploring the localized historical influences on emergent contemporary technological practices. I focus on the possible reasons why particular media exchanges are used to produce community in Prince Rupert, beyond the simple act of documenting events on Facebook. This is important because the Indian Act, the Potlatch Ban, and the removal of children from their families during residential school and ongoing challenges with the foster care system not only destroyed these social systems; they also destroyed cultural understanding of *why* they existed. Outcomes of colonialism attempted to destroy the stabilizing traditional practices of the feast system that produced and maintained feelings of belonging. Yet, some of the values and aspects of the feast system survived and evolved in response to external forces (often through the appropriation of technologies) thereby enabling the community to maintain a sense of belonging and connection.

Today, the appropriation of technology includes digital production. Aboriginal filmmakers, artists and authors are using digital technology to construct sovereign creative spaces for Indigenous people (see e.g. Dowell 2013). The practice of making and showing media are community building opportunities that respond to structural oppression (Wilson and Stewart 2008). As new media opens new opportunities, Aboriginal media producers are also moving towards their own sovereign websites (Lewis and Lévesque 2008). Canadian websites such as CyberPowWow, Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace, and www.isuma.tv also exemplify ways Indigenous media production, coupled with digital technology, can create new repositories for

knowledge, representation, and meaning important to Indigenous groups (Gaertner 2015; Lewis and Fragnito 2005; Sillicker 2008).

Aboriginal web developers are creating new and different opportunities for original content, but most of the Prince Rupert youth I interacted with did not have the coding skills or the digital literacy to create their own independent online spaces. Instead, the youth and their family's appropriated mobile social media—created by outsiders—to help maintain connections, create avenues for social expression, and fulfill their need for physical, economic, and emotional support.

Faye Ginsburg (2008, 302) argues that many Indigenous media makers and digital creators are cultural activists. The production of Indigenous media, she describes, articulates within a larger framework of community building and self-determination.

The cultural activists creating these new kinds of cultural forms have turned to them to as a means of revivifying their relationship to their lands, local languages, traditions and histories, and of articulating community concerns. They also see media as a means of furthering social and political transformation by inserting their own stories into national narratives as part of ongoing struggles for Aboriginal recognition and self-determination (Ginsburg 2008, 302).

Very few of the youth and families I met in Prince Rupert would venture to call themselves cultural activists according to Ginsburg's definition, but they are interested in revitalizing aspects of their traditions. This dissertation identifies a different context of media creation and recognizes that cultural resurgence in Prince Rupert is motivated by the desire to stay connected to each other and draws on whatever resources the community has to strengthen their social bonds. For example, the presence of our cell phones on the table during our 2011 conversation about oolichans and ketchup were there to help fulfill the need to stay connected. Social networking sites, cell phones, and the images created through my research are part of the resources used to prompt connection.

I argue technology and media (in their various forms) are vital to the organization and expression of Tsimshian and Nisga'a nations youth and their families because they help connect people over distance and organize exchanges at home. The youths' use of media, including the photographs produced during my research, is shaped by ongoing patterns of personal exchange and systems of support reproduced over time and great distances. Social media is the most recent

tool First Nations youth in Prince Rupert have adopted to improve daily exchanges in their individual networks and to help them endure and work to overcome the historical, familial, and economic challenges facing their increasing diasporic community.

1.5.3 Community

The term “community” is used by Tsimshian and Nisga’a individuals I met in Prince Rupert to describe the group of people connected by kinship, heritage, and friendship who participate in events around town. They also used the words family and group, but I never heard them use the phrase social network as a description. I also only heard the word society used in the name of non-profit organizations. Individuals used community to symbolise their social connection and to describe an inclusive relationship that went beyond kinship and was more intimate than that conveyed by the notion of society.

Many researchers also challenge the homogenous, static notions the term community seems to imply. John Posthill (2008, 5) observes that “community merits attention as a polymorphous folk notion widely used both online and offline, but as an analytical concept with an identifiable empirical referent it is of little use.” This sentiment is echoed by other scholars such as Amit and Rapport (2002), who argue that the concept has too many meanings, lacks clear boundaries, and is not precise enough for analysis. Some researchers work to acknowledge the divisive negotiations and always-shifting boundaries of social groups to complicate the idea of cohesive communities (see, e.g., Fox 1991, Behar and Gordon 1995). Community is at the same time a useful idea and difficult term to conceptualize.

Despite conceptual challenges, the concept of community has staying power. Social networks, personal networks, and even society have not eclipsed its popular use. This dissertation acknowledges that use of community may mask the complexities of social experiences, but I add to academic discourse about the concept by focusing on the shared outcomes and experiences that help identify the production and maintenance of Indigenous communities. Focusing on community enables my research to explore what the youth and their families in Prince Rupert have in common, and how these commonalities manifest to produce and maintain the sense of belonging that supports their resilience. It also, allows me to expand on

the ways that change in technology and media contribute to the production and maintenance of what those in Prince Rupert call “their community.”

Anthony Cohen (1985) identified community as both a symbol and an entity filled with symbols. These symbols identify what community members have in common among themselves that is different from other groups. Symbols, whether they are visual objects, phrases, or behaviours do not inherently contain meaning on their own, rather their commonality lies in how they are interpreted. Ketchup and oolichans, for example, are agreed upon symbols of belonging to the Nisga’a and Tsimshian community among the young people described at the beginning of this chapter. Chrystel may not like oolichans, but she understands their role and she can still laugh with others about the fish and ketchup. The laughter she shares with friends as they work through the ambiguities helps create group cohesion and develops a common outlook and shared experience. Moments when symbols are discussed produce shared definitions and feelings that, in turn, help the youth define their community.

Drawing on the notions of symbolism and shared awareness, Benedict Anderson (1991) proposes the concept of the imagined community. Anderson (1991, 6) explains, a nation is an imagined community that exists because of the ideas and symbols that produce ideas of “horizontal comradeship” without the face-to-face requirements of local communities. Notions of large national communities are imagined—created in the mind—and emotionally charged with positive notions of social connection. Anderson (1991) argues a printing press—a new technology—produced media and systems of knowledge that help people believe in the idea of a shared heritage and future interests across larger geographies.

Two decades before Anderson’s ground breaking work, Melvin Webber (1963) noted that community in North America during the middle of the twentieth century was disconnecting from location-based practices. At the time Webber was writing, the universal accessibility of new tools such as the telephone had dramatically shifted the locality of communities. He notes, “never before have men been able to maintain intimate and continuing contact with others across thousands of miles; never has intimacy been so independent of spatial propinquity” (Webber 1963, 43). Webber (1963) argues that in North America, personal networks based on occupation, leisure, and other interests were becoming how people defined their sense of belonging and cooperation. Location no longer defined the social order or boundaries of groups of people and

their communities. Intimacy was no longer a face-to-face process, but one that could be maintained across distance with less and less effort.

While Webber's (1963) research focuses on mid twentieth century car and telephone culture, his work has been useful for digital scholars at the turn of the twenty-first century who argue that the ubiquity of digital communication technologies is another shift in community practices (Freeman 2004). Barry Wellman (1979, 1999, 2001, 2004) and others have argued that urban communities should be studied as networks. Interpersonal linkages are not bound to a particular location, but are based on the dependencies people have on one another (Hampton and Wellman 2003; Wellman 1999). Wellman and others believe digital technology accelerated the process of creating social ties based on what individuals can do for one another and facilitated the rise of networked individualism (Rainie and Wellman 2012; Bruhn 2005).¹⁰

Networked individualism and social network analysis can minimize the collective affective experience of what is produced by these networks, such as symbols, feelings, support and laughter that Chrystel and her friends rely upon. In contrast, scholars such as Joseph Gusfield (1978) emphasize community as a process and make the point that the longevity and power of community lies in its affective application rather than its role as a simplifying organizing category. The production and maintenance of community is a process that results in a group of people creating feelings of belonging to one another.

Siding with Gusfield (1978), I believe community can be viewed as a point of reference through which to identify what helps produce a person's sense of belonging. The youth in Prince Rupert derive a sense of belonging to their community through elements of the feast system, effects of colonization, their *wilp* (*waap*) or family, and their marginalization from larger society. All of the above influences individuals as well as the group. For both traditional and more contemporary groups, community is formed by interactions between individuals in overlapping and yet unique personal networks. My emphasis on the term community prioritizes what is produced by these interactions: belonging.

¹⁰ Manuel Castells (2000) extended this idea and argued that the world has become a network society where key structures and activities are organized and processed through digital technology. Networks help identify person-centred processes that connect groups of people.

I focus on moments when belonging is felt through interactions with via digital technology and media and produce community. I use McMillan and George's (1986) four traits that create and maintain communities to guide my discussion. Communities have identifiable membership that prioritizes boundaries facilitated by visible symbols and relationships. Communities enable individuals to feel they have influence over the group, while at the same time experiencing pressure to conform to the group. Individuals also gravitate towards positive group experiences that fulfill their needs. And, finally the group creates a shared emotional awareness, which is often strengthened by a shared spiritual bond, co-presence at events, or the investment of the individual's time and resources at an event. In Prince Rupert, feasts create opportunities for these four traits to be visible and experienced by their community members. In particular moments, I argue individuals are also using Facebook to make visible and participate in community production.

McMillan and George (1986) argue each community displays these traits, but can be unique in how these traits are practiced. Thinking of my experiences with the youth in Prince Rupert, I argue that community is produced and maintained by individuals who deploy messages, photographs, and objects in ways that publicly mediate positive experiences, and shared emotional awareness. Interactions in person and online create opportunities for individuals to have influence among others in their community. Participation creates attachment and common sentiments that are shared among the youth and their families.

Active participation is central to many Aboriginal communities. For example, anthropologist Susan Lobo (1998,5) includes in her discussion of urban Aboriginal communities, consideration of the fact that members are both grounded in "their local environment and community as a place and also deeply intertwined with the network of relatedness that ties the community members together." Networks of relatedness are an active practice that remains tied to particular places such as villages, but that extend far beyond those locales. Being able to identify who is inside or outside a community helps identify and maintain a support system that shapes an individual's sense of belonging and identity, especially urban Aboriginal communities.

I choose to frame my discussion with ideas of community because the term mediates the ideas of belonging, responsibility, and probable historical kinship connections. I say probable kinship connections because the youths and their families' knowledge of their exact historical

ties are sometimes hazy (chapter 1). However, knowledge of these potential connections continue to shape the youths' ongoing activities to build and maintain their communities without propinquity. What is produced is a sense of belonging that creates positive relationships and awareness of responsibilities, which in turn help fulfill individual needs. Among the youth and families, I met, some practices of belonging have shifted to online spaces where representation and reciprocity maintain ideas and responsibilities of group cohesion tied to contemporary understandings of traditional practices.

1.6 Chapter Outline

My dissertation explores a selection of moments that reveal the interaction between technology, media, community, and the production of belonging among Tsimshian and Nisga'a youth. Technological practices I observed in 2011 were influenced by particular local histories and created the opportunity for cell phones to join physical spaces as a means of maintaining relationships with one another and with family. Social media was used to create support systems and publicly validate personal initiatives as well as recognize the importance of family and community. The youth and their families used mobile phone and Facebook to practice central values of their feast system and community in new ways. These communication practices help members imagine and feel a sense of belonging to their community that is also supported by activities hosted at the Friendship House and Nisga'a Hall. During the two periods of my fieldwork, between 2007 and 2011, the youth and their families reinvented and transformed the ways they connected to their community; opening new avenues to access cultural resources. I argue that digital communication is a new way youth and their families find financial and emotional support while also offering a way for them to practice social responsibility and experience relatedness that supports individuals in the community

In order to frame the youth and their families' shifting technological practices in a larger context, this dissertation begins by returning to the youths' use of the word native to describe themselves and their experiences. Their use of the term native reflects the outcomes of colonial policies and systems that have isolated youth from their own families and the larger Canadian society. Economic exclusion and alienation related to the larger historical and contemporary context of the Tsimshian and Nisga'a youths' experiences provides grounding for my argument

that technological practices developed after the introduction of Facebook and SMS texting in Prince Rupert have been used to manage economic and social marginalization and have become part of the community's cultural revitalization.

Prior to the introduction of mobile data access in the city the youth I met engaged in activities at the physical location of the teen drop-in centre. Chapter 3 establishes the change in technological practices by exploring the collaborative production of photographs and a video the youth and I created about their peer-based, ad-hoc support system they called their street family. The media we created documented the youths' understandings, re-invention and deployment of traditional notions of kinship responsibilities in a place-based peer community. The photographs and video were also traces of this temporary system of support that adults validated.

By 2011, the youth and their families had created technological practices that used Facebook as a new means of accessing community knowledge and support that relied on a physical location. In Chapter 4, I examine the remediation of locally used technology that informed the Facebook practices of youth and their families. Within two years Facebook was used to resolve immediate needs (such as car rides or questions), manage emotions, and share experiences as well as maintain social bonds despite physical absences. The production of shared experiences online became part of what it meant to participate in the community. Using the new accessibility created by Facebook mobile, the youth and their families changed the frequency by which they directed their attention and messages towards kinship and social support. The new technological practices resulted in a visible and always on potential support network.

Throughout my discussion, I ask the reader to be patient. Aspects of the feast system are explored in multiple chapters, but chapter 5 unpacks details of the feast system and its history to explain how youth are re-purposing their sometimes limited knowledge of traditional protocols for social media. I do so because respecting the strategies youth create means recognizing the youths' sometimes unclear understandings of their traditional protocols and feast details.¹¹ Yet, these details establish precedents that explain why some kinds of technological practices the

¹¹ My choice to wait until Chapter 5 follows a line of thinking that Foucault called writing his "experience books" (Foucault and Trombadori 1991, 36). The purpose of Foucault's books, he said, was to provide the reader with an experience along with knowledge. Following this idea, I organize this dissertation in such a way as to acknowledge details of history and feast system are not always available to the youth I met and must be learned through engagement over time.

youth invent are particularly effective. In chapter 5, I discuss a pair of youth who, in a moment of need, hosted an online 50/50 raffle. These two youths once felt marginalized, yet were able to create technological practices that leveraged their community's familiarity with and expected behaviours related to managing relationships and resources at a distance. Their raffle points to ways in which new invented practices can resonate with cultural traditions and protocols to be particularly effective.

Both Facebook and media projects I created with the youth and their families created traces of moments that provide opportunities for reflection and ways for individuals to locate themselves in their community. In chapter 6, I return to the circulation of the photographs, created by the youth and myself, and their presentation in a photo-collage we created. People interacted, shared, validated, and took ownership of the hundreds of images we created, both in person and on Facebook. In this chapter I explore why our collaborative media gained local popularity and produced feelings of belonging. Each moment represented in a photograph contributed to the shared and individual memories and became another symbols that managed and represented community relationships for generations.



Figure 1.7 Youth and members of the Nisga'a and Tsimshian community in Prince Rupert look at the photo-collage mural we created.

Chapter 2: “Because We’re Native”: Alienation and Revitalization

2.1 Introduction

On a rainy October afternoon in 2007, I wandered the mall in Prince Rupert. It was a Monday and the teen drop-in centre was closed. As expected, I found over a dozen teenagers from the centre entertaining themselves outside one of the entrances. A few were smoking while others were gossiping and joking as they attempted to stay under the overhang and out of the rain. Just like me, most had been wandering around the few public places out of the rain trying to find the group. As more teens arrived, they chatted about their day and teased each other to combat the boredom of having nothing to do. Evan, Jade, and Chrystel asked if I had my camera. They were bored and taking pictures was something to do. I gave the camera to Evan and as he got ready to take the picture, Desiré stood behind me and we both posed for the camera together (Figure 2.1). Jade held Chrystel upside down and posed for the lens (Figure 2.2). Jade then jumped into Darnell's arms for a third picture. Between the clicks of the camera shutter, laughter echoed off the overhang. It was a playful moment filled with joy and friendship; but it did not last long.



Figure 2.1 Desiré and I play for the camera.



Figure 2.2 Jade and Chrystel pose for Evan and the camera he held.

"Shoo, shoo. Shoo, go away," someone bellowed from behind me. I looked over and saw a white security guard in her mid-forties leaning out a partially opened door. "Shoo! I said Shoo," she continued, sweeping her hands towards us as if we were stray dogs. Her hands waved frantically as she screeched, trying to make the crowd depart.

A few of the teenagers rolled their eyes, and one stuck a tongue out at the guard. Very slowly, they drifted toward another overhang farther from the entrance. On the way, a few complained that they weren't welcome anywhere, but most didn't say anything about what just happened. Instead, they focused on creating another photograph.

Later, I asked several of the youth why we were told to leave the area. A few mentioned that it was because some of the youth shoplift. Another said the mall security just did not want people hanging around. More than one shrugged and replied with a statement I had heard several times before: "It's because we're native." The phrase highlights the experiences of First Nations

youth in Prince Rupert who frequently encounter moments of marginalization and alienation in their town.

In Canada, First Nations families continue to labour to regain their pride, overcome intergenerational trauma, and cope with ongoing structural violence, which can manifest in destructive behaviours such as substance and physical abuse (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Bombay et al. 2009). Aboriginal communities, both in villages and in urban centres, are still working towards overcoming structural and colonial violence compounded by weakened cultural transmission systems and social instability (Fast and Collin-Vezina 2010). Most of the youth I met remain somewhat connected to extended First Nations families in the city and surrounding villages, but the destruction of families by the forces of colonization has taken its toll (Menzies 2004). While the youth I met sometimes expressed ambivalence towards their own culture, their feelings of alienation—both from the city and from their traditional culture—was a shared experience that influenced the creative systems of support I discuss in this dissertation.

I use this chapter to establish a framework for my later discussions of technology, media, and community as they pertain to the history of economic exclusion and colonial policies that intentionally destroyed families and the cultural transmission of knowledge. In this chapter, I argued that the local context of economic exclusion, fractured connections, and cultural reawakening influence how and why the youth and their families use new tools, such as Facebook, to reconnect and build supportive relationships with their families and friends.

2.2 Economic Exclusion

Over the years of my research, I had the opportunity to watch Beatrice, one of the young women from Planet Youth, grow from a teenager to an adult and encounter financial challenges produced by a history of economic exclusion. In 2007, she was among the first to pick up a camera at the teen centre (Figure 2.3) At that time, she took advantage of the teen centre as an alcohol-free place to hang out with friends. Beatrice shared stories of taking care of friends and "sisters" who helped her when her thoughts were dark. We kept in touch between the years of my fieldwork and by the time we met in person again, she was a mother.



Figure 2.3 Beatrice tickles Kyle just before a water fight in 2007.

In 2011, she was working as a cashier at Tim Horton's. Her infectious smile still lit up the room, but she had become more mature with life experience. She had opted to leave school and enter the workforce before graduating to support her daughter and help her parents who suffered from ill health and had inconstant work at the cannery. We talked about her excitement at the prospect of going back to school in the fall to finish a few secondary school courses, but she was anxious about this plan. She was working two jobs and was the sole provider for the entire family. She was overwhelmed.

Beatrice told me that most of the work in Prince Rupert was only available during the summer so making enough to pay rent in winter was difficult—even with social assistance. “If I cut back my hours [at work to go to school], I don’t know how we’ll pay the bills.”

“I feel like I might cry over my tea,” she admitted, her voice choking up. “But I have to keep it together for my daughter’s sake” (Figure 2.4). An emotional moment passed between us.

I broke the silence to tell her, "You're my hero." Her commitment to her family and work ethic made a lasting impression.



Figure 2.4 Beatrice and her daughter at a National Aboriginal Day celebration in 2012.

The youth I met felt the enormous stress of their families' financial challenges brought on by the ongoing systems of oppression that reinforced the cycles of poverty they experienced. The moment I shared with Beatrice when we discussed her financial challenges was one of many discussions I had in Prince Rupert. While the phrase "because we're native" may seem disconnected from the economic challenges youth face, the statement summarizes how the youth understand the historical effects of colonial policies that limited economic opportunities for their families and shaped their experiences in the city.

In this section, I outline how the policies that managed fisheries and canneries worked to alienate Indigenous peoples from their resources in the territories that would later become the province of British Columbia. These policies prevented First Nations peoples from accessing technology that modernized the fishing and canning industries, and pushed people into seasonal

work at the margins of the economy. First Nations people have voiced their concerns and fought for their rights within the systems that suppressed their opportunities, but the effectiveness of economic exclusion and racism have made stable employment opportunities a challenge for many including the families of the youth who attended the teen centre.

2.2.1 Resource Management

During the fur trade (approximately 1780 to the late 1850s), the Tsimshian and Nisga'a peoples found a way to incorporate the new European economy into their own trading cycles (Seguin 1985, 15). As entrepreneurs and intermediaries, “the Haida, Tsimshian, and Nisga'a were prudent traders who dictated the price of their furs based on the time of year and the number of ships in the area. They managed European expectations and manipulated the supply and price of furs they traded from the inland” (Gibson 1991, 124). Harring (1998, 190) writes, “by the time of the colonization of Vancouver Island in 1849, Indian nations had a long tradition of incorporating trade with Europeans, mainly the Hudson's Bay Company, into their cultures on their own terms.” First Nations people in the area were able, for a time, to maintain control of their land and resource rights according to their own definitions and cultural systems.

When the European economy moved away from the fur trade towards other resource extraction industries and settlement, entrepreneurial opportunities for Tsimshian and Nisga'a peoples in the cash-economy diminished. Smallpox epidemics in the 1780s, 1830s, and 1860s, killed more than two-thirds of the Aboriginal population making it difficult for many First Nations people to continue their yearly harvesting cycles without participating in some aspect of the European cash economy (Duff 1969). The gold booms in Omineca, Cassiar, and Douglas, during the 1860s led to a flood of Europeans who sometimes employed First Nations people as guides and seasonal wage labourers (Brock 2011, 63). Fishing canneries were also being established and offered seasonal wage-labour to skilled fishermen and their families.

For a few decades, seasonal work complemented the pre-established Indigenous harvesting cycles, allowing people time to build winter food stocks and earn cash to buy European staples (such as molasses and flour) to supplement harvests of salmon, oolichan, berries, and other local foods (Gibson 1991). A few house leaders in the Skeena region signed contracts to lease fishing rights and territory to canneries, thus maintaining authority over their

territories for a time (Harris 2009). First Nations also obtained employment building the railroad and telegraph line in the inland areas (Brock 2011). During the early to mid-nineteenth century, First Nations took advantage of wage labour opportunities, but their employment would never generate the same kinds of wealth for First Nations people as the fur trade (Brock 2011).¹²

By the time Prince Rupert was incorporated as a city in 1910, multiple pressures and policies had already removed the full autonomy of First Nations in the area. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it became increasingly difficult for families to choose if, when, and how they wanted to participate in the cash-based economic systems along the Northwest Coast.

Douglas C. Harris (2009, 15) argues that European philosophies of "public ownership" of fish conflicted with First Nations resource management in the area during the mid-nineteenth century. European settlers viewed access to fish through a "common-law doctrine" that believed anyone had the right to fish anywhere, whereas Indigenous resource management systems in operation for centuries were built on ideas that specific families and individuals owned the rights to access certain resources in certain areas. The fur trade was able to generate wealth for First Nations along the coast, but European and Aboriginal world-views towards fishing rights clashed on waterways throughout the Northwest Coast (Harring 1998, 190).

The establishment of reserves in British Columbia was the colonial government's attempt to deal with the clash in world-views and resource access rights (Harring 1998; Harris 2002). In 1881, a three-week trip to the Skeena and Nass regions by Indian Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly established 24 reserves and a few fishing sites—a tiny fraction of the resources they used in their yearly harvesting cycle—for Tsimshian and Nisga'a people in the area (Harris 2002, 185). By removing Tsimshian and Nisga'a rights to the land and waterways, the provincial government also hoped to encourage white settlement and the European development of the fishing industry (Harris 2002; Harris 2009). By including fisheries in his declaration of reserve sites, O'Reilly attempted to preserve some form of self-sufficiency for the newly formed

¹² Throughout the last two centuries, Indigenous wage-labourers helped build telegraph lines, railroads, highways, skyscrapers, and oil pipelines, and worked in the resource extraction industries such as mining and logging, but their role in building Canada's infrastructure has often been overlooked (see, e.g., Muszynski 1996).

reserve communities, but the process formally alienated thousands of people from their traditional ownership systems and removed them from their territories.

During the same decade that the reserve system was removing Aboriginal people along the Northwest Coast from their territories and their own forms of resource management, the newly formed Department of Marine and Fisheries expanded its control over why, how, when, and where people were allowed to fish. In 1879, the government created a system that allowed Aboriginal people to fish for their own food, but required a license to participate in the commercial fishing industry (Brock 2011, 96). Harris (2009, 189) argues that the food fishing license exemption “performed the same function for the fisheries as Indian reserves did with respect to land. It set aside a small portion of the fisheries for Native peoples, at the same time opening the rest of the resource to an immigrant society.” In the early twentieth century, the department set aside a few licenses for First Nations fishermen, but by then Aboriginal people had been sidelined from the most profitable positions in the industry (Lovisek 2007). In 1917, the department took complete control by requiring permits for food fishing (Harring 1998, 119). The permits were under the purview of the local fishery officer and only given under certain conditions (Harris 2009, 112). By then, licensed fishing and canning industries operating at the mouth of the rivers were decimating fish populations, which affected Indigenous fisheries up stream (McDonald and Joseph 2000; Brock 2011). The instigation of reserves, licenses, and food fishing permits permanently transferred control away from local harvesters to the government and made it difficult for First Nations to sustain themselves outside of the cash-based economy.

Industrial fishing and canneries needed large amounts of low paid labour to succeed and turned First Nations labourers into a commodity. Recruiters traveled to reserve communities and hired entire First Nations families (Mawani 2010, 48). Children and women worked in the cannery, while the men caught fish with licenses and boats loaned by the canneries (Brock 2011; Mawani 2010). Skilled Aboriginal fishermen and their families had few options to access the cash-based economy except through the canneries because of the licensing system. Canneries were company towns that supplied housing and groceries on credit. The cannery system kept labourers in debt, and created racial hierarchies that placed First Nations at the bottom and fed stereotypes that First Nations people could not be trusted with items of value (Hawthorn et al.

1958, 117). Indigenous labourers in the canneries were increasingly alienated from the means of production and the wealth that their labour generated.



Figure 2.5 Peter, an elder, feeds fish scraps to a bald eagle during his shift at the cannery in 2011.

The establishment of industrial fishing and canneries along the Northwest Coast in the mid-nineteenth century marks a permanent shift to wage labour and the beginning of economic alienation of First Nations people in the Prince Rupert area (Figure 2.5). Since the arrival of the canneries, hourly, seasonal wage-labour has been one of the major employment options for Tsimshian, Nisga'a, and other Aboriginal people living in Prince Rupert. When I first met the youth in 2007, 64.5% of the self-identified Aboriginal people living in the city found hourly work in the service, trade, and processing industries. At that time, the average annual income for Prince Rupert's Aboriginal people was \$19,643—near Canada's low-income cut-off (Statistics Canada 2007).¹³ This low average income can be explained by the number of people who

¹³ Canada, unlike other nations, does not have a poverty line. Instead, the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) amount is the amount of income below which 65% or more of income is spent on basic necessities such as housing and food (Statistics Canada 2006). LICO provides a cost of living estimate based on family size and type of population centre.

continue to be contracted for seasonal short-term labour—a cycle of employment that extends back to the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁴

2.2.2 Racial Management

Economic alienation continues to be exacerbated by the effects of the colonial obsession with racial management. The fishing industry developed racial hierarchies that put the Japanese and First Nations at the bottom (Newell 1993, 84). Renisa Mawani (2010, 41) argues that colonial anxiety about racial contact between groups at the canneries "legitimized the need for new forms of legal regulation and governance. Although the fisheries were already sites saturated by law and legality, the encounters that these localities precipitated now demanded further legal and non-legal intervention." Colonial rule and racial segregation divided the kinds of work, living arrangements, and informal spaces in ways that were acceptable to white administrators (Mawani 2010, 41). The exclusion of both Asian immigrants and First Nations people would initiate cycles of poverty that many of the families in Prince Rupert struggle to overcome to this day.

Segregation has been a defining element in Prince Rupert since the city was founded. Throughout much of the twentieth century, First Nations were not allowed in certain restaurants or hotels, and had separate seating in theatres (Nayar 2014). In 1958, a riot in Prince Rupert resulted from the harsh and unfair treatment of First Nations people by the RCMP, and the ongoing racism and segregation that dominated the city (Nayar 2014). Over a thousand people—First Nations and others—joined the fray and forced the city and the RCMP to revisit their racial policies (Campbell 2004; Prince George Citizen 1958). The riot also helped inspire the creation of the Friendship House, which became a resource centre for the First Nations residents in the city. Forty years later the Friendship House continues to offer programs and manages the teen drop-in where I began my research and met the youth (BCAAFC 2009).

While formal segregation has ended, its legacy has informed daily life for decades (see e.g., Menzies 1994). I observed its ongoing influence the movement of people around the city.

¹⁴ Many Aboriginal people in Prince Rupert and elsewhere in Canada are part of a mobile workforce and are required to spend time outside of their home villages and cities to build Canada's infrastructure (Knight 1996).

For example, the bottom floor of the mall was often filled with only First Nations and the youth I met tended to avoid the tourist district of the city. Segregation has created new solidarities and entrenched old divides. For example, the contact and shared history of Asian and First Nations labourers in the area has made Chow Mein a staple at First Nations gatherings in Prince Rupert. Salmon and rice as well as beef Chow Mein were often donated and served at the public events I attended at the Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert and the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Hall. Chinese restaurants continue to be extremely popular among First Nations residents in Prince Rupert.

The Tim Horton's coffee shop at the geographic centre of Prince Rupert is a neutral space filled with people of all backgrounds. Asian, First Nations, Southeast Asian, and white families fill the tables and enjoy the inexpensive drinks. Fish boat owners sit next to cannery and mill workers, while teenagers hang outside or serve behind the counter, but rarely have I seen any of these groups interact with each other. The social segregation that organized the canning and fishing industries continues to define where youth from the teen centre feel welcome or excluded.

2.2.3 Technology Management

Technology-based management policies imposed by the Department of Marine and Fisheries continue to influence stereotypes and juridical definitions that alienate youth and their communities from equal participation in modern industries. In 1888, fishing license policies began to define the acceptable practices and type of technology for each license or exemption. First Nations were exempt from licenses only if they used what were considered traditional technologies such as "drift nets or spearing" (Harris 2009, 109). Colonizers' perceptions and representations of acceptable Aboriginal technology use were connected to their static ideas of tools and practices that existed pre-contact (Diamond 2009). Over time, as new technologies were introduced to the fishing industry, First Nations were often the last allowed to have licences that granted rights to use the new tools, which limited their opportunities in the fishing industry (Harris 2009, 147; Harring 1998).

External ideas of appropriate practices and technology use, as they pertain to cultural identity, continue to limit First Nations participation in the fishing industry. Technology-based

management of fisheries was one example of the many ways imposed definitions of indigeneity have classified and treated members of First Nations communities as if they are relics of the past (Simpson 2014, Harris 2009). A more recent example is the Integral to a Distinctive Culture Test, which developed as an outcome of the *R. v. Van der Peet* (1996) case. Kent (2012: 21) summarizes, that the “test outlines three criteria used to determine the definition of Indigenous rights pertaining to Section 35(1) of the Constitution, including ‘pre-contact’ ‘distinctive’ and ‘reconciliation with state sovereignty.’” First Nations in Canada must prove the pre-contact existence use of a practice, territory or resource to the Canadian court system, in order to have it recognized as their right. I agree with scholars that have argued definitions “pre-contact” and “distinctive” are based on Eurocentric logic that minimize or ignore the reality of cultural appropriation and development that are integral to contemporary First Nations communities (Asch 2000, Borrows 2002). The requirement to prove traditional practices means that an external legal body remains superior to First Nations self-determination and ultimately defines the appropriate contemporary cultural practices of First Nations groups.¹⁵

The Canadian legal system continues to scrutinize the connection between pre-contact practices to the modern rights First Nations are seeking. Near Prince Rupert for example, in *Lax Kw'alaams Indian Band v. Canada* (2011, paragraph 7), the Supreme Court decided the Lax Kw'alaams band could not develop a commercial fishing industry because “the attempt to build a modern commercial fishery on the narrow support of a limited ancestral trade in eulachon grease lacks sufficient continuity and proportionality.” The decision based on continuity ignored Lax Kw'alaams' extensive fishing territories and strong ties with other groups in the area as well as the fact oolichan grease trading was integral to their community. More importantly, pre-contract trade practices, European or First Nations, have little proportional resemblance, if any, to the present day global commercial trade. Denying Lax Kw'alaams the right to establish a commercial finishing industry is a contemporary example of Eurocentric notions of technology and indigeneity that continue to exclude individuals and communities from economic opportunities.

¹⁵ Many scholars have written on the colonial discourse of the Canadian legal system. Good examples of these discussions include, but are not limited to Eisenberg (2005) Rotman (1997) and Blackburn (2007).

This case, among others, continues to construct Aboriginal identity in Canada in a way that alienates First Nations from the rest of Canadian society (Alfred and Corntassel 2005). External definitions and control over use of technology in the fishing and cannery industries continues to limit the equal participation of First Nations in the modern global economy. While youth at the teen centre are not involved in these courtroom debates, external decisions such as these continue to affect their lack of sovereignty and their personal employment options.

2.2.4 Outcomes

It is important to note that First Nations were never passive when encountering these forces of alienation and marginalization (Menzies 1994). In 1887 for example, Tsimshian chiefs traveled to the Victoria, the capital of British Columbia to express their disapproval of the reserve system (Harris 2009, 73), and others sent letters asking for better legal recognition of their land and resource rights (Brock 2011, Harris 2002, Harris 2009). Moreover, at the turn of the 20th century, the Tsimshian First Nations went to the courts attempting to revise racist fishery department policies (Harris 2009, 144). Some First Nations simply ignored the laws and sold their fish without licenses (Harris 2009; Harring 1998). In 1922, the Tsimshian spoke out against the requirement for food fishing permits at the Duff Commission hearings (Harring 1998, 117). The Allied Tribes of British Columbia formed around 1915 and petitioned the provincial government for land recognition and in 1931, the Native Brotherhood was formed as a collective bargaining agent for First Nations labourers (Drucker 1958; McDonald and Joseph 2000). The Native Brotherhood continues to petition the government to improve treatment of First Nations in the province. Despite the sweeping forces of economic marginalization, some families were able to make enough money to operate their own fishing boats and find economic stability despite these unfair policies.

Despite these efforts and some successes, most First Nations continued to be marginalized in fishing and other industries throughout the twentieth century. In 1958, the government funded a province-wide census and report on the economic status of First Nations in British Columbia. At that time, the Skeena region had the strongest First Nations employment in the province focused mainly in the fishing industries (Hawthorn et al 1958). Relatively few Aboriginal people in British Columbia, however, worked outside of seasonal wage-labour sector.

As the least valued segment of the cannery workforce their employment was strongly affected by economic shifts in the industry (Mawani 2010). The fishing and canning industries were some of the hardest hit by the depression in the 1930s, and almost half of the canneries in operation in British Columbia closed leaving large numbers of people unemployed (Hawthorn et al. 1958, 110). First Nations employment rebounded somewhat during WWII when the war effort created a labour shortage and a demand for canned meat. Over time however, technology that improved productivity and refrigeration consolidated cannery operations and employed fewer people (Jamieson and Gladstone 1950). A few First Nations individuals in Prince Rupert and the surrounding villages managed to maintain steady employment and strong livelihoods, but a large portion of Prince Rupert's growing First Nations population encountered cycles of poverty and unemployment throughout the latter half of the twentieth century (Newell 1993).



Figure 2.6 Shawn fillets a salmon at the Friendship House in 2010.

Prince Rupert's First Nations community has endured over 150 years of economic policies that systematically pushed them into the lowest paid and most unstable portions of the economy.

“Because we’re native,” emphasizes the differential treatment and racialized policies directly connected to a history of marginalization by colonizing authorities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). The outcome of this history meant that in 2007, Prince Rupert had an unemployment rate of 12.8%, but among its self-identified Aboriginal population, unemployment was over 23% (Statistics Canada 2007).

A few Tsimshian and Nisga’a individuals who are now in their 50s and 60s have union seniority and continue to find stable work in the canneries. Many of the young people, however, can only look forward to a few weeks of summer work in the canneries. It is difficult for youth to gain seniority in the unions and the declining industry offers fewer hours each year. Many of the families of the youth who attended the teen centre received social assistance and struggled to make ends meet. Beatrice and a few of her friends were able to find employment in the service industry, but the cannery remains an important, if declining, source of employment in the city. The youth I met felt like they were on the bottom of the city’s social order, in part, because they were at the bottom of its economic hierarchy.

2.3 Alienation of Families and Loss of Cultural Knowledge

A few times a year, Prince Rupert’s diverse population shares the same public spaces; yet even then, the history of exclusion remains subtly visible. In June of each year, the city of Prince Rupert hosts Seafest, a weekend celebration of the city and its ocean-based economy. There is a boat show, a festival on the main street of the city, and a parade that celebrates the cultural mosaic of the city. In 2011, I attended the parade with the Gitmaxmak’ay Nisga’a Dancers. We lined up in the staging area next to a jazz dance class. The voices of the youth practicing the Nisga’a songs rose alongside the recorded beats of Beyoncé as each group warmed up for the parade. Down the block, the Scottish bagpipe band adjusted their kilts, and next to them, the colourful sarees of the city’s South Asian participants fluttered in the wind.

As I recorded the rare sight and cacophony of the city’s diverse groups with my video camera, I heard someone call my name. I turned to see Betsy who was sitting with other Nisga’a people in the Gitmaxmak’ay Nisga’a Society’s new canoe waiting to be towed behind a truck for the parade. We greeted each other. Betsy wanted to show me the drum she had designed and painted herself (Figure 2.7).

“Can I record the story of your drum?” I asked. When she agreed, I lifted the video camera to my eye. When the recording light turned red, she spoke.



Figure 2.7 A video still frame of Betsy and her drum in 2011.

This is my house crest, my and my children. This is a landing eagle. All the years— I'm one of those unfortunate ones that was sent away to the residential schools at a young age, like maybe about eight or nine. And, I never, never went back to live on my village . . . in my village . . . so I lost culture. I didn't know where I belonged for a long time. I kept asking my mother, "whose house do I come from?" But, she never gave me a direct answer. And then she died and I asked my brothers the same question and they too didn't give me a direct answer. I had an idea whose house we belonged [to]. I had a good idea. So when my brothers passed away it was confirmed definitely, where we came from. In the meantime, this eagle is flying around, flying around, aimlessly . . . doesn't know where to land. Doesn't know which house she belongs in. Just kept flying around, flying around, until it was confirmed which house we belong to and the eagle is landing. The eagle just landed. So happy. Now I'm somebody—I know where I belong!

Betsy's story and the landing eagle she painted on her drum symbolizes the lived effect of residential school that weakened social solidarity in most First Nations communities. For grandparents in Prince Rupert such as Betsy, her story captures the frustration and anger over what they lost. It also describes the joy and relief they feel when they reconnect with their tribes and extended families. For youth, her story reveals the confusion associated with not knowing one's family and the desire to restore damaged connections.

While colonialism worked to limit and obscure economic opportunities, it also worked to destroy Aboriginal cultural heritage and traditional family structures in Canada. In this section, I explore the history of the intentional destruction of families and how it manifests in the experiences of the elders and youth I met. The moment with Betsy is connected to the history of residential schools and the potlatch ban, the effect of which continues to be felt by the youth I met. More recently, the placement of youth in care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development has added to feelings of the alienation of youth from their childhoods and their village communities. Disconnection from family creates confusion among the youth and an uneasy shared experience of frequently discovering new family connections. While economic exclusions continue to marginalize the youth's financial opportunities, the history of cultural and family destruction affects their participation in the extensive Aboriginal kinship networks.

2.3.1 Residential Schools and the Potlatch Ban

In one way or another, all of the youth at the teen centre have been affected by the legacy left by the residential school system. In 2011, Victor, one of the young men who attended the drop-in centre explained:

The residential school system really, really hurt our people. You can still see it in every family 'til this day. Think about it. And, we're only a few generations from the people who went through. When you finally hear that they went through residential school you think ok that's why they're like that. They went through a whole lot crap load of things that we can't even begin to imagine. They abused them physically, mentally, and sexually. Things like that and they carried on the abuse. When people are like that I try not to judge. They must . . . somebody they know must have did that to them and passed on the only thing they knew. We're all still trying to get it out of our systems. Trying to heal our peoples to get past all that crap.

Residential schools operated in Canada from 1879 until 1996 (Milloy 1999). An estimated 150,000 Aboriginal children in Canada attended the schools where many experienced overcrowding, disease, experiments, abuse, and were subject to policies of cultural genocide (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2015).

In our discussions over the years, most of the youth cited residential schools as a significant cause of cultural disruption and family struggles. Learning about the realities of residential schools has given youth and their families an explanation—a name—for the

emotional trauma and its many manifestations. Learning about residential schools helps the youth understand the causes of observed cycles of physical and emotional abuse, or why a parent might refuse to attend a secondary school graduation. Residential schools, however, are only one aspect off the colonial system. As Rupert Ross explains, residential schools:

. . . were the closing punctuation mark in a loud, long declaration saying that nothing Aboriginal could possibly be of value to anyone. . . Taking the children away to residential school was, in a way just an exclamation mark ending the sentence that declared that all things Aboriginal are inferior at best and dangerous at worst (1996, 46-47).

According to the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015, 3), the laws that comprised the Indian Act and residential schools “were part of a coherent policy to eliminate Aboriginal people as distinct peoples and to assimilate them into the Canadian mainstream against their will.” McDonald and Joseph (2000, 202) noted, “eventually the Indian Act would regulate nearly every aspect of Aboriginal life” (McDonald and Joseph 2000, 202). The Indian Act banned First Nations from voting until 1960, restricted sovereignty over their land as well as resources and affected how Aboriginal groups could define their own membership and identity (Duff 1964).

An 1884, addition to the Indian Act also made potlatches and gatherings illegal. As I will describe in further detail in the following chapters, potlatches and feasts were an essential part of the traditional social order and economy. Individuals and families celebrated life transitions, validated their position and influence in the area, and affirmed their ownership of resources (Seguin 1985). The wealth brought about by the fur trade industry helped potlatches evolve into enormous affairs as individuals accumulated and then redistributed huge amounts of wealth to their guests. Missionaries and government officials who witnessed the potlatches believed the ceremonies were counter to capitalist ideologies and a threat to their interest in assimilating First Nations communities (Fiske 1991; Bracken 1997). By outlawing the gatherings, officials hoped to abolish the social structure that required these ceremonies to function (Bracken 1997).

In response to the Indian Act and Potlatch Ban, First Nations communities attempted to adapt or resist the intrusions on their way of life. Leaders across British Columbia debated whether to abandon old traditions and integrate new practices, as well as how to negotiate under the increasing pressures from colonial rule (Brock 2011, 195). Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin

(1990) argue that the Potlatch Ban inspired creative ways of getting around the law that helped some traditions to survive. Some community events, including the gatherings I attended in Prince Rupert, integrated Christian and European traditions with traditional feast practices. Winter feasts for example, became Christmas and New Year celebrations (Brock 2011). While elements of the potlatch survived, for many First Nations in British Columbia, the prohibition of the formal systems and potlatches permanently damaged traditional knowledge and threatened oral histories.

The potlatch ban was lifted in 1951. Colonialism had failed to eradicate some feast traditions practiced on the Northwest Coast of B.C., but had succeeded in damaging many of the necessary structures required for the reproduction and learning of oral histories.¹⁶ Within Tsimshian and Nisga'a communities, position, property, wealth, and status are related to lineage (Miller 1998). These oral histories defined relationships between individuals and to the land (Marsden 2002). The combined effect of banning potlatches, placing children in residential schools and intergenerational trauma produced by these experiences meant that young people, such as the youth I met, did not grow up hearing the histories of their people. Without immersion in the ceremonies that supported the reproduction of their oral history, younger generations became increasingly alienated from their heritage and the means by which it was conveyed. Older generations such as Betsy "didn't know where [they] belonged for a long time" which means, younger generations such as the youth I met have less opportunities to learn their family histories and social relationships.

2.3.2 Foster Care

The causes of "not knowing where to land" can be attributed to the residential school system, the Indian Act, the Potlatch Ban, and more recently, the child welfare system. An

¹⁶ Over the 20th century, tens of thousands of Canadians were denied the right to be legally recognized as members of First Nations communities because the Indian Act removed a woman and her children's legal recognition if she married to a non-status man outside of her community. The resulting divide between communities and the loss of membership weakened village communities and traditional ways of maintaining relationships (Lawrence 2003). It wasn't until Bill C-31 passed in 1985, that First Nations women and their children could petition to reclaim legal recognition of their identity (Lawrence 2003).

amendment to the Indian Act in 1951 allowed provincial governments to provide services to First Nations communities, an arrangement that began an overrepresentation of First Nations children in the child welfare system that continues to this day (Johnston 1983; Trocmé et al. 2004). As of 2011, Aboriginal children comprised 8% of British Columbia's population, but constituted 52% of the children in the care of the Ministry of Children and Families (Sinha et al. 2011).

While only a few of the youths I met at Planet Youth were still wards of the Ministry of Child and Family Services in 2007, almost all of them had personally experienced moments in which social workers knocked on their doors and checked on their families. Many youths shared memories of when they and their siblings had lived in foster care or had been moved by social workers to live with different relatives.

The teenagers' stories of foster care express the disruption and feelings of alienation they experienced during childhood. Chrystel, for example, spent the majority of her childhood as a ward of the state. Some of the foster families she lived with were fine, but others left lasting wounds. All the homes she lived in were disconnected and far from the village where her mother was raised. Fortunately, in her late teens, Chrystel was placed in what she called, "the right home," which provided her with a sense of autonomy, safety, and support and this family remains a part of her extended family.

In 2007, I recorded Chrystel in a video. She shared the following about what growing up "in the Ministry" had taught her:

I learnt not to trust too many people. Because if you trust them and you get too close to them, you're on to loving them and thinking that's gonna be your family until you're 19 or until you get out of the ministry. Some things can change, like they can get shut down because of protocols, or they can split up because of their own problems, or they can just be growing old, or they can get really stressed out and have to shut down their home, or they can get a job somewhere out of town and just up and move on you. So that's a little bad if you get too close or if some of them are just supposed to be temporary homes and if you get attached right away and it's only temporary and you get pulled out of that home right away. It's just pretty bad. So you just kind of learn not to get too close 'til you know it's gonna be alright.

Chrystel and her friends were not alone in their experiences. According to the *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect* (Public Health Agency of Canada 2008), for "every 1,000 First Nations children included in the study, there were 140.6 child

maltreatment-related investigations.” Reports of Aboriginal children maltreatment were “4.2 times the rate of non-Aboriginal” (Sinha et al. 2011, xii). Foster care neglect and abuse have continued the violence residential schools perpetrated on Aboriginal children in Canada.

In addition to outright abuse, youth in foster care faced stigma associated with the instability of their situation. In 2007, I first spoke with Augusta who liked to describe herself as a "reserve Indian." She felt the most comfortable and relaxed in village and reserve communities. The happiest days of her childhood were spent "on the pow wow trail" travelling to gatherings and dancing. She was a quiet young woman who wrote poems as a way to share her respect for the teaching elders can provide and posted them on social media. She shared the following:

I had problems . . . when they judged me cause of all those homes—I've been in 15 to 20. You know, most people question that. Why? Why'd ya move that much? Is it because you were bad? If it wasn't for judgment I would have done better. They didn't explain to me that it was a placement. Like it wasn't going to be long term. . . That's the thing with foster care, you move too much.

While her placement as a ward of the state was intended to improve her childhood, it created new challenges. She struggled with depression and used harmful coping mechanisms. By the time she found Planet Youth, she was living as an independent minor with little adult support. At the youth centre, she found other youths who understood the instability, judgment, and alienation that she had experienced and who offered to support (Figure 2.8).



Figure 2.8 Augusta (farthest right) and her friends create photographs in the street in front of Planet Youth in 2011.

Navigating bureaucratic systems filled with sterile offices and mountains of paperwork intended to protect the youth often added another layer to their feeling of alienation and frustration. Ministry policy issues meant Augusta almost did not appear in our video. She struggled to get her social worker's signature on the consent form and complained that she felt like the government was “silencing her people yet again.” In the end, Augusta had to find a youth advocate to make the case to her social worker that, at 17 years old, she could choose to include her face and story in our video.¹⁷

Also in 2007, about a week after she had become a legal adult, Chrystel sat with a staff member at the teen centre and went through her Ministry of Children and Family Development file. She had received the paperwork as part of her transition into adulthood. “Why do they black-out all the names?” she asked as she looked through the file that contained the story of her childhood.

The youth worker explained that the ministry did it to protect other youths' privacy, but that didn't satisfy Chrystel. “But I mean, I remember every kid I ever lived with. I always will. I remember them, why would they hide that?” The redacted sections in Chrystel's file seemed to declare that she should not know the friends she had made in each home. It was as if by putting a black mark over their names, they ceased to exist.

Foster care policies intended to protect youth, actually sent a messages to youth such as Chrystel and Augusta that they should silence their own memories and voices. Having much the same effect as the residential school system, the Ministry of Children and Family Development separated the youth from their Aboriginal families and stigmatized their identities. The use of “because we’re native” by the youth was used to summarize how they perceived their treatment and its connection to their Aboriginal identities, as they have been shaped by colonial policy. Their encounters with intergenerational trauma from residential schools and overrepresentation in foster care alienated youth at the teen centre from their extended families and created lingering feelings of anger and frustration.

¹⁷ Segments of interviews I recorded with both Chystel and Augusta were screened for the Representative of Children and Youth at the Champions for Youth Summit in Vancouver in October 2008.

2.3.3 Marginalization and Confusion Among the Youth

The loss of the knowledge about their lineage affects the youths' most intimate relationships. Some described how conversations that retrace a couple's respective family trees is a common part of dating. At the teen centre, for example, one girl expressed anxiety that she might be related to the person she has a big crush on. Meeting the family, the youth told me, is a moment when you hope your family won't tell you that your new boyfriend or girlfriend is your cousin. It was such a common experience among the teens that the experience became a running joke at the teen centre.

Over the years, another youth, Naomi has helped me understand some of the confusion and lack of knowledge about Tsimshian culture she and her friends struggle to overcome. I remember Naomi from when she attended the teen centre in 2007. She was bright and always had a smile on her face. Her friends would describe her as the "preppy one." A beautiful and strong young woman, I have seen her step into potentially physical altercations without hesitation to protect the ones she loves. In 2011, she invited me to her graduation. She had overcome a family tragedy to step on stage that day and receive her diploma (Figure 2.9). She later went on to find a job in town and is now raising her own beautiful daughter.

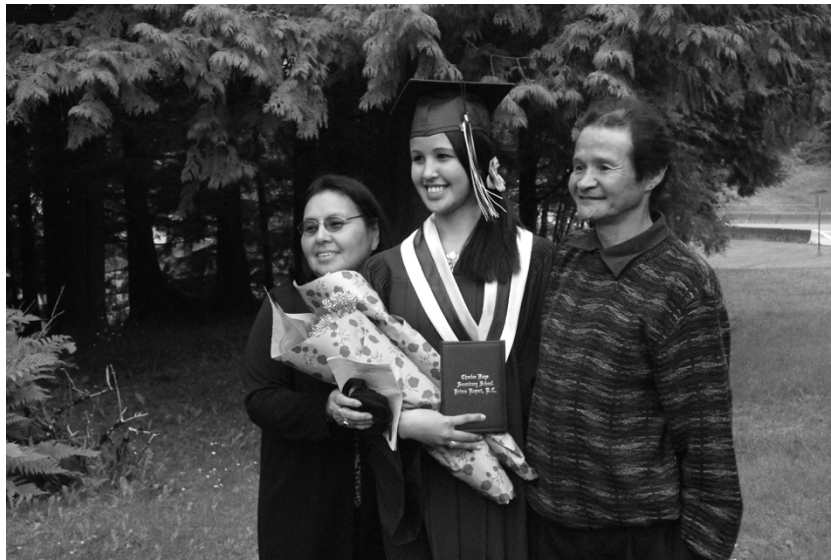


Figure 2.9 Naomi poses with her parents after the graduation ceremony in 2011.

In 2011, Naomi and I discussed how she had tried to record her family connections, and how difficult she found it. She talked about how she “got lost” after recording her "135 cousins."

She told me that her father "can't really remember or be sure of it and my mom doesn't really know so it's pretty difficult." Naomi went on to explain what it's like to walk around town or go to a feast and to meet family members she had never known of:

You don't know who you're related to until you go to a big family reunion and it's like, "Whoa! You're my cousin?"

"Yeah I'm your cousin," they say. And, we sit down and ask, "How are you my cousin?"

And, we try and find the connection.

I had that happen to me a few times. Like I was sitting in the mall and this guy comes up to me and says, "Hey I'm your cousin."

And, I ask, "How are you my cousin?"

And he tells me his last name and I ask my mom and my dad and if they don't know I ask my mom's grandparents because my dad's parents aren't here anymore and I never got to meet them. Yeah it's pretty complex actually to figure out who you're related to and who you're not [related to].

Naomi describes the sometimes-confusing relationships young people have with their extended families in the villages. Her story also describes an everyday moment common to the youth: the moment when they discover another family member then need to identify the links between themselves and their always-growing kinship network. Throughout the years, I've had many youth point to someone on the street or in a room and tell me they had just learned how they were related.

Beyond the awkward discovery of cousins, youth I met understood various elements of their heritage, but they did not know exactly, as they would say, "how it worked." Beatrice provided an example of this during one of our interviews:

My family is from Gitxaala and Greenville. My mom is from Gitxaala and my dad is from Greenville. So, I consider myself half Nisga'a. But, I think we're full Tsimshian. I don't know how that works. But, yeah, I know I'm raven. Well in Native ways, *Ganhada*.¹⁸

¹⁸ Greenville is another name for Laxgalts'ap, a village in the Nisga'a Nation. Gitxaala is a village and nation to the south of Prince Rupert. *Ganhada* is Sm'algyax for raven tribe.

Beatrice is aware of some of her mother's Tsimshian connections and her father's Nisga'a relationships. This is partly why Beatrice describes herself as Nisga'a and Tsimshian. In the past, the performance of oral histories at potlatches, and rules about marriage would have clearly identified Beatrice as a member of her mother's Gitxaala Tsimshian *waap* (*wilp* in Nisga'a) and the *Ganhada* tribe (Dunn 1984). Instead, because of the cultural disconnection her family has experienced, she is unable to explain the matrilineal inheritance patterns of the Northwest Coast First Nations and is confused about why her parents could come from the Nisga'a and Tsimshian nations, while she is full Tsimshian. The notion of patrilineal inheritance, introduced by the Indian Act and Christian traditions has muddled patterns of inheritance and confused Beatrice and other youth about their Tsimshian and Nisga'a traditions (Fiske 1991; Duff 1969, 103).

Just as Betsy struggled for years to understand her Indigenous heritage, the youth I met struggled to achieve a complete understanding of how and why they belong. Their confusion is a result of the compounding effects of colonial legislation, residential schools and foster care. When a youth discovers a cousin, it is a moment when larger socio-cultural policies become part of intimate everyday experiences. Each time a new relationship begins, youth find themselves renegotiating their relationships, supports, and responsibilities in the city and beyond. Discovering cousins, uncles, and aunts creates new interpersonal connections, but it also serves as a reminder of what the youth do not know. Unclear tribal membership and matrilineal inheritance adds to the confusion and has the potential to further disconnect youth from their extended families. The youths frequently struggle to understand and redefine relationships, which can produce anxiety that contribute to the youths' feelings of alienation.

2.4 Everyday Experiences of Revitalization and Alienation

The history of exclusion and the removal of children has left many of the youth feeling confused about the rules of their heritage. Over the last few decades however, Indigenous communities in Prince Rupert and beyond have prioritized cultural resurgence as a way to address contemporary challenges. Cultural efforts have created visible change in Prince Rupert. After dinner one evening in 2011, I sat with one of the board members of the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers. She has seen many changes for the positive in Prince Rupert with the development of dance groups and revitalizing programs. She told me, "You know, when I was

growing up. There was nothing Nisga'a in my home. My parents didn't want us to have anything to do with it." Crests, tribe symbols, and anything relating to her heritage were intentionally absent from her childhood home. Thirty years ago, she said, classmates in high school denied their Tsimshian and Nisga'a connections. It was a way of surviving the racism in town. Today, her parents welcome their culture into their home and First Nations' cultural symbols are everywhere in homes, cars, and on clothing. She and other women in the city have been instrumental in promoting cultural programs such as cedar weaving classes, button blanket sewing, and dance programming, as well as learning and sharing knowledge of Nisga'a protocols. Revitalization programs and efforts are recent initiatives intended to counter attempts to destroy their culture and connect urban Indigenous people to their heritage.

In this section, I recognize the relatively recent, important emergence of revitalization programs such as dance groups and classes that are helping to strengthen connections between youth and their heritage. Revitalization efforts help youth relate to their local and extended communities in ways that potentially identify support systems and transfer knowledge about their heritage. Revitalization efforts are making improvements, but are sometimes challenged by anxiety produced by lateral violence and the internalization of colonial discourses.

2.4.1 Moments of Revitalization

Many different kinds of revitalization programs are growing in popularity in Prince Rupert. The school district has worked with the Tsimshian leadership and encouraged language programs and Indigenous curriculum since the mid-1980s. Sm'algyax, the Tsimshian language, is taught in all the village schools as well as in Prince Rupert and Port Edward in to children in grades five through 12. A few of the elementary schools also offer language courses from kindergarten to grade five (Seguin 1985, 7; Wilson 2013). The Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Society holds open sewing nights so that members can get help making regalia and tribal vests to wear at community events. Wearing regalia and clothing displaying their crests helps youth and adults feel more included in community gatherings. They also help youth interact with elders during fundraising events and special activities. The Friendship House offers early childhood education, cultural arts program, and community fairs in addition to their youth programs.

Both the Prince Rupert Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert and the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Society groups send youth to the British Columbia Association of Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) Youth Gathering where they attend workshops and social events. Both have also participated in the annual Gathering Our Strength Canoe journey each summer where canoes from multiple communities, the RCMP, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans paddle to different communities along the coast (Figure 2.10). I have heard the canoe journey has been an overwhelming positive experience for the participants and the communities in the area. It has helped youth connect with their heritage, village communities, and role models in the city.



Figure 2.10 The Gathering Our Strength Canoe Journey arrives in Prince Rupert in August 2011.

The Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers and other dance groups in the area have also been a revitalizing force for many individuals. The dance groups in town have helped counter youths' feelings of invisibility. While groups of teens are chased out of the mall or ignored on street corners, Michael told me, "People see us, when we're in our regalia." In 2011, I often saw strangers come up to the youth and ask to take pictures with them when they were wearing their regalia. Every youth told me they felt good when that happened and performing was a source of pride. With more than 80 members, the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers provides families and youth the opportunity to travel, learn some of their heritage and language, and to be part of a multi-generational supportive social network. I was told that members relied on the regular two-hour rehearsals scheduled for nine months of the year to provide some stability and dependable social and emotional support. Elders, adults, youth, and children, look out for each other and engage in group activities such as fundraising as well as volunteering at feasts.



Figure 2.11 Steven and Jade dance at the Elder's Gathering in Prince Rupert in 2008.

Revitalization efforts are intended to help connect youth and other community members to their heritage. Learning about protocols, art, songs, and traditional food helps with identity formation by providing positive experiences that help the youth understand what it means to be Tsimshian and Nisga'a (Figure 2.11). Activities, such as the canoe journey, give participants a sense of pride in their accomplishment and provides an opportunity for them to feel part of a team, to better understand the meaning behind protocols, and to interact with youth from other communities. Even the simple act of creating a vest for feasts provided the teen centre youth with clothing that helped them fit in at feasts and gatherings. It also helped them learn about their tribe symbols, which, in turn, helps them feel that they belong. While gaps in knowledge remain, revitalization efforts encourage interactions between the generations and encourage families to spend time together, reducing feelings of alienation.

2.4.2 Moments of Debate and Anxiety

The youth and their families know that protocol and public validation are extremely important in their traditional activities, but some told me they are also anxious about how to perform cultural protocols. They are afraid of the possibility of criticism and family embarrassment that could happen if someone believes they have done something wrong. Instead of guessing, or risking being wrong, I often heard youth to respond to cultural questions from adults and elders with "I don't know," regardless of whether or not they knew the answer.

Sometimes the youth said, “I don’t know,” even if they thought they knew the answer. I know this because on occasion a few minutes after they have said, “I don’t know” to an elder, they have explained reasons behind cultural activities or protocol to me or to each other. For the youth I met, it seemed there was a sense of safety in saying, “I don’t know” to elders. When so much cultural knowledge is unknown, answering, “I don’t know” is a way of managing the anxiety that can be produced by incomplete cultural knowledge.

Part of the youths’ anxiety about their own knowledge of traditions and practices is because discussions about their Tsimshian and Nisga’a cultures within the urban community can sometimes be infused with lateral violence. Lateral violence is a term used to describe incidents in which community members attack each other because they are unable to fight back against their oppressors (Sandy 2013). Sometimes as I sat next to the youth at cultural events, I heard speeches where the words “tradition” or “respect” were evoked by an adults or elders as a way of asserting their power over the proceedings in a potentially unproductive way. Youth told me sometimes “tradition” or “respect” was asserted as a demand. One young man, for example, told me “the elders always talk about respect and how we don’t respect them. One even yelled at me. They want respect, but they don’t act very respectfully!” The youth told me assertions and angry lectures of this kind made them less likely to engage in the activity or conversation.

The harsh form of cultural discussion and correction can take may be influenced by or compounded by the legal discourses in ongoing legal battles, such as the *Lax Kw’alaams Indian Band v. Canada* (2011) decision mentioned earlier. Debates can become focused on identifying pre-contact, distinctive social practices as communities sometimes struggle to resolve conflicting ideas about specific cultural traditions that may vary from *wilp (waap)* to *wilp (waap)*. On top of resolving conflicting ideas and filling gaps in knowledge created by residential schools, First Nations also have to navigate the pressure of having to re-frame cultural protocols, practices, and concepts in ways that can help them achieve greater sovereignty in the Canadian system of law. As a result, sometimes colonial ideas of static cultural authenticity, as defined by external courts and bureaucracy are internalized and become part of the local conversations I observed in Prince Rupert’s urban community of First Nations. While many debates within the community are calm and productive, emotions can run high at times as community members work to define and share their understandings of Tsimshian and Nisga’a social practices and protocols.

A local elder and counsellor at the Friendship House helped me understand why the youth and adults feared that if they gave a wrong answer, told a story incorrectly, or mispronounced a word they would be verbally attacked or intentionally made to feel embarrassed (see e.g. Bombay et al 2014). He explained that, "people have been so harsh with our culture for so long, we've become harsh with each other." After over one hundred and fifty years of oppression and violence, he explained, community members are still working through how to be leaders and how to talk about their traditions and protocols with one another.

I mention cultural debates and youth's anxiety because they are examples of how external juridical requirements that related to Aboriginal identity and rights can be internalized in ways that cause frustration among the youth. The youth can focus on only learning the rules to avoid embarrassment instead of also learning the productive reasons for why the practices exist. For example, one young woman told me, "I wanted to make a blanket with my grandmother. I wanted to learn how to make it the right way." She was disappointed and frustrated to learn that her grandmother wanted to make the blanket with a sewing machine. The teenager went on to explain that she wanted to learn how they were made by hand, "like they did before Europeans came." The young woman found it difficult to reconcile the idea that the materials and technologies used to create button blankets have changed over time.¹⁹ Her emphasis on "the right way" as a practice related to pre-contact is an example of how outsider discourse manifest in local conversations. The moment is also an example of how focusing on a singular notion of cultural practice can also mean the youth miss out on important interactions. In this case, the young women's frustration meant that she and her grandmother never made the blanket together. Nor were they able to have a conversation about why family crests and blankets are used in ceremony to visibly identify and embody social responsibilities.

¹⁹ Button blankets are an outcome of First Nations appropriating Hudson Bay Company blankets (Jensen and Sargent 1986). Prior to contact Chilkat blankets, painted hides, and woven cedar were used as regalia (Fiske 1991). The use of different technologies to transform and redefine what is regalia has been a part of Northwest Coast First Nations' practice for generations (Jensen and Sargent 1986).

2.5 Conclusion

A young man I spoke with in 2007 summarized the struggle of alienation he and his peers felt. He told me, “At school we don’t belong because we’re native. In the villages we don’t belong because we’re not native enough.” Ongoing policies of colonization and the city's social stratification caused the youth that attended the centre to feel isolated and disconnected. The discourse of elders who lectured about respect, responsibility, and the right way of doing things, sometimes compounded the youths’ feelings of alienation. While revitalization efforts helped the youth feel pride and strengthen some multi-generational connections, dance groups and school programs have yet to completely overcome the alienating forces of economic exclusion and colonial racial management.

In this chapter, I provided the history of exclusion and alienation brought about by the laws and acts that separated Aboriginal people from their culture, practices, and traditional territories. A result, I observed that it is vital for members of communities to find ways to support one another. Adults and the youth pool resources and use programs offered by the Nisga’a Hall and Friendship House, including elder groups, parenting classes, and dance groups, to find and create ways of helping one another. In the next chapter I focus on how the youth, in 2007, used an available resource—the teen drop-in centre—to find support among their peers. In later chapters, I describe the changes that have resulted as mobile data became available in Prince Rupert, and the community created new technological practices that have helped them connect with traditional knowledge and emotional as well as economic support. By situating the creation of mobile social media-based technological practices among the youth and their families within the history of exclusion and recent revitalization, I show how the youth respond to these challenges using the teen centre and Facebook to re-invent and apply traditional cultural values that maintain aspects of the feast system and its vitality in their communities.

Chapter 3: The Media of a Street Family

3.1 Introduction

In 2007, when I began my research in Prince Rupert, the Tsimshian and Nisga'a youth I worked with sought support from their peers at a federally funded drop-in centre run through the Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert called Planet Youth. The centre offered the youth a reprieve from the experience of alienation—a by-product of the racism and colonialism that they encountered at school, at home, in their villages, and in the city. That year, I entered the teen centre with several digital still cameras and later a digital video camera. Within a few weeks, taking pictures, being in pictures, discussing pictures, video recording, and watching raw footage became part of going to the centre.²⁰ During my four months of participant observation and photo elicitations that year, the youth and myself created over two thousand photographs, made a public display of large format images, recorded their thoughts about their teen centre on video, and documented what they referred to as their “street family” (Wolowic 2008).

At a time before cell phones and Facebook, the physical location facilitated the creation of their extensive ad-hoc support system and community of peers. As Cohen (1985) describes, communities are formed through shared symbols. The shared symbols can be physical objects, ideas, or feelings. The precise meanings of these symbols are unique for every member, but the fact that they are shared brings people together. For the youth, feelings about being disconnected from their heritage as well as family and unwelcome in many spaces of town were shared. The shared feeling of alienation was one symbol of the youths' community. It was an experience they shared that the youth told me was one of the reasons why they connected with each other. Without the history of alienation and the ongoing experience of exclusion, youth would not have recognized the sanctuary provided by the centre and the experiences of hanging out with friends. Planet Youth and their street family were other symbols. It was a space where youth could find

²⁰ I have discussed my fieldwork with in my Masters of Arts written thesis and a documentary video titled, *For Our Street Family* (Wolowic 2008). This chapter expands on that project after seven years of ongoing interactions with the youth.

empathy for the alienation they felt elsewhere and the street family was a way of identifying the community they created through the centre.

The youths' strategies of support changed as they got older and left the centre (particularly once digital interactions became more accessible) but over the years of my research, I observed that practices of accessing extended communities for support remained. The singular importance of the localized gathering space shifted as technology changed. In 2007, the place-based interactions facilitated by the Planet Youth centre enabled the youth to create and maintain their peer community. Without the physical location of the centre, our media-based collaborations would have been impossible because they were inspired by the constant presence of the cameras and photographs and the strong relationship that I developed with the youth over time. Taking photographs led to talking about photographs. These conversations built relationships and led to conversations about the youths' experiences and lives. I shared my observations and they helped interpret the youths' experiences and give them meaning. In our process of shared creative collaboration, cameras and the images they helped produce were part of a larger process of shared meaning making that led to the production of a collection of photographs, a video, a mural, and this dissertation.

In this chapter, I discuss how Planet Youth and the ad-hoc emergence of the street family fulfilled needs that resulted from the youths' experiences of marginalization. The centre also offered the youth a stable environment in which to have positive interactions with staff and their peers. The street family and the location of Planet Youth became associated with fun and joy; another requirement of a community as defined by McMillan and George (1986). The group created lasting joyful memories that included the activities at the teen centre and the hanging out together when the Planet Youth was closed. Our photography projects were one of these activities.

The physical location aided the youth in creating their community and became the locus of our creative media production, which later came to be part of the visual representations of their peer community. Creating media through playful collaborations that allowed for different levels of engagement helped facilitate discussions about the youths' street family. The street family was a successful community partly because it formalized the youths' relationships in

ways that valued the importance of kinship in the familial sense but also in the sense of their cultural heritage.

In the Indigenous cultural context where feasts emphasize public visible display of social connections, the media we produced also had the effect of validating the street family as a system of support. The media we created disseminated as objects that represented the youths' connections. The images prompted conversations between adults and the youth, documented the youths' peer support system, and participated in framing the memories of their street family.

3.2 Planet Youth

In 2007, Planet Youth occupied the ground floor of a building on a rarely used city block in downtown Prince Rupert. Street Spirits, a youth program that offered gender specific activities, job training, outreach, and support accessing social services occupied the floor above. There were times in 2007 when I would see forty to sixty youth flow in and out of the centre each evening. Every youth I talked with said they "had homes to go to," but the teen centre, open from Tuesday through Saturday, was what they called their *real* home (Figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1 Steven (looking at the camera) and others sit down for dinner at Planet Youth.

Planet Youth and Street Spirits were physical places in the city where the teens knew they would find someone who understood and wanted to help them. During an on-camera interview for our film, Augusta explained her reasons for going to the drop-in centre,

When I go to Street Spirits and Planet Youth, everyone else has the same story too. Like the foster care system, how people in school treat them. How, how they were in white homes too and how they were treated in the white homes. And, that's where we go. We talk to one another That's what Planet Youth and Street Spirits are like. It's where everyone is comfortable to be there. You just got to go there and act like yourself.

While almost all of the youth shared Indigenous heritage, their heritage was not the focus of the centre. Staff Planet Youth took a hands-off approach, which was complemented by the outreach and support groups offered by their upstairs neighbour, Street Spirits. Having a safe place to hang out was the focus. Some of the youth workers in 2007, however, were elders in the community with cultural knowledge that was only surpassed by the love they shared for the youth in need. Some youth took advantage of the space and staff to learn about their heritage, hear about their peoples' history, and teach others. For others, the space was important because of the youths' desire for acceptance and the need to explore their feelings of ambivalence toward their communities was important. A few claimed to need the space as a place to ignore their cultural connections because as one youth told me, "My culture never gave me anything." The teen centre was a space that felt comfortable to a range of young perspectives.

The teen centre was a physical place where youth (who, at times, felt unwanted, invisible, ambivalent, and ignorant of their traditions) could find others who had similar experiences to welcome them and make them feel that they belonged. Stepping into Planet Youth, the teenagers entered a space where all of their interests merged and where they were comfortable. Each evening, dozens of youth flowed outside to smoke and then back in to lounge on couches, play pool, or watch others playing video games as they listened to pop music at volumes only teenagers can appreciate. Youth helped staff make fry bread, Indian tacos (tacos with fry bread instead of a tortilla), and Indian Steaks (thick slabs of bologna heated in a frying pan) for large group dinners. Dreamcatchers hung in a corner and several giant Northwest Coast art motifs created by a local artist were mounted on the walls. Girls strode through the centre with "Tsimshian chick" written across the seat of their pants; silver tribe symbols hung around the

necks of the young men. Traditional tribe symbols comfortably co-existed with rap music and the youths' other interests.

By congregating at the physical location of Planet Youth on an almost daily basis, many of the youth were able to form peer relationships that they might not have otherwise. The centre also provided activities that youth would not have access to on their own such as swimming nights, a softball team, beach BBQ's, and kayaking. In addition, the centre encouraged leadership opportunities by establishing a youth council and sending select teens to the yearly B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) Gathering Our Voices Aboriginal Youth Conference. Occasionally the youth at the centre participated in service work such as volunteering at feasts or picking up trash in the neighbourhood. These activities created positive interactions, role models, and shared activities that offered the youth a sense of purpose.



Figure 3.2 Teenagers hang out at Planet Youth in 2007.

Before asynchronous communication in the form of mobile data was available, youth went to Planet Youth because they knew their friends would likely be there too. It was the easiest way to find each other most evenings of the week in the evening. The youth shared coping strategies—healthy and unhealthy—with one another and offered a safe respite from the realities of their world. For example, although Planet Youth and Street Spirits had a no drinking policy,

youth would bring intoxicated friends to the youth workers at the centre when they needed to get to the hospital or safely home. The centre was a safe place where youth knew they would get help.

It is important to mention that many of the staff members at the teen centre created lasting relationships with the youths. Some of the staff were recognized elders in the community who gave their attention to the youth, particularly in supporting their interest in music and pop culture. By actively supporting the youths in support of their interests these elders not only demonstrated their respect for the youths, they received enormous respect and lasting appreciation in return. A good example of this lasting appreciation was when a number of current and past teen centre attendees and I walked all the way across town in 2011—a half hour walk—to sing happy birthday to an elder who had retired from working at the centre several years before. This kind of behaviour showed the enduring relationship that had developed between the elder and the youths. Staff members at the centre were adult resources for the youth. They offered more than supervision and guidance; they also offered lasting friendship.

Accessing the teen centre helped the youths create connections, explore their identities, and find a sense of stability. Everyone described it as “a home.” While experiencing positive relationships with adults was important to the youths, these relationships did not compare to the peer relationships they developed at the teen centre—the fact of their common life experiences meant that the youth could relate to each other better than anyone else could. In 2007, the teen centre offered a caring environment and it facilitated the development of the youths’ peer support system. The youth relied on the formal and informal supports offered by the physical location of the teen centre and by the people they engaged with when they went there. Before having access to cell phones to help them find each other, the youth knew they could find their friends at Planet Youth.

3.3 Creative Collaborations and Documenting the Street Family

My methodology of participant observation was dependent on digital cameras and a particular kind of collaboration. During my fieldwork in 2007 and 2011 as well as during my interim visits to Prince Rupert, I always had cameras with me and cameras must be acknowledged as having helped shape the outcomes of my research. The photographs we created

were collaborations between those who chose to stand in front of or behind a camera. Different individuals had different levels of interest and authorship in creating the photographs, but a collaborative approach to photography throughout the time of our projects has always defined both my relationship with the youth and the images we produced.

It is important to acknowledge the fact that photography is not always a collaborative process. Photographing and displaying “the other” is a contentious anthropological and colonial practice. In his book, *Photography and Anthropology*, Christopher Pinney (2012) provides numerous examples from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of Indigenous groups refusing to collaborate and of the colonialists who ignored these refusals. If participants did agree, they were rarely consulted about the use of the images. Moreover, while anthropologists and museums traded artefacts and objects (including photographs) to create public archives far from their source, the photography subjects remained unaware of where their images were displayed (Edwards 2001). In this way, the practices of anthropology and photography contributed to the exploitation and objectification of Indigenous groups. Indeed, removal of Indigenous artefacts for museum collections or putting photographs on display without consultation is a common experience—both historically and contemporarily—of the Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Kramer 2004). For example, during a 2011 visit to the Royal BC Museum in Victoria, one of the adult members of the Gitmaxmak’ay Nisga’a Dancers was surprised to see a life-sized picture of her father from the 1970s in a museum display. Although she was delighted and surprised at the time, we later talked about the unique experience of seeing a picture of someone you know in a display. She had never seen the picture before, but it was used as an artefact that defined herself and her people.

The media that the youths and I produced exists within this larger context of Indigenous objectification and display. In recognition of this context and working to change it, the Prince Rupert youths and others consented and helped create their representations. Over the years of our collaborations, whenever possible, we asked permission and made all collaborators aware of where these mimetic objects would be displayed. In general, the youths are aware that the video is in university collections across North America and has been screened abroad at film festivals in Finland and Serbia; however, it has not been possible to get permission from all 40 of the youth each time the video about their street family plays. In chapter 6, I explore the circulation of

photographs further, but it is important to note at this point that Facebook has made it easier to keep the youth and their families informed about where the images will be on display, but it has also enabled greater circulation of the images than any of us know. Understanding the complete afterlife of our images is an important consideration, but it is also beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Other methodologies have also sought to recognize and shift the potentially problematic relationship between photographer or researcher and participant. For example, photo-elicitation, as developed by John Collier (1967) emphasizes using photographs as information to develop knowledge about a person, community or activity. Elicitation encourages participants to be apart of the meaning making process that comes to create the images' understood and shared meaning. Methods such as participatory photography and photo-voice projects give participants a question or topic and ask them to take photos that speak to that question or topic over a period of time (Wang and Burris 1997; Lal, Jarus, and Suto 2012). The participants are then interviewed individually or in focus groups and the photographs are used to elicit their stories and perspectives. These methods separate the production of the image from the knowledge produced through discussions about the images (Joanou 2009).

Photo-elicitation, participatory photography, and photo-voice research methods require the cooperation of participants to create knowledge. In many ways these methodologies are responses to problematic colonial research practices. In photo-voice projects, for instance, the researcher, rather than being an active media creator, teaches participants to create media autonomously. Although the researcher could be the photographer in photo-elicitations, the methodology focuses on what happens after an image is created. In the case of my collaborative endeavour with the Prince Rupert youth group however, the practice of media making was embedded into the method of participant observation and elicitation—they occurred virtually simultaneously.

As a film made in collaboration with Aboriginal youth, our media making projects are sometimes compared to that of Sol Worth, John Adair, and Richard Chalfen. The trio taught filmmaking to a group of seven Navajo students in the 1960s; the films they produced are part of a collection called Navajo Film Themselves. Worth and Adair (1972) published a book titled *Through Navajo Eyes* about the films and their production. Much like theirs, my approach to

collaborative media production encourages participants to create images of anything they want. As part of that, I provided informal lessons on the language of film and photography as the youth played with still and video cameras. Worth and Adair also made the decision not to use the cameras, but only observe their students. I, on the other hand, chose to collaborate with the youth in the creation of our media.

Our project also compares to the Canadian National Film Board *Challenge for Change* projects of the 1960s. The projects “sought to create films about social problems that would make Canada better known to Canadians” (Crocker 2008,64). One of the most famous projects on the island of Fogo, Newfoundland, developed what came to be known as the *Fogo Process* (Quarry 1984). During this process a mediator spent time getting to know the community and their problems and helped organize the later arrival and collaboration with the National Film Board film crew. As a participatory project, community members helped define topic areas and were oriented to the processes of film production. Films were screened locally for discussion and the community also had input on editing and content. The resulting process created reflection and discussion among the community and a means of communication between government and a relatively isolated island.

In Prince Rupert, my role as a visual anthropologist meant I was both mediator and often one-person film crew. Conversations with the youth at the teen centre defined topic area, key informants and film narration. Their photographs, as I will discuss later in this chapter, became a source of reflection for themselves and their community. Minimal funding, the age of the youth and the frequent challenges they encountered meant our process had to be more flexible and informal than the *Through Navajo Eyes* and *Challenge for Change* projects.

My approach most closely followed Vygotsky’s (1978) theory on the zone of proximal development. Instead of observing what children can do independently, Vygotsky focused on what they could do with some assistance from adults or peers with greater skills and an atmosphere of play. In 2007 at Planet youth, I assisted in the playful creation of photographs through a “least adult model” (Mandell 1991). I intentionally limited my authority as an adult as an extension of my participant observation. I behaved at the centre more like an attendee than a

staff member.²¹ For example, I lounged on couches and did not enforce the rules. Instead of providing organized photography lessons about composition or lighting, we roamed the city taking photographs and collaborating on the creation of posed and candid images together. The youth developed their photography skills by observing and participating in conversations about the results.

My focus has always been to explore the youths' relationships and support systems using photography as a method of exploration and photographs as products of those explorations. To achieve these goals, our media was always created in collaboration. I use the term "collaboration" as described by Michael Schrage (1990, 40) who, in his discussion of technology and collaboration, argues that,

Collaboration is the process of shared creation: two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own. Collaboration creates a shared meaning about a process, a product, or an event.

Although Schrage's definition of collaboration is situated within the context of technology and collaborations in business settings, the same shared sense of meaning can emerge from collaborations in research and media creation.

For example, during my research, the shared spaces created by cameras helped develop my relationship with the youth. The laughter the youth and I shared during our photo-walks informed many of our interactions with the photographs and each other. Later, the images would become part of our discussions about friendship and the importance of the street family at Planet Youth. If we had not played together with the cameras, the youth and I would not have developed the trust that encouraged them to share their knowledge of the street family and their experiences with me. Through our collaboration, I was able to develop a strong relationship with the youth, which in turn encouraged their willingness to share information about their street family.

The method of collaboration that guided my research also draws on Jean Rouch's idea of *shared anthropology* (Henley 2009). As an anthropologist and a filmmaker, Rouch spent most of

²¹ Elsewhere I have an expanded discussion of my least adult role at the teen centre (Menzies and Butler 2011).

his sixty-year career working with members of the Songhai people who live in what is now called Niger. Together they created over 105 films (Henley 2009, 364). Rouch claimed that shared anthropology tries "not to theorize about a people in such a way as to introduce a gap between observer and observed, but to try to ask good questions, the answers to which will open up new questions" (Rouch 2003, 143). Rouch's filmmaking was a process of ongoing dialogue and exchange over time (Henley 2009, 316). Rouch created films with a great deal of input from his collaborators, who were also the stars of his films. He also screened his films in their communities and gathered feedback about them, which then inspired ideas for new films and ongoing collaborations.

Many of Rouch's films drew on his research to inform the broad idea for the film, but then he and his collaborators would improvise the scenes (Rouch 2003). He called these works ethno-fictions. As such, the film making process relied on improvisation focused on creating meaningful representations of particular experiences rather than documenting observational representations of events or relationships. The film *Jaguar* (1967), for example, depicts the migration of Songhai men to the Gold Coast for work that was part of their rite of passage. Rouch had researched the migration and wanted to create a film that represented the feelings and aspirations of young men who underwent it. To make the film, Rouch's three collaborators (and stars of the film) travelled to Accra from their villages in Niger improvising the scenes as they encountered different landscapes, people, and experiences. In an interview with John Marshall and John Adams (1978, 1017), Rouch describes the process of play in his films:

A film like *Jaguar* was fun . . . we made it up as we went along. It's a kind of journal de route—my working journal along the way with my camera. We were playing a game together, we were all in the same car going down the coast.

Rouch believed that the attitude of play and creativity that resulted from improvisation had the potential to create meaning and innovation in an anthropological endeavour. Although fictive, the resulting films disseminate the kinds of feelings created out of the experiences Rouch was researching.

In a similar way, it often felt that the youth and I were playing a game while we created the six-thousand images that comprised the totality of our collection. The youth treated the cameras as toys (Wolowic 2008). Their engagement with media production was playful and

collaborative. For example, moments before the image on the next page (Figure 3.3) was created, the boys had climbed up an abandoned building to take photographs on the roof. Beatrice who took the photograph suggested they stop climbing so she could create a picture. At the same time, I yelled a suggestion to Evan (on the left) that he point his camera towards Ryan (on the right). At that moment, Chrystel turned to see what Evan was doing and Beatrice pressed the shutter button. The result is an image with contrasting light, lines, and eye-lines that create a dynamic image. Without the improvisation and collaborative play engaged by everyone present—both behind and in front of the camera—the image would not have been created.



Figure 3.3 Evan, Jade, Chrystel and Ryan posed during a collaborative moment on one of our photo-walks.

Schrage (1999) argues the importance of serious play to encourage innovators in the creation of models or prototypes in the business world. In his business mode he focuses on playing with technology and prototypes. While this context is different from the one in which our media creation occurred it shares common elements: a process of collaboration that requires individuals to feel creative freedom, the freedom to try something new, and the freedom to make mistakes. For our media projects, our technology were cameras. Thousands of photographs were our prototypes. As I have written elsewhere, digital photography created instant feedback that encouraged youth to experiment and collaborate (Wolowic 2008).

In addition to a sense of play, Schrage (1995) also argues that collaborations are more effective when they occur in some kind of shared space. He points out that technology can create these spaces and identifies blackboards, shared screens or computer platforms as well as meeting rooms and office kitchens as spaces of creation. The space can be physical, asynchronous, or virtual, but must exist as a space where interactions occur with a mindset of intentional production and the freedom to experiment without repercussions. In the case of my media collaboration with the youth, the cameras were our primary technology and the thousands of photographs that we took were our prototypes. As I have written elsewhere, digital photography offers instant feedback that encourages youth to experiment and collaborate (Wolowic 2008). Additionally, in 2007 our shared space was defined by what was available in the teen centre. We created many of the images and discussed their meaning in the Planet Youth space where our images were posted on the walls (Figure 3.4). Over time, however, as my relationships with the youths developed, our shared space became defined more by the presence of cameras and photographs than by the physical space. By 2011, our spaces of collaboration had expanded to include gatherings, events, dance practices, airplanes, and places in the town.



Figure 3.4 Screen shot of Chrystel being interviewed for our 2007 video. The photographs behind her were also some of the photographs created during my research that year.

I believe that successful collaborations recognize, respect, and allow for different levels of engagement. In this way, my approach to collaborating with the youth expands on both Schrage's (1995, 1999) and Rouch's (2003) theories on collaboration and shared anthropology. A reality of collaborating with living people in any research project is that work, family, and life

responsibilities often take precedent. The research and media collaborations must be flexible to these realities, especially in communities that may be marginalized. Cameras and digital photographs, as part of the visual research method, can only participate in the production of community if the collaborations that develop around these technologies adapt and are respectful to other individual, community, and personal priorities. I found that creating collaboration in Prince Rupert meant respecting and finding ways to recognize the different kinds of contributions that individuals made to the projects.

Among the youth, some like Chrystel, had been intimately involved throughout the research. She helped create images on my first day in 2007 and helped construct the mural I will discuss in chapter 6. Others, such as Ryan, loved being in or taking photographs, but did not feel comfortable explaining what they meant to him or why he liked to be a part of the practice. Victor, appears in only a few photographs, but as I mention elsewhere in this dissertation, his insight and wisdom informed much of the shared meanings produced from the photography over the years. Kyle had minimal involvement with the photographs in 2007, but played an essential role in the production of the mural (chapter 6). By discussing the images with youth at the centre, and later with family and community members in 2011, the process of creation and distribution came to include more people and perspectives. As result of this inclusiveness, we were able to produce more images and more individuals were able to collaborate in ways they found most interesting and with which they were comfortable. The flexibility of our collaborations were a way of showing respect to the youth because it empowered them to determine their engagement on an ongoing basis.

Our collaborations in Prince Rupert involved a process of shared creation and play in a space and with a flexibility that recognized the social and economic challenges of the youth. Interactions between people and technology—in our projects with our cameras—produced outcomes and shared meanings that are greater than the sum of those that might be obtained individually. Without each of these elements—shared creation, a sense of play, spaces to create, and flexibility—I do not believe our images or conversations would have been as fruitful. Without play, we would not have developed the trust required to have conversations about the youths' lives and experiences. Without access to the teen centre, the youth would not have had a place to meet, create, and discuss our media nor would the project have gained traction.

Flexibility helped us to maintain our momentum and enabled the use of cameras and digital photography to document images of their experiences in 2007, and later in 2011.

3.4 An Ad-hoc Peer Support System

In 2007, I became aware of the street family during my discussions with the youth about the photographs because a few of them referred to people in the images using kinships terms. When I asked for clarification the youth started to share the details of their street family—a kinship-based term and construct for their peer community. Based on my conversations with centre staff at the time, I learned that the street family was rarely discussed with adults or outsiders. Had we not had the process of photography and the actual images to discuss, the youths might never have shared this information with me. Our collaborations helped document the street family in 2007, but our conversations over the years are what helped me understand the connections between the youths' street family and their biological families. By 2007, when I met the youth, their social kinship street family contained over 40 members. Chrystel and her friends were adamant that the street family was not a gang. Instead, they described the family as "the people we go to," or "the friends we talk to." Cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and sibling titles defined friends as family. As new youth entered the centre they would discover the existence of the "street family" and be asked to be a son, nephew, niece or grandchild. It was a symbol for the social and emotional support that the youth provided to one another.

The youth I met at Planet Youth are not unique in their creation of a peer support network. Researchers have documented street-involved and homeless youth creating street-based support networks among peers in urban locations across the world (see, e.g., Beazley 2003, Hecht 1998). The youth in Prince Rupert were not all homeless, although most were street-involved and many experienced unstable home lives. Street-involved peer groups are often commonly referred to as street families because they help fulfill a need for reliable, emotionally supportive kinship bonds (Smith 2008). Striking among the group I met, however, was the size of their street family and the consistent assignment of extended kin terms to define their relationships. For our film, the youth created and recorded a family tree of over 40 members, each with their own kin title and defined fictive-kinship relationships (Figure 3.5). The size of the Prince Rupert street family is novel compared to Hilary Smith's findings (2008). She

interviewed 30 homeless youth in the southwestern United States and they identified street families of four to six members that frequently disbanded and reformed into other groups with other youth. Similar to other fictive-kinship relationships created by youth, the street family that formed through Planet Youth shifted relationships and kin assignments frequently.



Figure 3.5 A screenshot of the youth writing down their street family for our film in 2007.

Planet Youth's street family was also unique. Unlike other youth groups, they created a family tree that resembled their experiences with the extensive kinship networks of their larger Indigenous communities. As I have mentioned, and as I will expand on in later chapters, kinship and the public representation of these relationships are extremely important to Northwest Coast First Nations. Lived relationships define the use of kinship terms more than biology and the use of kinship terms by the youth in their street family reflected such cultural practices. Despite the youths' alienation from their heritage and cultural knowledge, I believe the street family was sustained during their teenage years partly because it resembled the youths' traditional social relationships.

In my observations, Tsimshian and Nisga'a family structures prioritize relationships and responsibility over the European definition of kinship, which is based on biological heredity. The use of kinship terms to describe biological family relationships throughout the Indigenous community serve to define the responsibilities that individuals have towards one another and their social roles. For instance, related youth of one extended family used the term "cousin" to refer to a biological aunt or, depending on who raised the youth, they might refer to their aunt as

if she were a sibling. The youngest cousin, Caryn, was called an “aunt” by the rest of her cousins because she lived with their grandparents. She had more responsibility and a role in the family similar to the aunts and uncles. The title they used reflected her role. The rest of the cousins also referred to each other as sibling (brothers and sisters) because of their close relationships. They felt cousin did not reflect their intimacy, since, as I described in the previous chapter, cousins are numerous.

Nisga’a and Tsimshian kinship terms recognize the relationships and respect community members have with one another. In 2011, I asked Caryn’s cousin/sister Heather to list her moms, she replied,

I have my mom, my gigi Sharon, my auntie Julia has become like a mom to me, my daada Greta who’s Caryn’s mom has become like a mom to me. I have uh, my gigi Greta was like a mom to me, but she’s passed so I guess four.²²

During our conversation, Heather identified that she has four mothers and ten grandmothers. Heather explained that to her there was no difference between “mom” and “like a mom.” In certain contexts, they are *gigi*’s and in others, they are moms depending on their roles and relationships at the time. Like many of the families I met in Prince Rupert, Caryn and Heather’s family composition is defined by the responsibilities they have to one another—the kinship titles they use describe these relationships.

In 2011, each time I tried to work out the relationships between the cousins/aunts in Heather and Caryn’s family, they would laugh at me. Their system did not easily translate into a biologically-based family tree. They were also sympathetic. “It makes sense to us,” Heather explained. “It just gets confusing when we try to explain it to other people.” It is a mindset; a way of thinking about the world and their relationships that is shaped by their cultural logic and particular use of kinship terms (Figure 3.6). Family members knew their relationships and responsibilities to one another, and the kin titles they used reflected this knowledge and made it known to others.

²²*Gigi* is an term of endearment given to a grandmother in Nisga’a and a kinship term I heard often during my fieldwork. In Prince Rupert, I only saw grandmother written as “*gigi*” but the First Voices Language Archive (www.firstvoices.com) uses *jiji*.



Figure 3.6 Caryn (front right) and Heather (front left) lead the women of the wolf tribe in a Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers performance in Victoria in 2011.

The structure of kinship titles in the street family was also difficult to explain. When mapping the street family structure on paper for our film, Jade and Desire began with an anthropological-style kinship diagram to indicate the names and connections between them, but they quickly got confused. Eventually they were able to map the entire group by identifying the members based on kin titles instead of focusing on the exact singular links between people. Instead of mapping nodes and links, they listed names under the categories of cousins, uncles, and other kin titles.

When Naomi and I discussed the street family in 2007, she joked that “it’s so messed!” She referred to the multiple titles individuals held that did not correspond to a singular family tree. Someone could be an individual’s brother and, at the same time, their grandfather because of the different kinds of relationships he had with others. While the youth acknowledged they were confusing and mutable, the kinship titles they held were useful because they defined the youths' responsibility to one another and helped them navigate the social network of the teen centre. In the world of their street family, sisters were best friends, parents gave advice, and grandparents had the status of acquaintances that deserved respect. The relationship structure of the street family was based on an aspect of their cultural heritage that they understood: families are central and important—even if their experiences within their families are complicated.

In both the street family and the youths' extended biological families, the designation of brother or sister indicated a stronger relationship than the designation of cousin. One's street family designation signified whom the youth could go to when they needed help. In a similar way, Heather knew, that an adult she called mother or grandmother was a person in her own family that she could go to for advice and support. Caryn was referred to by the title of auntie because she had earned respect from her cousins by having a closer relationship with their grandparents. In both biological and the street family contexts, kin terms served to acknowledge relationships and give structure to their support systems.

In Nisga'a, Tsimshian, and other Northwest Coast First Nations, relationships are how someone introduces and identifies him or herself. When at a gathering or at feasts, speakers introduce themselves by describing their lineage—where their family is from and who they are related to—as a way of validating their right to speak and to articulate the relationships and responsibilities they hold (Seguin 1985). They identify themselves and their relationships by naming their grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters and/or cousins when relevant to the events' proceedings. Publicly sharing these relationships also makes these relationships known to others. By giving their friendships family status, the youth formalized their peer support structure in a similar way. As such, one could identify her or his position in the peer community in a way analogous to that which defined their own families thereby making their own relationships and responsibilities known to others. In this way, the youths took the practice of publicly identifying relationships at feasts and remade it for their own purposes.

By exploring the similarities between the uses of kinship terms at home and in the street family, the street family nomenclature can be understood as a way the youth recognized and validated their relationships to one another. Recognizing these roles publicly is important because of their traditional social structures and the history of colonization that has attempted to destroy these bonds. As such, creation of their street family was a strategy for managing the youths' experiences of alienation because it identified important peer relationships and fostered a sense of belonging in ways that could be considered an extension or adaptation of the technologies of their heritage. While the observable behaviour of the teens at the centre rarely showed a direct connection to traditional practices, their peer community structure certainly mirrored these practices. Kinship titles were a way of elevating their friendships into recognized

and respected relationships that bound them together. By extending their friendships in this way, the formation of the street family helped the youth to feel connected to others outside the physical location of Planet Youth and over the years that they spent at the centre.

3.5 Visible Display of the Street Family

The teen centre was central to the street family because it offered a space of safe communication and enabled the youth to form a community. Our photographs participated in the production of the positive feelings the youth associated with the centre and their street family. Sharing information about their street family publicly through our media aligned with the traditional value of publicly acknowledging relationships. Just as the street family used kinship terminology publicly to define their relationships for a time, our photography and video were a public form that also represented their connections in a way that could make these relationships known and validated by others.

Sharing visual representations of their connections holds similarities to the practice of using objects and visual media to help define and recognize relationships during feasts. Among Tsimshian and Nisga'a First Nations, a particular visual symbol represents each *wilp* (*waap*) also called a family or house. Historically, as new *wilp* (*waap*) formed, they would develop their own origin story and a new crest that was owned and could only be displayed by those in the *wilp* (*waap*) (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1997).²³ Each *wilp* (*waap*) belongs to one of the four *pdeex* (*pteex*) or tribes: *Ganada* (*Ganhada*) or raven; *Laxsgiik* (*Laxsgiik*) or eagle; *Gibuu* (*Gibaaw*) or wolf; and *Gisk'aast* (*Gispwudwada*) or killer whale. Each of the different *wilp* (*waap*) in the tribe can trace their relationship to a common origin story connecting their crest and their people (Lovisek 2007). Each *wilp* (*waap*) crest in the same tribe displays the same animal, but in different poses or representation that relate to their family's oral history.

In the previous chapter, Betsy described the design on her drum. It is an example of how tribe symbols and family crests remain important visual markers of shared and personal history as well as identity. Betsy knew her family belonged to the Eagle tribe, but was not aware of her

²³ Other First Nations along the Northwest coast have different numbers of tribes or different animal symbols, but the practice is similar.

specific crest, which was partly why she created the new image of the landing eagle. The eagle had “found where it belonged” as had she and her family had found their place. The crest on her drum visibly symbolized her connection to her tribe as well as to her own biological family. She shared the story of her crest so that others would recognize her relationships as well as the shared history of her family. The landing eagle and its story is an example of how visual symbols are used to mark shared histories and feelings as well as a way of publicly sharing and validating individual experiences and history.

Button blankets and vests are some of the most recognizable ways of displaying tribe and crest designs to identify tribe members. Button blankets were invented when Northwest Coast communities traded the Hudson Bay Company for wool blankets and appropriated the European cloth for their own social purposes (Duff 1969). Today for example, the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers always begin their performances by walking into the arena backwards in honour of the history of entering a long house backwards as a sign of peace and respect. They enter by presenting the red, black and white designs on their back, which identifies the individual, their family, and their history. Learning about and displaying button blankets and tribe symbols, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, has become an important part of the cultural revitalization in Prince Rupert and among other First Nations.



Figure 3.7 Jack Temple performs with the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers. The headdress and drum he made display his belonging to the raven tribe.

The public recognition of crest and tribe images and the relationships they identify are part of why they are displayed. Objects displaying tribe symbols are also exchanged at feasts or as personal gifts as part of a long tradition of visual display in these communities (Figure 3.7).

The Nisga'a Tribal Council published a short book on their artefacts and wrote,

The decorative art was often displayed or given away at potlatches where a wealthy chief might announce the acquisition of a new title or crest, to celebrate a coming of age or to repay a social obligation. In doing so, he would assert his status and power in the eyes of his guests (Nisga'a Tribal Council 1997).

The visible display of art was and is a way of defining social roles and recognizing social obligations. The symbols also identify relationships between community members as signified by the crests and tribe symbols. Display and recognition help create shared understanding of kin and community responsibilities.

Over time, other objects were incorporated as a way to display shared social symbols and to mark special occasions. Aaron Glass (2008, 1) argues that the exchange of t-shirts displaying tribe symbols at feasts in Kwakwaka'wakw communities (to the south of Tsimshian territory) help individuals to remember particular events and “facilitate social reproduction through the public articulation of memories and identities in diverse contexts of daily life.” Similarly, in my observations of the Prince Rupert Indigenous people's practices, items such as necklaces, drums, beads, and cedar hats were popular items to give in recognition of relationships. Tribe symbols and popular art depicting the animals of the residents' tribe are on display in homes as well. In all, these objects serve as repositories of memories, and signifiers of the shared experiences that underpin the connections that community members have with each other. The visible aspects of the items carrying the tribe symbols—t-shirts, drums, necklaces, hats—enable the wearer or owner to publicly affirm community membership and belonging.

Youth and families in the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancer group also wear bracelets, jewellery, hats, and other items as dance regalia. Many of these objects were received as gifts over time and symbolize as well as validate interpersonal relationships. In 2010 for example, I spoke with one of the youth members of the dancer group who became emotional when presented with a headdress carved by one of his mentors. I recorded as he received an unexpected gift from someone he respected who publicly gave him the gift to show her pride and

love for the young man. The young man felt acknowledged and valued for the work he had done for the dance group and the relationships he had developed with his mentors.

A little over a year later, the dance group gave me a cedar hat to recognize my role documenting their performances in photographs and film. According to traditional practice, the gift of the cedar hat legitimized my relationship to the group. I may not have danced with them, but I had still become part of the group. After I put the hat on, some dance group members joked with me saying, “Now, you look like us.” I quickly came to understand the hat was a symbol of my belonging, and demonstrated our relationship to others. Each object, such as the cedar hat, has a story that involves how and why it was received as well as what it represents. The objects are reference points for these stories—they serve as proof of relationships and inform the memories of the community.

T-shirts, drums, and other forms of visual Indigenous representation are products of a different kind of technology than photographs and photography, but I want to draw a connection between the practices because it highlights a reason why the images produced by the youth and myself remain important to the youth. Visual anthropologist Sarah Pink (2006, 142) points out that “a purely visual methodology is insufficient to understand the meaning of images. Instead, images need to be understood in terms of how their visual element is made meaningful in relation to a full set of culturally specific sensory categories.” As such, the meaning of the photographs created by the Planet Youth teens must be understood in relation to the culturally specific practices and technologies of visual display of their larger multi-generational community. In Prince Rupert, the Indigenous community valued public recognition and the visual display of membership and heritage that acknowledged and symbolized social relationships. In this context, our photographs are objects of visual display that have stories, evoke memories, and are intended to be viewed by others. They are different in form and character from crests and tribe symbols, but similar because of their visual qualities and capacity for meaning making.

Although the street family was a unique micro-community, many of their practices were familiar because they replicated those performed by the larger Indigenous community. Kinship ties symbolized their relationship to each other and calling themselves a street family symbolized the important cohesiveness of the group compared to others. It was not our initial intent, but

representing the street family through our film and photographs in a public way connected to the values of the feast system, which may also have enhanced their recognition by the larger community. Sharing our images publicly, for example, was another way the street family members were able to display their relationship to others and give meaning to the representations of themselves as a family. The positive response the images received from the larger community was alternative to the youths' usual feelings of disconnection, which may have strengthened the street family as a symbol of their teenage peer community.

In 2010, I discussed the film with the director of the Friendship House. He said he had showed the film to the elders who had been "blown away" by it. I learned later that people called the Friendship House to buy prints after they had been on display in an empty store front in 2007. The youth also sold prints of the photographs at the local mall that year and heard compliments in person. After one film screening in Vancouver, a former teacher commented, "I know these kids, I recognize them. I've taught them. But I had no idea." Teachers at the school also told me they recognized the youth in the video, but were unaware of their strong social bonds. Years later, youth would come up to me and introduce me to family members by talking about the photographs. I met Victor's grandmother this way. I also met cousins and parents in similar conversations. The circulation and presentation of the street family in video and photographs provided adults with some insight into the experiences and valued relationships of the youth. The responses youth received may also have prompted stronger connections to and within the street family. The larger community knew of the street family and its importance because of our collaborative media.

While the media we created were shared and discussed in Prince Rupert and beyond, the project and our archive did not change the youth's economic or social status. In between the years of my fieldwork, many of the youth still struggled to complete high school and some did not graduate. Among the cohort, fetal alcohol syndrome, racism, family disruption, and lack of support continued to be challenges. Friends and loved ones were also lost during this time. Later, initiatives such as Blade Runners, and other training and life management programs offered by the Friendship Centre and the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Society helped some of the youth find jobs and taught the youth the skills they needed to support themselves. The photographs and video we

created helped the youth gain some recognition, made fond memories, and engendered moments that increased self-esteem, but I do not want to overstate their importance.

I do believe our media projects altered awareness of the street family in some ways. Before our collaborations, only the youth knew about and understood the extent of the street family and its value. After our film was complete and had been watched by the youth and others, many people knew of the street family, which may have altered its longevity. In an interview, Jean Rouch (2003, 220) said that, “the fundamental problem in all social science, that the facts are always distorted by the presence of the person who asks the questions. You distort the answer simply by asking the question.” Research does not occur separate from the participants and researchers who engage in it. It is almost impossible to observe or research without influencing what is being questioned. Collaborating to create media about the street family meant the youth documented and conceptualized the street family outside of their own practice. The street family became more well known, and thus something different, because of our projects. Without the film and photography collaboration, other events may have caused the street family to expand, alter, or disband. Our media projects were only one possible variable that influenced the youths’ community. For example, in between my years of research in 2007 and 2011, Planet Youth closed for a time and changed location and reorganized as the Youth Hub. The centre also experienced high staff turnover. These factors may have also influenced the youths’ support systems perhaps weakening them and encouraging the shift to digital communications. By 2011, the street family was only actively used by smaller pockets of the original family, but a majority of the youth still referenced “the street family” a symbol of the important peer relationships they had as teenagers. It is impossible to know what would have become of the street family without our film and photographs or my many questions.

What I do know, is that in 2011, when I re-entered the teen centre and met a new cohort of teens, one of the first things a veteran staff member said, was that the new cohort had continued the practice. They were “the next generation” of the street family. Once grandchildren, the members were now the parents (according to the street-family structure) of a new, but much smaller generation. One of the first activities the staff suggested as a way to introduce me to the new cohort was to screen the street family film we had created four years before (Figure 3.8).



Figure 3.8 In 2011, staff and a new cohort of teens watch the film about the street family.

The new cohort recognized their older friends in the film. Afterwards members of the cohort shared that they felt the same about their relationships towards their peers. For years after our initial film, staff were aware of the street family and encouraged its maintenance among the youth by encouraging the next generation to watch the film. Such awareness and recommendations were a contrast to my observations in 2007, when the street family was rarely known outside of its members.

Sharing the film and the memories attached to their street family helps the youth maintain social bonds. In the years following 2007, the youth and I have spent time together reminiscing over our favourite images. The photographs and film are important traces of their teenage friendships. For example, when I distributed copies of the video to the youth in 2010, many of them went home and watched the video right away. The next day they told me about viewing the video with their friends and the memories it evoked. “Those days were so much fun,” one of the young men told me. “I miss my sisters,” another reminisced. A few shared with me how much they missed the teen centre and being able to hang out with their friends. The video prompted the youth to remember the shared experiences at Planet Youth as well as the important feelings of belonging they developed at the teen centre and through the street family.

Photography scholar, John Berger writes (1980, 13) that “unlike memory, photographs do not in themselves preserve meaning. They offer appearances—with all the credibility and gravity

we normally lend to appearances—pried away from their meaning.” In other words, viewers apply and attach many meanings to the images even though we think of them as single representative objects. Berger goes on to explore meaning as a function that takes place over time. Photographs, as objects, can eventually become disconnected from their initial context; some caution that photographs can have “too much” meaning, rendering them difficult to use for analysis (see, e.g., Berger and Mohr 1995; MacDougall 1998). Something similar can be said of crests and other community symbols. To outsiders, Northwest Coast artefacts are commodities (Roth 2013). Within communities, art forms are markers of belonging, identity, and power. The meaning of photographs depends on who views them, the context of their display and the purpose intended purpose of their distribution. For example, the images I share in this dissertation are disconnected from some meanings they have in Prince Rupert because the readers do not personally know the youth and their families. They are photographs of strangers frozen in moments removed from the context in which the images were created. Among the Prince Rupert youth and their families, the images are reference points that prompt memories and feelings associated with friends as well as loved ones. For the youth, the photographs are visual representations of important past and ongoing relationships.

While our photographs lack the power and unique cultural elements that make regalia and other objects valuable to the youth and their families, they are similar in the way they participate in the generation and dissemination of shared memories and meanings. Publicly watching the video screenings, seeing the photographs in displays around town or on the wall of the teen centre made the youths’ relationships visible and known to others. In the Prince Rupert Tsimshian and Nisga’a community and in other First Nations communities, oral history and visual display are important practices that make connections visible and knowable. This affinity explains why our photographs became part of the youth’s memories of their teenage years.

Talking about an experience—a memory—can create a shared social history. At feasts, listening to oral histories and reminiscing over them with others can re-energize social bonds. Listening, remembering and connecting through shared memories and history is partly why feasts are powerful spaces of shared experience. More importantly, the creation of a shared social memory helps define and make known the connections between members of a community. Our photographs had a similar effect on the youth, in a different context. The images prompted

conversations about the day they were created as well as general stories and conversations about Planet Youth. Many of these conversations have occurred years after the youth had become too old to attend the centre. The photographs continue to symbolize their peer community and their relationship with me.

For example, in 2011 Beatrice talked with me about an image we had created of her with her grandparents when we bumped into them on the street. She and I used the photograph as a reference point to recall our relationship and memories of that time in 2007 when I held the camera and she helped pose for the image. When Chrystel and I talk about the photographs, she often teases me about how I befriended the group by giving them cookies as they sat in a park. That moment is now part of our shared history. My conversations with her frequently include discussion about the iconic photograph she created depicting the youth who attended the drop-in centre at that time (Figure 3.9). We used the photograph as a reference point to build the shared memory of our project, our relationships, the Planet Youth group, and the street family. Not only do these shared memories shape our ongoing interactions, they serve to reinforce the bonds that bring me back to Prince Rupert to visit, and stay in contact with Beatrice, Chrystel, and others.



Figure 3.9 Members of the street family and Planet Youth attendees lounging at the park in 2007.

Over the nine years since our initial collaborations, the images continue to symbolize the youths' community and inform their identities. Over time, the images may have lost some of their initial meanings, but the documentation and public display of our images continue to be

important to the youth and their families in Prince Rupert. For example, some of our images have been displayed at funerals or hang on the walls of friends to remember and honour those who have passed away.²⁴ When the 2007 cohort from Planet Youth and other community members watch the film or look at our photographs from that year, they remember friends and they recall the important feelings of friendship and belonging that they had. In the years since their creation, the photographs have represented individual members of the street family and their community in public displays, which have helped the images become representative symbols of their community (more in chapter 6). The photographs and film we created documented aspects of particular moments and experience in the youth lives in ways that documented and shared how the youth created and maintained their own systems of support before cell phones.

3.6 Conclusion

By 2011, the street family had become one of the ways the youth thought about and defined their memories of their teenage years and, by extension, their ongoing relationships. The street family's role as a central support system however, had diminished. For some such as Beatrice and Naomi, their individual relationships remained strong because their friendship continued to be important, especially as both raised daughters of their own. For others, the connections were weaker, but were referenced infrequently in ways that will always remind the youth of the time they spent together at the teen centre. For example, Naomi described bumping into her (street family) son, a few years after she became too old to attend the drop-in centre. In her words:

The other day Mike . . . Little Man, still calls me mom. Like I heard "Mom, mom, mom." I was like "huh." He said, "yeah you're my mom, you forgot?" I was like "yeah I forgot." "Gosh you're so mean, you forget your own son." He starts laughing really hard. "Mom, you're getting old, you're forgetting things."

When Naomi shared this story with me, we reminisced about the street family and how much it had changed. Without Planet Youth, smaller groups of friends remained close, but the extended

²⁴ In order to respect the community, I have chosen not to research or describe this practice in any further detail.

family-like relationships went virtually unrecognized. Mostly, the street family only existed during moments such as those that Naomi described.

Among Prince Rupert's Tsimshian and Nisga'a community as well as other First Nations community, oral history and visual display are important practices that make connections visible and knowable. Within a social context where cousins abound, lineage is remembered and recited, and visual objects are repositories for memories that tradition dictates should be demonstrated in public, our photographs retain many of the connections that produced their meaning in the first place. While each individual photograph is mimetic of the individuals involved in the street family, they are also a reference point for relationships among the youth. By being used to recognize and honour these relationships, the photographs became another kind of visible symbol of the youths' responsibilities to one another.

Collaborations are about creating dialogue, recognizing contributions, and creating a product that can be shared with others. To Rouch (quoted in Stoller 1992, 193), "the camera does not capture reality, it creates reality—or cine-reality—a set of images that evoke ideas and stimulate dialogue among observer, observed, and viewer." In our projects, the presence and use of cameras stimulated dialogue between the youth, their families, and myself. The images we produced also performed as social objects that both represented and helped maintain relationship between the youth and myself as well. By our developing relationships I came to understand how the youth appropriated the kinship terminology used in their Indigenous culture for use in their ad-hoc peer support system. It also helped me better understand the difficulties the youth contended with at school, at home, and elsewhere, and therefore how important this street family community was to them.

In the period when cell phone service was available, but expensive and did not include text messaging services, the teen centre provided a location where youth were guaranteed to find a friend. The teenagers found adults who cared about them and friends at Planet Youth, all of whom understood the day-to-day challenges they faced. As a place with regular hours and a steady cohort of youth, Planet Youth offered predictability and stability, and fulfilled youths' needs for entertainment. The teen centre provided the youths a safe space where they could practice back flips, enjoy pop music, share their tribe symbols, and eat fry bread. Collectively this empathetic homelike atmosphere helped build their resilience, and provided a sanctuary

from the challenges they sometime experienced. The street family fulfilled a need for belonging and community participation that, at the time, was difficult to achieve elsewhere.

In later years, the youth would go on to form similar relationships through the dance group as well as build support systems across their community. They would leverage Facebook and mobile digital technology to create new strategies for finding economic and social support from their larger community. Facebook would also be used to recognize relationships, find entertainment, and would become a predictable way to find support. The youths' understanding of their heritage and traditional social systems would influenced the strategies they used to obtaining support through digital technologies, just as it had when they developed the street family at the physical location of the drop-in centre.



Figure 3.10 Youth at the teen centre hang out on the couches together watching some of our film footage in 2007.

Chapter 4: “I’ll Take Facebook Please”

4.1 Introduction

When I first met Chrystel, her friends, and the other teens in 2007, I saw only one cell phone. When they were at the teen centre, many of the youths had mp3 players, and sometimes used a social media site called Bebo. Their communication with one another however, was mostly limited to face-to-face encounters. When I returned in 2011, this situation had changed. The teen centre still existed, but its status among the teenagers had diminished. They no longer required a physical place to congregate and to find their friends. Instead the youth frequently accessed their support network through a computer or a mobile device. Four years after I met the teens at Planet youth, the next cohort of teenagers could find a form of support and empathy for their feelings of alienation at any time of day at any location by pushing a button. From there they could arrange a face-to-face meeting, or develop new forms of digital support.

During my fieldwork in the summer of 2011, I attended the teen centre occasionally, but mostly visited the carving class at the Friendship House because it was a space where several members of the old teen centre cohort chose to spend their time as young adults.



Figure 4.1 Rose helps Sharon with her mask.

Rose and her husband Jack taught the class. The couple taught informally, guiding each individual through their projects teaching both youths and adults the rules of Northwest Coast art and carving (Figure 4.1). Jack and Rose shared what they knew about carving, art, language, and traditions while encouraging others to pursue their interests and express their identities. Most evenings the room was shared by four generations (Figure 4.2). Chrystel and other youth brought their children. Chrystel, Kyle, and his family were a core group of participants who attended almost daily. Kyle, who also helped design the mural we created, used the class to learn about art and spend time with his friends, siblings, parents, aunts, and grandparents. Other visitors included Victor, members of a new cohort of youth at the teen drop-in centre, and staff of the Friendship house.



Figure 4.2 Jack advises Kyle while Chrystel's daughter sleeps in his arms.

In the classroom, teachings, discussions of carving tools and conversation intermingled with personal and community updates sent via SMS text messages from across the city. Each summer evening, the art projects transformed amidst the chimes of cell phones, the sound of carving tools, children's squeals, and the sharing of hockey scores and dirty jokes. While the group focussed on the sharp tools in their hands, they frequently shifted their awareness from the activities in the room to the digital messages that circulated through the community.

One afternoon in early July 2011, I was working on carving my own mask during the class. I asked Rose if ‘y’up’ and ‘ye’e’ are two different words for grandfather since I had heard both used. “Is one Nisga’a and the other Sm’algyax?” I asked.

“It’s all *Ye’e*,” she told me as she went to the white board to write down the translations. “Father is *Nigwoot* and *Bi’ip* is uncle. *Gigi* is grandmother. *Ye’e* is grandfather, but *yee* is walk.” She wrote on the board as she spoke. Nisga’a and Sm’algyax are similar, she went on to explain, but there are little differences. She continued her translations, but paused for a moment as she tried to remember the translation for aunt. Rose appealed to the room for help, but we didn’t have an answer. A Friendship House staff member who was working on a cedar plaque suggested, “We should try Facebook.”

Using her cell phone Rose posted the question as her status message on Facebook. Another staff member asked if there were tapes for learning Nisga’a or Sm’algyax. I had seen a dictionary at the Nisga’a Hall, but no one wanted to leave their projects and go get it.

Five minutes passed, and Rose and others checked their phones. We were all surprised that no one had posted an answer. Instead, from across town Kyle had commented on the post to let Rose know he was on his way to the carving class. She read Kyle’s post aloud, but was perplexed that no one had responded with an answer to the question.

"It's like who wants to be a millionaire." Rose joked.

"I'll take Facebook please." The staff member said as he added the question to his own Facebook page to increase the likelihood of an answer. He and Rose then made an informal bet on whose post would receive the answer first.

We checked our cellphones frequently and after ten minutes, an answer was posted as a comment to Rose's Facebook status message. She read the post aloud, "Nidxaa in Nisga'a." A few minutes later, she read another post from someone else, "Sm’algyax dictionary says Da'as or Niktaa." Although we had to wait a few minutes for the answer, we learned it in less time than it would have taken to find a dictionary, thanks to Facebook and the connected community.

In a moment of need, Rose used Facebook to access cultural resources and knowledge that did not exist in the physically bounded space of the carving room. Interaction between the dispersed community members facilitated our answer and served as another moment among many that identified a larger support system—a support system that was now accessible at the

push of a button. Although, at that particular moment we were a small group in a room, our access to Facebook created a strong sense of belonging to a larger system with access to knowledge and resources beyond our own. During this moment, cell phones allowed us to connect with resources beyond the class room. The resources existed because social participation in Prince Rupert and elsewhere often includes a co-awareness of the physical as well as the ephemeral social supports that can be accessed by cell phones.



Figure 4.3 Rose teaches Kyle how to draw an eagle for our mural. The phones on the table keep the pair apprised of friends.

Using Facebook to find the word for aunt is an example of the layered experience and always on connectivity described by Mizuko Ito (2012). In the introduction to the book *Networked Public*, she writes:

We are still very much in the midst of negotiating appropriate social norms in this era of layered presence . . . As networks increasingly pervade the nooks and crannies of physical space through portable objects and place-based infrastructure, we have opportunities for an always on sense of networked connectivity and a layering of presence in various physical and online places (Ito 2012, 6).

While I like the visual imagery of the layered metaphor, I find it problematic. A layering of presence makes it seem as if we are only aware of one group of individuals at a time, and only able to be with them in one way at a time. Layering implies a movement between separate layers

instead of thinking about how those layers form a complex system of media and awareness that inform our actions, strategies, past, and future.

In the carving room, the feel of the tools in our hands, our participation in conversations in person and via cell phones as well as listening to the hockey game on the radio were part of the threads of awareness we experienced. Another thread included the awareness that through the acts of carving or painting we were participating in a deeply embedded cultural tradition and expressing its values. Tsimshian and Nisga'a heritage was present in our conversations and interwoven with the modes of our creativity. We were present with one another as well as located in the less visible presence of kinship systems around town and communities across the region. We knew that by using Facebook the knowledge and resources of the larger groups was available and could be relied upon.

Facebook was accessible in Prince Rupert and the surrounding villages for less than two years before my fieldwork began in 2011. Semi-synchronous text messaging allowed users to decide with whom and when to interact (Baron 2009). This was different from the experiences of the youth in the teen centre in 2007 or moments when the youth discover new cousins at feasts or around town. Both kinds of interactions are moments when relationships manifest and are enacted. Online and in-person encounters are moments when individuals interact with a larger support system that they know exists—even if they are not physically present or aware of all its details. Both encounters, whether by surprise or as they are made visible and controlled by technology, are moments when relationships manifest and are enacted. For youth in Prince Rupert, the introduction of Facebook did not necessarily create a new layer of awareness or presence in the larger social support system, rather it changed their access and the frequency that they paid attention to kinship and social support.

In this chapter, I argue that the youth I met in Prince Rupert took up and defined their Facebook based technological practices based on their individual need to access and maintain systems of support. I begin with a reminder about methodology and then explore the particular domestication and remediation of communication technology in the Prince Rupert area that informs the ways Facebook was used by the youth and their families in 2011. Based on the remediation of previous technological practices, I expand on how the online medium was used quickly and frequently in Prince Rupert to fulfill individual immediate needs. For Tsimshian and

Nisga'a youth and their families in Prince Rupert, technological practices based on creating interactions via Facebook was built on top of, but did not entirely replace kinship and face-to-face based forms of maintaining community.

4.2 A Reminder about Methodology

During my fieldwork in 2011 and subsequent interactions, I discussed Facebook with participants and interacted with youth and their families over Facebook and its mobile platform. Although Facebook was a frequent topic of conversation, my analysis is not meant to be a representative of the kinds of interactions that occurred on the platform. It is not an ethnographic study conducted only within the confines of a virtual world (see, e.g., Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce and Taylor 2012). Nor is it a mixed method analysis monitoring manifest data produced in online spaces combined with in person interviews and observations of participant engagement with devices (see e.g., boyd 2008, Miller 2011, Madianou and Miller 2012). It is also not an example of the increasingly popular digital trace ethnography that combines big data records with interviews and online participation (see e.g., Geiger and Ribes 2011). While I did ask people about their devices and observed interactions such as those in the carving room, I felt that recording and doing manifest analyses of digital records in this particular context would have violated the social contract and trust I have with the youth and their families.

Our projects have always been focused on my participation with the youth through the creation of photographs, participation in activities, having conversations, and exchanging ideas face-to-face. At the time, I felt gathering data by observing and recording Facebook independent of moments when I physically spent time with the youth and their families, fell outside the boundaries of trust and consent for my research and participation in the community. Although in 2011, community participation required using the cell phones or computers, my relationships with the youths and their families have always been founded and developed during the physical time we spent together. These moments of physical observations and conversations are the foundation of my analysis.

I want to be clear: this method has limitations. The following is not a representative sample of how the First Nations' community in Prince Rupert use Facebook or how they think about the website. It is not meant to be. Instead I offer a way to think about a particular subset of

messages and practices I encountered and discussed with others and what they mean for the youths' resilience and participation in their community.²⁵

As with other chapters, I approach the influence of the new medium through a historical lens by unfolding the particular context that informs some of the behaviours of youth and their families. The moments I discuss, such as the evening at the carving class, are based on what I observed and discussed during moments of physical co-present community participation. They are moments I have received verbal permission from participants to write about. I discussed the purpose of the dissertation before and during our discussions, and I shared a draft of this chapter with the participants as well. While limited, my analysis offers a way to think about Facebook in relation to youths' social strategies and does so in a way that the youth who participated in my research would feel was acceptable.

4.3 Towards an Always on Facebook in Prince Rupert

In 2011, youth in Prince Rupert participated in events and moments that informed them that their community was “always on”—always ready to answer questions, provide resources, offer support, and critique their behaviour. Always on refers to the notion that our communication devices are increasingly left turned on and that members of our social network are increasingly willing to always be available. Naomi Baron (2009) titled her book, *Always on*, as a way of describing our growing ability to assert control over when and who we engage with in interactions. Mizuko Ito (2012) and others have borrowed the phrase as a way to describe a recent shift in communication accessibility. New technologies make it easier to be available to others. In this section, I explore the history of the technological practices that came to influence why members of Tsimshian and Nisga'a community are always on.

²⁵ My analysis for this chapter is also set in a particular period of time during February through August 2011, three months before the redesign and addition of the Timeline to Facebook's interface. An interface that Jose Van Dijck (2013) suggests added a narrative, temporal purpose to the website, which was shaped by the company's philosophy to promote “sharing.” Posts, messages and photographs shared during my fieldwork contained a linear temporal order, but the Timeline interface has since restructured their visibility and purpose. I cannot comment on how the Timeline has since affected temporality or interactions with memory.

Before the fur trade era, communities in the Northwest Coast were separate from one another, but they were not isolated. Trade cycles and feasts spread news throughout the area and helped facilitate the organizing and attendance of the feasts, which served to maintain political alliances and trade relations. Trade networks and complex oral histories maintained an awareness of distant connections and the value of these relationships. The efficient verbal face-to-face communication networks of Indigenous communities were nicknamed the moccasin telegraph.²⁶ The phrase, when compared to what was an innovative European technology of the time, also provides insight into the speed and effectiveness of Aboriginal communication networks across overlapping communities.

The youth and families I met use cultural concepts and values to facilitate efficient communication and maintain notions of kinship and community. In his argument for Indigenous anthropology in Gitxaala,²⁷ Menzies (2013; 2016) outlines that the core concepts of relatedness, interconnection, and the idea of continuity are central to the village community. Dangeli (2015) also acknowledges similar values—place, territory, and connections to social worlds beyond the human—as informing the knowledge and cultural traditions that instructed the systems of behaviour and individual responsibilities that in many ways continue today. Cyclical, continuous, temporal notions supported ongoing relations and social participation.

The feast system publicly shared and legitimized each groups' oral histories or *adaawx*, in the Tsimshian language of Sm'algyax. Susan Marsden (2002: 102-103) describes:

The concept of Northwest Coast *adaawx* should be set apart from the general concept of oral history. *Adaawx* are oral records of historical events of collective political, social, and economic significance... While specific to a lineage and passed from generation to generation within the lineage, *adaawx* are formally acknowledged by the society as a whole and collectively represent the authorized history of the nation. In every generation, *adaawx* are reaffirmed in feasts, during which chiefs recount their lineages' *adaawx* in the presence of chiefs from their own and other nations.

²⁶ Although the first use of this nickname is not known, it has been mentioned by several authors (see e.g., Sinard 2012; Kinsella 2009, Fragnito 1997). Based on the fact it names the telegraph and not the telephone means the nickname probably originated before the turn of the twentieth century.

²⁷ A Tsimshian Nation to the south of Prince Rupert.

In Nisga'a, the oral histories are called *adaawak*. *Adaawak* (*adaawx*) are more than histories, they are also the foundations of morality and values of the community. They function in conjunction and sometimes as origin stories for their laws. In Nisga'a these laws are called *ayuukhl*. The Nisga'a Lisims government website states:

Ayuukhl Nisga'a shows us that every being has a rightful and meaningful place in society — and that we are all interdependent — we need one another.

In Sm'algyax, these codes are referred to as *ayaawx*. Patricia June Vickers, the director of Mental Wellness at the First Nations Health Authority in British Columbia, who is from Gitxaala near Prince Rupert, studied the *ayaawx* for her dissertation. Her writing adds to this definition (Vickers 2008: 49):

Although the Ayaawx has two definite components, spiritual and socially political, they are not separate but inter-connected. All—humans, plants, the land, supernatural beings, are alive and intimately related to each other—impacting each other.

Interdependence and interconnection is a fundamental value of the First Nations people in the area. The *ayuukhl* (*ayaawx*) extends beyond human kinship to the territory and animals and other groups of people in the area. The *adaawak* (*adaawx*) describe histories of geopolitical interdependence from the perspective of each family. The *ayuukhl* (*ayaawx*) provide ongoing guidance for how and why interconnectedness between the *wilp* (*waap*), their territories, as well as spirits and animals should be enacted and validated. As central concepts and values that maintain the community and their worldviews, layers of awareness are reinforced each time the *adaawak* (*adaawx*) and *ayuukhl* (*ayaawx*) is thought of or shared.

Layers of awareness as well as the core concepts of relatedness meant communities were always on long before anyone had the faintest idea about digital technology. Relationships, responsibilities, history and future were frequently on peoples' mind. As some Indigenous people became economically and socially marginalized in Canada however, layers of knowledge and awareness related to *ayuukhl* (*ayaawx*) and *adaawak* (*adaawx*) became harder to access. Core concepts did not disappear, but colonialism meant *ayuukhl* (*ayaawx*) and *adaawak* (*adaawx*) were no longer transferred and received by younger generations in the same way. While many of the youth I met may not know the details, the central concepts of relatedness and

interconnectivity continue to shape their online, urban, and village community experiences and practice.

While an awareness of relatedness and participation in large social networks has always facilitated connections among Northwest Coast communities, modes of communications have sped up over time. In the past, news traveled great distances by foot and canoe through trade and family networks. For example, building the railroad to Prince Rupert added telegraph and mail service to face-to-face communication. Ferries replaced canoes throughout the inside passage and portions of the Grease Trails were paved to become segments of the major transportation highways in the region (Readicker-Henderson 2009, 215). The next wave of technology brought radio and low power relay stations to remote communities during the 1930s and 1940s further speeding up communication possibilities over distance (Canadian Communications Foundation 2001). Digital technology creates a new relationship with distance and speed as youth and their families chat, send pictures, and share videos relatively instantly both in the city and beyond.

Facebook (and the lists of friends and profile pages it records) provides a new kind of visibility for the youths' social support systems. Facebook has particular attributes that shape how users interact through the medium and with each other. Some scholars argue that social media sites such as Facebook are *networked publics* (see, e.g., boyd and Ellison 2008, Varnelis 2012). The qualities of a networked public include a web-based service that allows individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile, define a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and the ability to view other users within their network. Unlike verbal speech, interactions on networked publics are recorded and persistent, allowing the audience to review a statement asynchronously (boyd and Ellison 2008). Posts and profiles are designed to be searchable and can be copied and reviewed verbatim. The ability to see lists and explore connected profiles contribute to the visibility that defines how the site is used and its value. While boyd and Ellison (2008) argue these uses are common across all social network sites, researchers such as Daniel Miller (2011, x) note that a social networking site cannot be thought of as a separate unified entity that exists outside of local interactions. The availability of Facebook in Prince Rupert does not create an entirely new presence; rather, the technological practices of the youth and their families is the latest remediation of tools used to maintain awareness of relatedness and participation in a larger community.

The popularity and technological practice of using Facebook in Prince Rupert is a product of both the embedded values, such as kinship and community, as well as the transfer of older technological practices to new media. Bolter and Grusin (1999) use the idea of “remediation” to explain how new media refashions older media and their technological practices. “Domestication” is the process through which new technology become embedded into social systems (Haddon 2011). Remediation and domestication is not always a linear process, but the development of the youth and their families’ digital technological practices in Prince Rupert are influenced by a succession of popular technology-driven media, the late accessibility of mobile data in Prince Rupert, and the lowering cost of cell phone technology.

In Prince Rupert, among the Tsimshian and Nisga’a community, the particular remediation of the radio helps explain Facebook’s domestication. Radio stations are important to smaller more isolated communities in Canada.²⁸ For example, Denis Allen (2010) documented the importance of the radio in his observational film *CBQM*. The film profiles the ways in which the small community of Fort McPherson use the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s (CBC) broadcast system. Shared consumption of the station’s programming keeps people apprised of distant news and local events and helps produce imagined forms of community similar to those articulated by Anderson (1983). Nationally, news and shared programming create shared social narratives that produce feeling that listeners belong as a citizen of Canada.

The film, *CBQM* also documents the usefulness of the radio at a local community level. Residents run radio programs and play music. The town’s pastor announces events and gives sermons over the airwaves while the local police officer issues warnings and public service announcements. People telephone the radio station with messages and requests that they want relayed to the larger radio network. Whoever is operating the radio station at the time interrupts their program to announce messages from residents trying to locate individuals or sell goods. In

²⁸ CFNR, a popular First Nations radio station operating out of Terrace, B.C. is an excellent example of an Indigenous multimedia organization that has expanded as technology has changed. Exploring CFNR’s role in the community could be a research project in itself. The station plays classic rock most of the time, but also does live broadcasts at Nisga’a and Tsimshian events. In recent years, they have also started sharing videos of gatherings and performances on its website. The station participates in community building between villages and urban centres by posting and publicizing a community calendar. Their live broadcasts and video posts give witness to and disseminate information about local events.

one scene of the film, a radio announcer reminds a resident over the radio to hang up their telephone so a neighbour can call them directly. The radio station was the means by which the community sent mass and targeted messages to facilitate the functioning of day-to-day events and to express needs. In Fort McPherson, the radio is a tool that has been integrated into the daily activities of the community and is used to facilitate important and mundane interactions.

Radio mass media remains popular in Prince Rupert, but the use of (Citizen's Band) CB and VHF two-way radios developed technological practices that have shifted to Facebook. First Nations villages surrounding Prince Rupert, who did not have access to their own mass broadcast stations like the CBQM, adapted CB and VHF radios for a similar purpose.²⁹ Radios in kitchens, cars, and boats were often always on. Messages, call signs, jokes, announcements, and notification of community needs chirped back and forth between users. Hand held radios became a staple technology in reserve villages and radio communication became the new auditory medium that mediated public announcements. The VHF radios, with their eight-foot tall antennas bolted to cars, buildings, and boats, became an always on, networked communication system that was still popular in some areas as recently as 2011.

One of the leaders of the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers in Prince Rupert described how the radios were and are used to organize dance practice in the villages:

You know on a reserve, if anything's going to happen everybody is on the CB or the VHF. Everybody knows within a short period of time. And they can just get on the VHF and announce it and everybody knows. But when you're in an urban area it's not like that. It [the radio] is a luxury.

Others explained that multiple generations use and listen to radios in villages; it is accessible to everyone and an important part of daily life.

²⁹ I am not alone in associating the use of Facebook to the use of two-way radios in reserve communities. At the time I was undertaking my fieldwork in 2011, *The Tyee*, an online magazine, published a story about Facebook being used as a campaign tool for First Nation politicians (Krebs 2011). Candis Callison, a UBC professor of journalism, was quoted in the article sharing similar observations about Facebook domestication across location and generations as well as the use of Facebook to “augment the use of the two-way radio” (Krebs 2011). When I presented at the First Nations Technology Council ICT Summit in Vancouver in the Spring of 2012 about Facebook and belonging among youth, audience members commented on similar process of remediation in their own communities across British Columbia.

Elsewhere, anthropologists and media scholars have noted the many variations and similar importance of radio and local communication systems for groups across the globe (Bessire and Fields 2012). In Bolivia and Paraguay for example, “radio became a centrally important way to connect with relatives, clan kin, and acquaintances scattered in settlements often separated by hundreds of roadless miles” (Bessire 2012:199). In a similar, but hard-wired example, Joshua Barker (2008) explored the ‘interkom’ chat system in Bandung, Indonesia, where users ran phone lines between houses in a way that allowed them to communicate across a kind of conference telephone system. Interkom was often intended as a way to connect relatives, but the result is the creation of a semi-anonymous networked audience and a style of communication that defines community norms. Elsewhere, Indigenous communities in Australia have used the mass-broadcasting abilities of radio to promote, share, and create content in ways that has made radio “a crucial site for Indigenous cultural reproduction and activism” (Fisher 2012,72; see also Ginsburg 1994). These different examples reveal how radio and other kinds of local communication systems, including those along the Northwest Coast, are used for social organization, entertainment, and communication in ways that create means for listeners to connect, define, and influence their communities.

Over the last 40 years, two-way radios have been useful for local purposes and the maintenance of relationships within and across the communities in the area surrounding Prince Rupert. VHF radios often interrupted dinner conversations with announcements about the schedule of meetings or bingo games and messages from individuals wanting to share the congratulations or make the public statements of thanks and reciprocity that are foundational to daily life on reserves. The two-way radios used in First Nations villages across the Northwest Coast mediate the mundane interactions that helped facilitate face-to-face interactions. Two-way radios connected individuals in the villages and created a frequent narrative of events, announcements and mundane requests across the airways. In Prince Rupert, youth and their families were familiar with technological practices of using a medium to facilitate community interactions because of what they knew about the domestication of VHF radios in the villages. As such, the youth and their families in Prince Rupert were predisposed to appreciate, take advantage, and mold their new technological practices for Facebook in a similar way.

In addition to the Tsimshian and Nisga'a community's familiarity with how a hand held radio broadcast system could be useful for a community, the city's late access to mobile data also contributed to the speed at which particular local technological practices surrounding the use of Facebook developed. Citywest, the privately owned tele-communication company in Prince Rupert, was able to provide communication services, but did not have the ability to fund infrastructure developments as fast as larger telecommunication companies elsewhere. For example, according to Citywest's website, people in Prince Rupert still communicated with each other and with the rest of the world using party telephone lines up to 1987.³⁰ In the 1990's Citywest expanded its private residential service and by the end of the decade it became one of the smallest companies in North America to offer cellular services, but it was only able to offer calling services.

By 2005, when the rest of the world was sending and receiving more than one trillion text messages sent across the globe (Ling 2008,15), Prince Rupert was still working on improving the stability of its cell phone calling coverage—text messages were not available. In 2006, Citywest invested in the installation of hundreds of kilometres of fibre-optic cable, but it wasn't until late 2008 that they began upgrading their cellular infrastructure to bring mobile data and text messaging to the area (Citywest.com). Thus by the time mobile communication technology and social media were accessible to users in Prince Rupert, the technology was fully formed.

"Citywest was late to join the SMS trend," Chad Cunningham, the marketing manager for Citywest said when we chatted in 2011. He explained that smart phones and cell phones with full keyboards were available and affordable years before the city had access to SMS and data services. As a fully formed technology, Citywest documented an exponential rate of use of SMS texting its first two years of availability (Citywest.com). Facebook had also released its mobile application in 2006, which forwarded website posts as SMS text alerts to cell phone users. The full-keyboard smart phones and Facebook Mobile enabled certain cell phone capabilities all at once. Having a full keyboards and a cell plan with unlimited text messaging that could forward Facebook notifications helped explains the speed to which the youth and their families created

³⁰ Party telephones meant that many residences shared the same phone number a pattern of rings would identify the intended recipient.

technological practices dependent on cell phone, SMS technology, and the medium of Facebook status messages and comments.

The timing of Prince Rupert's mobile internet access corresponded with increased internet connectivity in reserve communities, which helped inspire urban members to use the medium to connect with families on reserves. At the same time that Citywest was improving and upgrading its information communication technology infrastructure the province of British Columbia was funding communication infrastructure upgrades on reserves. The Provincial Learning Network connected over 1800 schools across the province to broadband internet service, including schools on reserves near Prince Rupert (B.C. Ministry of Education 2011). At a time when long distance telephone calls remained relatively expensive, broadband internet service was increasing in village communities.³¹ Youth and their families were already aware of their peripheral, but connected participation in the villages in the area and the increase in internet connectivity helped them communicate in new ways.

Before Facebook became the most popular social network for First Nations communities, some urban and reserve communities such as those in and around Prince Rupert found other useful platforms that helped manifest their ongoing connectedness in a new medium. In Prince Rupert, the technological practice of connecting with friends as well as local and distant relatives via a social network site developed with Bebo.com. Both their use of Bebo and Facebook correspond to other research showing most users use social network sites to connect to people they know offline (Subrahmanyam et al 2008; Reich et al. 2012). Youth used the computers at the teen centre to access Bebo where they posted poems, pictures, and messages for friends and family. Members of their *wilp* (*waap*) on reserves also posted messages containing good wishes and updates about the events in their lives. The ability to share these posts eased the frustration and experience of alienation, and provided another medium for the youth to interact with their families. Youth and their families used the platforms to connect their peripheral, but connected communities in the villages, and Bebo profile pages as well as private messages replaced some of their costly long distance phone calls and travel.

³¹ The First Nations Technology Council helped expand broadband connection in Indigenous communities, but connecting remote communities was a slow process. At the end of 2011, 33 Indigenous communities in the province still did not have broadband internet access (Hui 2012).

As the cost of cell phones, computers, internet access, SMS texting, and mobile data decreased, more and more homes in Prince Rupert and reserve communities connected to social media sites used by their friends and family, thus expanding the size and the means of maintaining a presence in communities defined by diaspora relationships. Soon after Citywest installed fibre-optic cables in Prince Rupert, they began leasing their bandwidth to national companies, making cellular services in the city less expensive. By the time Prince Rupert had access to SMS messaging, inexpensive, unlimited text messaging was being offered by cell phone companies, which meant it was far cheaper for the youth to send and receive text messages than it was to call.

Lower cost helped inspire the youths' transition from Bebo to Facebook. Heather described her transition from Bebo to me:

I stopped going on Bebo when I got Facebook. I just gradually stopped going on. Cause everybody was on Bebo. Bebo was like everything. Like you can go on Bebo. You can get texts from Bebo too, but it costs something cause I tried to get it on my phone but I couldn't because it cost something. Then Facebook came around and it had free texting or whatever your plan was. Like you have unlimited texting you get free texts, but if you have like 'My5,' you have to get an extra ten [dollars] on your phone to text other people or it's like 15 cents to text somebody.

Facebook had also already integrated its service into its mobile platform, enabling cell phone users to receive text message based notifications and use their message service on cell phones relatively inexpensively. Cost influenced the youths' technological practices just as much as did the capabilities of the new technology and the need to maintain family and community relationships.

With tight finances, Tsmishian and Nisga'a youth and families in Prince Rupert during 2011 were often on pay-as-you-go cell phone plans that allowed them to load up the phone with minutes when they could afford it and thereby avoid possible penalties if a payment was missed. Only a year and half after the telecommunications infrastructure upgrade, the city of 12,000 people was sending and receiving over two million text messages a month (Citywest 2011). What had previously been accessed through phone calls, radio bursts, or physical travel across town had been remediated to 140 characters. In 2011, when I asked youth how many SMS messages they thought they sent and received, "300 a day" or "a ton" was a common response

based on the number of times a day they cleared messages from their cell phone's memory. They also told me many of these messages were actually forwarded Facebook notifications and messages.

In the Prince Rupert area, the technological practices of using the many-to-many format of VHF radio was quickly remediated to Facebook's text and visual format when mobile access became affordable for the youth and their families. The familiarity and the domestication of CB radios also meant multiple generations were comfortable with the idea of accessing their kinship networks, both locally and across distance via different technologies. By 2011, the Facebook News Feed offered a single source of updates similar to the way two-way radio systems on reserves had created a way for listeners to use a single source for following the news, messages, and sentiments of the many different users in their communities. Bebo, in contrast, had required users to visit individual profiles to get updates about their friends and family. The ability to communicate in photos, and asynchronous messages also expanded the forms of communication and the low expense meant community members could use the system frequently. The frequent updates to the News Feed and the social values of participation and maintaining awareness of others meant users increasingly visited the site, leading to a sense of the social network being always on and always available. Facebook was always on because it accessed technologically mediated tools of participating in the community that had been developing for decades and found new remediation on a relatively inexpensive medium with wider reach.

4.4 Facebook and Present Needs

The moment when Rose posted her question to Facebook during the carving class is indicative of the remediation of radio communication used in villages. Rose and others used Facebook to quickly access cultural knowledge and obtain support from the wider community. The moment is an example of ways the medium enabled interpersonal relationships and become a resource for cultural knowledge. Being able to post requests for rides or favours or alert the community about events helps maintain short-term immediate reciprocal exchanges that benefit community members. By the time of my fieldwork in 2011, the youth and their families had developed technological practices that used Facebook to semi-instantaneously access resources, knowledge, and social support.

For example, the Friendship House used its Facebook page to announce that the Department of Fisheries would be giving away salmon. As the truck arrived filled with fresh fish in black garbage bags for easy distribution, the organization added "Right Now" to its posted status. Over the next hour, alerted by the Facebook notification options on their computers or cell phones, people from across the city went to the Friendship House for the salmon. Previously, village announcements would have been made in person or via radio. In Prince Rupert, announcements were often made through Facebook.

The Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers of Prince Rupert as well as an increasing number of First Nations and non-Indigenous organizations interacted with their members through Facebook. Leaders posted announcements on the group page to ask for input regarding organizing decisions or trip planning and to publicly acknowledge members who contributed to fundraising efforts. Formal statements of appreciation circulated throughout the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers and the Friendship House's posts, as did promises to reciprocate the favours or duties mentioned. Most often, rescheduled or cancelled rehearsals were posted on their group page. The youth, their families, and First Nations organizations were on Facebook constantly making status updates, commenting, and submitting posts. This medium offered them a cheap and convenient way to text message each other while making their conversations accessible to others.

Similar to some of the uses of the VHF radios, Facebook provided a means of accessing a network that quickly fulfilled individual's immediate needs. Status updates on Facebook in Prince Rupert were used to find people across town, announce bake sales, and facilitate event organization. Users such as Rose and those in the carving class posted questions and others posted requests for food or volunteers for a feast or celebration. Multiple times, I answered Facebook requests from individuals looking for access to a vehicle and drove residents to a nearby town or helped move furniture. I also came to understand that rides across the province could be facilitated by a single Facebook request. As with radio communication, community members replied relatively quickly and offered their services or knowledge.

Unlike the information shared by radio, however, Facebook posts and responses are preserved. Although the messages of radio were remediating, they were not recorded and could be accessed asynchronously. Our request that day in the carving class was recorded and made

visible to users when they chose to look at their Facebook News Feed. If someone who knew the answer was not on Facebook at the time of the post, they could potentially still see our question when they signed into the social media platform. This increased the likelihood of someone who knew the translation coming across our question and offering an answer. Asynchronous communication increased the effectiveness of the medium for accessing resources, knowledge and support, while at the same time perpetuating the notion that the community is always on.

During moments when an individual can't be reached directly, cell phones and Facebook are used by the Tsimshian and Nisga'a community in Prince Rupert to reach out to a network of people for help. In an interview, Heather discussed a moment when she had left home early for work at the cannery. When her family awoke and she was not home, they wanted to make sure she knew she had work. She told me, that day she had run out of calling minutes on her phone but could still receive text messages. She received texts and Facebook messages from multiple members of her extended family. Here is her description of what happened:

On my way to work I got Facebook messages cause I could still receive them on my phone.

"Heather where are you, you got work."

"I'm like, 'I know.'"

"Heather, call Gigi."

"I can't."

"Heather, call your mom."

"I can't."

Everybody was trying to get a hold of me cause they thought I wasn't home. Well I wasn't home cause I was on my way to work. They thought I disappeared. Went somewhere else. I was like, gee you guys. Then my mom, she posted on my [Facebook] wall, "call me ASAP you got work."

And, I replied "I'm walking to work right now."

So yeah I was like, you see what happens when I don't have minutes? Everybody goes crazy looking for me. They have to find me.

Heather's walk to work was filled with immediate notifications from her friends and family. Her mother had posted on Facebook asking if anyone knew Heather's location. These friends and family then texted and messaged her directly. Heather did not have access to the Facebook News Feed to see the post her mom had made, but when her mom posted on her wall, the notification settings sent her a text and allowed her to reply. Messages circulated and were shared to draw Heather's attention and action across a digital Moccasin Telegraph. Her mother and family were

“on” ready to find her and help make sure she got to work on time. They sprang into action without having to leave their present locations because of the social media system. In a village, Rose’s or Heather’s mother could have announced their needs over the radio—in Prince Rupert, they chose to do it via Facebook.

The success of Facebook for finding people, acquiring goods, announcing events, and updating the community helped create the always on support system. While Facebook provided a tool for making requests, Nisga’a and Tsimshian cultural values of connectedness and ongoing reciprocity are why community members answered the requests. In this way, being available on Facebook was how people participated in the community. Reciprocity, combined with the limited resources available to some community members—a legacy of their historical social exclusion—encouraged participation on the website. The frequency of posts requesting immediate needs helped support awareness that a digital layer of presence was available for accessing others and receiving help. In 2011, this phenomenon defined the community and what it meant to be an active member of it.

4.5 Emotions and Shared Experiences

Facebook use in the Tsimshian and Nisga’a community of Prince Rupert developed within the larger experience of alienation. By 2011, conversations that once occurred in the corners of the teen centre or on its front steps now occurred via cell phones and their screens. Conversations that helped manage the rumours, trauma, and joyful moments of living in Prince Rupert were, in 2011, often expressed and on Facebook. Emergent feelings were recorded, repeated, and encountered across countless screens, creating an emotional resonance that helped define the scope of the youths’ community. For the Tsimshian and Nisga’a youth who continue to manage their experiences of alienation and colonialism, Facebook sometimes circulates painful emotions. Although negative, this sharing of emotions also defines the shared experiences that unite the community.

Facebook not only helped fill immediate needs, it also facilitated verbal attacks and the spreading of rumours. One day in 2011, for example, I sat with a young man a few minutes after he came storming into the teen centre. It was a moment of anger and panic. All the young man could think about was getting on Facebook to post about being stopped by the RCMP. A cop had

stopped him and asked to see his high school ID because they were looking for someone. The teen was frustrated about being targeted and harassed because he resembled someone else, but he was also concerned about who might have seen him talking with a police officer. He told me it was in the middle of the day at an intersection in the centre of town, "where everyone saw." He was afraid that rumours about him might circulate on Facebook that could hurt his reputation, his family, and his friends. He was embarrassed and angry by the public display. To explain his concern he told me, "Prince Rumour will make me look like a runaway who got caught by the cops!"

This was the first moment I heard the city referred to as "Prince Rumour," but it was not the last. In this town of only 12,000 people, I found it difficult to go to the supermarket at any time of day without bumping into someone who recognized me. I always saw people I knew and often, I discovered, others were aware of my movements around town. The circulation of gossip is often remediated with each new technology (see, e.g., Hampton and Wellman 2003). For example, during our interview about the history and expansion of Citywest, Chad Cunningham hypothesized that the origin of the city's nickname of Prince Rumour probably came with "the party telephone lines the city had until 1988. Each home would have a different ring but you hoped your neighbour wouldn't pick up," he told me. At the time, party telephone lines facilitated the distribution of rumours as neighbours overheard private conversations. With the introduction of Facebook, many of the city's 12,000 inhabitants were now "always on" in separate but overlapping social networks thereby speeding up the distribution of both news and rumours.

Mobile communication is "a new stage upon which gossip can be carried out" (Ling 2008, 148). For example, as Ilana Gershon (2010) observed in her study of breaking up and communicating across different media, Facebook has changed "the way in which gossip circulates among communities of active Facebook users—people now know about breakups without being told about them in person" (Gershon 2010, 9). Party telephones would require a point-to-point circulation of rumours that would have limited the speed and range of circulation. Using Facebook means that the effects of rumours are no longer limited by location.

Now, a single post can be viewed an infinite number of times. The always on access, regardless of whether one was in Prince Rupert or not, meant that rumours had to be defended

against at all times. This explains the young man's moment of panic about who might have seen him and his need to defend himself pre-emptively online. In another example, during a trip to Victoria, I watched as a family read posts created by people back home and then erupted in anger over the accusations they read. The respectability of their family was being challenged and the attacker referenced the history of sexual abuse in the community to inflict harm. As soon as someone alerted the group to the post, each family member pulled out a cell phone to access Facebook and respond. While in the past the family may have had to confront rumours upon their return to Prince Rupert, now it was important to manage these rumours immediately.

Rumours such as these are another form of lateral violence rooted in the history of colonialism, racism, and trauma in Aboriginal communities across Canada (Bombay 2014, Sandy 2013). In the chapter 2, I mentioned lateral violence in the context of the harsh cultural criticism that youth sometimes overheard or encountered in their community. Rumours and Facebook attacks are symptoms of an ongoing oppressive structural system and acts of remediated lateral violence. When explaining the African colonial experience, Franz Fanon (1963) described lateral violence as a way of releasing the tensions that built up in individuals as they experienced the violence of colonial society. Lateral violence also manifests when individuals attack or bully other members of their community because they cannot fight against their oppressors. Paulo Freire (1971) also understood that the spreading of rumours, bullying, and instances of verbal attacks that circulate in communities need to be addressed during the decolonizing process. For the Indigenous communities in Canada lateral violence can spread quickly through Facebook since the medium is not bound by the limitations of face-to-face exchanges.

For communities such as the Tsimshian and Nisga'a groups in Prince Rupert, Facebook is not just a new way of circulating rumours, but also an additional way of circulating lateral violence—it is also the means by which people combat such attacks. During my research, I saw rumours affect people deeply causing anger and tears. It made youth concerned about the potential harm of a rumour because of how quickly it could become public knowledge. In the past, telephone party lines presented a short period in which a person could listen in on an ephemeral conversation and a slower method of distribution of the potential rumour. In 2011, a

Facebook post could reach a broad audience quickly and make the rumour visible in perpetuity, regardless of the location of its origin.

The immediacy of the Facebook medium can also be used to combat the rumours and reach an equally broad network. While rumours circulate on Facebook, rebuttals and challenges also became part of technological practices that are undertaken to manage the potential effects of these moments. Both the young man at the teen centre and the family in Victoria used the medium to quickly and successfully protect their reputation and address the rumours. Encountering rumours is part of the social fabric of the community. In Prince Rupert, rumours and lateral violence are frustrating, but the shared experience of engaging in a discourse and defending oneself against these moments of distress is also a symbol of belonging and a defining boundary of one's community.

While frustrating for the individuals involved, this shared experience demonstrates their awareness of belonging to a community. Social media scholars have pointed out that Facebook and other social media websites express all of the complications of community in a new medium (Miller 2011). The technological practice "mirrors and magnifies many aspects of everyday life, good and bad" (boyd 2014, 212). For communities working to overcome effects of the residential school system however, the good and bad aspects of community shared via Facebook can be more complicated. The youth and families in Prince Rupert acknowledge the good and the bad, but created technological practices that used Facebook as means of accessing and providing support on a daily basis. While youth were concerned about the harm that could be created using Facebook, the ongoing popularity of the website can be interpreted to mean that the usefulness of the medium outweighed its risks.

In a community where trauma remains a force in people's lives, Facebook can also be a medium for expressing and managing it. One young adult told me that he posted to Facebook as a way of processing the sexual abuse he had experienced in the past.³²

My friend. Their father abused me when I was little. And, when I was processing it they laughed at me about it. For a while I was feeling really betrayed about it. And then I talked to some people about it, even posted it on Facebook. I didn't exactly mention

³² I have rephrased and anonymized the narrative to prevent it from being used as gossip or rumour.

them, but I just kinda hinted at the situation for the people who knew what I am talking about. So, it was awkward between us for a while, but now we're talking again.

This teen was able to speak through the medium of Facebook what he was unable to tell others in person. For this teen, creating a status message on Facebook allowed him to access a group of people who understood his experience and could therefore interpret his meaning. It activated his support system and created a space for conversations that helped him move forward.

In a community context where trauma and sadness are common, status updates on the Facebook and expressions of emotions were sometimes interpreted as calls for help, which in turn had the potential to create interactions that helped to define the social ties of the community. For example, in 2011, I sat in the youth centre with a young man glued to the screen of his PlayStation Vita, a small mobile gaming console with internet access that is about the same size as a cell phone. I sat down on the couch next to him and asked, "What game are you playing?"

"I'm on Facebook." He replied and added, "There's always drama on here. People like to post just drama." Then to explain, he showed me a post by a girl who was in a bad mood about how she wants to ignore everything. He had commented on her status asking, "What is going on?"

As he waited for a reply, we talked about the drama. I asked if he posted drama sometimes. He denied that he did, claiming it was because it frustrated him. Yet he was insistent when he said, "I can't not jump in when I see it." He was afraid of what might happen if he and others did not "jump in." With frequent news of suicide and violence relayed through the communities, everyone knows the potential severity of a crisis referenced on Facebook. These sorts of posts can employ second-order information. "Second- order information is not what is actually said, but rather the background knowledge of a situation and expectation of communication that allows one to interpret the words." (Gershon 2010, 123). Posts may hint at life and death situations without stating it as such. Thus, most people are quick to respond to calls for help. It may not be the same as a physical hug, but having friends and family post comments can be a source of light during the darkest moments. These kinds of posts call people into action and they respond by posting a supportive comment or asking, "what's up." Sometimes they will send a text or call the person directly. Depending on the severity of the situation, Facebook updates can also spur people to go out and offer help face-to-face.

The "always on" nature of Facebook News Feed makes it one of the easiest medium for expressing the feelings of people shattered by sadness, and it provides the fastest way to find emotional and personal support. Facebook, during tense moments such as this, is a medium through which individuals can ask for help and reply to those requests. It is also a site through which youth help manage their pain and the pain of others, since a layer of sadness is frequently present among the youth and their family. Experience with such sadness helps define who understands and can sympathize with others. It is one characteristic that defines who is in and who is outside of their Indigenous community.

Facebook records the emergent feelings of community. These feelings often include loss and sadness. In order to respect the community's privacy, I was hesitant to exploit the moments of grief I was exposed to for the purposes of social science research, but these moments are strong examples of how emotions are felt, expressed, and supported by the online community. Experiencing these moments is also how one comes to know they are a member of a community. Intimate awareness of lateral violence, sadness, and the emotions of the community creates a level of understanding which Augusta told me was "something you can't learn in textbooks"

During my first month of fieldwork in 2011, a young man I knew from the teen centre ended his life. At a dance practice that I was filming and photographing during my first month of fieldwork in 2011, I noticed members checking their phones during a break. Later, they shared that the reason they were on their phones: a young man I knew from the teen centre had ended his life. At the end of practice an hour later, the friends, families, and community members hugged each other physically, supported each other digitally, and they shared the pain of the loss. After another loss in the community a short time later, Victor used Facebook to post his shock and grief and a tally of the friends he had lost that year. Sharing the news and feelings of sudden loss in person and online was one way the community supported one another and processed the events.

Elsewhere, Facebook is recognized as important medium for community resilience, help-seeking and emotional support. A recent survey of social media use in the Souix Lookout region of Canada "suggests that social media fulfills the two core aspects of networking—bonding relations within the same community, and bridging relations with members of other communities" (Molyneaux et al. 2014). By posting about local events and emotions, community

members find support from within and beyond their local community that can help build resilience, despite such events. Researchers have also noted Aboriginal communities in Australia use Facebook to draw “on a continuum of practices ranging from soft, informal help-giving techniques (such as creating a positive online environment) to direct intervention (in some cases involving emergency services)” (Carlson et al. 2015, 11). I observed and participated in similar practices in Prince Rupert. Statements of support and encouragement were often shared and prioritized on Facebook. Expressions of well-wishes were quickly returned to those who shared posts of longing or regret. This circulation of communication, I believe, was motivated by an awareness of tragedy that unified the community. Each person had a personal connection to deep loss and knew the importance of supporting one another during times of distress. Digital technology practices created ways for personal support systems to overlap and build on one another in ways that unified the larger community and provided individuals access to care.

The frequent losses experienced by the youths and their families’ broad social networks, both in town and in surrounding villages, were recorded on Facebook. Chrystel for example, told me she used her status updates to share what she felt when no one was physically present to listen. Often she expressed the emotional impact of events beyond her control. It made her feel better to know others would read it. Often, her friends would comment or offer support when these posts appeared.

I came to understand that the emotional resonance of grief affects almost everyone’s News Feed. During a drive along the Skeena River—a ride facilitated by a request I posted on Facebook—a woman told me: “Not a week goes by that I don’t see a RIP on my Facebook wall. It seems to make the sadness around us more real.” At the time, her words resonated with me because I felt the same way. We shared a sigh between us and drove in silence along the highway. I had learned by then that participating in the community also meant participating in their sadness.

Facebook seemed to make the experience of sadness more real because it enabled the sharing of the experience while also making it visible. The idea of a community “emphasizes the attachment between men (in the general sense) based on what they possess in common: their human capacity to hurt and to be hurt; to love and to be loved; to shame and to feel shame; to be cruel and to abhor cruelty” (Gusfield 1978, 104). Facebook is a medium that keeps a record of

individual emotion in a way that is meant to be distributed among a group. At times what is common become visible and recorded. Accessing kinship for resources and being aware of ongoing trauma are shared community experiences that define the boundaries within and outside of the Tsimshian and Nisga'a community of Prince Rupert. The community is aware of and understands these experiences in ways that outsiders do not.

The experiences of alienation, loss, spreading of rumours, and frustration with rumours are all part of the community's shared characteristics. These characteristics, although difficult to endure, are also part of what defines social participation and stimulates creative strategies to promote resilience. In 2007, the youth formed a peer community based on the shared experiences of feeling excluded at school and in the town, and being disconnected from their families. In 2011, they created technological practices that helped managed lateral violence and shared their encounters tragedy in ways that created a system of support within their community. Being a part of the system of support by replying to posts interpreted as calls for help, or offering emotional support was one way the youth identified their own and others' membership in the community.

Digital interactions, such as those on Facebook, are not necessarily weaker or separate from other interactions (see, e.g., Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2007; Wellman and Hampton et al. 2003; Hew 2011; Sheldon, Abad and Hinsch 2011). Although painful, the emotions produced by the sharing of these kinds of experiences on Facebook, were aspects of what bound the youth and their families together and helped them maintain their connections. As youths and their families digitally and physically leaned on each other as a way of managing the effects of these kinds of experiences, (being subject to rumours or experiencing loss) they also reminded each other that a support system was always on. By participating online themselves and responding with help they were part of maintaining and guaranteeing the always on system could be relied upon.

4.6 Social Bonds and Absence

Individuals in the carving room sat next to each other, but they were also aware of the requests, statements, rumours, and expression of emotions posted by friends and families. As I have discussed, the experience of alienation and disruption of families is a dimension of the youths' overall experiences. For the Tsimshian and Nisga'a community in Prince Rupert,

relatedness remains a core community value, but the absence of family members was a defining aspect of their childhood. The youth used Facebook to stay in contact with friends and family during frequent intervals of absence. In this way Facebook can facilitate urban and reserve connections as well as their ongoing relationships.

Technological practices are invented locally based on the values and needs of a particular community and culture. Rather than exploring all the possibilities a new tool provides, Miller and Slater (2000) suggest that communities choose to incorporate a technology according to their historically entrenched needs. For example, Heather Horst and Daniel Miller's study of cell phone use in Jamaica argues "technology is used initially with reference to desires that are historically well established, but remain unfulfilled because of the limitation of previous technologies" (Horst and Miller 2006, 6). When Facebook or *Fasbook* (as it is called) in Trinidad became popular, technological practices evoked cultural values of friendship between acquaintances and helped users feel more co-present with family in the United States—two significant needs at the time (Miller 2011). These examples reveal that as new technology becomes available, local practices are invented help fulfill these needs. Similarly, in Prince Rupert, the uptake of Facebook was a response to the need for the youth and their families to maintain connection with reserve communities and access to support systems across the province.

To maintain connections and support systems, previous generations would have spent greater amounts of time at ceremonies, feasts, and gatherings where performances and oral histories produced collective moments of reflection about their history and ongoing relationships. Feasts make relationships visible, audible, and embodied. For the urban community that does not attend feasts as frequently, family relationships and contact has now found new forms of visibility with the appropriation of social media. Facebook, in this context, helps make social relationships immediately visible and emotionally resonant despite physical absence. While immediate-access technology is useful for answering questions and getting rides, the ability of users to engage in emotional communication with absent family members makes the medium well suited to the experiences of youth and their families.

Facebook also helped circulate communications among family members who did not live together. It facilitated urban-reserve connections and communication. In 2007, youth accessed

the centre's computers and used Bebo to share messages with family in the surrounding villages. In 2011, using computers at the teen centre meant youth could access Facebook's instant message and notification features. Although these features are technically semi-synchronous as messages needed to be typed and sent across fibre-optic cables, they felt instantaneous. The immediacy of this process made Facebook a more effective medium than Bebo for communicating with family. For example, Heather described how her aunts and sisters would post morning and evening greetings such as the simple phrases "Good Morning" or "Good night," which inspired others to send their own greetings and sentiments as comments on the initial post. After a few minutes, Heather and her family would have interacted with their entire extended family. Heather and her sister explained that this was a way of expressing how close they felt to their families, whether they lived across town, in the next largest city, or on reserve.



Figure 4.4 Heather's family celebrating Easter in 2011.

In 2011, I chatted with one girl at the centre who explained that accessing Facebook through the teen centre computer was the only way for her to communicate with her father who lived in one of the villages. At the time, she was sitting at the computer using the instant messenger function of the social networking site. She also said they shared photographs and asynchronous posts with one other. Her father was absent from Prince Rupert, but they stayed in regular contact via Facebook.

Another night, while we stood in the rain in front of the Nisga'a Hall waiting for dance practice to begin twenty-year-old Cecelia told me that Facebook was the only way for her to

communicate with her younger sister who had been put into foster care, sent away, and adopted when she was eight years old. She missed having a sister in her day-to-day experiences, but was thankful they now had a way to keep track of one another. For twenty-two-year-old Chrystel, Facebook helped her stay in contact with the foster brothers and sisters with whom she was raised. She remembers every child she ever lived with and gets worried when they do not update their status regularly. Although the Ministry of Children and Families had blacked out the names in her file, Chrystel has found a way to circumvent the system and remain in contact with those she met in foster care.

The medium of Facebook provides a tool to inexpensively and virtually immediately access and stay in contact with large extended family. Small statements of sentiment, such as wishing others "good morning" or "good night" helps maintain connections and provide ways of demonstrating the importance of family and friendship. For the Tsimshian and Nisga'a people I met, who name "family" as one of their greatest strengths and recognize the power of public communication, Facebook is being embraced as one way to maintain and strengthen relationships to the people and places of their community. The maintenance of social bonds among youth and their families in Prince Rupert requires managing periods of absence. For youth who previously often felt alienated from their families, Facebook is a tool used to increase the frequency of family interactions. Digital technological practices have been incorporated into daily life as a way to maintain the interactions and emotions that are foundational to relatedness.

In his book *Intimacy and Friendship on Facebook*, Alexander Lambert (2013,88) observes that particular kinds of status messages, photos, and posts are "triggers" for intimacy. Although I agree with Lambert, I prefer to call these activities prompts to avoid mistaken references to the triggers commonly associated with anxiety or trauma. Describing particular Facebook activities as prompts better expresses the intent of the user who shares these messages and the potential reactions they may activate. Prompts can be pictures, comments, status messages, or almost any activity on Facebook that inspires action or intense moments of reflection or awareness of other users and the relationships between them. Prompts are most pronounced in instances of distant, intermittent relationships such as a wedding announcement made by a friend the user hasn't spoken with for years, or a decades old picture of high school friends (Lambert 2013). Facebook posts succeed as prompts when they reignite conversations

and exchanges among the users that help maintain a sense of relationship over great periods of time.

Over the years, I have seen and been the topic of such prompts created by the community in Prince Rupert. In 2014, I was notified that I had been mentioned in a post created by a friend at the teen centre. A staff member at the teen centre had collected and created a photo album on Facebook titled “A Tribute to Jennifer Wollowic” that included 124 images. I was surprised to see the post as I scrolled through my own News Feed one morning in Vancouver. Although my name was misspelled, posting the album invited youth who had participated in creating the photographs as well as those connected to the youth centre to remind themselves of our projects and the images we produced. Although I was physically absent from the community, the sharing of the photographs prompted users to remember and comment on the images and I spent the afternoon reading and replying to comments about their memories of our project. The staff member had also posted a description of the album that read, “Thank you so much for all of your light and love Jenn! ♥.”

It had been 18 months since my last visit to Prince Rupert, but the sharing of the photo album prompted my thoughts to drift to those memories and I began to feel a desire to return to Prince Rupert. My personal response to these prompts demonstrates their effectiveness of prompts on Facebook. Such posts help shift a user’s awareness towards other times and places, which maintains a sense of connection into the future. Youth and staff continued to be appreciative of my time there and retained fond memories of myself and our moments together creating media. Despite being absent from the community, seeing the album reminded me that in some form, I was still present in the community and had an obligation to remain engaged into the future.

In some way, the photographs break the emergent temporality of Facebook by bringing attention to past images, but the past is also used to re-energize ongoing social bonds. Sharing the photographs again reminded community members of my past involvement at the teen centre as well as with the dance group, and reminded me, that despite absence, my participation in the community continued and I had obligations to maintain relationships. The sharing of the photo album elicited shared memories and shifted both my awareness and the awareness of others connected to the youth centre towards our relationships despite my physical absence. The post

was also a way of maintaining a digital presence that made it easier to visit sometime in the future. For example, when I next visited Prince Rupert, we discussed the post and the photo album, thereby situating the digital record into face-to-face experiences.

For individuals raised in the foster care system or for people who move around a lot, Facebook is a way to keep in touch with family. The youth and their families in Prince Rupert expressed similar notions to those studied by Miller (2011) in Trinidad who use Facebook to experience "less of a sense of dissonance or gap to be bridged when they returned home" (Miller 2011, 129). Other research on Facebook and other social networking sites record how individuals use the sites as tools for staying in touch or maintaining awareness of people who do not know each other very well or interact often (see, e.g., Bosch 2009 Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe 2007; Pempek et al., 2009; Sheldon 2008; Stern and Taylor 2007; Hew 2011). Prompts and the shifts of awareness they create help explain how these gaps are minimized by Facebook use. Weak social ties require little exertion and create many opportunities for users to respond to the prompts of others. While the particular context of Facebook in Prince Rupert is characterized by its remediation of other practices and the ongoing importance of relatedness, other diasporic communities use the medium in similar ways.

In Prince Rupert, Facebook joined gatherings, feasts, cultural revitalization activities, murals, and photographs in producing the memories and moments that become the shared symbols of their community. Facebook, with its particular technological practices, has joined face-to-face and mediated activities. All of these are part of what clarifies membership and boundaries of the youths' community by defining shared experiences, participation, and successful strategies youth can deploy to facilitate their resilience. They are not separate, but build and lean upon one another to maintain feelings of belonging to the group.

4.7 Conclusion

Facebook, as it is used in Prince Rupert, is an example of why the digital does not exist only as a "placeless place, a cyberspace" (Miller and Slater 2000, 4). Instead, local contexts define interactions, support, and remediate practices that inform both digital and face-to-face interactions. In 2011, I quickly learned that participating in the community and with the youth meant participating via text message and Facebook. Community participation in Prince Rupert

required statements of reciprocity, awareness of your position within a larger social system and mundane interactions that continually remind individuals of the usefulness to the group. Through Facebook, youth and their families contacted each other and myself; they spread news, shared memories, and became aware of the ripple of emotions spreading across the community (Figure 4.5). Facebook provided a means for youth to find support, share common experiences, and maintain social bonds. Technological practices that used cell phones and Facebook became a part of the strategies youth and their families used to support one another and maintain a sense of community.



Figure 4.5 Michael checks Facebook and chats with friends on Facebook Messenger while waiting for the dance group at a hotel in Victoria, B.C.

Facebook joined gatherings, feasts, cultural revitalization activities, murals, and photographs in producing the memories and moments that become the shared symbols that supported their community. In 2007, the youth had invented a street family that drew on and resembled aspects of the youths' heritage and lived experience. By 2011, the youth and their

families had drawn on previous technological practice and invented new strategies to fulfill their needs. Similar in purpose as the street family, Facebook was used as another mechanism by the youth to manage the forces of colonization and alienation. The medium was also another means by which the effects of colonial histories sometimes found painful expression. Unlike the street family, Facebook gave the youth, who previously felt alienated from extended family access to a wider community. All of which—the good and the bad—defined shared experiences that helped people know who was in and outside their community. Facebook was an always-emerging record of their community connection.

The appropriation of Facebook shifted some of the practices of finding and maintaining support from face-to-face encounters to a digital call-and-respond mediation. Statements of joy, longing, and frustration, as well as rumours, pain and “drama” circulated through the networked public. The inexpensive, always on network facilitated contact between youth such as Chrystel and Cecelia and family members that had been forcibly removed from their lives. The carving class received answers to questions in a way and with a speed that had not been available prior to Facebook’s accessibility. The public nature of Facebook broadcasted and made visible relationships which resonated with some of the purpose of feasts. In the process of inventing digital technological practices using Facebook, the youth and their families also created new cultural resources through a medium that could express their personal and community identities.



Figure 4.6 Kyle walks down a street in Victoria wearing his bear skin.

Chapter 5: Grease Trails, Trade Beads, and a Facebook 50/50 Raffle

5.1 Introduction

In 2014 I was in Vancouver when a request to participate in a 50/50 raffle appeared on my Facebook News Feed. During my fieldwork in 2011, it seemed someone in town was always selling tickets for something. Most were for group fundraisers or larger events and required several people selling tickets. The prizes included donated traditional art, hockey memorabilia, or 50/50 raffles where half the money raised would go to the raffle winner. This time, Victor, a bright young man with a gift for words and an old soul, and his girlfriend Shannon were raising money for his education. Victor and Shannon's raffle is an example of a moment when the mindset of supporting one another and inventing technological practices to facilitate support extends beyond the boundaries of Prince Rupert and the Tsimshian and Nisga'a territories. It is also an example of the potential effectiveness of these community support systems over time and distance.



Figure 5.1 Leon, Victor and Kristin at the park in 2007.

Victor has participated in my projects since the beginning (Figure 5.1). When I first met him, he didn't want to be video recorded for our documentary, but added his poetic voice by

helping write the video's narration. His experiences permeated our 2007 photographs, videos and written documents. In 2010, he was one of the only youth to read all of my master's thesis.

When I interviewed Victor in 2011, his shoulders seemed heavier as he reflected on his experiences. That morning he had picked up his high school graduation gown, but had yet to find his future in Prince Rupert. A friend's death in 2009 continued to depress him deeply. Sometimes, he admitted, he still drank too much alcohol and struggled with the challenges created by experiences with his family. When we discussed his upcoming graduation, he said, "I'm still working on finding my confidence again. I was thinking I wasn't gonna make it. A lot of things happened that makes [graduating] all that much more kind of a relief."

Victor and Shannon started dating a few months after my fieldwork in 2011. I met Shannon in 2011, but we rarely spoke with one another and I only knew her as the quiet artist who sometimes attended the carving class. In the summer of 2012, Victor and Shannon decided to move away from Prince Rupert. He found seasonal work in one of the town's salmon canneries and as a server at the local casino. She advertised her need for work on Facebook and found odd jobs to supplement the money she collected from public assistance living subsidies. After a summer, they managed to save enough to leave Prince Rupert.

Together with their little dog, they moved to a city four times the size of Prince Rupert in the middle of the province. "I just wanted to go somewhere I didn't know anyone," Shannon told me when I interviewed them in 2014, "so I could kick the habit of alcohol and drugs that was holding such control of my life."

In the new city, the couple struggled, but they acquired jobs and a car. They made plans for Shannon to finish high school and Victor to further his education. The couple missed their families deeply, swapped messages on Facebook with those back home daily, and posted photos celebrating their small successes. Long hours and low paying service industry work took its toll, but the new location gave the couple options and they were able to leave behind the vices that troubled them back in Prince Rupert.

A year and half after moving, Victor was accepted to an automotive technician's program at the local college. The school required a \$500 commitment fee with his application. Living pay check to pay check, they paid the fee on a credit card and looked for options to repay the loan. Victor visited the college's resource centres, the local Friendship House, and other services for

Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, he would only be eligible for financial support from his First Nations' band government once classes began, six months later. Soon they realized they had no way to repay the credit card charge.

Exhausted, they expressed their frustrations via their Facebook status messages. Back in Prince Rupert, Rose read their posts and sent a private Facebook message from her cell phone. In her message, she suggested they have a 50/50 raffle and sell 100 tickets at \$10 each. The winner would receive \$500 and Victor would have the \$500 to pay the commitment fee.

In the spring of 2014, a Facebook algorithm made their post appear in the News Feeds of their friends and family back in Prince Rupert as well as my own.³³ Many of their friends and family, including myself bought tickets via electronic email transfers and Shannon's father Clyde, in Prince Rupert, collected money from people who wanted to pay in person. In under six weeks they sold the 100 tickets. Almost all of the tickets were purchased back home in Prince Rupert, more than 1200 kilometres away. They were bought by people who had not seen Victor and Shannon in at least a year. Victor and Shannon were able to pay the loan and he began his program in September.

As teenagers, Victor and Shannon, were members of the Planet Youth cohort who found solidarity in their mutual feelings of alienation. Although they attended feasts occasionally, Victor, Shannon and many of their friends did not have the prestige and social standing of the feasts system's core participants. While Victor and Shannon are aware of their *adaawak* (*adaawx*) and *ayuukhl* (*ayaawx*) of their *wilp* (*waap*), they and their friends admit they do not know them very well. Over time they have asked questions and improved their knowledge, but they and their friends do not have the immersion of previous generations. Although they lack immersion in the systems of knowledge transfer of the past, moments of their Facebook raffle, I contend, reveal the traditional values and responsibilities they and their friends have to come to understand as young adults. Their raffle was successful because their actions resonated with the surviving forms of their peoples' traditional social relationships, which prioritize mutual obligation and resource exchange. While Victor and Shannon did not explicitly identify details of the feast system to explain their actions during our interview, their technological practices were a

³³ The Facebook post on my News Feed inspired a follow-up phone interview between Victor, Shannon, and myself in 2014 that became the foundation of this chapter.

successful way to gain access to greater economic resources because they resonated with the effective qualities of the feast system itself.

In this chapter, I argue they were successful for three reasons. First, the feast system has created a mindset and comfort among community members towards managing relationships across distance. Second the public protocols and ways of behaving are recognizable outside of feasts and potlatches. Following these protocols can generate particular kind of responses and reciprocity from other community members. Finally, the feast system can also be seen to represent a continuum of new technology and practices that become integrated and redefined. Social media can be viewed as the most recent conversation and iteration of that system, developing new technological practices that activate particular systems of support and strategies of legitimization in ways that resemble the learned practices shared in feasts. The technological practices the youth and their families appropriate and create helped Victor and Shannon be participants in their community in ways that did not exist before, but were effective because they shared elements of recognizable cultural protocols.

5.2 Resonating with the Feast System

When we discussed their raffle, I asked both Victor and Shannon why they thought raffles in the Prince Rupert were successful. Victor replied,

I think it relates back to the way things were before Europeans claimed to discover this land. Chiefs would hold feasts and redistribute everything equally. Then the next person would have a feast and give away everything. So we had a really tight community. We've always had a really tight community. I think all our raffles and stuff comes from that.

Victor believes the cultural traditions of holding a feast helped create their “tight community.” Victor summarizes his understanding of the complex system of public validation used by Northwest Coast First Nations peoples to manage territory, social ranking, inheritance and inter-community relationships. His summary also acknowledges his gaps in knowledge. He knows that feasts created a tight community but he doesn't know how exactly the protocols and traditions created these systems of support. He uses this explanation to explain the success of their raffle,

but he could not say why he and Shannon conducted their raffle in particular ways and how that resulted in their success.

Victor's explanation relies upon the attitudes of reciprocity and support that he attributes to their centuries of feasts and trade. Feasts bind responsibilities between individuals and their communities over distance and time. The historical successes of the feast system explain both Victor's reasoning and the effectiveness of the technological practices they used to hold their raffle.

The feast system brings people together to move resources and services throughout the community through public recognition and exchange. In the past, the system helped manage the enormous trade networks for oolichan grease and created trade monopolies and today continues to define as well as produce obligations between individuals and their *wilp (waap)*.³⁴ Northwest Coast First Nations people gather at feasts to witness the passage of names, the raising of totem poles, other legal proceedings, and celebrations (Seguin 1985). Feasts were and in some ways still are part of a system that legitimated access and ownership of resources, managed groups of people, and defined obligations among *pteex (pdeex)*, the *wilp (waap)*, and individuals (Garfield and Wignert 1966; Roth 2008; Miller 1984). In a moment of need, Victor and Shannon's strategy to find economic support resonated with the historical and ongoing success of these social structures.

Feasts are a public activity that traces human and material relationships. Law (1992:381) wrote, "almost all of our interactions with other people are mediated through objects of one kind or another." We do not simply produce goods with technology. Instead, knowledge, practices and objects come together and are used to define our social relationships with one another, often mediated by both objects and the modes of their production and exchange. The Nisga'a and

³⁴ When a house becomes too large for a leader to manage it splits into multiple houses. In in Sm'lg yax these groups of house are called *Wil'naatahl*. I did not come across a term in Nisga'a, but one most likely exists. They are closely related houses that share a common origin and identify strong social obligations under the feast system. When a *waap* hosts a feast, their *wil'naatahl* will support them. Epidemics and colonization collapsed the population and many larger house groups were re-absorbed into a single *waap*. In the 20th century, populations have grown but houses no longer live under the same roof, which means the concepts of *wil'naatahl* and *waap* are sometimes referred to interchangeably. For more on the adaptability of *wil'naatahl* structure see Daly (2005:63).

Tsimshian feast systems exemplify a particular kind of relationship between social interactions and economic exchange that manages relationships between communities over distance. The practice of social and political consolidation created allegiances, organized trading relationships, and maintained or redefined inherited access to territorial resources (Seguin 1985; Roth 2008). It continues to connect communities and individuals across the Northwest Coast.

Hosting a feast publicly validates an individual's or house's status, control and influence over social connections as well as resources across the region. Sometimes requiring hundreds of kilometres of travel, guests attend feasts and are paid for their attendance (Vaughan 1984; Roth 2002). In the past, feasts brought groups of people together during the winter months after house leaders consolidated portions of food and goods from their members. Before and during feasts, materials were collected and redistributed while verbal and visual statements of history and reciprocity complete the transactions. Throughout their history, feasts and the social consciousness they created, successfully managed tens of thousands of people across thousands of kilometres and provided guidelines for how youth, such as Victor and Shannon, should maintain their relationships back home, despite their physical absence.

Oral histories (*adaawak* or *adaawx*), are owned by individual houses and have recorded feasts as well as the individual actions of house members for thousands of years (Marsden and Martindale 1999, Boas 1902). Feasts are opportunities to share *adaawak* (*adaawx*) as well as performances that display the supernatural powers of the house leaders. They validate and empower the morals, history, origins, and achievements of the house members (Daly 2005). William Beynon, a Tsimshian ethnographer and research assistant of Marus Barbeau, Franz Boas and Viola Garfield wrote down his observations while attending one such feast in 1945.³⁵ In the two weeks of feasting and pole raisings in Gitksan territory, Beynon witnessed and recorded the performances songs, stories, and food shared at the events, as well as disagreements about protocols and political debates that defined participation and rank in the community (Anderson and Halpin 2000). He also recorded notes on the perspectives of different generations attending

³⁵ Beynon is often referred to as a “translator,” “transcriber,” “facilitator” or not mentioned at all by these anthropologists. More recently, Beynon has been recognized as an ethnographer for his enormous contribution to the knowledge of Tsimshian oral history and practices (Beynon 194; Halpin 1978; Cove 1985).

the feasts in 1945 making his monograph one of the most complete in history. Beynon's notebooks document an event that reveals the complex, lengthy protocols that publicly managed houses for thousands of years.

The multi-day events included performances that taught and reminded the community of their moral and social obligations and histories. Status and territorial claims were shared publicly and immortal names were passed on to new generations (Roth 2008, Halpin 1984). The performances and speeches identified the origins and continuing relationships that connected people to one another and made them subject to the decisions of their house leaders and individuals of higher rank. Payments of food, blankets, and goods were distributed according to status. Guests returned to their communities with the understanding that they have an obligation to share stories of what they witnessed (Miller 1984; Seguin 1985; Roth 2008). These acts of witnessing public statements validated the hosts' claims and actions and were then shared with others across the territory. Over time, these public displays strengthen shared understandings of history and present relationships. These shared understanding can develop into the symbols that help connect community members.

In 1973 Marjorie Halpin published a written record of over 750 houses and their corresponding crests in the Tsimshian linguistic group. Each of these 750 houses participated in the feast system, revealing the extensive and successful nature of these interactions for maintaining allegiances and trade. Success was not always easy. For example, Beynon's observations at the 1945 feast records the active struggle to retain control of certain rights connected to particular objects, stories, crests, and songs. The organization and performance of a successful feast created and maintained a particular mindset of reciprocity and legitimization based on particular protocols that encouraged interdependence and public displays of conflict resolution.

In addition to the organization, attendance, validation, and material re-distribution that maintained feelings of belonging through successful feasts, the ongoing "tight community" in Prince Rupert's urban Indigenous community can be traced back to marriage practices between tribes and houses that created an interdependent network of communities along the Northwest Coast. As mentioned previously, Nisga'a and Tsimshian peoples belong to one of four *pdeex* (*pteex*): the eagle, killer whale, raven, or wolf, which those in Prince Rupert also refer to as

tribes. Exogamous marriage practices meant individuals could not marry from any houses in their tribe. Marriages were organized between houses of different tribes to form alliances and gain potential access to different territories. In the past, after marriage, wives lived with their husband's house, but their children inherited their mother's tribe membership and the rights of her house (Garfield and Wingert 1966). Before contact, adolescent boys were often raised by their mother's uncles, but retained connections to their father's house, which created an overlapping bond between the tribes and houses that were most evident during rites of passage and feasts. An individual's obligations were (and are) first to their house and then to their tribe (Garfield and Wingert 1966).

The existence of the four tribes created strong relationships between different houses throughout the Northwest Coast. These strong relationships continue. Although each house or village was considered a "different world" (Halpin and Seguin 1990), the tribe system allows visitors to travel to unknown villages and find members "who will welcome them as brothers" (Chismore 1885). Tribes identified the spiritual and historical connections between the people of the area and continue to serve as important markers of identity. An awareness of interdependence and connection as an active practice of exchange and support beyond nuclear families facilitates the response of individuals to Facebook posts requesting assistance.

The management of semi-mobile people, trade and resources across large geographic areas is also part of Victor and Shannon's heritage. It has set a mindset upon which Victor and Shannon's actions interact with their community. Generations of practice have shaped the way their community approaches belonging and distance. For example, archaeological evidence suggests each Tsimshian house would usually have rights to at least three territories: one along the inland areas of the Skeena, winter villages around Metlakatla Sound, and a spring oolichan fishing site at the mouth of the Nass (Garfield and Wingert 1966; Martindale 1999). The Nisga'a had similar access to multiple sites throughout the year. Coastal Tsimshian territories stretched 300 kilometres inland from the coast and along the 50 kilometres of the Metlakatla Sound. Nisga'a territories stretched from what is now called the Portland Canal along the Nass River for over 100 kilometres inland. Both groups also had relationships with their neighbours the Tlingit, Gitksan, Nuxalk, Haida and others. Geographical resource control was vast and interconnected.

Before European contact, Coastal Tsimshian followed a yearly migration pattern from winter villages to interior territory and short stays each spring in the oolichan fishing grounds at the mouth of the Nass River (Martindale 1999). Each house was economically autonomous, organizing their members in the catching and processing of fish and other food and resources. Throughout the year, under the direction of their house leader, individual families within the house would travel to their different harvesting areas to collect and process food for the winter (Garfield and Wingert 1966). Members of the Coastal Tsimshian houses came together once again in the winter months and stayed together in coastal village sites around the Metlakatla Sound (Martindale 1999). These winter months were filled with ceremonies and used for “social and political consolidation” (Brock 2011:178).

In addition to creating shared understandings of history and community symbols, feasts helped define overlapping access to territory and rights that connected the people in an area. What was owned was a right to access a particular resource in a particular area, not all the resources within a territory (Mitchell and Donald 2001). For example, rights to oolichan fishing grounds granted rights to fish oolichans in February. Having control of an area to catch and process oolichan did not necessarily, or in this case usually, extend to other resources in the area, such as hunting on land or catching salmon later in the year (Mitchell and Donald 2001). Houses only had the right to fish and process grease in that area for a few weeks in February and March.

This practice developed a complicated interwoven quilt of rights and territory controlled by different individuals, houses and village groups that required interconnectedness and strict protocols to survive (Daly 2005). “Each tribe represented in a village had control over sites for each of the types of available resources in an area, but one *wilp* (*waap*) often held the highest ranked names and controlled the bulk of the territory” (Seguin 1985:5). Each tribe, house, and individual names had their own defined set of fishing areas, hunting areas, berry growing areas, and seaweed harvesting areas among others. In the past, rights expanded and were redefined through feasts as new resources such as the fur trade entered their economies (Mitchell and Donald 2001). Feasts clarified who could grant permission to access or use a territory, thus defining ownership.

Today, authority and resource management is still debated at feasts and in the treaty process through oral histories, but, as I mentioned in chapter 2, colonizing paradigms have

constrained the system. Unlike European notions, where territorial rights that pertain to all resources within solid blocks of land within defined geographic borders, First Nations along the Northwest Coast defined rights by territory, resource, and season. Feasts validated and transferred these rights. As I indicated in chapter 2, this paradigm has caused conflict with colonial fishery management. The conflict extends into contemporary treaty process as the colonial bureaucracy continues to require a system based on the ownership of bounded geographic British Columbia, which does not exist in Indigenous paradigms (Daly 2005). In Indigenous paradigms and practice, inheritance and feasts validated and maintained access to particular resources across the region.

In past practice, when subsistence harvesting was the only option, inheritance patterns were maintained through the tribe and feasts practices. Sons inherited the rights of their mother's house, but had access to their father's resource areas while he was alive and could ask for permission from his house to continue to utilize the territory after his death (Garfield and Wingert 1966). Daughters inherited and passed on the rights of their mother's house. Daughters helped gather food and materials from their husband's territories. Each nuclear family had relationships with their two houses that could be used to provide for their winter food needs. In return, the nuclear family was under obligations to help support the feasting efforts of their houses. They helped gather items for their houses that would be redistributed at feasts that validated the role of their house leaders and the inheritance of immortal names and rights of their lineages. Performance and material exchange combine in these events to solidify relationships between houses, tribes, and individuals.

In my opinion, the trade of oolichan grease, exemplifies the success of the feast system. Trade alliances and relationships forged by attending and validating feasts managed an extensive trade network that covered most of the Northwest Coast and connected to other First Nations in the interior. The arrival of oolichans to the Nass River at the end of February marked the end of the lean winter season and a new cycle of harvest and trade. Tsimshian and Nisga'a smoked the little fish, but also rendered it into grease. When produced with skill, the outcome is a semi-solid grease with a mild flavour, similar to the consistency of butter. The clarity and flavour varies with location and the amount of time the fish are allowed to ferment before processing. Today,

smoking the fish is popular and oolichan grease is a delicacy sometimes smeared on freshly baked bread (Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2 Under the guidance of an elder, Alex and Cody learn how to wash and prepare oolichans for smoking in the summer of 2011.

In the past, oolichan grease was a core item in inter-tribal commerce with inland groups. Oolichan production on the Nass River created a yearly trading centre that attracted thousands. Mitchell and Donald (2001) estimate seven to ten thousand First Nations people assembled near Fishery Bay along the Nass during the fur trade era. Many had rights to fish and process oolichans as well as harvest the wood in the area for fuel and shelter. Haida, Tlingit and others would come to Fishery Bay at the mouth of the Nass by canoe. Gitxsan and other inland people loaded with goods traveled on snowshoe for the annual event.

The oolichan grease created at the mouth of the Nass were transported to modern day Alaska to the north as well as the Fraser River and Puget Sound to the south (Chismore 1885). Inland trading highways were so prevalent that they became known as the “Grease Trails.” The trails hosted immense traffic throughout the year as groups traveled on foot or snowshoe. In the Tsimshian, Nisga’a and Gitxsan territories, Dr. George Chismore traveled with Arthur Clah on the inland trail that connected the Nass with Kispiox and Skeena Rivers in 1870. He wrote,

This highway is broad and clear and very old...Sweat-houses were built at frequent intervals, where, with a cup of water and a few heated stones, the tired native might assuage his aching limbs by a steam bath. Rude huts of bark afford

shelter to him who needs it, and large sheds built of the same material mark the spots where different tribes meet to trade” (Chishmore 1885:456).

According to the Bella Coola museum website, one trade route south of Tsimshian territories stretched over 400 kilometres from the Upper Fraser River near Quesnel to Bella Coola (accessed Jan 6, 2015). Other trails stretched through the Chilkat and Chilkoot Tlingit territory for trade with Athabaskan groups. These northern routes later became portions of the Haines and Alaska Highways (Locke 1993). Feasts created trading patterns that maintained the peace on the highways and created opportunities for individuals to establish monopolies over certain routes. For centuries, the grease trails physically connected communities while feasts established and maintained interconnections within and across groups that allowed the trade to succeed.

Territorial control, exogamous marriage practices, and the grease trails are examples of the historical success of the feast system and its ability to manage large groups of people and kept them connected across great distances. The economic exchange that occurred during these gatherings solidified rank, rights and trade for the rest of the year and was effective despite only periodic face-to-face contact between groups. Though circumstances now are in some respects vastly different, these precedents continue to be important as First Nations people use the feast system to manage their relationships between urban and village groups and members of their own community. This sets the stage for managing contemporary relationship between community members who may only occasionally see each other face-to-face, but can be expected to respond and activate their responsibilities as community members across distance.

Victor and Shannon were 1200 kilometres away from Prince Rupert when they organized and held their raffle. An awareness of interdependence and responsibility that was maintained successfully across distance provided a framework that was amiable for hosting an event and exchanging resources over distance. Among their village and urban community, relationships and responsibilities to geographically distant groups of people has been part of their social practice for generations. Although holding a raffle over Facebook was new, the history of the grease trails, marriage practices, and resource control organized and performed through feasts facilitated the success of their endeavour.

5.3 Public Protocols and Validation

After Victor mentioned the link between his raffle and the feast system, Shannon added:

I also think it's Rupert. It's such a dead end place for a lot of young people. Like I know I was headed towards the end of my life with my addictions and stuff when I was there. So I think people are really pleased to see young people getting out and doing stuff to improve their lives. We're living on our own, making a plan to go to school and working towards it. I think they really like to see that because it doesn't happen for a lot of young people. So to see youth doing it is a good thing.

For Victor and his friends, the role of feasts and house leaders in maintaining community was and in many ways still is part of the core of their community—a space where connections to the past and where present reciprocity are both formed. Shannon's answer however, refers to the lived reality for many youth in Prince Rupert. Her answer also reveals the importance of community approval in the success of their raffle. Without public support their raffle would have failed.

In the previous section, I explored how a history of economic exchange and interdependence supported by the feast system helped manage territory, define social relationships, and solidify what Victor calls their “tight community.” This is the foundation upon which ideas about community, participation and reciprocity are maintained. In this section I draw connection between Victor and Shannon's actions during the raffle and the feast protocols that solidify their community.

While Victor and Shannon's raffle occurs outside the formal protocols of organizing and hosting a feast, the raffle is an economic activity that provides an example of the public behaviours that define and continue to be influenced by the feast system create feelings of community. The success of the event required Victor and Shannon to document their actions and thank their contributors and defend their actions publicly. Both actions helped strengthen the young peoples' connections and obligations to their community. Although they created new ways of digitally hosting a raffle via Facebook, I argue they were effective because their technological practices aligned with the actions and protocols of feasts.

Feasts are spaces where exposure to shared events and statements inspire debate and form public opinion.³⁶ Richard Daly (2005:15) argues, “What we [Europeans] like to analyse into separate and discrete boxes (e.g., economy, kinship, religion, politics, or law) are often aspects of the same institutions and practices” for the peoples of the Northwest Coast.³⁷ The European habit of segmentation is counter to Indigenous ways of thinking and as such, there is no translation for “public” or “audience” in Sm’algayax.³⁸ Nor, traditionally, was there a concept of private or domestic realm. These separate categories did not exist. Nothing existed outside the feast system, so no concept clarifying its unique aspects existed (Roth 2008:162).

Even today, the house leaders and those of high rank engage in discussion and make socio-political decisions. These conversations shape general consensus and public opinion, which may also influence the decisions of house leaders. These decisions define inheritance, status, rights and obligations connected to their heritage, as well as contemporary personal aspirations such as those expressed in Victor and Shannon’s raffle.

Public debate about procedure and protocols are part of the public experience of feasts that extend into all kinds of community participation among the Nisga’a and Tsimshian in Prince Rupert. In the past for example, both Arthur Clah and William Beynon’s writings record debates between leaders that resolve both the protocols and outcomes of feasts (Brock 2011; Anderson and Halpin 2000). Clah’s journals record the meeting and debate among those of high rank living in Port Simpson about whether or not they should attend a feast held by Chief Mountain on the Nass (Brock 2011: 147). Over fifty years later, Beynon’s notes recorded a dispute over whose house had rights to include a particular name and crest in their totem pole (Anderson and Halpin 2000:64-65). In response, other leaders and their houses sent word that they would refuse to

³⁶ The feast hall is similar but also different from what Habermas (1962) and other European scholars refers to as the “public sphere” in large western democratic societies. See Nancy Fraser 1990 *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy* for further discussion of how Habermas’s notion of the public sphere is also class and gender specific.

³⁷ The title of Richard Daly’s (2005:15) book *Our Box Was Full* helps emphasize what [western thinkers] like to analyse into separate and discrete boxes (e.g., economy, kinship, religion, politics, or law) are often aspects of the same institutions and practices.”

³⁸ Nisga’a and Tsimshian’s people do have a concept for “speaking on behalf of the chief.” It is *galm’alagyax*, and recognizes that particular individuals have the right to be the spokesperson for a chief or particular house.

attend the pole-raising feast unless the pole and its name were changed. By publicly demonstrating their dissent, other leaders entered the debate and finally demanded the pole be changed. In both Arthur Clah and William Beynon's examples, those of high rank discuss and use their ability to invalidate a feast by publicly refusing to participate as a means to create political change.

Today, in Nisga'a and Tsimshian and other First Nations communities, holding a feast secures a house's inalienable rights and the particular rights of individuals by paying people to witness and validate the feast. The accumulation of goods for payment helps prove one deserves their rank and completes the protocol of validation. Payment is important, but the public statements made during and after the feasts use economic exchange to support a political arena meant to generate public acceptance. Witnessing and making statements further verify that the proper protocols were followed and the host's claim was approved (Seguin 1985; Garfield and Wingert 1966; Miller 1984; Halpin 1984). Witnesses will return home and tell stories of the event so that these rights will become part of wider public knowledge. Public statements thus define feasts' central role in the resource and political management of the community.

Feasts have the potential to create or embarrass alliances as well as increase or decrease political control over resources and property. Feasts are events where every action displays and determines the power of the participants. Roth (2008:138) writes, "A successful feast is not only well attended one but one whose hosts have correctly read the amount of support they have in the community." The host must gather enough resources to pay the correct amount, according to rank to those in attendance. They must also invite the correct individuals and the right number of people or risk ridicule in their community (Roth 2002). Part of the responsibility of those with high status is to know which feasts to attend and those they should not, because their validation has a political function. Those of high rank among the different houses determine the success of a feast and thus the validity of the claims made through its practices. In order to mitigate these risks, hosts actively follow protocols that publicly express respect and obligation, as well as their ability to manage their debts and wealth.

Public statements and informal conversations that surround the feasts are a vital part of creating boundaries and giving individuals the feelings that they have of influence in their community. McMillan and George (1986) identify these feelings as a large component of what

defines the meaning of community. Having a level of influence within a group to validate and shape the role of others is a key part of creating belonging. Public protocols and group dynamics create unity, but they also create the boundaries that help individuals identify their own group compared to others based on how influence moves through the group. For the Tsimshian and Nisga'a I met, strong public participation—both in person and online—create influence within the community and continues to be a core part of its creation.

Today, the youth grow up in a mixed cultural context where the community of Prince Rupert participates in both their feast system and as members of Canada's larger democratic public. Victor, Shannon and their friends, may not be able to name every aspect of the protocols that created and maintain reciprocal responsibilities among the community, but they have participated peripherally in contemporary feasts and celebrations that embody these practices. They have been part of the audience that recognizes the efforts and validates the actions of others. They may not be fully immersed in the details of the feast system, but they are able to reproduce and reinvent its effective practices of validation and reciprocity.

One of these practices requires the hosting house to settle debts by publicly recognizing the contributions of others during their feast. Managing house debts and payments at feasts recognizes the house's ability to responsibly manage its resources and social connections. Protocol dictates members of the house take turns announcing the names of those who have provided monetary donations followed by a statement by the individual promising to return the service in the future. The finances of the feast are publicly acknowledged, as are future expectations to support others' efforts to bring a feast. This is how reciprocity and participation are recognized and socially encouraged.

For example, at one feast I was asked to film, I sat at the back of the hall operating a camera when I heard, "Jenny Paparazzi" come over the audio system. "Jenny Paparazzi, we are paying you \$50 and thank you for filming this feast." I went to the front of the room and accepted my payment for filming the mortuary feast and naming ceremonies. Infusing humour into the moment, my friend referenced my role in the community as "the crazy photographer." They announced my fee in a way that publicly displayed the family's sense of humour, my relationship to their house, that their naming ceremony was being recorded, and payment for my duties. Once fees for the feast itself were paid each family member took turns announcing how

and what they had raised for the feast. They identified individuals who had donated and thanked their contributor by name. Publicly promising to return the generosity in the future creates an opportunity for the community recognize the members of the house as responsible members of the community. Announcing my payment and their fundraising made their finances transparent and helped proved they appropriately assembled and redistributed the costs of the feast.

Public accounting and payment continue to be a protocol that ensures transparency and reciprocity. At graduation feasts I attended, parents and family member spoke of the graduating student's accomplishments and publicly thanked those who had helped their children succeed. The audience witnessed the youth's transition and was in attendance to recognize the contributions of parents, friends, and families to the youths' success. Their friends and family donated food and their time setting up the hall for their guests which was also thanked publicly by the hosting parents. At fundraising gatherings, the Gitmaxmak'ay Dancers announce the amount they have raised and publicly thank their community. Great care is taken to document and make public the contributions and the payments that support the feast.

Instead of standing at the front of a room, Victor and Shannon's technological practices enacted transparency and public accounting through their keyboards. Similar to the protocols that support feasts, Victor and Shannon's raffle required the transparent documentation of fund transfers in order to gain approval and the participation of their community. Throughout their raffle drive, Victor and Shannon took photographs of people's tickets and used the Facebook system of "tagging," which I will expand upon in chapter 6, to notify individuals that their payment for the tickets had been received. Facebook privacy settings and algorithms allowed these images to be public to Victor, Shannon's and the raffle ticket purchaser's social networks on the site. Their actions resemble the requirements of public accounting during feasts, which recognize the obligations of the host families to those who have supported their endeavour.

In Facebook status message posts, the couple publically named and thanked those who had contributed. This is a very different function from standing in front of a feast enacting and embodying protocol, but it produced similar feelings of engagement and respect. Unlike many raffles where a ticket stub is the only record of participation, community protocols influenced by the feast system influenced Victor and Shannon to publicly recognize those who participated. Victor and Shannon could have individually thanked their friends and family, and in some cases

they did, but their numerous public postings on Facebook shared the raffle participants' identities with the rest of their social network. This completed the exchange and was a means for Victor and Shannon to publicly document their appreciation and express reciprocity to the always on network in Prince Rupert who saw these posts and could identify Victor and Shannon as respectful youth who were appreciative and responsive to their community's contributions.

Shannon and Victor used Facebook's attributes to their advantage by using the public forum to identify their supporters and create records of their thanks. After they sold all 100 tickets, they continued to follow the protocol of public transparency by asking a co-worker who had not participated in the raffle to draw the ticket. They filmed the draw and read the winner's name out loud to the camera. The video was posted to their Facebook account in order to show those at home that they were doing the raffle "fairly."

Victor and Shannon substituted cameras and fibre-optic cables for a face-to-face medium, but they were successful because they properly presented their actions, wishes, and responsibilities to their friends and families. Victor told me his grandmother approved of the raffle and how it was conducted on Facebook, but suggested next time they show the raffle ticket to the camera, so that there would be visual proof corresponding to what the volunteer was reading aloud. Her comment is an example of how elders and those of superior rank continue to shape how public activities should be done in their communities both in person and through new media. His grandmother validated their efforts and instructed how they could avoid potential criticism in the future. Her advice re-emphasizes and translates the importance of public transparency embedded in the feast system into new, digital protocols.

Victor and Shannon used Facebook to respectfully document and thank their participants in their efforts, but they also had to publicly navigate their support and manage the criticism and dissent they received. By electing to participate in any activity, especially those requiring economic activity, participants are validating the activity. Public opinion shapes participation, action and informs the feast system but material exchange marks the completion of debates that resolve political power.

Managing community support is a vital part of feasts as well as the couple's raffle. Earning validation requires conversation, explanation, and answers to criticism. Shannon and Victor's actions were both supported and questioned by members of their community in Prince

Rupert. In our interview, we discussed how some members of the community questioned and criticized their need for money and Shannon felt obligated to publicly respond. She posted a message to her Facebook status, which she has given me permission to share.

Just as an FYI to people questioning. Victor and I are NOT buying anything new. The only thing I see that may be seen as a new purchase is the cat things BUT we've been holding onto all these cat things (bowl, cat tower, food, kitty litter, etc.) since our kitten passed away last year. Loki our newest addition was a free kitten.

We are struggling for money and we are struggling with this commitment fee. We would not be doing this raffle if we weren't. Also we would not be so disrespectful as to be spending money we do not have when we have our loved ones and friends helping us out like this.

We are very grateful for all the help we are receiving and hope to gain just a little more for this commitment fee. Thank you.

Shannon defended their need for the help and acknowledges that spending money for purposes other than the commitment fee would be “disrespectful” to their friends and family. Shannon’s public statement recognized the influence of the community on their actions and responds to ensure they continued to be recognized as responsible members of their community. They acknowledged their social network and the respect both she and Victor owe to those who have helped them. Shannon’s posts prompted others to post comments stating their support for the couple. These posts helped minimize criticism and helped the success of the raffle. Several months later when I spoke with the couple, they remembered and continued to be grateful for the positive support they received from their community. I believe, the positive support they received occurred, in part, because the couple successfully navigated the opinions and influence of others.

In the past, the feast system “permeated every aspect of Tsimshian life” (Garfield and Wignert 1966: 216). Today, whether or not the feast permeates every aspect of life could be debated, but participation in feasts and public events continues to shape the values of the community and reproduces social obligations by creating feelings of belonging. As such, values of respect and obligation continue to permeate many aspects of life for First Nations youth in Prince Rupert. The importance of reputation and community validation is also why, in my observations, youth are careful to respond to criticism in public and manage their public personas. They do so at both events and on Facebook. Participation in the feast system helps

youth recognize that the public discussion influences decisions that affect both their community and their own individual endeavours. The feast system also provides the youth guidance as they navigate their involvement with their communities.

Shannon's answer to my original question about why their raffle was successful was a contemporary compliment to Victor's answer referencing chiefs and feasts. She believed that participation in their raffle was successful because people approved of what they were trying to accomplish. During the raffle however, they deployed protocols that defended and validated their actions in ways that resonated with what their community expected as part of the feast system.

In 2007, Victor was one of the youth at the centre who felt marginalized. He and his friends had created a peer support network, but felt alienation from both the rest of the city and their village communities. Seven years later, Victor and Shannon used digital technology to be influenced by and influence their community. They received advice, defended their position and gained support from community without face-to-face interactions. While adulthood and other factors significantly affected how Victor and Shannon located themselves and participated as young adults, the ability to digitally connect to a larger support system helped the couple participate in the diasporic community. They have become members and participants in the community; a community whose technological practice maintains connections across distance and participates in the re-distribution of economic wealth over time. In the last seven years, the youth used Facebook to connect and gain support from adults and peers during the early years of their adulthood and become part of their Indigenous community.

5.4 Trade Beads and New Technologies

It may seem like a stretch to connect Victor and Shannon's fundraising raffle to the public ceremonies of the feast system. In the previous sections however, I argued that the feast system contributes protocols and social values that expand beyond the feasts themselves. Its practices infiltrate and help shape the way the community members view and participate in their social, physical and digital worlds. Particular tools are incorporated into the system in order to produce social structure as well as a mindset of relatedness and reciprocity. Part of the feasts system's success, beyond its unique combination of economic exchange and recognition, is that

it can be amendable to incorporation of new objects and tools into its practices and extends its protocols and mindsets beyond its particular defined ceremony.

Today, traditional feasts most often occur as part of the mortuary cycle, but feasts also occur for celebrations such as graduations and weddings. These less formal gatherings display similar collecting and redistributing of goods, food, and validating statements. Although Victor, Shannon and their friends are not immersed in the feast system in the same way as previous generations their participation in contemporary events helps internalize the values of their heritage. These non-traditional feasts follow a practice of contributing food and bringing people together for an evening of stories and shared ritual that maintain their community. Today, goods continue to move through the area, whether through families sharing traditional food, the Friendship House redistributing salmon and oolichan to the community, or the markets that occur alongside gatherings and celebrations. For instance, Hobiye celebrations each February in Vancouver and Kitimat bring together families and communities to share days of feasts, stories and performances as a way of celebrating the Nisga'a new year. Alongside these performances artisans and families sell jewellery, clothing, soap berries, baked goods and traditional foods. The event is an opportunity to visit distant relatives, share dance performances, and trade or purchase traditional food and crafts. They are events that offer the opportunity to connect with elders and celebrate their shared history as well as their contemporary pleasures. Contemporary feasts and celebrations continue the practice of trade and the production of community sentiment. Speeches and protocols are also performed that validate individuals and communities.

Each year in February for example, the All Native Basketball Tournament brings thousands to the city of Prince Rupert. Aboriginal basketball teams, many of whom are from the surrounding villages, spend a week in competition. Dance, song, ceremony and protocol open and end the festivities. Families come with the teams and use the tournament to connect with extended kin. In some ways, the tournament is a translation of the annual feasts. While not meant to recognize an individual or *wilp* (*waap*), the tournament is an opportunity for villages and communities to express their respect for one another and compete for recognition over the course of a week. Off the basketball court, extended family reconnect and a marketplace trades arts and Indigenous foods. The week is also used to draw attention to political concerns affecting the area such as proposed oil pipelines. While the tournament does not follow the exact same structure of

a feast, it is a gathering that maintains connections to a shared history as well as ongoing relationships within and across the communities.

Efforts for cultural revitalization I mentioned in chapter 2 provide another example of how feasts and celebrations keep communities connected and work to try and pass on traditions to youth. In August of 2011, the Gathering Strength Canoe Journey brought the community together. Both the Friendship House and the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Society sponsored canoes, which allowed approximately a dozen youth and adults to join the multi-day canoe trip that travelled to different villages and cities in the area. When the canoe journey arrived in Prince Rupert, members of the community lined the shoreline to welcome the paddlers and donated food to feed over 100 people who stayed to witness songs and dances performed by the visiting paddlers (Figure 5.3). Each village the paddlers visited on their multi-day trip hosted similar feasts. Youth participated as paddlers and as witnesses, strengthening connections between generations and between villages in the area.



Figure 5.3 When the Gathering Strength Canoe Journey stopped in Prince Rupert for the afternoon, the paddlers performed dances and shared a feast at the Museum of Northern British Columbia. Alex, one of the paddlers from Prince Rupert takes a turn.

Annual feasts and celebrations teach and remind the community of their connections and responsibilities to one another. Individuals continue to assert their authority and amass support. Village and urban communities come together to re-energize their kin and clan relationships through periodic feasts, tournaments, and canoe journeys. Youth and their families have watched

and participated in events where members of the community, host, donate food or labour, or attend as guests. They have participated in the ongoing amassing and distribution of economic resources. The result, is that without knowing the detailed history and protocols of feasts and their role in managing the people and resources of the area, youth like Victor and Shannon have learned how relationships and reciprocal responsibilities can be harnessed by individuals to create support and access economic resources within and across communities.

In the context of Victor and Shannon's raffle, it should also be noted that games and gambling were vital elements of the historical dimensions of building Aboriginal communities (Belanger 2011; Culin 1975). Yale Belanger (2011:10), for example, has argued that "games were central features of diplomatic, economic, social, and political practices in pre and post-contact Indigenous communities, in addition to being essential ceremonial and religious features."³⁹ Raffles are an extension of these practices. Games and forms of gambling are complimentary to the feast system and were part to the socio-economic make up that supported Northwest Coast people's elaborate trading network. For example, Nisga'a and their neighbours played *lahaal*, a bone-stick gambling game. While I have yet to witness a stick game being played among Tsimshian and Nisga'a youth in Prince Rupert, I did have the opportunity to watch a similar game being played at Gathering Our Voices Conference in Prince Rupert in 2011. Dene youth from the northeast corner of BC attended the conference and gathered old and new friends in a circle to play a hand game. According to www.denegames.ca, in the past, stick games were used to gamble furs then bullets between players. Today the game continues to be a cultural mediator between strangers and a community building activity (Wicks 2005). At the youth gathering, the stick game was share across groups of youth and helped the visiting Dene find new friends and create connection with others—much as it has for centuries.⁴⁰

³⁹ Belanger (2011) also suggests games and gambling for First Nations were important activities of their political-economy, but because European taxonomies identify games to be a past-time their study and importance was overlooked by colonizers and researchers.

⁴⁰ In my observations, Indigenous games are not played in Prince Rupert, but many people spend time playing online video games and Facebook games in their networked publics. These online activities are certainly a part of the interactions between individuals across town, in other cities, and in villages. Unfortunately, I did not have the ability to explore the role of online games in the community experience of Prince Rupert for this project, but I would like to identify it as a subject that needs future exploration.

Raffles are a relatively a new practice that stands in for and supports the reciprocity of tribes, *wilp* (*waap*), and individuals managed by the feast system. Raffles combine the tradition of gaming and the protocols of feasts in ways that economically support individuals in the community. In addition to providing food or labour for feasts and fundraising gatherings, individuals donate objects as raffle prizes and frequently buy tickets. During my fieldwork in 2011 for example, the Gitmaxmak'ay Dancers held fundraiser nights and raffles that gave away hockey jerseys, art as well as money to fund their trip to Victoria that summer. Individuals held raffles to give away their carvings and others held raffles to fundraise for their upcoming wedding. Participation in raffles redistributes economic resources in the community to fund trips for the different dance groups, sports teams, as well as individual endeavours. Facebook is only the most recent tool for facilitating reciprocity.



Figure 5.4 Rose, Shannon, Julia and others sort raffle tickets for the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers Fundraiser in 2011.

Exchanging objects at feasts and gatherings is another important way of participating in the community. These objects create mental and material traces that inform the social mapping of the Northwest Coast and their neighbours in the interior. The objects represent and validate social control of territory, which defines the relationships between individuals, groups, territories and the animals (Allaire 1984). Objects produced by particular kinds of technology, whether

oolichan grease, masks, Tupperware or raffle tickets are incorporated into practices that maintain social awareness that facilitates belonging and reciprocity.

New technologies are incorporated into this system and creates new ways to mark these relationships and boundaries. While on a field trip with a group of Nisga'a youth in 2011 for example, I was walking back to the bus with a matriarch and her husband when she noticed me admiring her necklace. She held up the gold chain and motioned to the blue beads.

"Do you know why we wear these?" she asked, inserting a dramatic pause to tease the anthropologist.

"To remind us to never sell so cheaply again!" She grinned as she announced the punch line of her joke. We laughed together as she spoke the truth.

Beyond her joke, the beads are symbols of friendship and family that remind people of their history and visibly connect them to others. The blue glass beads were brought to the region by Russian fur traders, and continue to wash up on shores along the Northwest Coast (Mackie 1997). At the time they were objects of a brand new technology. The beads became integrated into the public presentation and exchange of the First Nations of the area. People find and often give them away as tokens of friendship or sell them at gatherings. The beads are introduced objects that have become part of the visual and social fabric of everyday life in Prince Rupert.

I share the story of the trade beads because their origins mark an era of rapid change that mirrors the overwhelming introductions of new technology over the last thirty years. At the turn of the 19th century, First Nations peoples along the Northwest Coast had to adapt to European contact and the fur trade, then colonization, that transformed their core experiences. At the turn of the 20th century, a new flood of digital technology is transforming core ideas. The beads show how new tools can become immersed in social systems. The matriarch also reminds us how we learn from and reshape our social world to mitigate the unwanted effects of these technologies.

In practice, the beads are hung on necklaces and cedar hats and continue to participate in interpersonal networks that prioritize visible public symbols that display ongoing Indigenous relationships. The matriarch's beads hang on either side of a gold pendant of a *Gisk'aast* (*Gispwudwada*), killer whale, symbol that publicly displays her membership in the tribe. The beads are one example of appropriation that supports Tsimshian and Nisga'a ongoing historical and contemporary relationships. They are exchanged and worn to recognize relationships

publicly. They are a medium that represents and disseminates their social relationships. Facebook has joined the practice of exchanging objects as a means for displaying and validating connections.

Victor and Shannon are an example of youth creating new technological practices that can be successful because of a social foundation built by the feast system. And the feast system has been able to survive partly because social practices incorporate new technologies such as button blankets and beads, soda and Tupperware, and Facebook posts in ways that maintain community practice, memory, and future relationships.

In Prince Rupert, the feast system and its adaptable practices have created a general attitude towards fundraising that emphasizes reciprocity and participation. These attitudes facilitate the appropriation of new objects and translate across activities as well as media. Public displays of objects that represent relationships remain important for Tsimshian and Nisga'a peoples, but the medium and objects of display has changed over time. For example, Arthur Clah listed the different feasts held in 1870 including bread and molasses feasts, whiskey feasts and bread feasts—all introduced materials the feast system embraced (Brock 2011: 201). As technologies changed, grease, hides, beads, bread, and whiskey were joined by tea towels, Tupperware, soda pop, cash, and beads as part of the economic exchange that publicly demonstrate the wealth of an individual or house. Now social media and bank transfers have become part of social exchange that recognizes relationships and facilitates transparent transactions.

5.5 Conclusion

In 2014, although Victor and Shannon were not recognized as members of the community with high stature, they were able to raise public support because, in part, they behaved in a way that resonated with the feast system. Victor and Shannon's technological practices using Facebook to hold their raffle not only supported their educational plans, but strengthened their connections to friends and families despite their physical absence. Friends who have always found ways to mutually support one another—sharing their chips and pop as teenagers or offering each other safety for the night when they attended the teen centre—have now found new ways to enact a similar support network across fibre-optic cables and

international computer servers. It is a new technological practice, but follows similar patterns of creativity and resilience, reliant on expressions of respect, validation and reciprocity, to translate the values of their heritage into new forms.

Victor and Shannon's raffle shows how new technological practices can be effective when they create expressions that resemble protocols familiar to the community. Fundraising in Prince Rupert is just one form of the public economic activities that keep the community connected and support their survival. In the past, feasts practices created and defined how, when, and why people traded and their responsibilities to one another. More recently the ongoing economic transfers and fundraising are successful because participating in the feast system, even minimally, taught community members the importance of reciprocity. As demonstrated by Victor and Shannon's efforts, when the technological practices of the youth and their families align with the successes of the feast system, they are particularly effective.



Figure 5.5 After the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Society's blessed their new canoe following traditional Nisga'a protocols, Betsy christens it with a bottle of champagne as the final act of the ceremony.

Chapter 6: “It Shows How We Are All Connected:” A Community Collage

6.1 Introduction

The media collaborations I worked on with the youth were effective in creating respectful and valued representations of individuals, events, objects, and interactions that helped define their community. Digital tools such as cameras and cell phones as well as the practice of wide distribution and replication that often defines social media interactions, aided each step. The photographs we created became an aspect of community participation in-person and online. During my engagement with the youth and their families in Prince Rupert, Facebook was a popular way of circulating media that represented and recorded selected moments of the youth and their families’ experiences. The media we created were included in how youth and their families chose to store and distribute representations of selected moments via Facebook.

Throughout my fieldwork, digital tools, social interactions, and multiple reproductions of our images were interdependent. As I mentioned during my discussion of the street family and its media, the collaborative approaches and practices of public display helped validate our work and served to turn the media we produced into symbols that defined the youths’ community. The ability to circulate images physically and online, for example, prompted interactions that reinforced the social bonds documented by the creation of the photographs in the first place. Our photographs were part of the community’s shared media and often facilitated the expression of positive feelings through the distribution of user-made content.

The digital media we produced also inspired the re-production of our images in the photo-collage mural we titled *Wilp Lax Kaien*, The House of Kaien Island. The image on the following page is approximately 15 by 21 centimetres (Figure 6.1) and shows approximately 4% of the original mural, which stands 2.75 metres (8-feet) tall and 3.67 metres (12-feet) across. While this image gives one an idea of what it might be like to see the full sized original, it does not generate the same effect on its own—viewing the mural in-person is a social experience that cannot be reproduced on these pages.



Figure 6.1 The *Wilp Lax Kaïen* (The House of Kaïen) mural.

Over 600 moments are portrayed in the mural. Many of these images have come to represent joyful memories for the individuals who stood in front, behind, and around the cameras as the photos were taken. The mural and photographs are empirical documents of the community and symbolize the relationships between people over time. The collection of images, as they appear in the mural serves as reminders of the interaction between the individuals in the images and their community.

Elizabeth Edwards (2004, 12) focused on the “thingness” of a photograph that “influences, contains or performs the image itself, because photographs have inextricably linked meanings as images and meanings as objects.” How photographs are used is as important to their meanings as what they visibly resemble. I believe the same is true of the digital photographs we created. In Prince Rupert, among the youth and their families, photographs on Facebook facilitated interactions, sharing, and acts of validating, that helped the images become social products and valuable traces of community interactions. Tactile photographs in our mural recorded visible contemporary experiences and identified individuals from within the youths’ support network in ways that were appreciated by the community.

In this chapter, I argue that community members looked at our photographs or our mural and interpreted them in different ways, but through the shared experience of engaging with the photographs, community members connected with each other. As with the street family and the raffle, the mural and the photographs were something new and invented that also resonated with the longstanding systems and understanding of community identification. Individuals responded positively to the mural because it participates in and represents a social framework that builds and maintains the kind of bonds that made it possible for some youths to move away from the community, yet still access its economic support mechanisms and participate in the community practice of reciprocity.

The creation and circulation of the photographs as well as the presentation of the mural are examples of media-inspired moments of reflection that help locate and legitimize present experiences. In this chapter, I begin by discussing our collaborative media making practices in 2011 as the means by which our photographs and the mural generated positive responses from community members. I then review the aesthetics of the images as a collection to help explain their popularity. Although the individual photographs document

diverse events and activities, their shared aesthetic qualities unite the collection and creates opportunities to celebrate the diversity of people and experiences in the community. The mural created opportunities for the youth and their families to reflect on this diversity, and enabled viewers to locate themselves in their community and their history.

6.2 Collaborations in 2011

Over the course of my research, the digital camera became a symbol of my relationship with the youth and our collaborations that changed over time. In 2007, for example, the youth knew me as "Jenny with the cameras." I was just someone with cameras. In 2010, during a short visit, the youth introduced me to their family members as "Jenny, you remember . . . the [one with the] cameras and the photos?" After our film and photographs had circulated, youth wanted to introduce me to their families, but I remained someone with cameras. In 2011, the community began publicly defining my role. As I mentioned, at a feast in the spring of 2011, I was introduced as "Jenny Paparazzi" and paid publicly for recording a feast. It was a statement that represented a growing recognition of my particular role in the community. Later that summer, my reputation grew within the community to the point where a stranger approached me on the street and asked, "You're the Nisga'a camera girl, right?" By the end of the summer, as my 2011 fieldwork came to a close and our mural was made public, elders in the dance group introduced me to others as, "Jenny, our photographer." Over time, as the images circulated among the community, both the media and myself became theirs. The cameras and the activity of taking photographs both created, represented, and became my publicly recognized role in the community.

Paul Henley (2009, 324) wrote that Jean Rouch often wondered "if it was he who had chosen to meet his African friends, or whether it was they who had chosen to meet him." For Rouch, regardless of who truly instigated the meeting, the success of over 60 years of film productions was dependent upon the adventurous collaborations of all involved. At times, I have felt the same way about the youth I worked with in 2007 and 2011. While I was the one who chose to enter the youth drop-in centre with my cameras in 2007, only certain youth chose to engage with my cameras and me. It was the same in 2011. Individuals chose to sign consent forms that allowed me to record them, they were the ones who chose to talk with me

and participate in our collaborations. They also chose to circulate the images digitally over Facebook and to help transform our photo collection into a large photo-collage. Adults as well as youth helped solidify my role in the community and encouraged, supported, and shaped my ongoing interaction with the youth and their families. I am thankful for their choices.

By 2011, the shared spaces of our media making were no longer defined by the physical location of the teen centre. Instead, as families, carving classes, and dance groups entered the project, our collaborative spaces became defined more by the presence of the digital cameras and printed or digital photographs than by the location. We took photographs at dance rehearsals, a museum opening, street festivals, parades, and in individual homes. Hotel rooms, residences, the Friendship Centre, the youth centre, the Nisga'a Hall, and Facebook became spaces where we interacted with each other and discussed or viewed the photographs. The expansion of these shared spaces of collaboration meant we were able to photograph a range of subjects to round out our collection including mundane moments, formal ceremonies, events, holidays, and capture intimate portraits as well. Thus, the images we created document the youths' experiences as they engaged in an extended support system and social network that was no longer dependent on a single location. The circulation of the images, as I will explain in the next section, similarly became part of the interactions that defined the in-person and digital participation in the community.

The photographers that I worked with in 2011 ranged from two-year-olds to elders (Figure 6.2, Figure 6.3, and Figure 6.4). Once, for example, while I was filming youth learning how to prep oolichans for smoking, Camilla, a matriarch, demanded I hand over the video camera and get my hands dirty. She then recorded us, elbow deep in the little fish. Another time, during the Seafest Parade, I handed my still camera to a grandfather who followed us around the parade route from the sidelines, taking pictures (Figure 6.5). In 2011, our photography remained youth focused, but the cameras (and the photographs they produced) entered the hands of community members who become part of the collaborations as result. Their playfulness both created and was represented in many of the images.



Figure 6.2 In 2011, our youngest participant was Chrystel's two-year-old daughter, who experimented with the camera at dance practice. This is one of the images she helped create.



Figure 6.3 In 2011, children including 7 year old Carrie helped create images of feasts and video recorded dance practices and the dance group's trip to Victoria.



Figure 6.4 Teenagers, such as Roger (photographer) and Michael (in the image), continued to take an interest in creating images in 2011 and were encouraged to experiment and have fun together.



Figure 6.5 The grandfather of one of the youths at the teen centre, used my still camera to create this photo of the Seafest parade.

The creation of the mural was also collaborative. The idea was mine, but it could not have become a reality without the participation and influence of particular individuals. I approached the executive director of the Friendship House at the time, Farley Stewart, who agreed to fund the project. The mural could not have been created without his help. I went to

a local sign shop and explored materials that could allow the mural to be mobile. Nine pieces of signboard were cut and attached in groups of three to form the base of the mural.

During 2011, Kyle and Chrystel spent a great deal of time in the carving class. Kyle's designs adorned his box drum and his skateboard with beautiful designs. Knowing the quality and creativity of his work, I asked him to think about designing the four tribal symbols for the mural. Initially, Kyle was intrigued, but intimidated by the idea of designing such a complex symbol. As a new artist and member of the wolf tribe, he had never drawn a raven or a killer whale before. However, during a trip to Victoria he started to show more interest in the project as the three of us sat in a hotel room looking at our photographs on my laptop. A few days later, I bought him a sketch-pad and as we waited for our flight home his design began to take form.

The process of creating the mural is depicted in Figure 6.6, Figure 6.7, Figure 6.8, Figure 6.9, Figure 6.10, and Figure 6.11) below.



Figure 6.6 On our flight back to Prince Rupert from Victoria with the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers, Kyle receives lessons from Rose about drawing eagles and ravens.



Figure 6.7 A week later the outline of the entire mural takes shape in the collaborative space of the Friendship House carving room. Here Kyle creates a scaled version of the design.



Figure 6.8 Chrystel and her sister help transfer Kyle's design to the synthetic sign boards.



Figure 6.9 Chrystel and her daughter help create the faux wood finish of the mural.



Figure 6.10 Once transferred, Kyle corrected and improved the tribe symbol outlines with Chrystel's help.



Figure 6.11 I spent two weeks arranging and attaching the collage of images with help from Chrystel, Rose, Cecelia and others. Occasionally I stood on the table for a better look.

Just as in 2007, collaborating with the youth and their community meant different levels of engagement had to be respected. The mural was created in the middle of summer when cannery employment was the highest and few people had the time to help. The youth were busy taking care of their children and finding work, while adults were busy with their own jobs. Many were simply not interested in putting in the dedicated time needed to create the collage. Chrystel, Kyle, Rose, and others helped or dropped by to check on the progress and provide guidance when they had time, but most of the 80 hours of labour that went into gluing images to the mural were mine. By the end, my enduring “contact high” from the hours spent inhaling glue had become a joke among all.

While the work of creating the mural involved only a few, I wanted to honour all collaborators that helped create or were represented by the images within the collage. Everyone who was in an image in the mural had the opportunity to add their signature as a way of further publicly recognizing the various contributions (Figure 6.12 and Figure 6.13).



Figure 6.12 Ryan signs the mural on display at the Museum of Northern British Columbia in August 2011.



Figure 6.13 Josh lifts his mother up so she can sign the mural.

Placing their signature in the mural was a way for individuals to validate their images and contributions. Adults and youth laughed and remembered together as they passed pens around to take turns adding their signature. The activity of signing the mural, transformed it from an art created by a few to a valuable representation approved by many.

Deciding what to include in the mural was a collaborative process, and the ideas about what this entailed evolved throughout its creation. For example, although I had the idea of inserting the photographs into the symbols, the final look of the tribe symbols was based on Kyle's design. In addition, I had originally imagined that I would be absent from the mural. At the time, I did not feel the need to be represented, however everyone else who collaborated on the mural disagreed. As the mural took shape, elders and others asked, "Jen, where are you? When will you be in it?" As the conversation about my representation in the mural continued, I came to understand the request as another iteration of feast system protocols—because I was involved in the mural's creation, I must be publicly represented. At first, I turned down the request, but then Rose came to my rescue. She suggested making the killer whale spray in the shape of a butterfly. Butterflies have become the stand-in tribe symbol for the *k'amksiiwaa* (*t'kumsiwah*) or non-native European-Canadians in the area. Thus, I am now memorialized in the mural in the body of a butterfly wearing the cedar hat that the dancers had given me earlier that summer. In hindsight, I have come to realize that excluding my representation would have violated community values about the appropriate public representation that I had hoped the mural would embody.

I believe the quality of our collaboration explains why so many of the photographs are visually beautiful. With little to no formal instruction on photography, they are good according to the language of photography. Hundreds of the images are well framed, have a good use of light, nice contrast, use unique angles. Conversations over the years about photographs the youth really liked have made all involved better photographers. In addition, the intimacy, humour, personality and creativity the images portray could not have been achieved without the many different forms of involvement and the open sharing of the cameras among the youth and some adults. Many of the images grab viewers' attention and capture a wide range of experiences shared by those who chose to be in front of the cameras.

6.3 Photographs and Facebook

Within days of meeting a new cohort of youth at the teen centre in February of 2011, they asked me to put their photographs on Facebook. After conversations with the youth and several adults, I recognized that collaborating with the community in 2011 meant circulating images according to their technological practices. Such practices included sharing images on Facebook. I continued to print photographs and share them with youth in a photo album, but I also utilized Facebook as the fastest, cheapest, and easiest means of circulating photographs.

Some may find posting images to Facebook site troublesome for privacy and copyright reasons. Our collaborations in Prince Rupert, have always included conversations about what to photograph and how to share the images. I felt that ignoring their requests by refusing to put images in our collection on the social network site in 2011 would, at best, have made me a gatekeeper who restricted access to the photographs. At worst, it would have been another instance of an outsider imposing an outside system that restricted the desires and practices of the Tsimshian and Nisga'a youth and their families. It would have been disrespectful to the participants and our ongoing collaborations to have restricted circulation of the images in such a way.⁴¹ Thus, instead of only circulating as material objects, in 2011 our images also circulated as digital files that were visually embedded into photo albums, profile pages and Facebook News Feeds. As a result, the digital circulation of the images was another outcome of our ongoing collaborations and became part of the social objects that visibly connected individuals to each other.

By the time Prince Rupert residents had access to inexpensive cell phones and Facebook mobile applications in 2009, Facebook had already developed ways for users to interact with photographs and connect an image to their own or other users' profiles. Before

⁴¹ Consent forms also included statements that images might appear on websites. All participants who were photographed had signed consent forms and verbally gave permission to put the images on Facebook. To my knowledge as of the date of publication of this dissertation, no participant has asked that their images be removed. I acknowledge the sharing of our photographs on Facebook opens a larger debate about research ethics, colonial conceptions of privacy laws, and community collaborations that are beyond the context of this dissertation, but should be part of an ongoing conversation regarding research in Indigenous communities.

Facebook developed technology that allowed users to share images, the practice of “tagging” images was developed and popularized by websites such as Flickr, who allowed users to add annotations that made the images searchable, sharable, and easier to retrieve at a later date (Ames and Naaman 2007). In 2005, Facebook patented its own “tagging” feature, which was the first time users could select portions of an image (such as a person’s face), and connect the photograph to the profiles of other users in their friend network.⁴² The tagging feature enables the image to appear on the walls, profiles, and photo albums of the tagged person (depending on their privacy settings). The tagging feature is a popular way of identifying and linking the photograph to the profiles of users who appear in the image (Miller 2011). Then people who have been tagged in a photo can add more tags to the image, which expands the network of individuals who have access to the image beyond the original user’s network.

Youth and their families in Prince Rupert appropriated the intended use of the tagging feature. Rather than only using the tagging feature to identify the people in a photograph, our images were tagged with the names of people youth and their families wanted to see the image. When I asked Kyle why he thought these kinds of tags existed, he said it might be a way to “show the other people the picture.” Indeed, this approach is a way of targeting a particular audience. By tagging the image, it becomes linked to the specific person’s profile, the image appears in that person’s News Feed, and profile, which makes it more likely that the person will see the image when they use the social network site. Tagging was used to quickly direct the circulation of the image beyond those who participated in the photographs’ creation.

Chrystel also tagged herself in images where she did not appear. She told me her motivation for tagging images was to “have the photo saved in my profile. So I can have an easier time accessing it.” Some of the images she tagged were ones she had taken or that featured friends and family that were close to her. The images reminded her of happy

⁴² In 2005, Facebook engineers applied for a patent for their photo tagging interface. They won the patent in 2011. See Patent US009049260B2 <http://pdfpiw.uspto.gov/.piw?docid=09049260&SectionNum=1&IDKey=E2163996FC04&HomeUrl=http://patft.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO2%2526Sect2=HITOFF%2526u=%25252Fnetahtml%25252FPTO%25252Fsearch-adv.htm%2526r=1%2526p=1%2526f=G%2526l=50%2526d=PTXT%2526S1=facebook.ASNM.%2526OS=an/facebook%2526RS=AN/facebook>

moments and feelings each time she accessed the images through Facebook or became aware that someone else had viewed an image. The tagging feature was a way of collecting and keeping track of the images that circulated through her friend network.

Images were tagged as a way of sharing and directing the photograph through the social network as well as a way of making them easier to access in the future. Thinking about the circulation of photographs in Prince Rupert “materially” as Edwards (2004, 11) suggests, the meaning of a particular image,

does not reside only in the mutable semiotic structures of images, but in their material forms and in the social function and sensory apprehension of those material forms. . . . That is, as socially salient objects which are tactile, sensorally engaged with and which exist in time and space and thus in social and cultural experience.

The social uses viewers apply to a photograph are as much a part of its meaning as the interpretations of the two-dimensional image. The ability to direct who can see the images, identify them as desired representations of oneself, and easily retrieve the photographs are aspects of the social experience of our photographs on Facebook’s digital platform. The images represent friends and family, but their meaning for the Tsimshian and Nisga’a community in Prince Rupert relates to their ability to quickly direct and share photographs with friends and family across distance.

Facebook’s features and the digital form of our photographs enabled the youths to make our images as their own profile pictures. For example, Tyler shared an image of him dancing at a 2012 National Aboriginal Day Celebration in Prince Rupert (Figure 6.14). The image he selected appeared next to his name and any comments or post he created for the site. When I asked Tyler why he chose the image he said, “I made it my profile picture because it’s an amazing photo of myself doing something I love to do.” The image elicits positive feelings and memories he has of the dance group, dancing, and towards himself. Tyler told me, when he looked at the image he felt pride.



Figure 6.14 Tyler dancing at a National Aboriginal Day Celebration in 2012.

For the youth, profile pictures were often of a person, a memorable moment, or an activity. For example, both Chrystel and Beatrice used images of themselves with their daughters as their profile pictures. For a time, Kyle's profile picture was of the mural, his art, or an image of himself participating in the dance group. For Chrystel, Kyle and others, the images they chose as their profile images—representations of themselves—were often representations they associated with pride and joy. They were images the youth enjoyed looking at and that they thought others would enjoy as well.

When the youth and their families choose an image for their profile picture or used the tagging feature, they identified the image as something that is worthy of an audience. Tagging and commenting is a way of creating and recording the members of such an audience. When I asked Jade why he thought people tagged photos with the names of people who were not in the images he said, "To share the memories. Some people may be proud of those moments and want to tag someone to share it with." Tyler agreed with Jade's reasoning and noted that he enjoyed receiving feedback from those who saw the image. At the time we discussed the image, Tyler's profile image had received 54 comments and 204 likes. In other words, it had received over 200 public declarations of approval. Posting and sharing an image was a way youth expressed their own and received statements of approval from friends and family. With the assistance of Facebook, Tyler and others could draw on the representations, memories, and feelings our photographs elicited at any time they chose.

Indeed, the digitization of photographs and their circulation throughout the web allows their infinite reproduction and appropriation, which created many more opportunities for interaction than the printed photographs in 2007.

Edwards (2004) has also argued that much of a photograph's sociality comes from the tactile experience of interacting with the image. Edwards (2004, 16) writes, "touch is critical in the social use of photographs, from the fingering of a photographic locket to the desire to touch the surface of the print." Touching the paper as we view a photograph is a way of interacting with the image and by extension, a way of interacting with the feelings and memories the photograph elicits. We physically pass photos to others or point at them as a way of drawing attention to an image.

We often point or touch a screen when encountering a digital image. For example, in February of 2015, I bumped into Tyler and his friends at a Hobiye celebration in Vancouver. When he introduced me to his friends, he introduced me as "a photographer who created a lot of pictures with the dance group back home in Prince Rupert." As he introduced me he took out his cell phone and with a few taps on the Facebook application he brought up the picture of him dancing. Tyler tapped the screen of his cell phone to help focus his friends' attention on our photograph. His friends also pointed and touched the screen as they complimented us and the image. It was partly through touch that the digital social object became a physical encounter that generated positive feelings in the people who saw the image.

Facebook's features create other ways to touch the images that circulate on the social media site. Tagging can be thought of as a way of "passing" the image to others as users create an audience for the photograph. Making the image a profile picture prompts others to click on and expand an image or "touch" the photograph as the social networking site records the interactions of users. Facebook released the "like" button in 2009 to create further means for programmers to sort posts in News Feeds and gather more information about how people interact with material on the site (Bosworth 2010). For users, likes are another way of touching the image and tracing human relationships that manifest as interactions on Facebook.

The development of the "like" button was similar to the evolution of the tagging feature. At about the same time that Facebook introduced the "like" function other websites

were creating ways for users to interact or touch and leave their trace on the content. Reddit for example was allowing users to vote up or vote down posts. YouTube offered a rating system, and other social media platforms were beginning to provide similar buttons. Facebook's unique addition was recording the identities of those who have chosen to publicize their "likes," and records the total number of "likes" an image or post receives. These features have since been added to other platforms.

Facebook "likes" can be thought of as the recorded traces of a photograph's sociality. The circulation of images via Facebook creates positive ways for individuals to interact on a daily basis. Likes and comments record aspects of social relationships between the people who create, post, and view the image, and they serve to augment the meaning of the original visual representation. Thinking of photos we took at the teen centre and later posted online, people "liked" and commented in ways that made their affection and connections visible to the user who posted the image and to others that could see the image. The public validation of these images facilitated the recognition that informed which individuals were included or excluded from a potential support system. The frequent informal interactions, whether giving "likes" or commenting on images (including ours) created patterns of interactions that would make it acceptable to ask people to participate in a raffle, ask for a car ride, or ask for a digital hug. Digital prompts, comments and likes made ongoing relationships visible, reinforcing awareness of the youth and their families' support system.

Photographs, Edwards (2003, 20) writes, are a "combination of trace and social usage." The photographs that circulated on Facebook visually represented people and moments that the youth and their families enjoyed looking and thinking about. Individual images we created were also often used as prompts on Facebook to inspire positive interactions. As youth tagged those they wanted to see the images, they prompted interactions that encouraged others to validate and share expressions of approval in the form of comments and likes. Kyle and Chrystel also told me friends and family sent positive messages regarding profile pictures and photo albums that included our images. Circulating single images were one of the ways the youth used our photographs.

The meaning of the mural—a physical object—was also a combination of trace and use. Hundreds of photographs glued side by side represented the traces of memories and individual moments. The mural displayed traces of many moments together in a way that

encouraged those represented within the mural to think about their place in their community. Viewing the mural in public promoted positive interaction between an individual and their community. Youth and adults chatted as they looked over the images and laughed together. In turn, the mural also circulated as a digital object because it was used for online profile pictures, cell phone backgrounds images, and screensavers (Figure 6.15). These images were touched with likes and positive comments stating pride and awe. The mural created opportunities for individuals to interact with one another, both in person and online, in ways that celebrated membership in their community.



Figure 6.15 One of the youth creates a picture of the mural on a mobile phone.

Making a comment on Facebook or touching a photograph by clicking on the like button creates traces of friendship and social connection during the photograph's circulation. In the previous chapter, I described how trade beads are social objects embedded with history that continue to be exchanged as tokens of friendship. When given as gifts, the trade beads also serve as traces and reminders of social relationships. The beads are disseminated through a system of reciprocity that maintains Tsimshian and Nisga'a communities and their social structures. The "likes" attributed to a comment or image on Facebook similarly publically record friendships and social relationships across the digital platform. The 200 documented positive interactions with Tyler's photograph trace his relationships with others. He will also reciprocate by posting likes and comments on other peoples' images. Digital exchanges are acts that are different from, but resemble the more formal gift exchange

models that bind reciprocal relationships among people (Ling 2004; Ling 2008). The acts of liking something and the sharing of photographs on Facebook are gifts that publicize and record relationships in a digital form. The beads were introduced objects from a different culture and technology that were appropriated and gained meanings specific to the local First Nations people. Similarly, Facebook likes and tagging features are digitally imposed opportunities for interactions that have acquired meaning in local community participation.

6.4 Aesthetics and Function of the Mural

Our images circulated widely because of the collaborative nature of their creation and the respectful diversity of the representations made them popular among the youth and their families. The images were able to circulate widely because Facebook features allowed the images to be reproduced infinitely. Our photographs began as digital colour images, which I then manipulated and turned into black and white images through the software on my laptop. The popularity of the photographs must also be contributed to the digital technology that helped create distinct, eye-catching images, and elevated their value not only as positive (and powerful) representations of individuals and groups, but as beautiful images.

The images stood out because of the simple fact that they looked different, or as one young man noted, “they look cool.” Good images have this “cool” factor and attract attention for longer periods of time because of a detail or quality that peaks viewers’ interests. Barthes (1980) called this aspect the “punctum” of a photograph. The punctum is what draws the viewers’ attention beyond the image’s overall meaning and feeling it evokes. The punctum of an image is a detail that personally connects to the viewer. It is what a viewer focuses on and chooses to think about while looking at an image. In our project, the punctum of the photos derived from their black and white aesthetic qualities.

Some argue that the aesthetics of a black and white image causes viewers to find additional details that may be missed when the images are in colour. For example, Canadian photojournalist Ted Grant is quoted as saying that “when you photograph people in colour, you photograph their clothes. But, when you photograph people in black and white, you photograph their soul” (Faye 2013: 208). Grant (2009) has suggested, that the lack of colour allows a viewer to concentrate on other aspects such as the composition, the framing, a

detail, or an expression. The unique details help viewers connect with the image and make meaning from them. While Grant's ideas may not be universally agreed upon, changing the visual aesthetic of the image did help our images stand out.

As cell phone and Facebook imagery became ubiquitous, the black and white images were aesthetically different from many of the images the youth and their families encountered. The ubiquity of colour images on Facebook made the black and white photos of our collection stand out and attract attention online and in person. The black and white aesthetic was only one aspect that made our images popular. Yet, the intimacy of the images, the variety of representations, and the interesting moments they captured were also part of their popularity. The black and white aesthetic, however, identified our images as part of a collection and as something different from the selfies, family portraits, and school photographs circulating at time.

Over time, dozens upon dozens of our black and white images circulated on Facebook. With so many circulating, their the black and white aesthetic was no longer so unique. One night I was bored of looking at black and white images. Inspired by a sense of play, I began manipulating a photographs' settings on my computer one night. Once again, the digital capabilities of the photographs made this manipulation easier. For some of the images, I left a single colour and desaturated the rest of the image. The outcome produced visually interesting images that participants really enjoyed.

In most cases, I desaturated the image except for the performer, red of regalia, or the colours of cedar objects. This technique also influenced the meaning of these images by strengthening the focal points and emphasizing colours traditionally found in the Nisga'a and Tsimshian artwork (black, white, red, turquoise and yellow). The isolated colours became part of the punctum of these images. These additionally manipulated images also gathered more attention as they circulated because of their unique visual quality.

For example, the figure below was created prior to a Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers performance in Victoria (Figure 6.16). As shown in the left image, when the image is in its full colour state, the background awnings, tree and building compete with the dancers in the foreground. In the centre black and white image, the dancers in the background are almost impossible to find. In its final version, the colour is used to identify the different groups of dancers waiting in the crowd and to visually separate the dancers from the audience. The red

in the final image serves as the image's "punctum"—it is an aspect that draws attention and produces meaning beyond the overall representation of the dance group waiting to perform.



Figure 6.16 The original photograph (left), the photo in black and white (middle), and the final version (right) with the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers in full colour and the audience in black and white. Image taken June 2011.

For some like Caryn, the red symbolizes pride which underscores one of the reasons why the youth enjoy wearing regalia. Michael also associated the image with pride, but added that he enjoyed the way he stands out when he wears his regalia. He told me, “people actually see us when we wear our regalia.” For him the photograph represents that feeling. For others such as myself, the colour contrast highlights the difference between the audience and the performers as well as the unity of the performers as a group despite their different tribes. The transformed aesthetic inspired conversations such as those I had with Caryn and Michael. In 2011 these photographs tended to receive more likes and comments than other black and white images. Caryn, Michael and I associated slightly different meanings with the image, but each came about because we responded to the same manipulated punctum within the photographs.

The large number of black and white images in our collection also helped inspire the mural. The mural depicts the four tribes of the Tsimshian and Nisga'a—raven, eagle, killer whale, and wolf. Northwest Coast First Nations tribal crests are usually painted in red, black, and white, with yellow and turquoise accents. As I looked through our collection and thought about how to share them as a group, I thought about these colours. Our images already contained two of the three symbolic colours: black and white. It was a serendipitous moment

of inspiration to fill the black portions of the tribal symbols with the black and white photographs. The result is a merging of two different modes of representation; the photographic image with the tribe symbol. Had the photographs been in colour at that point, I doubt I would have had the idea to fill the black portions of tribe symbols with photographs.

By prioritizing the use of red, black and white, the mural conforms to the visual aesthetic of the tribe symbols. As I have alluded to before, the tribe symbols are more than decoration. They are the building blocks of Northwest Coast social structure and effective symbols of belonging. Colour photographs would have weakened the mural's visual acknowledgement of the history of Northwest Coast art and muddled the visual symbolism. Instead, the faces of community members fill the tribe symbols, just as the people they represent fill the tribe and community and make it whole. Visually, tribe symbols mark belonging and ownership. They also guide interactions and continue to be robust markers and expressions of identity. The mural acknowledges the importance of the tribe symbols and the people who support one another and their community.

The mural also shared respectful representations that came from within and alongside the community. It was a contrast to much of the media created about Northwest Coast First Nations and other Aboriginal peoples. For example, in a blog post, Duncan McCue (2014), a journalist for CBC reported on the "Four D's" that often shape public media representation of Aboriginal people in Canada: dancing, drums, drinking and death. These four stereotypes participate in the ongoing social hierarchies that marginalize First Nations people. The mural's photo-collage is important because it portrays a wide range of moments in contemporary Tsimshian and Nisga'a life; the kinds of which are rarely represented in popular media. While not every experience is referenced in the mural's black and white photo-collage, its non-linear form helps highlight the diversity of interests and experiences that define the community.

The photo-collage locates images depicting the everyday next to moments of ceremony in order to connect the various moments experienced by members of the community. Their uniformity as black and white images unify the images as representations of cohesive events. They are many moments that make up the whole of the community. Photographs from a canoe blessing, from a museum opening, during the holidays, at carnivals, and of bored teenagers appear alongside each other. Pictures of individuals in

regalia are next to pictures of youth doing back flips; pictures of children playing are next to pictures of adults carving masks. Viewers of the mural will see images of Kyle long boarding, Beatrice parenting, Peter feeding eagles at the cannery, Rose carving, Chrystel with her friends, and of the dance group's travels—all of which exemplify the experiences of the community and inform the youths' identities. The multitude of images represented in the photo-collage validates the diversity of interests and activities that bring the Tsimshian and Nisga'a peoples together in Prince Rupert. The public presentation of the photo-collage identifies all of these elements as valid parts of the ongoing process of community formation and survival.

The mural also hints at another aspect of contemporary Aboriginal experience in Canada. Inside the red portion of the killer whale's dorsal fin, we wrote "RIP" followed by the names of youth who were members of the street family that lost their lives since our photography projects began in 2007. These friends and loved ones appear in the photo-collage along with other elders and members of the community that have passed away since the mural's creation. Tragedy and loss are shared experiences among the Aboriginal people in Prince Rupert and elsewhere and cannot be ignored. Loss is a part of the experience shared by the community and a reason for youth and their families to maintain their social relationships.

The black and white photo-collage presents over 600 heterogeneous moments that respectfully cross-reference the diversity of experiences that take place in Prince Rupert's Tsimshian and Nisga'a community. Until recently, Indigenous peoples have "been the objects of other peoples' image-making practices in ways damaging to their lives" (Ginsburg 2008, 301; Diamond 2010; Pierro 2013). Often images of Northwest Coast peoples focus on the cultural tropes that have created these damaging stereotypes. Northwest Coast artwork is known world-wide, yet the realities of colonialism and residential schools are ignored. The mural, however combines art forms with selected moments of contemporary experiences—experiences that portray the diversity of activities and experiences of the community.

In Prince Rupert, the photo-collage is a celebration of their Nisga'a and Tsimshian community. And as such, I believe, the context is somewhat different from other Indigenous media makers who intentionally create media to "mobilize social and political action" through acts of sovereignty (Raheja 2007, 1165; Dowell 2013). Instead, the youth and

families who held cameras and participated in the production and circulation of our images did so as a way of honouring their already existing bonds. They then used the traces they created in ways that resonated with cultural traditions of recognition and validation. At the same time, using likes, commenting, and tagging images on Facebook celebrated each other in a very contemporary way. In doing so, the youth and their families may have mobilized new social bonds, but the creation of our media was never described by the youth or their families as an intentional act of resistance against colonial oppression, something to spur political organization, nor revitalization. Instead, the function of the mural was to honour the strengths they found in each other.

Thus the function of our projects align, but are slightly different than other spaces of Indigenous media production. First, as a collaborative project, the intended outcomes of the mural were not known from the start. I, for example, was motivated by a desire to share the images in a material way, so that they would not be hidden on hard drives. The youth were motivated to create the images because they were fun and resulted in something beautiful. It is a very different context than the appropriation of mass media (Roth 2012; Deger 2006; Ginsburg 1997; Gauthier 2008; Roth 2005), fighting for recognition at film festivals and community events (Dowell 2013), or purposefully using a performance medium to define identity and rights (Dangeli 2015). Second, the often spontaneous creation of images highlighted the heterogeneity of community members and the moments they share together. Similar to other Indigenous media projects, our collaborations did result in representations that challenge stereotypes and recognize Indigenous values, but the sometimes surprising process of creative collaboration did not emphasize recording traditions as they were, stories the past, or responses to outside representations sometimes discussed in academic publications (see e.g. Wilson and Stuart 2008; Raheja 2007). Finally, unlike Indigenous media makers who create media to circulate their work more broadly (see e.g. Broten 2008; Himpele 2008; Ginsburg 1994; Lewis 2012), the use of our media projects were usually as intimate as the relationships that produced the images in the first place. Friends and family tagged and liked images on Facebook, thus sending personal support and approval towards one another. Friends and family stood in front of the photo-collage together, discussed their loved ones, and created new memories. Although these interactions occurred publicly—online or and front of the mural—the intimacy represented and produced by the images are part of

their function. The media we created, I believe, did lead to a kind of community empowerment, but did so in a way that is somewhat different than the kinds of visual, screen or performance based acts of sovereignty discussed by others (see e.g. Raheja 2007; Dowell 2013; Dangelis 2015).

In the context of other global Indigenous media, the photo-collage functions to strengthen community bonds and honour Indigenous aesthetics. The mural and our photographs aesthetically create a visible connection that unites past, present, and future. Multiple kinds of moments are celebrated, remembered, and placed in relationship with one another and the symbols that have united and shaped their communities for generations. Yet, the photocollage and our collaborations do so in a way that prioritizes individual relationships and the heterogeneity of local contemporary experiences among the Tsimshian and Nisga'a community.

6.5 Viewing the Mural: A Collage of Moments

The mural, *Wilp Lax Kaien*, premiered in August 2011 at a celebration held for the Gathering Strength Canoe Journey paddlers when they stopped in Prince Rupert. The following day it was displayed in the lower levels of the Rupert Square Mall, which was often filled with Tsimshian and Nisga'a elders and youth (Figure 6.17).



Figure 6.17 I talk with an elder as others point at and discuss a picture of a family member.



Figure 6.18 Jack, Rose, and others look at the mural at the Rupert Square Mall.

For many, looking at the *Wilp Lax Kaien* mural produced a feeling of connectedness. The mural held meaning for the community because it portrayed modern-day interpersonal relationships and identities in a respectful way that resonated with traditional Nisga'a and Tsimshian practices. The size and physical form of the mural invited community members to observe the symbols and photographs together. While standing in front of the mural, youth, their families, and their friends shared memories of the photographs and discussed images they had never seen before. Photographs taken of the mural became cell phone background images or were uploaded to Facebook. Displaying the mural at events and in the mall honoured the values of transparency, public validation of community contributions, kinship and belonging, as well as another kind of shared experience for the community.

According to the SAGE Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods (2008, 94) a collage is a “juxtaposition of a variety of pictures, artefacts, natural objects, words, phrases, textiles, sounds, and stories. It is not meant to provide one-to-one transfer of information; rather, it strives to create metaphoric evocative texts.” The word collage, moreover, comes from the French word *coller* meaning “to glue” (Given 2008, 94). As such, the photo-collage in the mural connects moments, individuals, and symbols together to create something that is more than the sum of its parts. In addition, the heterogeneous moments represented in the photographs are shared elements that connect people together—not only are the photographs glued to the medium, collectively they are a form of glue that adheres the community. The

mural and the response it elicits articulate the glue: the particular moments, memories, feelings, and meanings that are associated with the viewers' community.

As an art piece, the mural embedded representations of contemporary experience within the symbols that organized and connected people of the region for generations. The tribe symbols follow the colours and rules of Northwest Coast Art and the large tribe symbols grabbed attention. At a distance, viewers can tell that the mural includes photo-collage, but it is difficult to identify the individual images. When the viewer steps closer to the mural, the approximately six hundred images in the photo-collage come into focus. Numerous photographs document feasts, gatherings, the teen centre, public spaces, raffles, and cell phones (Figure 6.19)—all of which record and share the activities that contribute to maintaining social responsibility and friendships.



Figure 6.19 Close up section of the photo-collage.

The mural and its photo-collage elicit many memories and thoughts from those who view it. Youth identify particular photographs and remember the moments happening during the opening and closing of the camera shutters. For some, the memories are of events or time spent with friends who have since passed away. Upon seeing the photographs, members of the dance group were reminded of their trip to Victoria and the joy of dancing. For others, such as Kyle and Chrystel, the collage evokes memories of the mural's creation and the pride they felt upon its completion. Rose remembers her role in the collaboration and the time we spent together.

When I look at the mural, I am reminded of one particular memory that I also recorded in my field notes as follows:

I picked up Kyle to give him a ride home at 11:30pm. He had stayed up all night the previous night finishing the mural design, worked in the cannery all day, and went to an appointment with his brother that night. The first thing he said as he climbed in the car was that he couldn't wait to see it. "How does it look," he asked again.

To reply I repeated the line from a text message I sent him earlier, "Well, there's an awesome four foot tall wolf in my living room!"

"I can't wait to see it," he said again with a grin.

"Ok, we'll go to my house," I relented, making a right turn.

Kyle is an extremely quiet young man. He has a calm way of observing the world, but once you get to know him, you discover he is always the first in the room to find and share a dirty joke. He is devoted to helping the people close to him, but extended family admit he has only just begun to really open up to them. We've shared conversations about how he spent many of his teenage years angry about the circumstances in his life and how only a few people give him compliments. Now the only kind of angry I've ever seen him are those moments when he sets his jaw after someone's joke hits too close to home. The anger has eased, and he finds pride in his skateboard and box drum, but still wishes more people recognized his work ethic and contributions to his family, friends, and community.

Tonight he saw an outcome of his work. He walked into my living room and saw the full-sized 9-foot-tall and 12 foot wide outline of his design hanging on my wall.

"Wow" he said stopping in the middle of the room to look at it.

"First thoughts?" I asked.

"Wow" he smiled at me and turned to look at it again. After a moment he said, "I never thought my work could be like this.

We stayed a few more minutes as he, the artist, moved closer to inspect the design while he told me about the rules of Nisga'a art and pointed out lines he wanted to improve before we painted it. "I never thought my art could be like this." He said again with one of the largest smiles he has ever shared with me.

As we got into my car and drove up the hill to his house he pulled out his phone and was on Facebook. "Wow . . . I'm just overwhelmed" he posted as his status after checking with me to make sure he spelled overwhelmed correctly. By the time I dropped him off and returned home he had added to his post "I want to thank everyone into pushing me into completing my design." (Field notes July 23, 2015)



Figure 6.20 Kyle and his long board.

When I look at or think about the mural, this memory comes to mind and becomes part of my present consciousness. I have other memories that surface when I look at particular photographs in our collection, but this is a memory I associate with the mural overall. The memory is so strong because it is filled with my appreciation of Kyle and his hard work, as well as the pride and joy I felt as I watched him develop the mural's design. I have similarly strong feelings for the other youth I have known for nine years.

These memories, I believe are in part the glue that holds together the meaning embedded in the collage and the community. They are what make social relationships a conscious experience. Kyle and I have a relationship that extends beyond the mural, beyond this dissertation, and beyond any photograph, we may have created together. The photographs and the mural help me stay aware of these relationships. Youth who were at the water fight remember their street family and the social relationships that defined their teenage years. Kyle, Chrystel, Victor, Beatrice, and others have relationships with one another, their families and their communities that extend far beyond my limited understanding. These social relationships are formed around shared memories and similar experiences as well as the mutual affection that has developed over time. The photo-collage recognizes these relationships and elicits memories that invoke these emotions.

For some, the photo-collage documents a passage of time since my interactions with the youth began. Each photograph in the photo-collage presents viewers with “an image that

is static, but that nonetheless can give a powerful sensation of time passing” (Sutton 2009, 38). The passage of time helps people reflect on their social relationships. For example, after looking over the complete photo-collage, Cecilia pointed at a picture of a friend and squealed, “look how young Jeff is!” She had been involved in the photography project since the beginning, but had forgotten about some of the images and was surprised by how much the passage of time and the addition of facial hair had visually changed Jeff’s appearance. Others expressed a desire to return to a previous moment in time. Naomi, for example described a longing for a time at the teen centre when “we were all such good friends.” Others, like Beatrice, look at the mural and see pictures of themselves at the youth centre and of their children and think about how different they have become in just four years. In each example, the youth reflected on the passage of time and how much had changed for them personally and in their relationships with individuals and groups within the city.

When someone in the community looks at the mural, heterogeneous moments of the past co-exist with their present. During these moments of looking, time is not represented or experienced linearly. The random arrangement of images taken over a period prioritizes the individuals and their relationships instead of a linear sequence of events. There is, however, an awareness of the passage of time. Cecilia for example, saw a picture of Jeff and told me she wondered what he was doing now. Naomi said the pictures make her think about people she still identifies as friends even though their relationships have weakened. Beatrice saw the pictures and thought about her child, her current role as a mother and how that compared to who she was a few years ago. All three young women expressed feelings of joy as they looked at the images and thought about themselves and their friends. Prompted by the photo-collage, these memories of the past linger and remind people of the feelings and activities that connected them with the people in the photos.

The mural produced a place-based (physical) opportunity for viewers to reflect on the passage of time. People stood in front of the mural and thought about their friends, family and the moments represented. Facebook offers a similar, but digital way, of circulating images that prompts similar reflections about friends, family and events. Digital interactions are however usually asynchronous. They are individual experiences that become shared as people post and interact with the medium at different times. It is not the same as Naomi, Beatrice, or Cecilia and I standing in front of the mural having a conversation. Nor does

Facebook provide the same experience of thinking about dozens of community members represented side by side in a collage and how their relationships have changed over time. Instead individual images appear in sequence on Facebook, directed by the clicks of the user. Both media however, prompt moments of sharing memories and creating new memories. The interactions, whether in person or online, increased awareness of individual and collective community relationships and the youths' overlapping support systems.

The associations in our photo-collage are based on individual photos and combinations of photographs as well as the tribe symbols and peoples' memories. Berger (1980, 64) suggests that "memory works radially. That is to say with an enormous number of associations all leading to the same event." A radius of associations made by the viewer creates the present context of a photograph being viewed. This is why "one photograph can contain a thousand references" (Collier 1986, 6). The prompted individual memories and the relationship between memories will be different for each person. Yet, everyone who has personal connections to those represented in the mural do share the experience reflecting and identifying themselves in relation to the community as they look over the images in the photo-collage.

Memory plays an important role in the associations and interpretations we make at any present moment. Husserl (1902) and Bergson (1911) approached memory as an active part of the conscious experience of time in a present. Husserl and Bergson had different ways of expressing how time, memory and consciousness worked, but for both, the experience of time is not linear, rather it is a function of conscious associations and past memories that are recreated to help us define our present often in relation to a desired future. The relationship between past, present and future is a kind of feedback loop where perception evokes memories and understanding of that perception leads thoughts (Sutton 2009, 44).

The past and present, natural and spiritual, individual and social are equally important as the stories used to identify relationships (Bastien 2004; Archibald 2008). In Prince Rupert, the histories and inheritance of immortal Tsimshian and Nisga'a names create a kind of circular understanding of the actions of the past that continues to form the present (Roth 2008). As elders would remind me, "each year is a cycle. It always has been and always will [be]." The notion of understanding the world in this circular way informs the Tsimshian and Nisga'a conception of time and their relationships to one another.

The mural is also a way of understanding the passage of time and it embeds the recent past into the historical past through the symbols and ideas that have organized communities for generations. Even though I spent hours standing by the mural, documenting peoples' reactions was difficult. The most common expressions were like Kyle's first impression of amazement. I often heard "wow," "so great," and "beautiful" as people gazed at the mural during the canoe journey feast. At the mall, responses remained hard to define linguistically—the mural received many compliments, but people seemed to struggle to express what it meant to them with words. Several family members mentioned they appreciated seeing so many smiles. Clarence exclaimed, "look at all the happy people" when he joined me in the mall and saw the mural for the first time. In the conversation that ensued we reminded each other of the importance of joy, and Clarence pointed out that it was always good to be reminded of the good times, "when there is so much sadness here." The mural celebrates moments of happiness that help people endure the trauma and tragedy that remain a daily experience for many Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Based on my observations, finding moments of joy is one of the important strategies youth and their families recognized as part of their resilience. The mural both represents and produced emotions that help sustain the community and their support system.

We had a lot of photos from some tribes and less from others. We also had members from different tribes in many of the same photographs, and it would have been impossible to organize the photographs based on tribe membership. Fortunately, the logistical choice resulted in an elder, Peter, voicing an important aspect of the mural—he told me "it shows how we are all together and connected." Peter also suggested the title of *Wilp Lax Kaien* for the mural to identify the similar roles and responsibilities that Prince Rupert's community members have towards one another and their houses. The Nisga'a and Tsimshian community in Prince Rupert, may not be as aware of the social structures as they once were, but the support they show towards each other is powerful. The values, memories, and meanings that arise out of their variety of experiences continue to bring people together and form their shared identity.

6.6 The Mural and the Feast System

The mural and its photo-collage is a public display that encourages people to gather, elicits memories, and identifies social connections in a way that is similar to what a feast does. At a feast, each person in the room witnesses public speeches, economic exchanges, and participates in ceremonies. This experience orients their attention, for a time, to their responsibilities as community members. Community members I observed and spoke with spent time thinking about their memories, feelings and social relationships when they viewed the mural. While it was often difficult to express the meanings they associated with the mural, youth and adults shared stories of the images with me as well as kinship relations of those represented in the photo-collage. Others did not mention specific memories. Instead they pointed out pictures of events such as the canoe blessing and naming ceremonies they felt were important because they represented the revitalization of ceremony and protocol that helped bring people together. In both the mural and at gatherings, the meanings produced are unique for each person, but what they have in common is the ability to help maintain the connections people have with one another and their heritage.

Feasts are signifying practices. They define shared histories, relationships, power, and responsibilities. From these activities, shared meanings are created that become central to community identity. A group witnesses a public event and comes to understand the meanings of shared objects over time through discursive practices (Hall 1997). What the example of the mural also shows, is that as each person creates individual meanings from the experience, they also create new experiences with one another that pass on knowledge and define relationships.

Creating, viewing, and sharing the mural is also a signifying practice. Although different in scale and form from the feast, the mural is a reference point that creates positive expressions about the community. Standing in front of the mural together or sharing messages online solidify and validate individual meanings into shared understandings. Comments like “there’s so many smiles,” “beautiful” or “we’re all connected” become part of the shared ideas about the mural and in relation, the negotiated ideas community members had about each other. These moments of reflection participate in how people reflect and place themselves in their community. The mural represents many aspects of identity in ways

that celebrate people as individuals and as a collective. The shared ideas about the mural added these meaning to our collection of photographs while also incorporating the collection into a social practices of public display that helps maintain a sense of community among the Nisga'a and Tsimshian people in Prince Rupert.

The mural also resonated with the signifying practices of feasts because it became part of a travelling display. After my fieldwork in 2011, the mural spent time in Vancouver and was intermittently displayed at the First Nations House of Learning and other institutions at the University of British Columbia, as well as at the Urban Native Youth Centre, and the Vancouver Public Library (Figure 5.21; Figure 5.22). On more than one occasion, someone who looked at the mural in Vancouver recognized a friend or a cousin. People travel to feasts intermittently to reactivate connections across Aboriginal communities and the mural did the same.

The mural's online presence was also maintained during its travels, which helped preserve its connection to Prince Rupert. As the youth had done when the mural was being created in Price Rupert, I shared photographs of the mural on Facebook whenever it was on display (Figure 6.21). Upon seeing the mural in their newsfeeds, Kyle and others felt renewed pride, commented on, and shared the pictures to express their approval. They also saw the updates I posted about the compliments the mural received when it was on display in the Vancouver Public Library and at the Urban Native Youth Centre.



Figure 6.21 The mural hangs in the Vancouver Public Library.

While the mural was on display at the library both Jade and Augusta, members of the 2007 cohort who had left Prince Rupert a few years earlier, were able to visit it. They were active Facebook users who maintained friendships and support systems through the social media platform. They also appreciated the opportunity to see the mural in person. They had not seen many of their friends in person for years, both Jade and Augusta enjoyed the opportunity to see images of themselves as part of the community to which they both still felt like they belonged. Hanging the mural in different locations and posting images of it on Facebook enabled a larger Indigenous community to connect with it although those most strongly connected to it lived in Prince Rupert.



Figure 6.22 Augusta, far left, looks at the mural with some of my friends who live in Vancouver.

The media and technology that facilitated the creation, circulation and reproduction of the mural were introduced by my research, but were quickly appropriated and validated by the community. The mural is infused with traditional values of public presentation and inspires moments of reflection among community members. The physicality of the mural stood out for community members and created moments of shared observation and conversation at the museum, the mall and wherever else it was displayed in town. As an image shared on social media, the mural also became part of the digital interactions that produced joy and pride. Finally, moving the mural around to different locations also resonated with patterns of movement and opportunities of connection provided by physical gatherings such as feasts. It was an object that connected to individuals within city and community members who remained connected, but no longer lived in Prince Rupert. The mural, in both a physical and digital form, created an opportunity for youth and their families to reflect and recognize themselves, their values, and their community.

6.7 Conclusion

The night before I left Prince Rupert at the end of my fieldwork in 2011, I went to the mall and took down the mural. I was alone and the mall was deserted. As I carried the boards out of the storefront where the mural had hung for the past two weeks, I looked back at the window. The window display was now empty, but the glass was covered with hundreds of fingerprints. There were fingerprints of all sizes at all heights. Smears and chocolate stained prints covered the bottom where children had pressed dirty fingers and drippy noses against the glass. Dozens of fingerprints had collected in certain areas recording the popularity of a few of the images. A few fingerprints even recorded where people had jumped to point out an image to their friends. The mural was now gone, but traces of the community's connection to and interactions with the mural remained behind. Each fingerprint represented a moment when a viewer felt some kind of connection or engaged in a conversation about the images, the memories they evoked, or meanings the mural and its photo-collage produced. The fingerprints provided evidence of the interactions and connections people had with the mural and with each other.

The media created during my research are meaningful to individuals in Prince Rupert because of the collaborations that they represented and their novel their visual qualities. The mural itself is still at the Friendship House. As a medium, the mural stores and disseminates these experiences by presenting our photo collection as a multitude of moments. It also produced new moments as community members shared the act of viewing it in person and online. The mural elicits memories of social support, feasts, and mundane moments that give individuals sense of identity. The mural's size and cultural symbols create strong feelings of connection in the viewer that support and participate within the community's traditional values by creating a physical space where people interact with each other and with the mural. In these ways, the collection of photographs and the mural recorded and participate in the social relationships of the Tsimshian and Nisga'a community of Prince Rupert.

During my engagement with the youth and families I met in Prince Rupert, Facebook became another medium that recorded the interactions between the members of the community. Comments and status messages shaped what it meant to participate in their Aboriginal community. Our photographs and the mural became a kind of representation that

could be publicly validated in ways that resonated with the culture. Technological practices using Facebook, cell phones, and digital cameras created new opportunities and new forms of representation that activated and validated support systems and in the process created new avenues for youth to access cultural knowledge and support.

To this day, the images continue to represent and elicit memories that would not have been as strong if cameras had not been present and if the photographs had not circulated for many years afterwards. The circulation and the inclusion of these images in the photo-collage reinforce the memories of the friendships that helped produce the images in the first place. The physical and digital circulations of our images resonate with one another to prompt viewers' reflections about community and their relationships. Facebook likes and comments recorded the interactions and reinforced the practices that support reciprocity and community maintenance. Conversations in front of the mural shared memories and identified the mural as a repository that prompted new interactions, which in turn shape future feelings of belonging, responsibility, and connection to the past, present, and future.



Figure 6.22 Kyle holds a camera and creates a picture of his friends and family who, at the same time, are holding cameras and creating images of him in front of his design.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Contributions and Implications

In 2015, I walked through a hallway at the University of British Columbia's hospital towards my part time job as a research coordinator. A large man with tattoos walked towards me. With surprise I recognized Clyde, Betsy's son and Shannon's father (Figure 7.1). Clyde is one of the funniest men I have ever met, but I had not seen him in years. In 2011, he was part of the carving class and the Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers. During quieter moments, such as when we were waiting at the airport for a flight, we would also engage in conversations about my work. He was worried for the youth, his own children, and the children of others.

During these conversations, Clyde shared that he had struggled with many of the same things as the youth I met. He has been estranged from his culture and his family but, over time, has learned and reconnected with both. The carving class, the dance group, and becoming part of Kyle's family has been a part of that process.⁴³

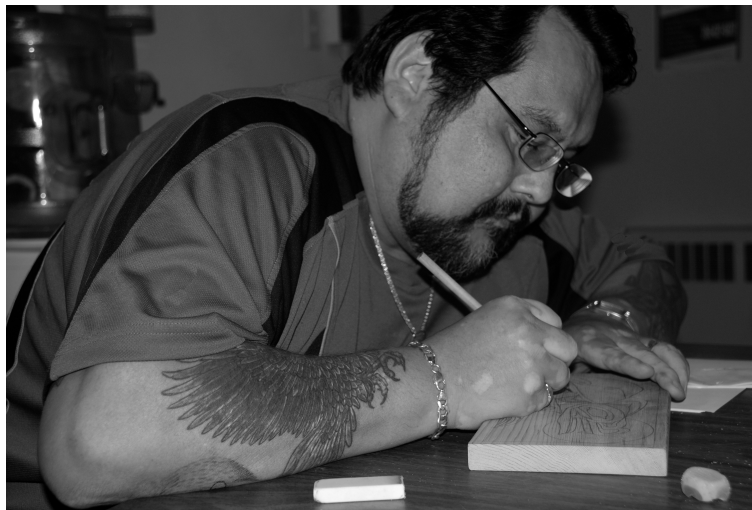


Figure 7.1 Clyde works on a project during the carving class in 2011.

⁴³ Since my fieldwork in 2011, Clyde has married Kyle's mother Julia. He learned and then performed Nisga'a protocols to ask for her hand in marriage at a special gathering at the Nisga'a Hall; an infrequent event in the urban community. They also filmed the event and shared it on Youtube. The couples' proposal is another example of how families are reconnecting with protocols and incorporating digital media into these practices.

That day in 2015, Clyde was in Vancouver for a doctor's appointment. During our serendipitous meeting in the hospital hallway, he bragged about Shannon and Victor as well as the other young people in Prince Rupert who were finding their way. He also told me he was worried about the next cohort of teenagers who seemed to be repeating self-destructive behaviours and encountering the same challenges as those who came before.

"I keep wondering," he told me, "How do we break the cycle? What do we do to help?" I have heard this question more times than I can count.

Often, when I hear this question, I share a conversation I had with Chrystel in 2008 after the first time I was asked this question at a film screening outside of Prince Rupert. At the time, I was hoping she give me an answer from the youths' perspective that we could share with others. Instead, she challenged and refused to accept the premise of the question.

"What do they do to help us? Well, nothing. We'll figure it out. Just give us time. We figure it out," she said. Chrystel's answer was informed by her experiences in the Ministry of Children and Families as well as other interventions made by adults and outsiders. Instead of relying on others, Chrystel was steadfast in her belief that she and her friends would figure it out.

As of the time of this writing, Chrystel and many of her friends have figured it out. They are employed. They are parents. They have hobbies and relationships that they enjoy. Some chose to continue their education; others did not. The youth—now young adults—have figured out how to manage loss and sadness, although it remains a large part of their lives. Many have found individuals in their community to lean on and figured out what works for them, based on their own definitions of success. Social media and digital technologies I have described have been a part of "figuring it out."

Let me be clear, however, that most of the youth I met continue to face significant economic challenges and are still contending with the effects of colonialism and marginalization. Wages are often low and jobs too few. Self-destructive coping mechanisms continue to affect their community and others. Suicide is too common. The youth have figured it out, but there remain challenges and it has not been without its costs.

There continues to be concern about suicide in Prince Rupert and First Nations communities across British Columbia. Results from the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey show that 45% of Aboriginal student participants reported "having a family member or close

friend who had attempted suicide” (Tourand et al 2016,20). These rates are comparable to those reported in the 2008 BC Adolescent Health Survey that also reported approximately one in five Aboriginal Youth seriously thought about ending their own life in the last year (Tsuruda et al 2012). The outcomes of economic and social marginalization as part of the assaults of colonialism are concerning and vary in relation to local efforts to maintain and revitalize Aboriginal communities, including the community I met in Prince Rupert.

There is real concern, but it is important to recognize that there is a wide range of suicide rates across Indigenous communities in British Columbia (Chandler and Lalonde 1998). Chandler and Proulx (2006,136) point out an important fact: “Suicide is not an Indigenous problem, but, rather, a dramatic problem in some Aboriginal communities and not a problem at all in others.” The rates vary dramatically depending on the particular community. These statistics have not had a more prominent place in my introduction or chapters because of the stigma surrounding suicide rates. Yet, it is appropriate to recognize such risks are a part of the youth’s realities and challenges, but it does not define them. Clyde and others remain worried, but as Chrystel reminded me, many figure it out.

So what can *we* do? When I hear this question, I often contemplate what the person who asks *we* means by “*we*.” Often the person who asks has never visited Prince Rupert. In these moments I understand “*we*” to mean structural and bureaucratic systems such as social services, school districts, and processes of decolonization. When asked by those in Prince Rupert however, “*we*” usually mean the individuals in their community. What can they do personally? And it is this local question that has guided my participation, research and media production with the youth and their families as well as my writing.

I believe engaging in conversations with youth that bridge and explain contemporary technological practice in relation to traditions, values, and history is one of many answers to the “what can we do” question. Effective conversations I have observed in Prince Rupert begin with the youth and connect their interests to their heritage. For example, I watched some elders at the teen centre, gain respect by showing interest in popular music and using the lyrics as jumping off points for conversations about culture and respect. Discussing technological practices with the youth and their families offers similar opportunities to discuss heritage, community responsibilities and reciprocity in ways that connect new practices to traditions that maintained their communities for centuries.

Such local answers to the “what do we do” question, will only work within the larger context of structure and bureaucracy, and decolonizing change. Land claims, reconciliation and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) are vital. The Nisga’a Final Agreement (Nisga’a Lisims Government) for example, gave the youth I met, such as Kyle, a source of strength and identity that filled them with pride, even though Kyle and his friends may never live in the territory. This pride inspired conversations about protocol and culture that helped him discover his skill as an artist and continues to motivate his contributions to the reciprocal practices of his community. It helps define and create the feelings of belonging to his village, First Nation, Prince Rupert, and beyond that make up his and others’ community-based support systems. A combination of answers is needed.

This dissertation has been a strength-based approach exploring how framing discussions of Facebook and digital technological practice, as a creative means of managing marginalization, exclusion, and cultural revitalization opens a conversation about community belonging and the influences of the past within the present. In Prince Rupert, invented technological practices using cell phones and Facebook can be especially successful when the media produced resonates with cultural protocols and values. Posting to Facebook and engaging in public participation via social media offers a means for teenagers, who felt disconnected from their community and traditions, to leverage reciprocal relationships and become participating members of the community members regardless of physical location. The youth and their families are remediating previous technology and traditional values to create new social systems that support resilience in the present.

Although the appropriation of social media to support each other and create resilience among youth and their families around Prince Rupert is relatively new, the youth described in this dissertation are not alone in their digital technological practices. *Raven’s Children IV: Aboriginal Youth Health in BC*, a report based on Aboriginal student responses to the 2013 B.C. Adolescent Health Survey released by the McCreary Centre Society in 2016, identified technology use as a potential protective factor for Aboriginal Youth. The report found:

During consultations, social media, email, and text were seen as key ways to keep in touch with family and maintain community networks, especially across geographical barriers. Survey results showed that youth with a phone were more likely than those without one to feel like a part of their community (36% vs. 30%), to feel an adult in their community cared about them (64% vs. 56%), and to have an adult they could turn to if they had a serious problem (79% vs. 73%) (Tourand et al 2016, 56).

The reported differences between Aboriginal youth with cell phones and those without shows a positive correlation between technological practices and resilience. The report also recognizes online bullying as a factor in youths' participation, but the positive relationships between supportive adult relationships and technology use show a positive trend that aligns with my observations among youth in Prince Rupert. The survey report confirms that cell phones increase youths' sense of belonging and ability to find supportive adults. In particular, this dissertation helps answer why advisory groups and survey analysis identify technology use as important and what Aboriginal youth may be doing with technology to maintain community networks among their communities in British Columbia.



Figure 7.2 Verna, Kristen and Shaylene enjoy a ride during a visiting carnival in 2011.

Digital technological practices with social media are one of the ways the youth are recognizing, practicing and redefining responsibility and relationship within their communities. The shared, similar experiences that circulate on Facebook are also part of how the youth and their families define their community's boundaries. In Prince Rupert, interactions on Facebook and through cell phones have become part of how the Indigenous community develops and maintains feelings of belonging, and in some respect, perhaps feel a greater sense of belonging.

Technological practices I observed in Prince Rupert also point to another important protective factor: cultural continuity. Dr. Michael Chandler, a developmental psychologist,

and his colleagues have studied the relationship between cultural continuity and youth suicide rates among Aboriginal communities in British Columbia (Chandler and Lalonde 1998, Chandler et al 2003). Chandler and others argue cultural continuity in the form of self-determination and control over land, education, health are important for Aboriginal communities on reserve and in urban centres such as Prince Rupert. Scholars have also outlined how individuals and communities practice sovereignty and cultural continuity in British Columbia's Indigenous media (e.g. Dowell 2013) and in gatherings and performance practices (e.g. Dangeli 2015). Self-determining fights for recognition, decolonization, sovereignty are a priority (e.g. Coulthard 2014). Awareness of these acts of sovereignty, fights for self-determination, and cultural continuity are many structural and systematic answers for the “what can we do” question.

For Clyde and others in Prince Rupert, “what can we do” means including technological practices in discussions of cultural continuity as one means by which Aboriginal youth are defining themselves and participating in their communities. Digital technologies have inspired a great deal of change in the way individuals interact in a relatively short period time, but some aspects of new technological practices created and reproduced in the community reflect successful behaviours of the feast system and its ability to manage and maintain communities. This text provides examples of ways youth are creating new technological practices in ways that align with some aspects of cultural continuity in their community and has the potential for creating enfranchisement among younger members seeking relief from periods of alienation. These examples can be used to further conversations among youth, their families, and their communities.

7.1.1 Facebook

In 2007, some of the youths' needs were supported by Planet Youth and the street family. It was an alternative physical safe space compared to unavoidable family struggles at home. The youth found sanctuary at the centre and addressed their felt invisibility and a lack of supportive relationships by creating a system of support—their peer community. Kinship was recognized and enacted as a respectful way to identify important relationship and responsibilities among the peer group. Before mobile digital communication was ubiquitous,

the street family is an example of how youth recreated aspects of their culture in their own terms. The result was a support system that stood in for more traditional interactions.

The street family was an example of teenagers practicing building community and support system building before cell phones. Although youth may have felt alienated, I have argued that they created new ways of interacting and finding support that remediated public validation similar to the protocols taught by and embodied in the feast system. During their teenage years, before mobile communication technology was available in Prince Rupert, they created these systems through a physical place. After inexpensive access to Facebook, youth and their families similarly created new technological practices that identified and incorporated ancient practices in into asynchronous communication.

By 2011, new technology had shifted some of the youths' daily activities. Instead of gathering at a physical location on a daily basis, the youth I met frequently connected via their cell phones. Technology influenced the range and reach of the youth and their families' communicative practices. These new opportunities framed daily communication and potentially even youths' movements around the city. In 2007, youth had to go to the teen centre to find support. In 2011, emotional, economic, and cultural support could be accessed through the phone in their pocket. Rides out of town, cultural knowledge, and economic support were managed through social media and their cell phones. Digital technology became a characteristic of participating in the mostly place-based Indigenous community of Prince Rupert and its surrounding villages.

Respect, relatedness and responsibility towards one another were expressed, practiced and recorded through Facebook. The youth I met appropriated social media to engage and practice aspects of the feast system's values, including recognizing the respect and potential opportunities gained in public communication and validation as well as the continued maintenance of geographically dispersed support systems and relationships. These technological practices were popular because of the new opportunities provided by digital technology and social media. I have argued that they were effective, in part, because the youth and their families remediate communication practices learned from in-person feasts and VHF radios to Facebook.

Victor and Shannon are an example of youth harnessing and deploying the strong aspects of their heritage combined with current technology-based opportunities to shape their

futures. They and others used social media to influence their role in their community in Prince Rupert as well as document and disseminate their experiences. Successful technological practices such as Victor and Shannon's, re-invent aspects of community building practices that are recognizable to others because although new, they resemble protocols of the feast system.

Success encourages the reproduction of the practice and the common qualities that identify and influence local appropriations of digital technology. Raffles and social media were so successful that in later years I heard the Friendship House was video recording and sharing the results of their own raffles in ways similar to Victor and Shannon. The reproduction of these practices and elements of success are why Facebook, as a mean to find and manage emotional and economic need as well as periods of absence, became popular so quickly. Technological practices developed and were reproduced because individuals observed and recognized that social media offered new opportunities for youth and their families to engage with others in ways that encouraged culturally appropriate reciprocity that could mitigated effects of ongoing colonialism within the community.

7.1.2 Digital Photographs

In 2007, our photographs and interactions created by and for the street family were media that identified boundaries of the group and, more importantly, expressed and shared their feelings of belonging. The youth photographed each other because their friends were important to them and they wanted to recognize those relationships. When our media shared the street family with others, public validation extended beyond the teen centre and among the adults in the community. Digital media participated in the production of belonging by creating opportunities for reflection and ways to visibly and symbolically locate themselves in their community. At times when youth and their families may have felt invisible, our collaborations created positive images that prompted interactions between the youth, adults, and our media. Through the individual photographs, film, and mural we created, community members engaged in activities that helped them reflect, locate and take ownership of their representations and community.

Our photographs and the mural also offer a way of expressing and validating youth and other's feelings. For example, when I discussed the photographs with Beatrice in 2011, she discussed a picture of Jade she had created with a camera in 2007.

I think of the one I took which is the one of Jade, it kind of seemed like it was telling the truth. That we were invisible, but not because part of him was invisible, but like you couldn't really see him. That's how some of us felt and some of us chose to feel like and what we didn't want people to see and what we did want them to see.



Figure 7.3 An image of Jade in 2007 that the youth chose to title "Disappearing." Beatrice held the camera.

The image in particular, shows Jade balancing on a fence in front of a train (Figure 7.3). The exposure and contrast, created by the camera, hides his face. At the teen centre in 2007, the youth titled the photograph "Disappearing" because of the Jade's hidden identity and the precarious way he balanced in front of the train. For Beatrice, this feeling of invisibility and pain defined her teenage years and remains a strong memory. For Beatrice, the photograph represents that experience. Beatrice remembers this feeling, four years after

the photograph's creation, and its inclusion in the mural validates it as part of the various feelings that define what the youth did and continue to have in common.

The images created with the street family came to represent the youths' teenage years and their feelings of both alienation and the strength of their friends. In 2011, the tone of our photographs shifted someone to represent feelings of pride, joy, and strength. Our photographs were praised by friends and family as positive representations and an alternative to stereotypical settler representations. They helped youth and their families feel visible in ways that respected and celebrated the diversity and unity of their communities.

The mural also created opportunities for recognizing the cultural importance of media-based reflection for the Tsimshian and Nisga'a community of Prince Rupert. Photographs, videos, button blankets, beads, masks and our mural are repositories for shared experiences, stories, and the glue that maintains the sentiments that community members have for one another. Our photographs and mural were new media and introduced activities that were embraced because they expressed respect and the power of human relationships. The result was that the community took ownership of the images. They have since been used as memorial images and happy birthday photographs and occasionally recirculate through Facebook as community members interact with them again. Images of the mural continue to circulate via social media and the physical mural is in Friendship Association of Prince Rupert. Opportunities to interact with media, whether through performance at a feast or walking through the mall and stopping to look for friends within our mural, created ways for individuals to actively reflect and recognize how they connect to others.

For those in Prince Rupert, the mural visualized the continuity of their community and its features. As one elder said, "It shows how we are all connected." Connected to their shared past and to each other. Similar to sitting in the audience of the feast, the activity of viewing the mural or its reproduction and our photographs are moments that mean something different to each person, but also have a collective experience. Both are meant to ask viewers to reflect on their part of their shared history, personal experiences and what these mean for the future. The mural, in both its physical and digital forms, also prompts interactions, memories, and feelings that are part of the shared symbols that define their community. For Tsimshian and Nisga'a people I met, media is used to create moments of reflection and

opportunities to identify shared community symbols have changed over time; our mural is one iteration.



Figure 7.4 The Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers invited me to joint them for a group photo during a tour of the British Columbia's Government House during trip to Victoria in 2011.

Digital technology is the newest iteration of invented practices that reinvent community building practices in ways that are recognizable as forms of cultural continuity. It is not purely a linear evolutionary process, but more of a conversation with the past within the created adaptations of the present. Previous successes are incorporated into new practice. Within a cultural framework where public validation and mutual responsibility are valued, and marginalization means relying on these relationships is even more important, invented technological practices respond to both influences. The result is that relatively quickly, cell phones, cameras, photographs, and social media became a part of how the youth in Prince Rupert navigated and directed their social worlds. Participating in the community meant participating via appropriate technological practices that recognized, created and maintained always-available access to what has always been their greatest resource: each other and their families.

7.2 Limitations

When discussing this dissertation with Chrystel in 2015, I asked her, “do you remember that day when we joked about oolichans and ketchup? What your daughter liked and didn’t?” She nodded, and we remembered the conversation together. “I think I want to

start my introduction with that. It's a great way to start the conversation. What do you think?"

Chrystel liked the story, but also reminded me, "You know, now, my daughter likes ketchup. Fish? Not so much... It's like it switched." She twisted her face to emphasize her point and we laughed together again.⁴⁴

Chrystel's comment is a good reminder of the fact that my observations and participation occurred over a particular period of time. The examples I discuss are selected moments in a continuum of experiences and changes. My research is limited by my participant observation in 2007, 2011, and to a lesser extent the visits, phone interviews, instant message chats and follow up conversations since my fieldwork in Prince Rupert. As of this publication, Chrystel's daughter is grade 1 and her tastes, as well as her height, have changed greatly since I spent time with her as a toddler. More than likely, the technological practices of the youth and families I met have changed as well. My analysis is limited by the time period, but offers a way to think about why particular technological practices I observed are successful because they exist within larger frames of reference.

My dissertation is also limited to the small number of people who have participated in my research over the years. I encountered one urban community and became familiar with a subset of that group. The youth I met in Prince Rupert were a subset of the Aboriginal youth in town who shared the extreme effects of colonialism. Other Aboriginal youth in town had different experiences and opportunities. Their technological practices may be different and would reflect these differences. While the cohort of youth I met at Planet Youth may be similar to others in Prince Rupert and across British Columbia, I do not assume these factors and practices are universal. Instead, my dissertation offers memorable moments that are used to create suggestions for how to think about the practices as they are reinvented based on traditions, remediation, and current needs.

⁴⁴ A year later I emailed, the final version of the oolichans and ketchup introduction section to Chrystel. She replied, "I love it the way it is 😍."

7.3 Future Research

Following Jean Rouch's approach, this dissertation is a beginning of a conversation. Cultural continuity is recognizable, although transformed, within the way youth posted on Facebook and interacted with one another. The opportunities and limitations of new tools and highly functional aspects of the feast system are potentially active every time a cell phone notification seeks a youths' attention. These conversations, especially for youth who may feel disconnected from their heritage and families can lead to further learning and strategizing for ways to incorporate their heritage as a means of managing the effects of colonialism and developing future successes.

My dissertation also highlights the importance of ongoing mixed-method studies to document and understand these shifts. The *Raven's Children Four Report* also stated 88% of Aboriginal participants in the British Columbia Adolescent Youth Health Survey had a cell phone. What are they doing with their phones? How do they think about what they are doing? How does technological practices among First Nations in British Columbia and Canada compare with other Indigenous groups around the world? How do Indigenous technological practices differ from other groups? What can we learn about these different practices?

Since my time in Prince Rupert, First Nations in Canada united for a time around #IdleNoMore, a social media based activism movement that brought people physically together for protests, flash mobs, and blockades (Wood 2015). Callison and Hermida (2014, 713) argue, "#IdleNoMore offers an example of networked forms of leadership and gatekeeping, where actors emerge through conversational practices of thousands of individuals making decisions on the relevance of a fragment of information" through direct address outside of traditional mass media. Four years later, the hashtag continues to circulate and the Facebook group remains active, but engagement has decreased over time. My research suggests future research should approach Indigenous social movements in ways that recognize and engage personal Aboriginal support systems to unify and promote structural and local promotion of cultural continuity, self-determination, and sovereignty.

In addition to exploring the use of technology among First Nations in Canada on a mass scale, future research should particularly explore the incorporation of recording

technology and media into feast protocols themselves. I was able to observe technological practices at feasts and gatherings and have mentioned a few, but further analysis was beyond the scope and permissions for this project. My research touches upon the circulation of photographs and videos after the event, but the presence and activity of recording a speech, dance, or protocol with a camera or cell phone has the potential to change a person's experience of the event. How does the live streaming of gatherings such as the Hobiye in Vancouver weaken or strengthen attendance and how does it shift perceptions and understandings of those who attend the event? As technological practices become a part of feast practices, how can these tools be responsibly leveraged to encourage participation and feelings of belonging? How do they extend tradition, and how do they affect its ongoing practice and perception?

My research identifies the possible productive potential of appropriating technology created outside of Indigenous communities. If youth are able to appropriate these tools in ways that support themselves and their communities, then what would happen if they created the protocols and systems of cyberspace themselves. For this project, I hope to one day have the funding and time to make all of our photographs available online to the Nisga'a Society and Friendship Association of Prince Rupert. A web site would remediate the mural into a new kind of multi-media platform. In addition to images it would include information identifying individuals, events and relationships contained within the images. The photographs and the data related to their representation and production would be a new way of preserving and distributing the shared memories of the community.

7.4 Final Thoughts

For the youth I met, digital technology is a new repository for shorter, more numerous snapshots of their evolving experience compared to lengthier traditions of the past. The representations and insider knowledge represented by our mural, are used to chart and navigate the vast depth of the community's knowledge and shared experiences. The youth and their families in Prince Rupert have created digital technology practices that change and manoeuvre aspects of the Northwest Coast feast system in ways that encourage community-based systems of support as well as ways for communities to enfranchise youth and grow.

Public expression in art, economic exchange, and social media provide a means to decode the always-evolving repository of material and ephemeral expressions of core cultural concepts.

While traditional social structures managed resources and relationships for the population across distance, contemporary Indigenous experience must also navigate a constant awareness of village realities and relations to a surrounding social context, no matter their physical location. Facebook News Feeds keep people aware of tragedies endured by the people of their homelands. Such always on access can be difficult for youth seeking different opportunities. Yet Facebook also offers an always on support system that can access cultural knowledge, friendship, and advice.

Around Prince Rupert, radios in villages blurt with community announcements and call outs to find people. Within the city and beyond, Facebook streams with affections, bake sale announcements, family reminders, cultural expressions, public statements of reciprocity and prompts for ongoing intimacies. Photographs and video circulate as users validate their own and representations of others with likes, comments, and tags. Cell phones chime with the feelings, histories, and desires of First Nations peoples. The strengths of their Indigenous identity has found new expression on social media and creates resilient systems of support that stretch across the Northwest Coast and beyond.



Figure 7.5 Multiple generations of youth hang out on the grass together.

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