“IT’S NICE TO SEE OLD FRIENDS AGAIN”: FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS, ‘ADVICE’, AND ARCHIVAL POWER IN A NORTHERN COAST SALISH COMMUNITY

by

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Abstract

Photography has a rich and complex past and present among the shíshálh Coast Salish, a self-governing Indigenous Nation on British Columbia’s southern Northwest Coast. This dissertation explores the multiple ways in which photography intersects with contemporary shíshálh (pronounced sheesh-ath) lives. I argue that, far from being an imposed colonial technology, photography is localized in unique, transformative ways. Drawing on James L. Hevia’s (2009) notion of the “photography complex,” I examine the key ways through which photography is culturally active and activated. This begins with locating photography within the complex that is “family” in shíshálh territory. I then move to a discussion of the relationship between photography and cultural memory—as both oral history-telling and public performance. Next, I consider how photographs operate as contact zones between shíshálh peoples and others. Finally, I explore the ways through which photographs are transformed by, in particular, digital preservation and its relationship to more analogue, familial forms of photographic sociality.
Lay Summary

This dissertation explores the relationship between culture and photography amongst the shíshálh Nation, a Coast Salish Indigenous community on the Northwest Coast of British Columbia. The central argument of this dissertation is that photography is connected to, and shaped by, particulars of place, history, and memory—as well as forces of politics and power—what historian James L. Hevia (2009) refers to as the “photography complex.” A primary contribution of this research is its attention to family photograph collections, an often-overlooked aspect of Indigenous visual-material culture. This dissertation is the product of 18 months of participant observation fieldwork in the shíshálh community, as well as extensive scholarly source and archival research. The primary focus of fieldwork was a community-driven photograph digitization project—The shíshálh Nation Historical Photograph Digitization and Research Project—that digitized over 2000 photographs and produced 30 hours of recorded oral narratives for community control and use.
Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, Adam Arthur Solomonian. The fieldwork reported herein was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H11-01234 and conducted with the permission of the shíshálh Nation Government. Funding for this dissertation was provided by the University of British Columbia and the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project.
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This dissertation is dedicated to all Shíshálh — past, present, and future. 
\( ?ul \ nu \ msh \ chalap \) (Thank You).
Chapter One: Introduction and Methodology

Over the last century and a half, photographs have come to constitute important forms of cultural patrimony the world over, with abundant archives and collections, both public and private, dedicated to the preservation and circulation of images. In considering their indigenization, however, anthropological perspectives must shift to account for how photographs—through local production, preservation, and possible global circulation—contribute to the formation of new types of Indigenous subjectivities, and can potentially be used to articulate those identities to wider audiences. This dissertation examines how this is occurring in one particular local context and the significance this has for expanding the anthropology of photography in Indigenous North America and beyond.

I argue that there is a general gap in anthropological literature concerning photograph collections produced and controlled by Indigenous peoples themselves. While much attention has been paid to the re-negotiation of outsider-produced photographs by contemporary Indigenous communities in North America and elsewhere (a body of literature I review below), little has been said by anthropologists about family photograph collections (see Pedri-Spade 2016 for an exception). The possible reasons for this are difficult to hypothesize, but there appears to be a bias in anthropology that views Indigenous peoples as photographic subjects, but rarely, if ever, on the other side of the camera.\(^1\) I seek to address that gap by focusing on local collections and collection-making practices that include both photographs taken by community members, as well as those produced by outsiders that have acquired uniquely local significance. Thus, I further complicate this insider/outsider binary by arguing that photographs produced by outsiders can be

\(^1\) This same bias, however, is not overtly present with regard to the medium of film, where there has been a substantial anthropological engagement for over 20 years (see Ginsburg 1994; Turner 1992).
transformed into family photographs through their material and figurative incorporation into the display and performance of family and community histories.

This is an ethnography about the relationship between photography, history, and the repertoire of local cultural memory. It is also a story about the making of a community archive of historical photographs, the coming together of numerous kinds of “archival” processes and practices in a small Coast Salish community on British Columbia’s Sunshine Coast. Here, the “archive” is a real space, both physical and virtual, with a multitude of practices and processes, informed and performed through the nuances of culture, the particulars of history, and the power of locality. At the heart of this story are collections of family photographs and community photo archives, some dating back to the late nineteenth century, as well as historical photographic material acquired from other places and other archives. It examines shíshálh (pronounced sheesh-ath) peoples’ engagement with photographs in a variety of social settings and contexts, as well as my own engagement with shíshálh peoples and their photographs.

I present an ethnographic analysis of how photographs are imbued with cultural significance in a host of interactive and affective spaces—a form of what historian Geoffrey Batchen (2000) terms “vernacular photographies.” A central component of my discussion is cultural memory, considered to be both orated as stories and performed through repertoire (Taylor 2003). Cultural memory is an extensive engagement with the past that collects and is collected through photographs and their human interlocutors. This combination of image, material, sound, and embodiment weave in and out of a larger discussion that engages the day-to-day life of people on the Sechelt isthmus, and beyond, in a relational manner (Edwards 2009), as photographs give presence to stories, emotions, and actions, and these in turn give life to photographs in a kind of always-emergent simultaneity. They are also always engaged with and
given meaning through the systems of social relations into which they enter, a central one being family.

The primary location of this research is a small town called Sechelt. *shíshálh* people have occupied this place, a spit of land that separates the Sechelt Inlet from the Salish Sea (*tsain-ko*), since the beginning of their existence. It has, since time immemorial, been a seasonal, family-owned resource-harvesting site called *ch’átelich*, one of many such places within their larger ancestral territory. With the arrival of Oblate missionaries in the 1860s, *ch’átelich* was transformed into Sechelt, a Catholic mission community that was intended by missionaries and government officials to become the permanent home of all *shíshálh* peoples (Lemert 1954).

But the term *shíshálh* means so much more than just a people. It is better considered as a larger *shíshálh* ontological and epistemological web in which people are just one node in a series of interconnections. Linguistically, the term designates not only human beings, but the landscape, culturally significant objects, and attendant ways of knowing (Beaumont 2011)—*shíshálh* is the melding or interlinking of all of these elements. I frame this ethnography of photography with this cultural tetrad of people, places, things, and knowledge in mind in order to best understand the *shíshálh* “social life” of photographs (Appadurai 1988). This model is influenced by Karen Barad’s (2007) notion of intra-action, whereby:

[k]nowing is a distributed practice that includes the larger material arrangement. To the extent that humans participate in scientific or other practices of knowing, they do so as part of the larger material configuration of the world and its ongoing open-ended articulation. *(Barad 2007, 379).*

This linkage of all that is *shíshálh* frames an examination of how photographs operate as vibrant and radiant “things” (Bennett 2010), with and through which human actors communicate knowledge about a variety of subjects, in a variety of settings. It provides an important way to
begin conceiving photographs and photography from a local perspective. *shíshálh*, photographs are given uniquely local cultural significance and power in this larger onto-epistemological web (Barrad 2007). They are animated aspects of *shíshálh*, becoming at once a manifestation of the intra-action of people, places, things, and knowledge. Furthermore, this interconnection addresses the broader symbolic and social processes and practices that transform certain photographs from familial objects into heritage materials in need of preservation, and, in some cases, back into family belongings once again.

My research is guided by three interrelated questions: (i) How are photographs actively made into culturally important things—by being shared, argued over, talked about, secreted away, copied, stolen, returned, remembered, forgotten—and transformed through various archival practices into heritage materials in need of preservation? (ii) In what ways is the production, circulation, and reception of photographs embedded within and active upon *shíshálh* cultural memory-making and historical consciousness? (iii) How are perspectives on the ongoing, particularly digital, preservation of photographic materials—alongside other community archives—linked to larger ideas about the management of heritage, the protection of cultural knowledge, and the processes of self-determination within the *shíshálh* community, particularly in an era of ongoing land claims? These questions still persist, owing in part to the open-ended conversation that is anthropology and the ever-moving entity that is culture.

This is a representation of a *shíshálh* response, from the perspective of a particular ethnographer, at a particular moment in time. As such, it is not intended to be photographic analysis from an art historical point of view, or a purely archival endeavour. In engaging with photographs using an ethnographic method, I am not so much concerned with their form and content, or their authorship. I am not interested in constructing my own subjective interpretation,
or “reading,” of them. I am not interested in producing a comprehensive cataloguing of them. I am concerned with gaining a better understanding of what shíshálh people think about, and do with, their photographs in their day-to-day lives. Information about the content and context of photographs, and their production, is included where necessary, or where the information is available. Many of the photographs discussed here lack the provenance particular to Western archival and historical practice. They are often copies of copies, and their dates are estimated through various types of corroborating evidence supplied by community members at various points in their history. Who took a photograph, particularly if taken by an outsider, is generally of little concern and, therefore, generally absent from existing data and local memory. This by no means lessens their value or significance for those who care for them, since they continue to animate stories and personal relationships through their circulation. Before venturing further, I wish to better position myself within this story and how it came to be that I get to share in its telling.

The Isthmus and I

I arrived in shíshálh territory via ferry and pickup truck in the fall of 2012. My interest in the past and present of photography among Indigenous communities on Canada’s Northwest Coast began in the fourth year of my anthropology undergraduate degree at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario. There, I was introduced to photographs of Nuxalk, Ulkatcho, and Dakelh peoples taken between 1920 and 1924 in the Bella Coola Valley by an archaeologist named Harlan Ingersoll Smith who, at that point in his career, was employed by the Anthropology Division of the Geological Survey of Canada (Tepper 1991). I decided that I wanted to know more about this collection of photographs, which are now held in the archival collections of the
Canadian Museum of History, formerly the Canadian Museum of Civilization. In particular, I wanted to know more about how contemporary *Nuxalkmc* (*Nuxalk* people), whose ancestors and traditional territory make up the bulk of the photographic archive, valued and made use of the collection. To do this, I travelled to Bella Coola in the summer of 2008 to conduct fieldwork for my Masters in Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (Solomonian 2009).

Upon my arrival in Bella Coola, I was immediately struck by the extensive family photograph collections adorning the walls of most *Nuxalk* homes (as well as printed onto t-shirts or sewn onto pillowcases). This interest carried on into my doctoral studies. I wanted to better understand the importance of these collections to these people, how they wanted them shared, and what kind of future their stewards desired for them. I had originally intended to travel back to *Nuxalk* territory to carry out fieldwork for my PhD, with an interest in documenting and digitizing family photograph collections. Upon discussion with friends and relations in Bella Coola, however, it appeared that conducting a project of this nature at that time would have been more of an imposition than a benefit. I explained this predicament to a colleague over coffee one fall day in 2010. At this point, he had been working with the *shíshálh* Nation as an archaeologist for over 15 years. He told me about a project the Nation’s Rights and Title Department was currently engaged in that involved the digitization of historical photographs (from the late nineteenth century to the 1950s) held in the collections of the Nation’s *tems swiya* Museum and Cultural Centre.

I immediately drafted a letter to the *shíshálh* Nation Chief and Council explaining my research interests and proposing a meeting to discuss how I might contribute to the digitization project, should it be of interest to them. In the spring of 2011, I travelled to Sechelt for a meeting. At the outset, I think the Chief and Council viewed me with a healthy dose of
skepticism. Too many times, researchers approach communities with projects that end up being of little or no benefit to them. Researchers, particularly anthropologists, are viewed as “takers” rather than “givers.” When knowledge is provided through the generosity of community members, they very often have little say in how it is circulated after it is passed on to a researcher.

The *shíshálh* Nation Rights and Title Department, and the Cultural Department continue to care for all of the digitized photographs and interview recordings from this research. The community’s *tems swiya* Museum and Cultural Centre houses copies in their digital database as well. I conducted the interviews with the help of Steven Feschuk, a community researcher from the Rights and Title Department, to ensure that the interests of the community were reflected throughout the research process, a topic I return to shortly. The decision is the community’s in terms of how to best steward and circulate this collection. I hope that the coming years will see the production of an interactive digital repository, controlled through some form of community-defined protocol, that will facilitate access to this material. After receiving approval from the Chief and Council, I immediately began preparing to relocate from Vancouver to Sechelt to start my research. This would begin in a makeshift archive located in the back room of a back room.

The first time I stepped into the *tems swiya* Museum was one of the last days it would be open to the public for almost two years, owing to its former curator stepping down and an extensive renovation. The *tems swiya* emerged out of the Sechelt Act of 1986. Through this Act of federal Parliament, the *shíshálh* Nation established themselves as a self-governing entity within the province of British Columbia. With the passing of the Act came many changes to the *shíshálh* community. The funds allocated to the Nation were used, among other things, to create new infrastructure on Band Lands (formerly Reserves), particularly a new office complex for the
Nation’s government and its attendant departments. These funds also went into the creation of a museum, cultural centre, and movie theatre adjacent to the Nation’s main offices (see Chapter Two for a more thorough discussion of the Sechelt Act).

The *tems swiya* is not a large space, but what it lacks in size it makes up for in contents. I distinctly remember the first time I entered the building to meet with the curator. The walls of the entranceway were lined with enlarged prints of historical photographs and maps of *shíshálh* territory. At the rear of the entranceway was a loom where community members could come and learn to weave, a practice long remembered in *shíshálh* territory that is now re-emerging. The main museum space, a large room with 20-foot ceilings, was filled with an array of material. Racing canoes hung from the ceiling. Cases were filled with woven baskets (a major form of *shíshálh* cultural and economic production well into the 1980s). Oil paintings of prominent Chiefs and Elders hung on the walls. Vitrines and drawers chock full of lithics and other archaeological material from *shíshálh* territory lined one wall. Ceremonial dance masks lined another. And there were photographs, photographs everywhere. This exhibition space, like most museums, was just the tip of the iceberg. The back rooms, which still serve as office space, makeshift archaeology lab, storage, and archive, contain even more objects that there is simply no space for on the museum floor. What struck me as most significant was that this seemed to be a place, while in many ways was directed towards the outsider tourists who flock to the Sunshine Coast during the summer months, that was also an active community cultural space.

In a locked cabinet on the south wall of the second storage room were the photographs that make up the bulk of the *tems swiya*’s current physical collection. An array of photographic prints, negatives, albums, and slides, numbering in the thousands, the *tems swiya*’s historical photograph collection contains material that dates from the 1880s to the present. Many
community members have contributed material from their own family collections. Over the years, shíshálh cultural researchers have actively gathered photographic material from other archives, including the Vancouver Public Library, the City of Vancouver, and the Royal British Columbia Museum, as well as private collections. The photographs contained in the tems swiya archive were produced by local priests, travellers, neighbours, professionals of varying calibre, and, most importantly, by shíshálh themselves. The diversity of types and themes is almost overwhelming. The historical images document a wide range of subject matter from the day-to-day life of the shíshálh community and the history of the Catholic mission and Residential School at Sechelt, shíshálh working in logging camps and canneries farther afield (see Roy and Taylor 2013), and their travels throughout the Lower Mainland of British Columbia and beyond as itinerant farm workers (see Chapter Two for a thorough description of the photographic archive).

My initial interaction with this archive preceded my interactions with shíshálh community members. My first task upon arrival was the digitization of the entire historical collection into TIFF (tagged image file format) format so as to ensure optimal digital preservation. The Rights and Title Department had previously digitized the collection in JPEG (joint photographic experts group) format, but in early discussions with them, it was decided that the material needed to be re-scanned.

For approximately a month, I sat in the back room of the museum scanning photographs, slides, and negatives, one at a time, essentially alone, save for the mechanical buzz of the scanner. However, I wasn’t completely alone. I was required to smudge every day owing to the presence of ancestral remains stored in painted cedar boxes awaiting re-interment. Also, the curator would sometimes be around working on family genealogies, or weaving with community
members. The operator of the museum gift shop was a welcome companion for much-needed coffee breaks, and I learned a lot about community goings-on through our casual conversations.

This was an ideal way to start the project that lay before me. I developed a familiarity with the photograph collection in an extremely direct, tactile way. With white-gloved hands, I meticulously handled every piece of photographic material in the archive and felt like a bona fide archivist. There were numerous traces of previous archival processes and public usage visible on the photographs’ surfaces, both front and back. In fact, in these early days of my fieldwork, I learned as much about the photographic collection from the backs of the images as I did from the fronts. Many had information, either scrawled in pen or typed on taped-on pieces of paper, that provided details concerning the content and context of the photograph and the biography of the object. For example, many photographs came with a notation about the community member who had donated them to the museum. Some still carried their name and/or location labels from an earlier exhibition in which they were used. Others came with a companion document, a computer-generated silhouette of the image outlining the people in the original photograph. Each of these outlines were numbered and the numbers corresponded to names identified by a community member. Naming projects of these kinds have been one of the main uses of the photograph archive by shishálh since the 1970s. Much of the current data the tems swiya has about their photographs was generated in this way. This metadata was included in the file names of the digitized images, or entered into a separate spreadsheet document to be stored with photographs.

Thinking about photographs as artifacts with both a front and a back is key to Elizabeth Edwards’ and Janice Hart’s (2004) commentary on the material importance of the photograph. They note the general triumph of visuality over materiality in photographic reception and
analysis. This separation of the image from the object produces a uniquely limited interaction, they argue. They further point out that photographic materiality must be accounted for as an equal participant in the meaning-making assemblage. The idea of the photograph as, first and foremost, a material object forms a central theoretical jumping-off point of my analysis, but this must first be better situated within the context of an anthropology of photography itself and the larger theories that inform my research.

The Anthropology of Photography: A Theoretical Overview as It Pertains to My Current Research

My focus on the anthropology of photography is based on Jay Ruby’s (1981, 4), then relatively avant-garde, definition of the subject area as an effort to examine “photographs and other visual products in the context of their production and consumption.” Curiously, this took over a decade to really catch on in anthropological studies, although Northwest Coast ethnographer Margaret Blackman (1981; 1985) should rightly be credited as a pioneer of this approach.

My three framing research questions mentioned above are thus shaped by a host of interdisciplinary perspectives that have sought to better understand the nature of photographic production, reception, and circulation in cross-cultural contexts. Regarding my first question about the imbuing of photographs with cultural significance, the anthropologist Webb Keane (1994; 2003; 2005) illustrates a necessary consideration of the relationship between material objects and meaning, or, between “words and things” as a culturally mediated process. He is by no means alone in attempting to explore this process (Cruikshank 1992; Hennessy 2012). That
this concern with the relationship between material and meaning should spill over into a
discussion of photography should really be no surprise. 

In “The Ambiguity of the Photograph” (2002), artist/theorist John Berger addresses the
inherent problem of photographic meaning and argues a relatively simple point: “All
photographs are ambiguous” because “[a]ll photographs have been taken out of a continuity”
(2002, 50). This is illustrated by the inherent link between photography, narrative, and gesture—
with the words and actions one chooses to associate with an image. As Berger observes, “[w]hat
the photograph shows goes with any story one chooses to invent” (2002, 48)—stressing its
ambiguity as a medium and its dependence on an external context in order to have meaning.

Berger’s observations challenge a somewhat problematic, yet persistent, assumption that
photographs have the ability to tell viewers something “real” or positively “true” about their
referent, that they are “indexical” of their subject matter. This situation has especially been
discussed in relation to the colonial history of image-making (Appadurai 1997; Ryan 1998;
Maxwell 1999; Hight and Sampson 2004; Pinney 2003). It is influenced by a post-structuralist
turn that has significantly challenged this assumed ability of photographs (or anything,
ultimately) to tell the truth, or to be considered an appropriate index of their subject matter

Berger’s discussion of ambiguity is primarily concerned with the “reading” of
photographs, or what can be gleaned from their surface in the absence of a fixed context or
narrative depth. Photographs require contextualization through narrative and, for my purposes
here, memory, in order to be re-sutured to the flows of life from which they have ultimately been
disconnected. Thus, a photograph is less ambiguous when it can be linked to a specific memory
or experience that gives it depth. In this way, meaning is created around an image, as well as by
an image: “When we find a photograph meaningful we are lending it a past and a future” (Berger 2002, 49; see also Edwards 2009). This meaning is always positional. Berger further comments on the power inherent in the combination of image and words to construct a subjective, rather than objective, “truth” (Berger 2002, 53). This truth has consequences, what Berger terms “the social function of subjectivity” (Berger 2002, 55). This subjectivity is a vital social and public energy, further imposing the role of memory on shaping photographic meaning.

Photographic meaning is a constructed, processual, practiced event and, like memory itself, borne of particular historical and social consequences. The words and actions attached to photographs serve to anchor (and return) them to the spatiotemporal flows from which they have been, theoretically, severed. It is through an attention to these processes of anchoring that photographs transform into cultural, or culture-bearing, things. I argue that the words and actions (and, I will further add, the feelings) considered here extend beyond direct engagements with photographs themselves, and out into the larger social worlds in which photographs circulate (Edwards 2009; 2012). This act of re-attaching photographs to socially and culturally significant circumstances is, especially in an Indigenous context, also an act of reparation or reclamation. It is an effort to create a new truth for images that have long been given depth by more colonial contexts (see Appadurai 1997; Taussig 1999).

In her seminal text, On Photography (1977), Susan Sontag establishes photography as an inherently “predatory” technology. For Sontag, and others after her (see Faris 1996; Tagg 1993), the photographer becomes, ostensibly, an agent of colonial privilege (1977, 55). Her discussion makes key observations about the relationship between photography and forms of discursive control and power (1977, 21, 156), noting that with the industrialization of photography, “photographs were enrolled in the service of important institutions of control” (1977, 21)—an
issue addressed by cultural theorists of photography in varying ways (Edwards 2009; Pinney 1997; Strassler 2010; Tagg 1993). The “past and future” (Berger 2002, 49) lent to photographs of Indigenous peoples in these contexts was not an Indigenous one.

This is, I argue, a common origin story for the Indigenous photographic experience. While Sontag’s language perhaps disallows or negates a consideration of Indigenous agency in early photographic encounters, it nonetheless provides a critical interpretation that positions photography squarely in relation to forms of colonial power. Here, too, is the ultimate question of the relationship and operationalization of things (photographs), and words and actions (meaning) in the transformation of photographs into culturally significant image-objects. In fact, it is this relationship between words and actions and things, in the co-production of photographic meaning, that allows an expression of both material and human agency to occur. I am reminded of a story two shíshálh Elders told me around a kitchen table one morning. It was a story about one of the “old people” that they remembered from their youth. They told me about how he used to sit on the old boardwalk, with an open hand outstretched, happy to pose for tourist photographs upon adequate payment for his services. This kind of social interaction is as involved in the production of photographic meaning as the scientific entrapment of light on treated paper, and the colonial geography that led to the proximity of photographer and subject (see Mawani 2009). These kinds of stories are there if we listen.

In “making” photographs (taken broadly), I argue, shíshálh people are, and have always been, performing photographic reclamation, or sovereignty (Tsinhnahjinnie 2003), through acts of indigenization. In this sense, any engagement with photography in an Indigenous context is doing similar work by virtue of its inherent opposition to the colonial production of photography, and its domains of meaning. This production of alternative, sovereign meaning is indicative of
both the flexibility of photography (once ignored), and the vernacular relationships of
photography to other processes of meaning-making about the past, present, and future.

Turning to my second question, I am interested in the production of meaning about the
shíshálh past in the present, as both individual cultural memory and collective historical
consciousness, and the role of photography therein. Indigenous production of cultural memory
and historical consciousness through photography is taken up in the work of Seminole-
Muskogee-Navajo artist/curator Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie (2003, 44) whose concept of
“photographic sovereignty” emphasizes forms of reclamation in the repurposing of historical
photographs. In her work, the power of words in particular is of primary concern: “When is a
photograph worth a thousand words? When photographs were occupied with ‘a thousand words’
of text the ‘official’ language often would fall short and many times completely miss the point”
(2003, 48). There are words, other stories, other histories, that can upset the dominance of
imposed narratives: “When I first began reading ethnographic images I would become extremely
depressed, but then recognition dawned. I was viewing the images as an observer, not as the
observed. My analytical eye matured, and I became suspicious of the awkward, self-appointed
‘expert’ narrative” (Tsinhnahjinnie 2003, 41).

This enactment of photographic sovereignty, as an effort to “re-read” (Berger 2002), is
echoed by other Indigenous artists, culture bearers, and critics (Askren 2010; Lonetree 2011,
2012; Lippard 1992; Pedri-Spade 2016; Raheja 2007; Rickard 1995, 2011; Smith 2014) as a
position of empowerment and agency that extends sovereignty beyond legal definitions into
material, visual, and aesthetic domains. Forms of photographic sovereignty create new spaces for
articulations of indigeneity through a critical re-imagining and re-presentation of past, present,
and future. Tracking this ethnographically requires an attention to the broader sociocultural
processes and practices in and through which photographs are “re-read.” This is my goal.

My research in *shíshálh* territory is also influenced by anthropological discussions of media (see Askew and Wilk 2002; Ginsberg, Larkin, Abu-Lughod 2002). These analyses show that, in cross-cultural contexts, there is no such thing as a singular or definitive “reading” of media products. This has caused anthropology to shift its focus over the last several decades from an interest in the methodological merits of photography (Collier Jr. 1967), to the social and cultural forces underlying photographic encounter (Appadurai 1997; Faris 1996; Poole 1997). Emerging from this scholarship is a line of analysis that addresses the social practices that inform the production, circulation, and reception of photographic objects in diverse cultural settings (see Pinney 1997; Poignant 1996; Strassler 2010).

For example, a now-common practice, the re-insertion of (often) historical ethnographic photographs into their communities of origin, frequently labelled “visual repatriation,” has provided valuable insight into the diverse ways photographs are culturally transformed (see Bell 2003, 2008; Brown and Peers 2006; Geismar 2009; Poignant 1996; Solomonian 2009; Wright 2004, 2013). The standard focus is on how outsider-produced images are renegotiated and re-imagined through local processes and practices. These examples provide my current study with a theoretical and methodological baseline.

Allison Brown and Laura Peers’ (2006) work with Kanai Indigenous communities in the Canadian province of Alberta illustrates how a particular archive of photographs taken by the anthropologist Beatrice Blackwood in the nineteenth century is reclaimed and re-contextualized by contemporary Kanai peoples through oral narrative, song, and performance. These cultural practices re-insert the photographs into contemporary Kanai engagements with their past and allow these photographs to “bring messages” from their ancestors.
In the Purari Delta of Papua New Guinea, Joshua Bell (2003) examines the role of photographs in the making and articulation of history. Bell refers to photographs as “containers” (2003, 118) of multiple histories and notes that through visual repatriation, the return of photographs to the communities in which they were made, researchers can better understand their expanded social lives (2003, 111). Narratives from the site of production often run counter to knowledge about photographs produced by Western museological and colonial discourses. Bell observes that “photographs…become sites through which traditions were revisited, contested and publicly discussed” (Bell 2003, 119). This is performed through a variety of “enactments”—song, dance, dialogue, and material displays of various kinds (Bell 2003, 119). Photographs become “evidence” of the past and allow for the transmission of histories from older to younger generations (Bell 2003, 119), something I witnessed time and again in Shíshálh territory.

In these circumstances, Edwards (2005) observes, photographs are incorporated into a larger relational object world where various extra-photographic forms of enactment work to co-produce meaning. Methodologically, the return of images constitutes a new terrain of collaboration between researchers and communities as both “re-engage in dialogues that began long ago: dialogues which at the time they were begun may have been unequal because of existing colonial structures, and which have remained unfinished” (Bell 2003, 120). An emphasis on “dialogue” makes evident the connection of photographic objects, what people say about and through them, and what they do with them. This contributes to my approach to photographs as cultural objects through which people talk about and perform their past. Again, photography needs to be understood within the local sociocultural contexts that produce and give (or lend) it meaning.
My study of *shishálh* photographic culture is further shaped by the recent ethnographic record on photography that has wrestled with the notion of the nature of so-called photographic “truth” in relation to non-Western photographic cultures (see Pinney 1997; 2003; Wright 2013). In Nagda, India, Christopher Pinney (1997) observes that photography is “not lexically or semiotically marked in local discourses as indexical, and in most cases not differentiated from other techniques of iconic representation” (1997, 131). There is no culturally prescribed truth relationship between a photograph and reality, any more than there is with any other visual medium. As such, analysis “needs to locate [photography] at the centre of various overlapping visual practices, rather than at the apex of other media that it claims to have vanquished” (Pinney 1997, 112). There is an interesting observation here. It is a caution to not consider representational media hierarchically, but laterally. In *shishálh* territory, it presses me to consider the placement of photographs within larger discursive and performative assemblages.

Furthermore, Pinney’s discussion comments on the imaginary potential of the photograph alongside other visual media—the ability of people to see in an image what they want to see, or to use the image surface as a space for creativity and play rather than as a direct representation of reality. This connects to the open-ended potential of the photograph discussed above. The social life of the photographic object is bound up with its ability to “point to” something, and to assist and enhance similar “pointing” qualities of other words and objects. It is, therefore, not so much that photography is not indexical, but rather that it is *no more* indexical than other forms of representation, and that indexicality itself is a cultural matter.

This culturally informed indexicality is also addressed in the ethnography of Christopher Wright. Writing about the uses of photography and social lives of photographs in the Solomon Islands, Wright (2004; 2013, 1) observes, following the comments of one of his
principal informants, that a photograph is understood as an “echo or shadow” of the person it depicts. It is a trace in the dual sense of the term: it is both outline and remnant. His interlocutor talks about a photograph of his deceased father: “When I saw it, he was alive. I kept that photograph… and after he died I looked at that photograph again and I thought that my father was still alive. When I look at that photograph, I say, ‘that is my father…’” (Wright 2013, 126). This is a different photographic ontology than the one emphasized by Pinney (1997) in India. Wright invokes a more direct connection with the image depicted—a firm understanding of the relationship between object and referent, what he refers to as the “forensic” abilities of the photograph. However, similar to Pinney’s analysis, in the Solomon Islands, the referent quality of photography is connected to a host of other representational media, affective states, and material objects. This perspective firmly attaches the discursive, performative, and affective cultures of photography to larger sociocultural processes and practices. This interconnection is central to my consideration of the ways in which photography is embedded within and active upon the cultural memory and historical consciousness of shíshálh people, and the various ways through which this is articulated in the present—particularly the connection between photographs and oral histories as evidence in legal claims.

To this end, the last decade of analyses in anthropology has focused heavily on these discursive, performative, and affective cultures of photography (Edwards 2012). This extends the anthropologist Nancy Munn’s (1992, see also Keane 2005) observations about the “sensuous” qualities of objects. For Munn (1986 [1992], as cited in Keane 2005), objects share certain “qualities,” beyond the particularities of any singular specific object, that connect to a larger cultural totality of object experience. Webb Keane (2005, 188) offers the term “bundling” to describe the ways qualities “must be embodied in something in particular. But as soon as they
do, they are actually, and often contingently (rather than by logical necessity), bound up with other qualities….” There is, therefore, a direct connection, rather than inherent separation, between material objects and forms of meaning, between words and actions and things and feelings.

In the case of photography, acknowledging this demands a push to go “beyond the image” (Edwards 2012, 221), even beyond the object. As Edwards (2012, 228) observes, “the understanding of photographs cannot be contained in the relation between the visual and its material support but rather through an expanded sensory realm of the social in which photographs are put to work.” Edwards (2012) presses Keane’s ruminations on the relationship between words and things into new territory by effectively reorienting his bundled signifying qualities towards a discussion of the similarly bundled affective qualities of photographic objects—the sensory engagements that require an “acknowledgment that in the apprehension of the visual, one sensation is often integrally related to, and followed by, another to form continuous patterns of experience, representing a dense social embedding of an object” (Edwards 2012, 229). The particulars of this “social embedding” are of direct concern to anthropology, and it is exactly the vernacular forms of this sociality that I examine in shíshálh territory.

Returning to my final research question, I also draw on scholarship that examines how engagements with media and media technology (here, processes of digital preservation) are linked to emergent forms of Indigenous empowerment and processes of decolonization around the globe. In particular, the work of Patrick Moore and Kate Hennessy (2006) with the Tagish First Nation, and Hennessy’s (2010) fieldwork at Doig River, British Columbia, discuss the role of new media in cultural preservation, its links to self-determination, as well as the issues that arise from its use. Kimberly Christen’s (2006; 2009; 2011) work in Warumungu communities in
Australia demonstrates how new media are providing opportunities for Indigenous communities to not only share their culture with a global audience, but also to control access to it on their own terms by infusing technology with pre-existing cultural protocols. These types of research are a model for my consideration of the transformations shíshálh photographs undergo, both physically and symbolically, as they move from family belongings to national patrimony in the whirr of a scanner.

The contexts that provide the ethnographic opportunities to track the social lives of photographs in my research are diverse, even multi-sited. They move between living rooms and kitchen tables, museums and archives (both local and non-local), grocery stores, community halls, government offices, and school gymnasiums. These physical sites are further complemented and complicated by online locales. I return to these ethnographic locales in Chapter Two. I now turn to an overview of the methodology used in this research.

**Methodology**

The methodology used here is fairly straightforward, but was continuously revisited and fine-tuned, with the help of my shíshálh advisors, throughout the project. Initially, several meetings were held with the Director and researchers from the shíshálh Nation Rights and Title Department to develop an appropriate methodological approach and research plan. We immediately decided that a community researcher, Steven Feschuk, and I would conduct all the interviews with community members as a team. Steven is now the Director of the Cultural Department for the shíshálh Nation. At the time of this research, he was working in the Rights and Title Department.
This approach proved extremely beneficial. Steven’s knowledge of the community and his familiarity with community members facilitated an efficient undertaking of the research and an almost instant rapport with project participants. This being said, there were community members who were not interested in participating or sharing their photograph collections for various reasons, as elaborated below. Steven’s presence also ensured that the interests of the Nation and, in particular, the Rights and Title Department, were being represented in the data collection phase of the project. The Rights and Title Department is tasked with overseeing matters pertaining to shishálh traditional territory, its protection, and the assertion of shishálh rights in matters of resource development and the protection of cultural heritage. This body also undertakes and oversees research into shishálh legal claims of sovereign title to their traditional lands, a topic I address further in Chapter Two. ²

What came out of these initial planning meetings was the “shishálh Nation Historical Photograph Digitization and Research Project,” headed by the Rights and Title, Education, and Cultural Departments. The project was driven by four key initial goals:

(i) Expand the tems swiya Museum archives through the incorporation of family photograph collections from the community.

² While it might be argued that these kinds of approaches could potentially limit academic freedom or structure research data in certain ways, I argue that this form of collaborative, mutually beneficial research is the only way in which anthropology can be conducted. While there are potential limitations produced by these arrangements, any anthropology that attempts an, albeit imperfect, decolonized practice must adopt these models of approach.
(ii) Gather photographic and narrative material to be used in a future digital database collection geared towards educational interests and the sharing of photographs within the community.

(iii) Combine photographs and narratives in the interest of creating a dynamic photographic history of the Nation, which would also serve as a tool through which community members and the larger public can access collections and obtain copies of photographs.

(iv) Develop community protocols for the access and use of materials in digital collections.

In reality, only a portion of these goals were completed during my fieldwork, and the work is ongoing. However, valuable steps were certainly taken in what will most likely be an ever-expanding endeavour.

After developing this initial research plan, we went out into the community to introduce the project and find interested participants. This was followed by a public research statement that was posted on the Nation’s website and circulated for a number of weeks in the community news flyer that read:

With the expressed permission of the shíshálh Nation, Adam Solomonian will be conducting ethnographic research on historical photographs in the community over the course of the next year for his PhD dissertation in Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. He will be working closely with Steven Feschuk from the shíshálh Nation Rights and Title Department, and advisors from the Education Department and the tems swiya Museum. The goal of this research is to better understand how historical photographs are regarded as cultural objects and valued as part of shíshálh history and culture. Material gathered through this research will also be used in the production of an educational resource for use within the community and expanding the archival collections of the tems swiya Museum. As members of the shíshálh community, your input and participation in this project is highly encouraged. We are particularly interested in
photographs from the 1950s and earlier. We would appreciate an opportunity to look at any photographs you might have from this period and can certainly come to your homes to do so. We cannot guarantee that we will have the capacity to digitize all of your photographs, but any digital scans we make will be included in the collections of the *tems swiya* Museum and preserved for future use. If you wish to speak more about the project and/or wish to know more about how you can participate, please do not hesitate to contact our Rights and Title Department.

The flyer advertisements included a different photograph from the *tems swiya* collection every week. These produced a significant “buzz” within the community and were extremely helpful in developing interest in the project. In fact, many people expressed a degree of disappointment when we ceased running the advertisements a couple of months into the project, as it was an opportunity for them to see a new photograph every week. Immediately, we had people wanting to participate, and the research/collection portion of the project began. We employed three overlapping data-collection methods: photo-elicitation/interview sessions with *shíshálh* Nation members; participant observation within the *shíshálh* community (and the larger Sechelt community); and archival research.

*Photo-Elicitation Interviews*

Steven and I conducted all of the photo-elicitation interviews as a team. Steven’s role in this project cannot be understated. It began with him and his fascination with the community’s photograph collections. It was Steven who first began the digital preservation of the *tems swiya* collection, and Steven who first took the project into the homes of community members in his official role as a researcher in the Rights and Title Department. When he began the project, the goal was to amass photographic material related to *shíshálh* rights and title matters—for example, as evidence of continued hunting and fishing practices in their territory. This prioritization continued to inform his participation in the project, and in the project overall.
While this dissertation offers my own interpretations of the research conducted, it would not have been possible without Steven. This was apparent in the immediate comfort and familiarity he brought to the interviews, and the extensive information he provided about the community’s past and present. In total, we conducted multiple interviews with 20 participants that produced approximately 30 hours of recorded narratives.

Through the photo-elicitation interviews, we collected personal narratives about particular photographs from community members, and gained insight into the relationship between photographs, oral histories, and cultural memory. These interviews provide data about both the narrator’s intersubjective relationship with what is photographed, and the larger historical consciousness and cultural context of which their narrative is part (see Poignant 1996).

In addition, these narratives contain stories that reveal larger patterns in shíshálh cultural memory through which photographs are interpreted and conceptually organized (see Wright 2004). Furthermore, these sessions revealed particular ideas about the care of photographs, which were indicative of broader perspectives within the community regarding the production and circulation of knowledge, and the protection of various forms of cultural and intellectual property.

As Douglas Harper (2002, 13) notes, photo-elicitation “is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview. The difference between interviews using images and text, and interviews using words alone lies in the ways we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation.” In addition, Gemma Canal (2004, 35), challenging Margaret Mead’s early assertion of the dominance of images by words, notes that while “photographs reinforce spoken or written narratives…they also lend words a new dimension; that is, photographs inspire new narrations.” This relationship between words (and gestures and other interactional forms)
and photographs will be revisited and discussed throughout this dissertation. At present, however, I wish only to provide some justification for photo-elicitation as a methodological tool that allows for a unique, intersubjective interaction between a photograph and a viewer to be documented.

As per the desires of the Rights and Title, Cultural, and Education Departments, we focused on interviewing Elders and older community members who held family photograph collections, who were familiar with the archival photographs we were collecting, or who were identified as respected bearers of *shíshálh* cultural knowledge. The selection of interviewees for these more formal sessions was determined by Steven. His knowledge of the community helped us tailor our research program. Using his expertise, he operated with and through a stated knowledge of individuals to whom we should speak. While not a gatekeeper *per se* in the traditional anthropological sense, Steven was certainly a cultural broker.

Steven’s knowledge and familiarity were conditioned by his place in the community. At the time of this research, Steven’s father held the position of Chief Councilor, a role he had occupied for some time. Steven’s relationships with many community members thus reflected their overall opinion of his father’s leadership. Furthermore, Steven’s connections were also influenced by his family’s status in the community (which was relatively high) and, therefore, made use of the larger inter-family connections that continue to characterize the Coast Salish world (see Chapter Three).

At an official level, the decision to focus on working with Elders and older, more knowledgeable community members in particular was made by the Rights and Title Department researchers and department heads as a way to best ensure quality control over the information collected from research participants. Generally, within the *shíshálh* community, Elders are
defined by age, usually people over 65, although some laughingly protest this age-based
designation. On several occasions, we also visited community members, not yet old enough to be
recognized as Elders, but regarded as culture bearers, who had expressed interest in the project.
Given that the photographic material we were interested in documenting and using in elicitation
interviews was of a distinctly historical nature (dating between the 1880s and 1950s), it was
decided to focus on older generations of community members who could speak most directly to
the content of the photographs, or the themes photographed. My access to interview participants
thus reflected the priorities of the shíshálh government, and the particularities of Steven’s social
relationships. This being said, I often had opportunities to have more informal conversations and
interactions with younger community members (such as my co-researcher, Steven) about
photographs and photography, which were equally informative.

Certain key occasions provided me with a perspective on the relationships younger
community members had with historical photographs. For several months, I contributed to a
digital storytelling project with college-age community members that was facilitated through the
local campus of Capilano University. Digital storytelling employs a combination of photography
and minimal recorded narrative to produce a visual story that in some way represents or connects
to the life of the storyteller/producer. It has been particularly useful in articulating the voices and
experiences of youth and other marginalized, or underrepresented populations (Robin 2008).

The overall goal of this project was to provide shíshálh youth with an opportunity to tell a
story about something important in their lives. I provided consultation to the project participants
about the digital photographic archives and assisted them in getting photographs for their
individual projects. One student, for example, chose to examine the cultural practice of cedar
root basket-making through the life history of her grandmother, one of the community’s last
basket-makers. Her digital story incorporated many images of baskets and basket-makers from the digital photograph archives. After completion, the students presented their digital stories at a well-attended event at the community hall. It was certainly satisfying to see the new digital archive being put to use in this way.

On other occasions, I would set up a station at community “Culture Nights” where I would project a slideshow of photographs from the archives. The shíshálh government hosted these events in the interest of exposing community members (particularly youth) to diverse aspects of their cultural heritage. I would set up my station alongside lessons in cedar weaving, drawing and painting, and other activities. Community members of all ages could sit and look at photographs, discuss them among themselves, and ask questions about the project. In particular, younger children would often spend time sitting with their parents or grandparents looking at the projected images. These were great opportunities to introduce the archive and the project to new people, as well as to observe first-hand the incorporation of photographs into intergenerational conversations of family and community.

The Interview Process

The photo-elicitation sessions were typically conducted with small groups of family members and would generally occur in three phases. The interview process would transpire as follows: we would make an initial visit to a community member’s (or members’) home and introduce the project to them. At this point I would go through the project consent form and leave it with them to review. In a few days’ time, we would contact them again and see if they were interested in participating. If the answer was “yes,” we would schedule an initial session.

For the first interview session, we would select photographs from the existing tems swiya
Museum collection that we felt a particular participant or participants could speak to. This might include photographs of their extended family members, places they lived or worked, activities they participated in, and so on. We would either print off copies on the Rights and Title photocopy machine or I would load the images onto my laptop, which would then be plugged into a participant’s television. While both formats proved beneficial, I always preferred circulating hard copies to get a better sense of the more nuanced relationship between photographic materiality and the telling of stories. We recorded each session, some of which were upwards of two hours in length, using a Zoom H4N digital recorder. Recordings were then transferred to the secure server in the Rights and Title Department, my personal laptop, and burned onto CDs to be returned to project participants.

After this initial photo-elicitation session, we would schedule a follow-up interview, this time to digitize and discuss participants’ own family photograph collections. For these sessions, I would bring my laptop and scanner to a participant’s home. We would go through the collections with participants, scanning each photograph and recording the stories that accompanied them, what Steven always referred to as “metadata.” I explore both the content and contexts of family collections in more depth in the following two chapters. Here, I want to sketch only a basic outline of the photographic material held by shishálh families.

These collections were presented to us in many different ways: some in photo albums, some in frames, some in old cigar boxes, some stuck to reams and reams of bristol board paper, some loosely stored in envelopes (see Figure 3.2). These were largely black and white snapshots, and studio portrait postcards (see Chapter 2). Some colour images from the 1970s were digitized as well, usually at the request of the collection’s steward. The family collections digitized in this project include group and individual portraits; wedding photographs (very common); logging,
fishing, and other photographs of labour; photographs of babies and small children; and day-to-day community events such as sporting events and church-related gatherings. It is also worth noting the kinds of photographs that were absent from family collections. There were no photographs of the residential school that operated in Sechelt from 1904 to 1975, although many of these have been gathered from other archival collections. There were no photographs of what could broadly be termed “ceremonies.” This is not that unusual, given the federal illegalization of these kinds of events during the period of photography focused on in this research (Cole and Chaikin 1990), and the general internal prohibitions against photographing ceremonies that continue today in many Indigenous communities along the Northwest Coast. While photographs are certainly used in ceremonies, something I further explore in Chapter Five, they are not often used to document them. I have, on occasion, been at an event where a photographer has been assigned by the hosts to document the proceedings, but other attendees are generally not permitted to do so.

Through these photo-elicitation/scanning sessions, we were able to gather close to 2000 new historical photographs for the tems swiya Museum collections, as well as over 30 hours of oral historical material. The newly digitized photographs have been preliminarily organized under the names of the family member or family group who donated them to the project. There was some initial discussion about incorporating them within the existing photographic catalogue of the tems swiya Museum (see Chapter Two), but this was quickly eschewed in favour of an organizational method that would acknowledge the individual donor or donor family as the stewards of individual collections. This itself, however, opens up the potential for intra-family conflict concerning the control of photograph collections. Family photograph collections are a very powerful resource. As such, there are debates, even disputes, about their control. I will
address the topic of how broader family politics emerge through the control of photographs in Chapter Three.

The photographic and narrative material collected through this project is stored on the secure servers of the Rights and Title Department, as well as on the digital archival platform at the *tems swiya* Museum, where full community access is ensured. Future work is needed to fully integrate the narrative data with particular digitized photographs, a process unfortunately beyond the scope of this research project. A web-based project has been discussed as a potential site for this work, and some of the images digitized during this research have been uploaded to the *shishálh* Nation’s website and the digital screens at the *tems swiya*. However, a comprehensive online archive has yet to emerge. I explore this aspect of the project further in Chapter Six.

These photographs, and their attendant stories, make up the bulk of the data presented here. As with any anthropological inquiry, this description does not even begin to scratch the surface, but, to borrow a photographic term, it offers but a snapshot. It is hoped that the archival/curatorial aims of this project will continue, driven by community members’ own interests in establishing an ever-expanding digital collection for community use.

*Participant Observation*

My 18 months of fieldwork in Sechelt also involved a lot of “deep hanging out” (Geertz 1998) around the community. This took many forms, all equally important to the task at hand. I spent many hours at the Nation’s government offices consulting with researchers and department heads about the various projects they were working on. This provided insight into the inner workings of the Nation’s government and its goals for the future. I also participated in the day-to-day life of the community by attending events of various kinds: soccer games, memorial
feasts, funerals, baby welcomings, culture nights, dinners, song and dance performances, and so forth. I watched television in community members’ living rooms and chatted about various subjects, from local politics to the seasonal performance of the Montreal Canadiens hockey team. Many of these occasions provided opportunities to observe not only how historical photographs were used publicly, but also to share some of the material gathered through the project with the larger community.

Furthermore, time spent within the larger non-shíshálh local community gave me insight into the history of relationships between shíshálh and non-shíshálh peoples, as well as an opportunity to observe how these relationships play out in the present. Besides engaging and observing the flows of day-to-day life, I volunteered as a member of the Sechelt Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee. This organization, which interestingly featured no shíshálh community members, served as a planning body for local arts and culture events, and also advised Sechelt town council on heritage policy. While serving on this committee, I was most interested in seeing how shíshálh culture and heritage “fit” within the broader scope of Sechelt and Sunshine Coast “heritage.” My thoughts on these matters are expanded on in Chapter Five.

Archival Research

Finally, my fieldwork research was supplemented by my work with archival material gathered from the tems swiya Museum archives, Sechelt Library archives, The Sunshine Coast Museum archives, the Province of British Columbia Archives, the City of Vancouver Archives, the Vancouver Library Archives, the University of Oregon Archives, and the Deschâtelets Archives in Ottawa, Ontario.
The following sources contain the bulk of the archival photographic material that directly features *shíshálh* peoples, the mission settlement, and/or the residential school produced by non-local professional photographers. The City of Vancouver Archives has the largest collection of material. It contains 130 photographs from the Sechelt area, of which 25 photographs pertain directly to its Indigenous inhabitants. The Vancouver Public Library Archives contain 41 photographic images, primarily dating to the 1890s and attributed to the Bailey Brothers firm. The provincial archives contain 14 photographic images dating between 1890 and 1922. Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa has a total of nine photographs dating between 1901 and 1980.

While the main archival material is photographic, these sources also provide information about the establishment of the Catholic mission at Sechelt in the 1860s, the relationships between *shíshálh* peoples and missionaries, the relationships between *shíshálh* peoples and settlers in their territory, early ethnography in *shíshálh* territory, and the impact of St. Augustine’s Residential School on the community.

**Chapter Summaries and Layout of Dissertation**

The following chapters will examine photographs as familial possessions whose stewardship is indicative of larger family practices and politics within the *shíshálh* world; the relationship between photography and oral history-telling within and between families; the ways photographs as objects are performed and experienced in diverse contexts of display; and the politics of heritage-making within and outside the *shíshálh* community.

In **Chapter Two**, I will provide an ethnographic and historical context to my research. I will discuss features of *shíshálh* pre-contact culture and society, the establishment of the Oblate mission and the relocation of *shíshálh* peoples to Sechelt in the mid-1800s, the mission
community and Residential school at Sechelt and their legacies, the post-mission period, the
move to *shíshálh* self-governance, anthropology and *shíshálh* peoples, and the history of
photography in the *shíshálh*/Coast Salish world.

In **Chapter Three**, I will focus on an analysis of family within the context of *shíshálh*,
and broader Coast Salish, society. It is argued that the “corporate family group” (Miller 1989)
continues to be a central sociopolitical feature, and that the power of the family is made evident
through, and shapes, the production and stewardship of family photograph collections. The social
and cultural power of family groups, by extension, becomes a defining factor in the circulation of
knowledge and, therefore, archival practice of all kinds.

In **Chapter Four**, I will examine the relationship between photography and cultural
memory of, in particular, places and place-based experience. It is argued that the relationship
between photography and spoken narrative, a practice I call photo-storying (see also McCormack
2004), provides a wholly unique dimension of oral history-telling that serves to re-claim and re-
place *shíshálh* cultural knowledge of and on the land and water.

In **Chapter Five**, I approach the materiality of photographs through the context of
performance and affect. I begin by examining the use of photographic objects in two different
*shíshálh* ceremonies: a family memorial feast and a community Remembrance Day event. I then
move to consider how particular photographic objects insert themselves into certain affective
relationships through their placement and circulation. Furthermore, I use my own experiences of
two particular objects, a photograph in a grocery store and a postcard that I received in the mail
from North Dakota, to explore the ways photographs of *shíshálh* peoples are experienced in,
through, and by their placement in varied places and spaces of interaction.
In **Chapter Six**, I examine in detail the aims, goals, and successes and limits of the *shishálh* Nation Historical Photograph Digitization and Research Project. I unpack how the digitization of photographic material fits with other newly created digital archives in the community. I examine how access to, and control of, these materials is being discussed in various, sometimes differing, ways. I highlight the issues this raises in terms of control and how these conversations might fit within, and assist with, larger processes and practices of *shishálh* self-governance and self-determination. Finally, I examine the potential of digital photograph archives for new forms of interaction that in many ways extends a continuum of photographic practice that has been active in the *shishálh* world for over a century.

**Chapter Seven** brings to a conclusion my explorations of photography in *shishálh* territory. Here, I synthesize and summarize the various aspects that contribute to an understanding of a *shishálh* photography complex (Hevia 2009). Lastly, I consider what an anthropological attention to the localities of photography can reveal regarding the myriad relationships formed between a particular community, their photographic history, and how these processes and practices are embedded within a continuing negotiation of the past, present, and future.
Chapter Two: Ethnographic and Historical Context

Introduction

In 1995, the late Gilbert Joe, respected shíshálh Elder and master storyteller, sat down in front of a video camera operated by members of Coast TV, a local Sunshine Coast cable network, and recorded The History of the Sechelt Nation, a four-part, four-hour-long program that still plays regularly today. With only a few pages of notes and a stack of photographs, he told a story he believed needed to be told. His stated purpose in recording this history was to ensure that it was passed on to younger generations of shíshálh people who, through various machinations of colonial disruption, he perceived, had not received the same cultural teachings he had as a boy and young man. At the age of 61, he summoned all the knowledge he had been given throughout his life by his ancestors—themselves master storytellers and activists like Joe LeDally, Basil Joe, and Clarence Joe—and his own experiences as a fisherman, logger, husband, father, and shíshálh person, to share what he referred to as the “legends of our forefathers” (Joe 1995).

The story begins like this: “A long time ago”—here, he pauses to point out that this “long time ago” stands in direct opposition to the theories of migration and population proposed by archaeologists and anthropologists—the ancestors of shíshálh people, s-pelem-ulh, were dropped down to s-wiya, earth, from kwatam s-wiya, the “high land,” by the Creator, kwatam salham. These s-pelem-ulh were dropped down into specific places in shíshálh territory and each was given a specific skill. For example, at ts’unay, the s-pelem-ulh brought the skill of weapon-making. At xenichen, the gift of making fish traps. And, at tawankw, the art of canoe-making.

All she shashishálhem terms and place names from Beaumont (2011), Merchant (2012), and Roy and Taylor (2013).
These individual gifts were then shared throughout the territory, bringing all *s-pelem-ulh* together as a people (Joe 1995; Peterson 1990), a unity that continues to define *shíshálh* people today.

In this chapter, I will provide both a historical and contemporary ethnographic context to my research. In what follows, I will sketch an image of pre-contact *shíshálh* culture and society as it is presented in the ethnographic record, archaeological research, and, importantly, in the ongoing stories and oral histories of *shíshálh* people themselves. I will then examine the early contact period and the arrival of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (OMI) at Sechelt in the mid-nineteenth century. Next, I will discuss responses to the mission and later colonial periods, and the transition towards *shíshálh* self-government that began in the 1970s. Finally, I will conclude by considering the larger history and legacy of photography among Indigenous communities in British Columbia. As well, I will provide a more thorough examination of how these took shape in the local context.

*shíshálh* photography does not exist in a vacuum. It is embedded within the larger processes and practices, histories and experiences that it both transforms and is transformed by. It requires “placing” in both a material and affective context (Edwards 2012). In his analysis of photography in Boxer-era China, James L. Hevia (2009) introduces the “photography complex,” an analytical approach that, Edwards (2012) observes, importantly combines two previous critical models that have influenced recent conversations about photography within and outside of anthropology. The first is the “social life” model (Appadurai 1988), which takes as its topic of analysis the biographical careers of material things in an effort to better understand the non-human agency of objects as they circulated within different cultural contexts (Brown and Peers 2006; Poignant 1996). The second is the “visual economy” model (Poole 1997), which considers
the power relationships inherent in the meaning-making apparatus that is photography, often from the perspective of the colonial gaze (see Lutz and Collins 1993; Tagg 1993).

In Hevia’s “photography complex,” both of the analytical models discussed above work as part of a larger network of “human and non-human parts” (Hevia 2009, 81). Hevia introduces the photography complex as a way to go beyond the “usual tripartite division photographer/camera/photograph” to “suggest a novel form of agency, one understood in terms of the capacity to mobilize and deploy elements for generating new material realities. The photograph is thus neither reflection nor representation of the real, but rather a kind of metonymic sign of the photography complex in operation” (2009, 81). What follows begins an exploration of a *shíshálh* photography complex.

### Landscape and Setting

![Figure 2-1. Location of Sechelt. Courtesy: Google Maps.](image-url)
The town of Sechelt, on British Columbia’s lower Sunshine Coast, covers a portion of mainland BC that, while 50 kilometres from Vancouver, is accessible only via ferry. Sechelt (ch’atelich), once a traditional summer resource-harvesting site named for the bay that forms its southern border, sits within the traditional territory of she shashiłhǽm-speaking peoples, now collectively known as the shíshálh Nation (and in various official capacities as either the Sechelt Nation or Sechelt Indian Band), a Northern Coast Salish cultural group. The larger Coast Salish world, as it has become anthropologized (Carlson 2010; Miller 2001, 2008; Thom 2009), stretches from Southern Oregon in the United States to the central coast region of British Columbia. The affinity of the many Indigenous groups that make up this area of North America is largely based on evidence of a shared linguistic subgroup within the larger Salishan language family, and a general similarity in political, economic, and ceremonial systems. As a result of this affinity, the Coast Salish world is a complex network of relationships between not only people, but also places and things, and the attendant knowledges that constellate around them.

Carlson (2010) employs the powerful image of invisible “special tunnels” that connect the various reaches of the Coast Salish world, providing a sense of cohesion. He argues that not only is interconnection facilitated by the movement and migration presented as the foundation of collective identity in the pre-contact Coast Salish world, it has become a contemporary means through which Coast Salish people engage in decolonization (2010, 271).

This history of interconnection is as much about inter-group relations within the Coast Salish world as it is between Coast Salish peoples and newcomers. This narrative of Indigenous-newcomer relations, Carlson argues, has often positioned Indigenous peoples as “reactive victims” or “foils…to critique and expose the excesses of Western colonialism and capitalism” (2010, 274), rather than as the directors of their own history. It is through this lens of historical
agency that I engage *shíshálh* cultural memory as it emerges and is performed in the present. The ethnographic vignettes contained in this dissertation position both *shíshálh* peoples and their photographs as actors in a larger story—*their own story*—about the past, present, and future.

**Ancestral Territory**

![Map of Ancestral Territory](image)

Figure 2-2. “Map of *shíshálh* Territory, major water bodies, and adjacent First Nations.” Source: Merchant 2012.
The land mass itself is carved through with serpentine inlets that run from tsain-ko to the northernmost reaches of shíshálh territory. These inlets—lek’wemin (Jervis Inlet), ?álhtúlich (Sechelt Inlet), skupa (Salmon Inlet), and stil’ixwim (Narrows Inlet)—are in many ways the aqueous backbone of shíshálh culture and society. They are sacred highways travelled for millennia, their road signs painted in red ochre on the rock faces that seek to contain them. Smaller salmon-bearing creeks and river systems drain into these waterways from the heights of the Coast mountain range in the east. These mountains themselves become rocky fjords that crash into the inlet systems at their feet. On the sides of these mountains, temperate coastal rainforests rise to meet glacial alpine peaks. The diverse topography of shíshálh territory is blanketed in massive stands of coniferous forest bountiful in Western hemlock, red cedar, and Douglas fir. These forests and waterways not only serve as the lifeblood of shíshálh society, but are historically a key integration point for shíshálh people into the Euro-Western resource economy, an experience they share with many Indigenous peoples on the Northwest Coast of North America (see Lutz 2009; Menzies and Butler 2001; Roy and Taylor 2013).
Today, things are noticeably different. The geographical features described above are still there and the stories that animate them still resonate, but generations of settler colonial intrusion and intervention are apparent. Asphalt roads and highways, often laid over ancient trails, now funnel the traffic that once navigated the inlets. Towns, villages, and private properties dot the landscape of shíshálh territory. Docks and dams disrupt the flow of waterways. Massive bare patches are visible on the forested mountainsides as industrial logging companies continue to harvest timber at ever-increasing rates. Resource extraction is also a central industry, moving shíshálh territory into numerous elsewheres. The timber harvested here circulates through markets in Europe and Asia. The gravel mined just outside of ch’atelich lies under the streets of Vancouver. The shale quarried up lek ’wemin covers the roofs of the Parliament Buildings in Victoria.

The town of Sechelt itself, where most of this research was conducted, is a divided place. Arriving in town, heading roughly north on BC Highway 101 (or the Sunshine Coast Highway) from Gibsons, one is almost immediately greeted by the House of hewhiwus, the offices of the shíshálh Nation Government. Behind the Band office complex, descending down a hill that overlooks tsain-ko, is Band Lands #2, or “the Waterfront.” Site of the original Oblate mission village (Lemert 1954; Keller and Leslie 2009; Hill-Tout [Maud ed.] 1978), this part of town remains the central place of residence for most shíshálh community members. The Waterfont is also the location of the Band Hall where many community events are held. The Catholic Church, Our Lady of Lourdes and its grotto, are still a major presence within the small community, as is the graveyard where generations of ancestors now rest. Slightly to the west, at the head of ?álhtúlích (Sechelt Inlet), is Band Lands #3, or “the Bay.” A newer neighbourhood, the Bay was developed to provide additional housing for the community in the mid-twentieth century.
Across the road from the House of *hewhiwus*, fronted by a row of totem poles, is the *tsain-ko* Village Shopping Centre. This complex was built by the *shishálh* Nation as a form of economic development and continues to provide the Nation with a large source of income and employment. Reaching the traffic lights at the intersection of Highway 101 and Wharf Road, a threshold is crossed. Wharf Road is the boundary between *shishálh* space and “the other side,” as it is known to community members. Here, the only real visible *shishálh* presence is the painted mural on the Bank of Montreal featuring seven men with their salmon catch, a mural copied from an old photograph.

![Figure 2-3. “Catch of the Day” photo-mural in Sechelt, painted by Gordon Halloran in 1997. Source: District of Sechelt n.d.](image)

“The other side,” which houses most of the businesses and services in the town, is both a physical reality for *shishálh* people and a metaphor for their displacement. Thus, there is a structure of feeling (Williams 1977), an affective comportment, that makes very apparent the transition from *shishálh* to settler space within the town of Sechelt itself.
During my time in Sechelt, I lived just outside of the townsite, up a small mountain whose name I never knew, overlooking ?álhtúlích near the former village site of tawankw. Every day, I would drive my 1986 Dodge D50 truck into town along the roads that demarcate shíshálh and non-shíshálh spaces so vividly, roads that represent the seizure and dissection of unceded Indigenous land by colonizing powers, a context that continues to define the not-so-post-colonial reality of British Columbia (see Harris 2002; Tennant 1990). As I travelled these roads, I would consider the divisions and the exclusions that mark the present, as well as the ways shíshálh people continue to assert control over their own destinies. It is this present that is my focus. But first, it is important to situate it within a context that begins with pre-contact shíshálh culture and society, both as it has been reconstructed by archaeologists and ethnographers, and as described in the oral histories of shíshálh people. I do this not to root shíshálh people to some romanticized, thought-to-be-lost past. In fact, I do it to argue the opposite, that, although constantly adapting and dynamic, shíshálh culture remains anchored to traditions and philosophies that have persisted against all odds.

**Historical and Contemporary Outsider Sources**

The earliest, and most substantial, ethnographic writing on shíshálh culture comes from Charles Hill-Tout’s 1902 fieldwork published in *The Salish People: The Local Contribution of Charles Hill-Tout* (Maud ed. 1978) and Homer Barnett’s *The Coast Salish of Canada* (1955). Charles Hill-Tout is best understood as an amateur and, ultimately, “clumsy,” ethnographer/archaeologist who plied his trade throughout the province of British Columbia (Maud ed. 1978). An infamous character in some circles, Hill-Tout never achieved the academic recognition he desired, largely because his theories of migration and population along the
Northwest Coast were regarded as completely erroneous. In 1898, he worked briefly alongside the archaeologist Harlan I. Smith in Lytton, BC as part of the Franz Boas-directed Jesup North Pacific Expedition. His most substantial work, however, comes from the numerous reports he submitted on various Coast Salish peoples to the Ethnological Survey of Canada, then directed by George Mercer Dawson. While his theoretical forays were considered almost laughable, his attention to detail and thoroughness were lauded by his peers (Maud ed. 1978).

At the time of Hill-Tout’s arrival, shíshálh peoples had experienced over 40 years of intensive missionization by Roman Catholic Oblate missionaries (Maud ed. 1978, 94; Lemert 1954). Most of the shíshálh community, which then numbered some 300 people, were nominal Catholic converts and much of their social life revolved around the mission, albeit coercively so (Merchant 2012). Hill-Tout spent most of his time on the Sechelt isthmus during the summer of 1902. He also travelled to various shíshálh summer resource-harvesting sites (which were still in use during this time), and collected information on pre-contact shíshálh society, as well as numerous oral histories and legends. These, he believed, were “all that may now be gathered of the past concerning this tribe” (Maud 1978, 93). Hill-Tout’s reflections on life at Sechelt in 1902 is a telling representation of his beliefs regarding Indigenous peoples and the “civilizing” efforts of missionaries and others:

Of all the native races of this Province, they are probably the most modified by white influences. They are now, outwardly at least, a civilized people….Their permanent tribal home, or headquarters, contains about a hundred well-built cottages….Each house has its own garden plot…In the centre of the village, and dominating the whole, stands an imposing church, which cost the tribe nearly $8000 a few years ago….As a body, the Sechelt are, without a doubt, the most industrious and prosperous of all the native peoples of this Province. Respecting their improved condition, their tribal and individual prosperity, highly moral character, and orderly conduct, it is only right to say that they owe it mainly, if not entirely, to the Fathers of the Oblate Mission, and particularly to the late Bishop Durieu, who more than forty years ago went first among them and won them to the Roman Catholic faith (Maud 1978, 93-94).
Despite his problematic predilections, the material Hill-Tout gathered on pre-contact shíshálh society continues to serve as an important source of historical and ethnographic information for both community members and outsiders.

Some 30 years later, Homer Barnett, during his time as a doctoral student in anthropology at the University of California, spent time at Sechelt during his travels throughout the Coast Salish world in 1935 and 1936. Working with several key shíshálh informants, including Joe LeDally and Basil Joe (Gilbert Joe’s grandfather), Barnett collected information on pre-contact shíshálh culture and society for his larger study, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia* (1955). Barnett’s research on shíshálh peoples and lifeways is a wide-ranging study that covers what he deemed to be the major facets of traditional life. Ultimately a project of ethnology, Barnett’s study of the Coast Salish world is based on key social and cultural features, or culture traits, of the area used to compare and contrast the various groups of people with whom he worked.

Barnett’s (1955) publication and field notes provide a wealth of information on various aspects of shíshálh life before the arrival of European missionaries, including resource-harvesting technologies, ceremonial practices, beliefs around death and the afterlife, rites of passage rituals, warfare, and trade. A much more in-depth, academic, and objective analysis than that of Hill-Tout, Homer Barnett’s research is an extremely important resource for understanding the bigger picture of both shíshálh culture and society, and its place within the larger Coast Salish world. His field notes are particularly interesting. While his study, *Coast Salish of British Columbia*
Columbia, is essentially a work of salvage anthropology, his notes reveal the extent to which many practices and beliefs were still in place, despite three-quarters of a century of colonial disruption. Reading between the lines, an image of shíshálh agency emerges. Thus, where Hill-Tout’s observations are tainted by his overt bias concerning the “betterment” of shíshálh life thanks to missionaries and Catholicism, Barnett’s maintain an air of objectivity, typical of his Boasian training, that while mired in salvage practice, presents shíshálh society within a broader, deeper context.

There are non-shíshálh locals, too, who have engaged in amateur ethnographic and historical research with members of the shíshálh community, and their contributions are equally important to the present study. The first is Helen Dawe (1990), seen by many as the Sunshine Coast’s first archivist. The collections she began amassing in the mid-1960s form the foundations of the Sechelt Library and Archives. During the 1960s and 1970s, Dawe spent time with shíshálh Elders, many of whom she could count among her close friends. Her interview notes reveal an interest in collecting information on shíshálh genealogies, which she tried to connect back to the four original territories of shíshálh people (see below). It appears that she was also convinced that she had uncovered information that would seem to support the existence of a fifth territorial affiliation for a branch of shíshálh society, something also observed by missionary sources (Merchant 2012), but this has never been confirmed.

A second local Sunshine Coast researcher worth noting is a teacher named Lester Peterson (1990). In the 1950s, Peterson wanted to study Indigenous education in the province of British Columbia for a Master’s degree in Education at the University of British Columbia.

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4 A particularly Boasian perspective that held that Indigenous cultures were in danger of extinction and, therefore, extensive study and collection needed to be undertaken so as to best preserve the knowledge that remained (Clifford 1989).
Peterson began working with prominent shíshálh Elders and storytellers, many whose names still resonate today as important culture bearers. Peterson’s later publication, *The Story of the Sechelt Nation* (1990), is the product of the decades he spent sitting in shíshálh homes and travelling through their territory. Peterson’s central concern is what might be called the “mythological” dimension of shíshálh culture. He speaks constantly of “esoteric” and “mystic” elements of culture, attempting all the while to connect them to larger world mythologies. A diffusionist to a fault, Peterson’s analytical rendering of the narratives shared are problematic to say the least. Despite this, his text (co-published with the shíshálh Nation) provides one of the most comprehensive collections of shíshálh oral history—including creation stories, disasters, morality tales, rites of passage, ceremonialism, warfare, economy, and more—available for public consumption.

Peter Merchant (2012), an archaeologist and ethnohistorian, has written about the shíshálh experience of colonialism, and, importantly, their resistance to it. His MA thesis, “shíshálh Responses to Colonial Conflict (1791-present): Resilience in the Face of Disease, Missionaries, and Colonialism,” is an indispensable contemporary scholarly source that recounts the life history of the late shíshálh Elder, Vi Jackson, her family’s resistance to colonialism, and the agency of the larger shíshálh community in response to generations of imperialist imposition. Susan Roy and Ruth Taylor (2013) have provided an important historical revisiting of shíshálh labour that focuses on the role of women in the industrial economies that arrived with settler society. More recent unpublished ethnographic and linguistic research has been conducted by Dorothy Kennedy and Randy Bouchard (1971-1983), and a series of ethnographers hired by the
shíshálh Nation themselves. Last, but most certainly not least, the late Elders sxi-xiy-xay (Theresa Jeffries), Clarence Joe, and Gilbert Joe, among others, have documented important first-person discussions of the role of shíshálh women in empowering self-governance, shíshálh politics, and shíshálh oral history.

The ethnographic and oral historical material collected over the last century provides a basic sketch of what shíshálh life was like before the arrival of Europeans, the impacts of contact on shíshálh lifeways, and the mythopoetic structures that inform shíshálh culture. In a similar manner to what Susan Roy (2016) has observed for Musqueam peoples, this legacy of outsider research in shíshálh territory has greatly informed a shíshálh interaction with, and experience of, their culture and history, as well as a critical co-creation of meaning in the constant dialectic of emic and etic forms of knowledge production.

Pre-Contact shíshálh Society and the Early Contact Period

Charles Hill-Tout was told by his interlocutors that shíshálh territory is divided into four main areas from which people continue to claim descent. He recorded these as: “Qunetcin,” “Tsonai,” “Tuwanekq,” and “Sqiaqos” (Maud 1978, 95). Contemporary shíshálh names for these places are as follows: xenichen and ts’unay in lek’wemin (Jervis Inlet), tewankw in ?álhtúlích (Sechelt Inlet), and sxixus, a term for the people of kalpilin (Pender Harbour).

Pre-contact shíshálh society shared many similarities with the rest of the Coast Salish world. Political, economic, and spiritual systems were maintained through customary feasting and winter dance ceremonies. The most powerful political organization was the “corporate” family

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5 All of these unpublished materials are currently classified legal documents and therefore cannot be included in this research.
group, with leadership roles falling to the head of a particular family (see Barnett 1955; Miller 1989, 2008). To this end, familial relations in pre-contact shíshálh society served an extremely important role and continue to do so today (see Chapter Three).

House groups were organized based on family. Similarly, fishing, hunting, and food-collecting areas were all owned and organized around the family group (Maud 1978, 99-104). With regard to property and ownership, Barnett argues that, among shíshálh, family ownership of what he referred to as “summer resorts” (resource-collecting places) and hunting territories was more pronounced than elsewhere in the Coast Salish world (1955, 252).

The first European to enter shíshálh territory was the Spanish sea captain, Jose Maria Navarez in 1791. While anchoring at the mouth of what is now Wilson Creek to replenish fresh water supplies for his ship, the Santa Saturnina, Navarez briefly explored the coastline before heading across Malaspina Strait to Vancouver Island and then back south to Puget Sound (Keller and Leslie 2009). While it appears that Navarez and his crew did not make contact with shíshálh people, George Vancouver and the crew of the Discovery would do so a year later.

On June 17, 1792, Vancouver and his crew, navigating what would later be named Jervis Inlet, encountered 17 shíshálh people in two canoes. The crew traded iron goods for fish and a few bows and arrows (Keller and Leslie 2009, 15; Merchant 2012, 21-22). Although there are scattered references to visible fires and seemingly uninhabited dwellings, this is the only record of actual interactions with shíshálh people by Vancouver and his crew.

The presence of Europeans in shíshálh territory continued sporadically into the nineteenth century. British gunboats would occasionally pass the outer coastline on their way north or south, but no real sustained contact seems to have occurred throughout the first half of the century. This would not last. For a period though, shíshálh peoples were left relatively alone,
their only concern regarding intruders being the expansion of marauding Ligwilda’xw Kwakwaka’wakw into tsain-ko (Maud 1978).

**The Arrival of Missionaries and Residential School**

By the mid-nineteenth century, the *shíshálh* world changed forever. In 1860, a group of missionaries led by Father Leon Fouquet landed at *kalpilin* (Pender Harbour), near the main *shíshálh* winter village site. As the story goes, this initial missionizing effort was brief. After only two short months, the missionaries were forced out of *shíshálh* territory (Lemert 1954). This brief encounter with Christianity was not, however, the last *shíshálh* peoples would see of the Oblate priests.

The year 1862 is probably the most devastating date in the Indigenous history of what is now British Columbia. When the vessel the *Brother Jonathan* docked at Victoria in March, it unleashed what has been referred to as a “wall of death” that rolled up the Northwest Coast and into the interior of British Columbia (Lutz 2009; Menzies, personal communication, 2014). This was most likely not the first time smallpox had reached *shíshálh* peoples. As Merchant (2012) observes, there is no “official” historical documentation of early smallpox epidemics among *shíshálh* peoples, but scholarly opinion holds that an epidemic in 1782 was particularly devastating to Indigenous peoples along the Salish Sea (Harris 1994). The abandoned villages observed by Vancouver and his crew in 1792 would seem to indicate that something serious had caused the massive depopulation and dispersal of people. Another argument could be that the inhabitants were simply away from their villages, fishing and gathering far up their inlets.

Scholarly debate on the spread and number of pre-1862 smallpox epidemics is varied (Boyd 1996; Duff 1997; Lutz 2009). All agree, however, that the 1862 outbreak was, as the late
Wilson Duff (1997, 59) put it, “the most terrible single calamity to befall the Indians of British Columbia,” with an estimated 60% mortality rate among Indigenous peoples in the province. There are no exact numbers to estimate the destruction caused by the 1862 epidemic among shíshálh. It is telling, however, that later in that same year, in the midst of an epidemic that undoubtedly upended their entire worldview, two shíshálh leaders travelled to New Westminster (then the colonial capital) to ask the Oblates to return to their territory. Upon their return, the Oblates were greeted by a surviving shíshálh population of approximately 300, a population that once numbered in the thousands (Lemert 1954; Merchant 2012).

Edwin Lemert’s (1954) article, “The Life and Death of an Indian State,” is perhaps the best source on what transpired next. The Oblates, now under the direction of Father Durieu, built a chapel at kalpilin, adjacent to the main shíshálh winter village. Conversion to Christianity was swift and nearly absolute. Lemert observes that “by 1871 the sacrament of confirmation was administered to the entire Seschelt [sic] tribe” (1954, 23). Merchant’s (2012) recent life history work with the late shíshálh Elder, Vi Jackson, indicates, however, that while perhaps adopting a nominal form of Catholicism, many shíshálh sought ways to resist the overbearing control imposed by the Oblates.

What Durieu and the Oblates imposed on the shíshálh and other communities in the Coast Salish world became known as the “Durieu System” (Lemert 1954). One of the principal mechanisms of the system was the complete spatial upending of shíshálh life. Concurrent with William Duncan’s Anglican community at Metlakatla (Duff 1997), and heavily influenced by the Jesuit reduction settlements in South America (Ganson 2003), Durieu established a mission community complete with a church and European-style housing, built and paid for by shíshálh converts. This community was constructed on the site of ch’atelich and became known as
Sechelt, as did *shíshálh* peoples. For Durieu, it was fundamental that all *shíshálh* peoples relocate from their ancestral territories and come together at Sechelt. Contemporary observers viewed what was established at Sechelt as a model “Indian State” (Lemert 1954, 24). The functioning of this state required the compliance and participation of *shíshálh* leaders themselves. To this end, *shíshálh* family-heads and other high-status people were integrated into the system. As Lemert (1954, 24) observes:

The functionaries at the local level included chiefs, sub-chiefs, watchmen, policemen, catechists, chanters and sextons….The more complex differentiation occurred at Seschelt, where there were four chiefs, each with his own captains, watchmen, and policemen….Watchmen served as truant officers to insure attendance at religious instruction meetings which, in early days, included adults as well as children; they also reported instances of misconduct and helped maintain old taboos, such as entering houses where there were pubescent girls or using property without the owner's permission. Chanters had the task of publicizing wrongdoing by reading aloud a community inventory of sins prior to confession. The sexton was official bell-ringer, or “king-ting” man, as an old French priest has quaintly called him…. Social control under the system resided with the local chief and two others who acted as judges in cases of misbehavior, with the priest reserving the right to preside over hearings. The watchmen became the eyes of the court; the judges passed down punishments and Indigenous policemen carried them out. Final and effective authority, of course, flowed into this structure from the presence and direct intervention of the priests.

The paternalism and outright racism that fueled the missionizing effort at Sechelt is quite apparent in the opinions of Durieu:

The Indian is weak in heart and mind…and must be ruled by religious motives ….He must be protected against himself and against evil-doers….He must be paternally guided (for)…Indians are only big children…and hence (have) need for other than regular white law and control….” (as quoted in Lemert 1954, 24).

Despite the seemingly absolute control imposed by missionaries, it becomes important to also illustrate, where possible, the ways through which *shíshálh* peoples maintained and exerted agency in this drastically changing world. This requires some reading between the lines of official history (see Merchant 2012).
In his analysis of the Durieu System, Lemert (1954) continues to stress the overall dysfunction of the model. He comments that by the 1890s, just 30 years after its inception, the system was crumbling in all four Salish communities onto which it had been imposed. *shíshálh* peoples continued to maintain pre-contact economic practices alongside newer ones, and families still ventured up the inlets in the summers to harvest various resources.

Furthermore, even within the mission community itself, clandestine activities such as “drinking parties” (Lemert 1954, 26) provided new venues for both resistance and the continuance of older cultural forms of pageantry, storytelling, wealth redistribution, and so forth. These forms of resistance coincided with a gradual breakdown within the ranks of the Oblates themselves, and an increased authoritarian presence of provincial and federal governments, who also sought to control the lives of Indigenous peoples, particularly after the creation of the Indian Act in 1876. Thus, by the close of the nineteenth century, the initial Oblate jurisdiction among *shíshálh* peoples had diminished, replaced by more secular state control. The presence of the Catholic Church, however, was about to take on a whole new visage.

In 1904, St. Augustine’s Residential School opened its doors on the top of a hill overlooking the Waterfront. Paid for and built by the *shíshálh* community, the school would operate until 1975. The school was originally populated only by *shíshálh* children, but later youth from neighbouring Nations like *Tla-amin* (Sliammon) and from Vancouver Island also attended (see Paul, Johnson, and Raibmon 2015). *shíshálh* children were required to reside at the school from September to June each year. Interaction with their parents and community was strictly regulated and monitored. Instruction was provided by the Sisters of the Child Jesus and was ultimately intended to further distance *shíshálh* children from their culture in the interests of
assimilating them into settler society. In 1917, the original wooden school burned to the ground and construction began on a larger stone structure.

St. Augustine’s Residential School continues to mark shíshálh cultural memory in many ways. Survivors who were day scholars have recently filed a lawsuit against the Canadian government that has yet to be settled. This building, now a gravel parking lot that handles overflow from the local hospital, was a dominating feature in the community for over half a century. Most older community members were students within its walls at some point in their lives. Most, if not all, have stories of abuses suffered there. Most, if not all, also have stories of resilience and resistance. I will return to these stories in Chapter Four.

The Arrival of Settlers and Industry

The first wave of settlers arrived in shíshálh territory beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This encroachment coincided with burgeoning tourist and resource industries that saw steamships bringing in newcomers from Vancouver and elsewhere. The reactions and experiences of shíshálh peoples to these early incursions were largely negative and, at times, hostile. One particular incident saw shíshálh ejecting loggers from their territory at gunpoint (Roy and Taylor 2013).

Beginning with the first Joint Indian Reserve Commission in 1876, shíshálh territory began to be carved up and pre-empted by agents of the growing settler state operating without treaty. Until this point, as noted by Harris (2002,109), there were no major white settlements or reserves in shíshálh territory. This was all about to change. When the Reserve commissioners arrived at Sechelt in 1876, the entire population was living in the mission village during the
winter months and dispersing throughout the territory for labour and harvesting work in the spring and summers.

Harris (2002) notes that the commissioners were petitioned by *shíshálh* leaders to establish reserve lands that would ensure them a stake in the commercial timber industry. At this point, *shíshálh* peoples were heavily engaged in the commercial hand logging of their lands in *lek’wemin* (Jervis Inlet), but were constantly in conflict with white loggers. The reserve commissioners acknowledged in their assessments that the *shíshálh* were the “old and exclusive occupants of the Inlet” (as quoted in Harris 2002, 115) and entitled to earning a living from it. Despite this, they failed to get the provincial government to grant them Indigenous commercial timber leases, and *shíshálh* remained outsiders in their own lands. The only option was to enter into a wage-labour relationship with the commercial forest industry (Harris 2002; Lutz 2009).

Another major historical source on the relationships between *shíshálh* and newcomers in their territory comes from the testimonies of the McKenna-McBride Commission of 1913-1916. Though some 30 years later, the issues apparent in the *shíshálh* petitions of 1876 were still very present. In their records, the McKenna-McBride (British Columbia 1916) commissioners identify Chief Julius as the “head chief” of the *shíshálh*, although other chiefs such as Chief George and Chief Johnson make appearances. What becomes apparent in these testimonies is that the dwelling patterns of *shíshálh* peoples, although greatly constricted by the imposed reserve system, maintain a certain continuity with pre-contact patterns of seasonal amalgamation and dispersal (Merchant 2012).

Chief Julius notes that all *shíshálh* people, then some 260 individuals, lived in the old mission village of Sechelt. All *shíshálh* children of school age attended the school, which by this point was under the control of the federal Government. The occupied reserves in *shíshálh*
territory, which vary in size from two acres to 600 acres, were generally used on a seasonal basis and “owned” by families. Thus, in the spring and summer months, shíshálh families would disperse to these areas to fish, hunt, and garden. This pattern was still present when Barnett (1955) visited shíshálh territory in the mid-1930s. The McKenna-McBride commissioners identified a total of 23 reserves in shíshálh territory. These reserves vary in terms of their uses, but most appear to have been fishing, hunting, and gardening sites.

The testimonies of shíshálh leaders also reveal a tension over the continuing pre-emption of lands and the encroachment of settlement. There is much discussion of the displacement of shíshálh from ancient resource sites. Another major theme apparent in the McKenna-McBride testimonies is the expressed desire to retain control over sacred sites, particularly burial islands (British Columbia 1916). Thus, a continuous loss of control over the spaces and places of their traditional territory permeates shíshálh experience of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The frustrations born of exclusion from their lands and resources would continue to structure their interactions with settler populations, government officials, and resource capitalists. This frustration, however, would provide the impetus for a major politicization of shíshálh peoples throughout the twentieth century, and an accelerating movement towards self-government that became a reality on June 17, 1986.

Self-Government, Economic Development, and Cultural Sovereignty

The Sechelt Act, 1986

A newly revamped shíshálh Nation website proclaims on its home page “Independent and Self-Governing Since 1986: A Unique Third Order of the Government of Canada.” This status is not to be confused with a treaty agreement. The contemporary shíshálh Nation is a self-
governing nation as per a 1986 agreement with the Government of Canada. Bill C-93, or the Sechelt Act, was given royal assent on June 17, 1986 and effectively removed the shíshálh Nation from a substantial portion of the Canadian Government’s Indian Act and made them a third level of government within Canada’s political system (Etkin 1988). The purpose of the Act is to “enable the Sechelt Indian Band to exercise and maintain self-government on Sechelt lands and to obtain control over and the administration of the resources and services available to its members” (Government of Canada 2002). While I do not have the space here, nor is it the purpose of this section, to completely unpack the Sechelt Act in detail, it is useful to briefly outline its most fundamental components.

This achievement of self-governance did not occur overnight. In fact, it was the product of a long history of shíshálh political organizing, petitioning, and direct action. Negotiation between the shíshálh Nation and the provincial and federal governments began in earnest in 1971. The agreement that was ratified in 1986 was the first of its kind in Canada. As of 2015, the federal Government has signed a total of 22 self-government agreements with 36 different Indigenous communities across Canada (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2015). The Sechelt Act established a new governmental entity, the Sechelt Indian Band (also referred to here as SIB, the Band, or the Nation to designate all governmental aspects). The SIB maintains jurisdiction over the Sechelt Indian Government District, which comprises all lands formerly held as reserves by the federal Government.

Thus, one of the major changes brought about by the Act was the transfer of title of all former federal reserve lands to the Band as fee simple property. Reserves thus became known as “Band Lands” and are at the full disposal of the Band government to develop in any way they see fit. To this end, the Band has built a number of businesses on Band Lands and has leased
numerous lots for individual housing developments. With this transfer of ownership, all
Indigenous title to these lands was extinguished. SIB land holdings are currently some 1000
hectares of land around the Sechelt Peninsula. This area is divided into thirty-three sections of
Band Lands, all under the administration of the SIB government (Etkin 1988). The Band
maintains a right to enter into litigation or treaty negotiation with federal and provincial
governments over Indigenous title to the remainder of unceded shíshálh traditional territory not
currently controlled by the Band.

The SIB exists as a legal entity with its own constitution. This constitution, known as the
Sechelt Indian Band Constitution, emerged out of the 1986 agreement and was put into force in
1993. The constitution defines Band membership in accordance with the rights to membership
laid out in the Canadian Indian Act. Furthermore, it lays out the structure of the Band Council
and community electoral processes. Lastly, it enshrines SIB title to their Band Lands and how
these lands can be developed and/or put to use.

To say that the achievement of self-government is one of the most important moments in
the recent history of shíshálh peoples is an understatement. Every June, Self-Government Day
marks the anniversary of the occasion, and the community comes together to celebrate its own
National holiday. But self-government must not be considered an end point; rather, it is the
beginning, or perhaps, a node, in a much larger network of cultural and political sovereignty that
began in the nineteenth century and continues today.

Treaty Negotiations and the Advancement of Cultural Heritage Protocols

In 1994, the SIB filed a Statement of Intent with the newly formed BC Treaty
Commission. In their statement, the SIB drew on their powers derived from the Act to bring
forward a treaty claim. In 1999, the SIB signed an Agreement in Principle with the Commission, the province, and the federal Government. Although treaty negotiations stalled at this point and are yet to be ratified and implemented, the Agreement in Principle outlines some key protocols that would further empower the SIB within their territory and are directly related to the SIB’s implementation of self-government and overall goals of self-determination.

In exercising self-governance, the SIB has instituted numerous policies defining and outlining particular protocols regarding the management of cultural heritage—in particular, archaeological remains and objects of cultural patrimony. Chapter 14 of the Agreement in Principle, titled simply “Culture and Heritage,” outlines a transfer of shishálh cultural material from the Royal British Columbia Museum to the SIB. It further outlines the future rights of the SIB regarding control over material cultural heritage extant within their territory. Despite these protocols not being enshrined in treaty, the SIB has implemented numerous policies so as to best ensure the proper treatment of cultural heritage material, and to ensure the direct involvement of the SIB specifically in any archaeological work done within their traditional territory.

In 2008, the SIB’s Rights and Title Department issued a public statement concerning their ongoing effort to have shishálh Indigenous title acknowledged:

*shishálh* Nation Indigenous Title is a legal interest in the lands and resources of our Territory, and includes the right to decide how those lands and resources will be used, and share in the benefits from the development of our Territory. The *shishálh* Nation does not accept the Province acting as if our Indigenous Title does not exist. The Province must respect the law of this land. Once again, the Court calls upon governments to recognize our Indigenous Title and Rights to our Territory and engage in meaningful negotiations. The *shishálh* Nation is putting all residents, businesses and governments within our Territory on notice that we intend to continue to exercise, and defend, our Indigenous Title and Rights (*shishálh* Nation 2008).
This statement of *shíshálh* sovereignty builds on the foundation established through the achievement of self-governance and has direct implications for, among other things, archaeological and anthropological research done within *shíshálh* territory.

To this end, the SIB employs its own archaeological team who are involved in the excavation of any new development sites within *shíshálh* territory. Here, the SIB is able to exert continued control over the monitoring of development within their territory and the stewardship of cultural heritage materials. Another important example of *shíshálh* exertion of cultural sovereignty is the recent collaboration between the *shíshálh* Nation, the University of Toronto, and the Canadian Museum of History. Known as the *shíshálh* Archaeological Research Project, this endeavour seeks to increase knowledge about *shíshálh* territorial occupation through focused excavations and introduce *shíshálh* community members to archaeological research within their territory by directly involving them in the process. Collaboration between academic researchers and the SIB’s own archaeological team is also a central component of this project. To date, this initiative has uncovered an array of *shíshálh* material cultural heritage and sites of cultural importance, including a burial site that is unlike any found before on the Northwest Coast in which the occupants were adorned in thousands of tiny stone beads (Wood 2014).

A final, and extremely significant, example of *shíshálh* cultural sovereignty happened on Saturday October 16, 2010. The story, as recounted by *shíshálh* Elder *mus swiya* (Jamie Dixon), actually starts some 3000 years earlier when a *shíshálh* child spied a raiding party of *Ligwilda’xw* crossing *tsain-ko* from the Northern Vancouver Island. The child immediately raised the alarm, which ultimately saved the *shíshálh* people, but the child was killed. Upon hearing of the death of her child, the mother, stricken with grief, took her own life.
To commemorate the sacrifice of the child and the grief of the mother, a carver created what would become known to the non-\textit{shíshálh} world as the “Sechelt Image” (Duff 1975). A stone carving that stands about 53 centimetres tall and weighs approximately 32 kilograms, the Sechelt Image has been in the possession of the Museum of Vancouver for over 80 years. Discovered near Wilson Creek in \textit{shíshálh} territory in the early 1920s, the carving was sold to the museum for $25, reportedly by a \textit{shíshálh} community member who feared it would be stolen. I was told during my time in Sechelt that this original transaction was always intended to be temporary. The museum was entrusted with the care of the Sechelt Image, but its ownership, it was understood, would remain in \textit{shíshálh} hands. At some point, a replica was commissioned to be displayed in Sechelt. The original, however, continued to remain in the hands of the Museum of Vancouver.

In 1976, so the story goes, \textit{shíshálh} Elders began requests for the return of the Sechelt Image. While the object biography of this carving remains unwritten, what transpired in the following thirty-odd years can perhaps be inferred from similar examples. Getting things back from institutions is never easy for Indigenous communities. The legacy of NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act), which oversees the return of Indigenous remains and cultural material in the United States, has changed this dynamic to some degree, but in Canada, where there is no legal framework mandating repatriation, this process can drag on.

In 2010, however, things changed. The curator of the \textit{tems swiya} Museum at the time, Jessica Casey, decided it was time to bring the Sechelt Image home once and for all. Working with Museum of Vancouver board members, including UBC anthropologist Bruce Miller and PhD Candidate Emily Birky, Casey and the \textit{shíshálh} community achieved a long-sought-after
goal and officially reclaimed the carving from the museum. Upon its return, the carving was given a new name, “Our Grieving Mother,” and was reconnected with the story that is its animator.

I will return to Our Grieving Mother and its significance in Chapter Five. For now, I want to turn to a brief discussion of the place that is now its home, the tems swiya Museum—the place where this research began and, ultimately, where it ended. It is a place deserving of its own lengthy treatment, but for now, I will do my best to situate it within the context of the shíshálh community and this research.

*The tems swiya Museum and Cultural Centre*

In *she shashilhalhem*, *tems swiya* means “our world” (Beaumont 2011). This is a perfect name for the shíshálh museum and cultural centre. Its displays and collections dutifully reflect a shíshálh conception of their culture and history. It is their space. This does not mean that it is not a place that is uniformly embraced within the larger community. Nor is it a place that is outside of community politics. It is actually, as we will see, very much at the centre of a lot of discussion, conflict, and negotiation.

One of the many developments emerging from the recent history of self-government initiatives—in areas of education, economic stimulation, resource management—this shíshálh-operated museum and cultural centre serves a vital role in the small community. The tems swiya serves a dual purpose. It communicates and presents shíshálh culture and history to outsiders while simultaneously serving as a place for community members to come and engage in various

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6 In an interesting side note, the replica of the Sechelt Image was given back to the Museum of Vancouver.
cultural activities. As such, at any given time, one might encounter a group of tourists learning about the history of basket-making alongside a group of community members learning how to make baskets. As well as its status, as both museum and cultural centre, the *tems swiya* is the main community archive and cultural repository.

As mentioned in my introduction, the physical archival space of the *tems swiya* is something to behold. It is a room, well actually, two rooms, filled to the brim with an array of objects and documents. Entering through a door in the back of the exhibition space, the first thing one encounters is the giant work table in the centre of the first room. This table was always covered with something. Genealogical research documents, lithic fragments, balls of yarn and other weaving equipment, cedar bark in various stages of preparation are all things one might find on any given day. In the rear left-hand corner is the curator’s desk, usually piled high with various stacks of paper. On the back wall is a long bookshelf that contains an assortment of publications, VHS tapes, DVDs and museum paraphernalia. To its right is the loading dock, usually a storage area for the painted cedar boxes that will someday hold the remains of *shíshálh* ancestors as they are uncovered. The walls are covered with maps of *shíshálh* territory, a carved wooden banner that reads “Think Indian Because No One Is Going to Think Indian For You,” and historical photographs.

Moving through another door, flanked by two images of *shíshálh* women rolling logs, a significant photograph of women’s participation in the forestry industry (see Roy and Taylor 2013), you enter another room filled with even more objects. Old brass band equipment sits alongside giant oil paintings of community leaders and prominent Elders. Shelving units are littered with photograph albums, models of cedar plank houses, and incredibly old copies of Franz Boas’ Jesup North Pacific Expedition writings (Boas 1898). More archaeological material
covers almost every flat surface. If I remember correctly, there is even a birdcage. I do not mean to imply that there is no organization or that this is all merely clutter. It is certainly not. In fact, museum staff can navigate this material cacophony with ease, knowing where all the bits and pieces are and why they are important. The diverse material that makes up this archive *cum* storage room is all significant in telling the story of *shíshálh* peoples. This material includes an extensive archival collection of close to 1500 historical photographic prints, negatives, digital scans and slides, as well as shelves upon shelves of more recent photograph albums donated by families.

*The tems swiya Museum Photograph Archive*

The initial physical photograph archive that made up the *tems swiya* Museum’s photograph collection when I first arrived in *shíshálh* Territory comprised 209 photographic prints and 485 slides, organized within 17 different series. These series reflect basic organizational themes and were developed by museum workers over the past two decades as the collections grew. The photographs come from an array of sources and are thought to have been produced by both *shíshálh* and non-*shíshálh* photographers. Though the archive is relatively silent with regard to authorship, a familiar eye can discern between the more “ethnographic” imagery and the more vernacular subject matter and style that characterizes *shíshálh*-produced photographs, a topic I return to below.

Series 1.00 contains photographs taken in the hop- and berry-picking fields of southern British Columbia and Northwestern Washington State taken circa 1930, places where many *shíshálh* people would travel during the summer months for extra income. Series 2.00 contains photographs of another form of *shíshálh* labour, cedar root basket-making, ranging from circa
1930 to 1970. Once a utilitarian product, baskets were transformed within a settler economy into a form of art production and income for shishálh women well into the 1960s. Collected here are not only photographs of baskets and basket-makers (typically women), but also photographs of root gathering and other procurement activities central to the production of baskets. Series 3.00 focuses on various photographs of watercraft, from canoes to more contemporary skiffs, that continue to be central to the movement and labour of shíshálh peoples within and beyond their territory. The dates of these images range between circa 1900 and 1930.

Series 4.00 returns to another central form of post-contact female labour—fish canneries. This series collects images from numerous Northwest Coast canneries, between the 1930s and 1970s, where (primarily) shíshálh women found employment. Contained here as well are many photographs of younger shíshálh children who would travel with their parents to the canneries. Series 5.00 and series 6.00 are less focused in their respective themes and can perhaps best be described as group shots of shíshálh people attending various kinds of events within the mission context—religious processions, brass band gatherings, and celebrations for various visiting officials. The dates for images in this series range expansively from the 1890s to the 1950s. Series 7.00 contains photographs of various dwellings—homes, smokehouses, logging bunkhouses—outside of the mission, up the inlets of shíshálh territory, dating between 1900 and 1940. Series 8.00 is one of the largest in the collection and contains images of shíshálh commercial fishers and their vessels, ranging from the late 1920s to the 1950s. While no longer a central industry in the community, commercial fishing remains a significant component of shíshálh cultural memory, and food fishing is an ongoing and vital cultural practice.

Series 9.00 collects numerous images best described as “individual and group portraits.” Many are of family groups and prominent community leaders, but there are also group portraits
of sports teams, Girl Guides, fishing crews, cannery workers, and so on. The photographs in this series span a large portion of shíshálh photographic history, the earliest dating from the 1890s and running up until 1970. Series 10.00 focuses on another prominent shíshálh industrial activity, logging. The largest series in the collection, the images of shíshálh loggers and logging grounds continue to animate the oral narratives of older community members who have all had some experience with the logging industry in their territory. Again, this collection covers a significant period of the community’s recent history. The earliest of the logging photographs are tentatively dated from around 1900 and the latest to the 1970s, when logging (like commercial fishing) became a less significant part of the shíshálh economy. Series 11.00 contains photographs of the numerous pictograph sites that exist within shíshálh traditional territory. These images, usually painted in red ochre on rock faces, are sacred to contemporary shíshálh people and provide them with direct connections to the presence of their ancestors. Although by far the most recent photographs in the collection (these images were all produced in the late 1990s), they fit into the historical narrative of the archive in that they document ancient cultural features on the landscape.

Series 12.00 is perhaps the most complicated in the collection. Collected here are the majority of the photographs the museum has acquired that document the history of St. Augustine’s Residential School, a prominent fixture in the community for almost three-quarters of a century. Contained within this series are photographs of the school buildings, group photographs of children in front of the school, class photos, photographs of community members clearing the land on which the school was built, and more. It is also perhaps the most incomplete archive in the collection, as the museum has not yet been able to acquire photographs known to exist in the archival collections of the Oblate Missionaries who ran the school for many years.
These photographs cover roughly the first 30 years of St. Augustine’s operation, between 1907 and 1937, with few images from 1940 to 1975 when the school was finally shut down. Series 13.00 contains more photographs of the larger mission community. Most of the photographs are landscape images of the Waterfront. Now also known as Band Lands #2, this area remains one of the central dwelling places of *shíshálh* peoples. As a place, the Waterfront is firmly fixed in the cultural memory of community members and is the narrative backdrop for many stories. The photographs in this series are some of the only ones to be given precise dates in their series numbering (from 1900 to 1960) in order to reflect the evolution of the community throughout the early twentieth century.

Series 14.00 is a curious conglomeration of essentially all the other preceding series. It contains no prints, only slides, and there are many duplicates and overlaps with other existing series. It therefore covers the largest historical period of *shíshálh* photographs, beginning in the 1890s and running on into the 1970s. It is not known why these images were not placed into already existing series, but it appears that this series is a more recently created catch-all for newly acquired images. The archive makes a curious curatorial leap at this point with the next series being 17.00, which contains only two images, one of a group of men in a racing canoe named “The Miss Sechelt” and one of the “Sechelt Braves” basketball team, both from the 1930s. Series 18.00 contains a small number of images of Residential School groups taking part in either church-related ceremonies or exploring the waterfront, taken in the 1960s. The final series, 19.00, contains several images of a totem pole raising at the current Band Hall in the 1980s.

This physical archive has been supplemented in recent years through the acquisition of digital photographic copies from a range of public institutions. Most of these still require
incorporation into the larger *tems swiya* collection. The Vancouver Public Library, the
Vancouver City Archives, the British Columbia Provincial Archives, the Sechelt Library
Archives, and the Sunshine Coast Museum have all provided access to their collections. The
photographs in these collections are largely late nineteenth century to early twentieth century
images of the life of the mission community. They are photographs of religious events such as
Passion Plays and ceremonial processions, brass band gatherings, and public events celebrating
the visits of important religious officials. Where the previously described collection is essentially
anonymous with regard to the producers of the photographs, these collections come with a
clearer provenance. The photographs reclaimed from non-local institutions like the City of
Vancouver and the provincial archives are attributed to numerous Vancouver-based photographic
firms and image-makers, whereas those from local institutions like the Sechelt Library often also
contain photographs produced by Sunshine Coast residents. In all these cases, the photographs
are attributed to non-šíshálh photographers.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the future preservation of this continuously expanding
physical and digital archive has recently been given increased attention by both the museum’s
curatorial staff and the Band government. The entire physical collection has been digitized, and
the Band administration is trying to figure out an appropriate way to organize and manage the
new digital archive, which includes all of the material gathered from other sources. This process
has raised important questions within the community about the place of these photographs in the
larger constellation of *šíshálh* heritage, and their applicability in a variety of cultural and legal
arenas.

Particularly important are issues about controlling the circulation of digitized images,
both within the community and outside of it. This resonates with many Indigenous communities
the world over who have engaged in vital cultural rejuvenations that have sparked serious debates, both within and outside of those communities, about the ownership of visual and material culture, its circulation in arenas of public display, and protocols for its preservation (Christen 2006; Geismar and Tilley 2003; Hennessy 2012; Kramer 2004; 2006; Townsend-Gault 2004). Exploring this topic within the context of an Indigenous community and its museum provides a broader understanding of how people use and value forms of material and visual culture—from ancestral crests to photographs—in documenting and sharing the history of their families, communities, and cultures with each other and, through various media, with diverse audiences (see Glass 2008). Of further consequence is an engagement with the larger ethnographic record of photography among Indigenous communities on the Northwest Coast of North America in order to better understand the various ways researchers have approached the topic over the past three decades of scholarship.

Photography and Indigenous Peoples on the Northwest Coast—Ethnographic Considerations

While it is one of the goals of this thesis to examine a shíshálh experience of photography, this experience must be located within a larger historical and ethnographic context of photography among Indigenous peoples in British Columbia, the Northwest Coast of North America, and even around the world. Not that the experiences of photography, or its legacies, are in any sense universal, but there is perhaps something of a shared origin in terms of photography’s early employment as a technology of contact that connects them, in the same way that there is a particular genealogy of critical photographic theory that requires explication and analysis (see Chapter One).
The early photographic record of what is now known as British Columbia is indeed largely “predatory,” as Sontag (1977) would have it. Alan Thomas (1981) observes that the earliest professional practitioners of photography in British Columbia were ultimately opportunists seeking to cash in on a trade in the “primitive Indian” that was increasingly captivating audiences worldwide. This had particular repercussions for who, and what, is selectively represented in the earliest images being produced.

Almost half a century before Edward S. Curtis popularized the romantic depiction of North American Indigenous peoples, photographers like Hannah and Richard Maynard, Charles Gentile, Frederick Dally, O. C. Hastings, Edward Dossetter and others were travelling throughout the colony, often accompanied by government officials, reproducing a particular image of Indigenous life (Thomas 1981). Their images are often characterized by a distinct (and problematic) obsession with the “primitive” or “savage,” thematic tropes that dominated other representations of Indigenous life as well—especially ethnographic ones. While exceptions to this approach perhaps exist—for example, the Chinese photographer C.D. Hoy’s portraits of Quesnel and Barkerville residents (Moosang 1999), Tsimshian photographer B.A. Haldane (Askren 2010), or Tlingit photographers George Johnson (Geddes 1997) and Louis Shotridge (Gmelch 2008)—early photography must ultimately be understood as being in dialogue with a larger colonialist conception of Indigenous life. In the case of British Columbia and the Northwest Coast, this had important consequences, particularly for the Coast Salish world.

Bruce Miller (2008) observes that in the early ethnographic record of British Columbia, something of a blind spot, or gap, exists concerning the Coast Salish world. He comments that there is a palpable lack of early scholarly work dealing with Coast Salish communities, while there is a plethora of ethnography concerning the cultures of the northern Northwest Coast and
northern Vancouver Island. This gap, Miller argues, is the product of an assumed dilution of Coast Salish cultures as a result of such a long period of sustained contact and missionization. Northern cultures were seen as more “authentic” specimens of a pre-contact indigeneity than were their southern counterparts.

That this same general disregard was reproduced by photographs should not be too surprising. British Columbia’s earliest photographers, fuelled by the economic incentive embodied in the “authentic Indian,” focused their gazes North, often overlooking the people that they passed by daily on the streets of Victoria and Vancouver (Thomas 1981). There are certainly exceptions to this (see Keddie 2010), but it is fair to say that the biases present in the early ethnographic record are certainly evident in the early photographic record as well. As a result of this, cameras did not really intrude into shíshálh territory until the 1880s. Even more interesting still, the earliest images of shíshálh people appear to be a large series of posed family portraits, most likely taken in their church. These are, therefore, still largely in the family collections of shíshálh people themselves rather than in outsider institutions, and thus produce a very early local photographic history, a topic I return to below.

There are several key sources that help uncover early Indigenous reactions to and uses of photography on the Northwest Coast of North America that are relevant for my discussion here. The earliest is Margaret Blackman’s (1981) seminal “‘Copying People:’ Northwest Coast Indigenous Responses to Early Photography.” Focused on the Northwest Coast at the end of the nineteenth century, Blackman examines interactions between early photographers and Indigenous peoples. Her objective is to present an “initial inquiry into the perceptions of and reactions to photography by Northwest Coast Indigenous peoples during the latter part of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries” (1981, 87). Blackman discusses two types, and sites
of encounters between photographers and Indigenous peoples. The first takes place in studios in cities like Victoria and Vancouver. Here, Indigenous photographic subjects sometimes travelled great distances to experience what the Ts’msyen chief Arthur Wellington Clah referred to as the “likeness house” (as quoted in Savard 2010). A second type of encounter took place in the villages of Indigenous peoples themselves.

Blackman makes two important observations. The first is that the earliest photographs of Indigenous peoples, taken in villages by itinerant image-makers seeking profit, were akin to other collectible curios and that, therefore, photographers were perceived with much the same apprehension as other collectors: “As human curios, the Haida are missing part of their identity” (1981, 107). A second is that later photographic encounters, whether produced in studios or in situ, indicate more control on the part of Indigenous peoples, who were beginning to use photographs for their own purposes. As Blackman observes, “photographic imaging became part of Haida culture and they turned it to their own purposes, recording themselves as they wished to be seen…images, which truly ‘copy people.’” (1981, 110). This points to an increasing indigenization of photography on the Northwest Coast that indicates a fundamental shift in the agency of both people and objects.

It is this consideration of the “use of” or indigenization of photography that I am interested in expanding throughout this thesis. Several scholars have advanced this line of inquiry in important ways. Caroline Marr’s (1996) discussion of the uses of photography among Salishan- and Wakashan-speaking communities along the southern Northwest Coast is important for expanding a consideration of agency in photographic encounters. Marr reminds us that there were varying responses by, and motivations for, Indigenous peoples who worked with early photographers. This concept of agency is, she observes, noticeably absent from most discussions
of early image-making practices, perhaps because it is now difficult to discern individual motivations. Photographic practices must be inserted into the recurring themes of power and control. In terms of agency, we must pay attention to the ways in which Indigenous peoples sought to exert control over a technology and a representational form that was imposed upon them.

Marr’s (1996) analysis illustrates that some communities were more open to photography and photographers than others. In some cases, communities controlled what could and could not be photographed, protecting carved house posts and other sacred materials from exploitation. Furthermore, Marr highlights how Indigenous communities used photographs for various purposes of their own. She highlights the early use of photographs as sacred objects in “commemorative ceremonies” such as customary feasts—a topic I address with a contemporary shíshálh example in Chapter Five. Thus, photographs and photography were not uniformly incorporated by Indigenous communities on the Northwest Coast. Agency is at best considered locally specific, and even this might be too broad. The heterogeneity of reactions to photography on the Northwest Coast inserts it within broader local negotiations of changing worlds.

This local model is engaged by Sharon Gmelch (2008), who focuses on a Tlingit example. Gmelch argues that “historical images are imbedded in a matrix of cultural meanings” (2008, 5). Using Catherine Lutz’ and June Collins’ (1993) idea of multiple photographic gazes, Gmelch asks, “To what extent did the Tlingit control their representation and use of photography themselves? Or, was it simply another form of colonization over which they had little control?” (Gmelch 2008, 1). As with Blackman’s (1981) analysis, this is something that gradually changed over time.
Gmelch (2008) positions the arrival of photography among the Tlingit within larger colonial processes that ultimately disrupted life along the coast of Alaska. The earliest photographs of the Tlingit were often taken by photographers assigned to various scientific and survey expeditions, including those conducted by anthropologists (2008, 46). By the 1870s, the production and circulation of photographs were also embedded in a burgeoning tourist industry. Here, images of Tlingit became “curiosities,” not all that different from other forms of collectible culture (2008, 67). A third gaze, one that ultimately blurs the outsider/insider distinction, is that produced by local photographers who used their connectedness to various high-ranking Tlingit families to achieve an unparalleled photographic intimacy, even if they violated other Tlingit protocols by raiding graves (2008, 95).

The most important photographer in this category is Tlingit photographer Louis Shotridge. While working for the Museum of Pennsylvania, Shotridge made photographs of numerous Tlingit individuals, as well as material culture, landscapes, streetscapes, and cultural activities (2008, 104). Gmelch asserts that, from very early on, Tlingit “exerted considerable control over the activities of Euro-American photographers…. But Tlingit could not control the circulation or meaning of the images taken of them once they reached outside audiences” (2008, 186). High-ranking Tlingit sought to have their photographs taken and displayed photographs in their homes (2008, 164-171). Photography became part of post-mortem displays of wealth, as well as a tool to document such displays (2008, 173). Tlingit also actively resisted photography through various forms of gesture and pose (particularly women) that indicate both their familiarity with the implications of the medium and their agency (2008, 152).

Askren (2010) explores a similar case in her analysis of Ts ’msyen photographer B.A. Haldane’s work.
Lastly, in her expansive historical exploration of early photography in British Columbia—*Framing the West: Race, Gender, and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest* (2003)—Carol Williams provides an important critical overview of some key ways indigenous communities in the nineteenth century incorporated photography into their daily and ceremonial lives. Williams’ observations position photography as a technology of representation that was both firmly understood, and powerfully re-imagined by indigenous peoples in different social and cultural contexts. Her work reinforces one of the central aims of this dissertation—to understand photography not as an imposed outsider technology, but as a uniquely indigenized, transformative mode of representation. Her discussion of the use of photographs in memorial practices and ceremonies is, in particular, extremely beneficial to my research.

These examples provide a basic ethnographic framework for approaching *shíshálh* experiences with and uses of photography. They are, however, clearly unique to the historical and cultural circumstances that define them. In moving from this discussion to a specific analysis of photography of, with, and by *shíshálh*, I argue that local conceptions of orality, visuality, and materiality—and the way these intersect with various kinds of performed memory-as-history—are important considerations. Having sketched an ethnographic framework that both informs and influences my analysis, I want to return to a discussion of *shíshálh* photography specifically in terms of what I categorize as the four “genres” (Strassler 2010) that make up the larger corpus this dissertation seeks to address.

**Genres of shíshálh Photography**

Karen Strassler (2010) observes that in ethnographically considering the diverse array of image-objects that constitute “popular” photography, it is necessary to address the various
“genres” in which particular photographs, and photographic subjects, can be located—their
“habitats.” For Strassler, photographic genres produce particular “ways of seeing” (2010, 18-19;
see also Berger 1990) that are entangled with photography as both a representational medium
and as a sociocultural construct: “The analytic of genre…allows us to keep in view both
photography’s material and historical coherence as a medium and its profound malleability as it
is put into the service of different kinds of projects and social actors” (2010, 19). Attention to
this duality allows for a broader consideration of the more expansive “visual [and material]
economies” (Strassler 2010; see also Poole 1997) photographs participate in, as well as the
dialectic of “gazes” that these make possible.

This concept of genres is helpful for my discussion of shíshálh photography in that it
allows, at least initially, for there to be some kind of organization of what is an incredibly diverse
body of material. In applying the concept of photographic genres, I do not mean to imply or
impose a rigid or hierarchical structuring to the contexts of production, circulation, and
reception. In fact, I hope to demonstrate that although they are a beneficial way to categorize
photographic types, these genres are ultimately fluid and collapse in on one another in local
circumstances. To begin, however, I propose that shíshálh photography can be broken down into
four distinct genres: photographs taken by professional firms, studio portraits, tourist/amateur
photographs, and family snapshots.
This first genre, which I have labelled “professional firms,” consists largely of photographs produced by outsider photographic firms between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two major firms working in shíshálh territory during this period were Bailey and Neelands, and its successor Bailey Brothers Company, both based out of what is now the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver, British Columbia. Other professional photographic firms to document shíshálh life in this era were the Edwards Brothers Company and Gowan and Sutton Company. While copies of most of these photographs now reside in the tems swiya Museum archive, and have made their way into shíshálh family collections, they originate from the archival fonds of institutions such as the Vancouver Public Library and the
City of Vancouver Archives, as well as the provincial archives in Victoria, British Columbia and Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa.

The photographs produced by these individuals and firms are heavily focused on documenting life around the Oblate mission from the 1890s. Prominently featured are photographs of shíshálh peoples at Mass; participating in religious performances like Passion plays, which act out the crucifixion of Jesus Christ; group portraits in front of the church and residential school; the mission brass band (see Figure 2-3); and landscapes of the mission village and residential school. Men are featured more often than women in these earliest photographs. The attire of individuals is very formal, with men dressed in suits and women wearing dresses. The men in the brass band photographs are dressed in typical military marching band attire. Participants in the Passion Plays are dressed either as Roman soldiers or robed onlookers. In many photographs of this type, priests, nuns, and other lay mission workers appear alongside shíshálh subjects.

The majority of these images circulated in popular publications like newspapers, or as commercial postcards (Thirkell and Scullion 2004), in the interest of promoting tourism and settlement on the Sunshine Coast, or reporting on the perceived “successes” of the Catholic mission at Sechelt, which was often idealized as the archetype for missionary practice on the southern Northwest Coast (Kennedy and Bouchard 1990; Lemert 1954). It is important to note that there are also several photographs of this genre that depict shíshálh peoples in other places. For example, there are photographs of the mission brass band and Passion Play performances throughout the Coast Salish world at other places where the Oblates were based, like Chilliwack and New Westminster, British Columbia. Oblate priests would often bring shíshálh on tours to
other mission locations, perhaps again as another display of their “successes” at Sechelt, by then understood as the model “Indian state” (Lemert 1954).

From an anthropological perspective, these photographs, when considered in their original spheres of circulation, produce a very particular image of *shíshálh* peoples and their lives. There is a distinct presence of what I refer to as a “civilizing gaze” (see Lutz and Collins 1993). The photographs emerging from this genre, which circulated well into the 1930s, reflect what was then thought to be the success of missionization, and, ultimately, colonialism. *shíshálh* people are represented as a testament to the colonial effort. In direct juxtaposition to the “wild savage” trope being produced by photographers working among Haida and Tlingit communities to the north (see Thomas 1981), *shíshálh* are presented as tamed, Christian, civilized. Played off against one another, these tropes, this visual economy of savage and civilized, produce not only an image of *shíshálh*, but of the entire Northwest Coast, as either a continuum, or a dialectic. If this civilizing gaze imagined *shíshálh* peoples as the ideal Christian colonial subjects, it simultaneously reflects them as “inauthentic” or “spoiled” in the eyes of those, like the region’s early salvage ethnographers, who sought “the real thing.”

For many of the *shíshálh* people I worked with and spoke to, these photographs, while certainly reflecting the impacts of missionization and Christianity, are also photographs of the “old people,” their ancestors. They are part of a continuum of practice and representation. For example, the photograph of the brass band featured above can be situated within a larger history of music and performance. A pair of Elders remembered the dances of their youth that would always feature the community band “anytime there was some do going on…you could hear them all over. Even the old people used to go to the dance. They’d sit around the edge and watch
everyone dancing.” Christmas was a particularly popular time for dances and music in the community where “you’d be pretty much dancing when you’re going in” to midnight Mass.

Thus, the historical context and outsider production of these older photographs are of less importance than the way these photographs are situated within more expansive stories of the past. Certainly, the mission and the Catholic Church were transformative forces, but they hardly produced the total erasure of customary beliefs and practices as a surface reading of these photographs might imply.

Regional/Amateur Images

Figure 2-5. “Indian Basket-Maker” (identified as Agnes Charlie), c. 1930. Photograph by Helen McCall. Courtesy: City of Vancouver Archives (#P1180.03).

Beginning in the early twentieth century, the Union Steamship Company of British Columbia began offering twice-weekly passage to the Sunshine Coast from Vancouver and other coastal locations. While serving as primary transport to and from logging camps and canneries, the steamships also gave rise to a tourist industry in places like Sechelt. The emergence of a
booming tourist industry on the Sunshine Coast by the 1920s and 1930s coincided with the emergence of a more portable and affordable type of camera in the form of the box camera and early Kodak “Brownie” models that, first introduced in 1888, had become readily available by the early decades of the twentieth century (Gustavson 2011). Thus, many of the tourists who began flocking to the isthmus brought their cameras with them.

Around the same time, non-shíshálh residents of the area began documenting various aspects of shíshálh life as well. Of these regional and amateur image-makers who comprise this second genre of photography, the photographs of Helen McCall represent the most substantial archive. McCall began photographing the peoples and places of the Sunshine Coast around 1916 after receiving formal training in Vancouver. From the beginning, McCall was intent on producing photographs that could be sold to both local residents and tourists, which by the 1920s doubled the population of the Coast in the summer months. As such, many of her silver gelatin prints were marketed in the form of postcards, including her photograph of Agnes Charlie (telye-ah-huhm’at), a well-known shíshálh basket-maker (Sunshine Coast Museum and Archives 2014, see Figure 2-4).

Similar to the images produced by photographic firms discussed above, the photographs taken by tourists and regional professionals reside in museum archives in locations further afield, or in as yet undocumented personal collections. It is said, for example, that a non-shíshálh resident of the area, now in her nineties, has a veritable treasure trove of photographs from her family’s extensive collection. Several shíshálh Elders are among her friends, and they remember seeing her photographs from time to time, but none of these photographs have as yet been collected by the temps swiya or the shíshálh Nation government. Indeed, the number of photographs that have made their way into archival collections are undoubtedly dwarfed by those
that did not. Today, there is still very little by way of an archival record of *shíshálh* people and lifeways as seen through the eyes, and captured by the cameras, of visitors and neighbours. This perhaps stems from a legacy of segregationist policies that have generally kept *shíshálh* and non-*shíshálh* Sunshine Coast residents apart. This division continues to be manifest in *shíshálh* experiences of what they call “the other side.”

*Studio Portraits*

![Figure 2-6. “John Jackson,” c. 1900. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the *tems swiya* Museum (#869).](image)

One of the oldest genres of photography present in *shíshálh* family collections are posed studio portraits, usually in the form of silver gelatin prints on cardboard postcards measuring approximately 3.5x5 inches, a format referred to by photograph historians as “real photo postcards” (Bogdan and Weseloh 2006). Emerging around the turn of the nineteenth century,
these images represent what can be considered as the first family photographs in the community. Likely produced in local makeshift portrait studios by itinerant professionals, most families have at least a couple of these kinds of photographs in their possession. They are usually printed on cardboard, like larger *cartes-de-visites*, a popular and highly social photographic object that emerged in France in the 1850s, and one very prominent among early photographs of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia beginning in the 1860s (Blackman 1985). These were objects that were made to be collected and exchanged.

Unlike the Indigenous *cartes-de-visites* produced in the Victoria, British Columbia studios of photographers like Hannah and Richard Maynard, as analyzed by Blackman (1985), which were made to be purchased by a non-Indigenous audience, these larger *shíshálh* postcards appear to have been produced for, and circulated by, *shíshálh* people themselves. Bogdan and Weseloh (2006) observe that, arguably, over half of the real photo postcards produced and purchased in North America during the first third of the twentieth century were never actually mailed, but were collected and circulated through other means. In the case of *shíshálh* photographs of this type, we may increase that percentage significantly. I have found no photographs of this type in any regional, provincial, or national archives. As far as my archival research indicates, they exist only in the collections of *shíshálh* families, where they continue to be cherished belongings.

While the objects themselves represent a unique and early form of local photograph production and circulation, the content of these images is also significant. Anthropologists who examine the legacies of studio photography among (usually) non-Western populations between the 1850s and 1920s often point to the role of the studio backdrop and setting, the poses and facial expressions of the photographic subjects, and their garb as traces of colonization, of which
the photograph itself is ultimately an extension (Appadurai 1997; Blackman 1985). As

Appadurai (1997, 4) observes:

As sites for the production of various cultural imaginaries, colonial photographic backdrops testify to the struggle between photographic modernity and the various cultural environments into which it enters…backdrops serve not just as ‘icons’ (allegories of wealth, status, romance, respectability, modernity, etc.) for the photographic subject, but they are, in practice, indexical of these realities.

In studies conducted by Pinney (1997; 2003) in India and Strassler (2010) in Indonesia, however, the backdrop and its accompanying poses, expressions, and self-fashionings, become part of the larger imaginary of the photographic subject. They extend the space or location of the image frame beyond a simple indexical suturing, eschewing photographic verisimilitude in favour of something more along the lines of the fantastical. I argue that shisháhlh studio portraiture falls somewhere in between—while it certainly reflects the material transformations of colonialism, it simultaneously represents more indefatigable and intangible traces of a vernacular shisháhlh modernity.

In the early studio portraits from shisháhlh territory, groups or individuals are typically posed in front of backdrops that simulate the interior of a typical Victorian-era sitting room. These postcards feature both men and women, as well as children. The organization of these portraits is varied. Some feature individuals posed on their own, as the image of John Jackson featured above indicates. Others contain two or more adults posed sitting, standing, or both. I saw several examples that featured inter-generational family groups of parents, grandparents, and children. Lastly, while adults make up the majority of photographic subjects in this genre, there are also portraits of children and babies.

In many photos, props like tables, chairs, and lamps are added to increase the parlour-like feel. The people are dressed formally—suits for men and long dresses for women, children are
also formally dressed, and babies appear in long gowns. No one is smiling, and they seem rigid, perhaps owing to the arduous photographic process of the time and the general aesthetic of formality. The photograph of John Jackson above comes from one of the largest family collections in the community. In this collection alone, there are over two dozen of these studio portrait postcards, inherited through various branches of extended family. Smaller collections might feature one or two photographs of this type. While John Jackson is recognized and remembered, some of the individuals in the portraits are not.

The exact provenance of these studio postcards is difficult to pinpoint. No one I spoke to could directly remember their production, marking their age at some time before the 1920s at least, most likely closer to the turn of the century. Further estimates might be made using the approximate age of some of the remembered, named individuals who appear in these postcards. For example, one group of Elders I spoke with recognized a woman named Ikat in several postcards (see below). In these images, Ikat is guessed to be in her early-to-mid 20s. When the Elders I spoke with were children in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Ikat was an “old person,” roughly putting her age at around 65-70. Subtracting a conservative 40 years between the Ikat they remember, and the Ikat in the postcards, a date of production around the turn of the 20th century again seems likely.
As mentioned above, the location of their production is another mystery. Curiously, none of the postcards that I saw bore the name of the studio or photographer that produced them, although the similarities and repetition in the backdrops and decorations used suggest a common origin. The backs of the objects simply have “Postcard” printed on them, with no notation of studio or photographer.

My shíshálh collaborators guessed that they were probably taken in the community, most likely at the Catholic church or community hall, although the photographer or photographers responsible are open to speculation. It is clear, based on archival records, that Vancouver firms like Bailey Brothers, and Bailey and Neelands were active on the Sechelt peninsula during the 1890s, and many of their images ended up as commercial postcards, as mentioned above. That
they may have been engaging in studio photography and actively making postcard prints for shíshálh residents is a distinct possibility that cannot currently be confirmed.

A local origin is also a reasonable conclusion, given that the production process for these types of objects was fairly simple and could therefore be accomplished with relative ease by any adept photographer, in any location. Photo postcards of this type were produced where they were taken, rather than sending film elsewhere for processing and printing. The silver gelatin negative images were printed directly on photographic paper with a postcard back (Bogdan and Weseloh 2006, 8).

Furthermore, during the period in which these objects were produced, travel to and from the Sunshine Coast was relatively arduous and expensive. The possibility that so many individuals and family groups were regularly making the twice-weekly steamship trip to Vancouver seems unlikely. Secondly, even if travel to Vancouver was easier, the rules prohibiting Indigenous travel off Reserve, enforced by both missionaries and federal authorities in the early twentieth century, would further support an argument for their local production. While shíshálh people began travelling outside their traditional territory to find work in fisheries and agricultural sectors by the 1940s, it was not yet a common practice at the turn of the century.

A final mystery that hangs over many of these portrait postcards is who is in them. In some cases, even the oldest community members cannot recognize many of the people pictured. As one Elder noted, with some trepidation, “These have a lot of families that we, you know, don’t remember” because their memory “doesn’t go that far back.” The general anonymity or uncertainty that hangs over many of these objects is striking. Where most photographs are animated, or brought close, through the stories or actions that they make possible, there is a palpable “silence” to these images (Edwards 2005). However, while the faces and names might
not be remembered in some circumstances, they are brought to life in other ways through the connections they forge between the past and present of a people, and a community.

These portraits mark some of the earliest images shíshálh peoples have of their ancestors in such an intimate format. In them they can see what the faces of their relatives looked like and, especially, how people chose to present themselves for the camera. One of the most striking features, and one of the most discussed elements, of the studio portraits is the array of clothing worn by the people in them. The styles of dress are something that always gets people of all ages talking about ‘how fancy people were back then,’ decked out in their Sunday best.

This is an important local rejoinder to an alternative critical reading of these photographs as demonstrating an Indigenous body colonized by clothing (see Cohn 1996), or a more “authentic” costuming of Indigenous subjects in other contexts of studio portraiture (Blackman 1985). In contemporary shíshálh readings of these images, the garments worn in the studio portraits are indicative of an expressive agency and a sense of pride that their ancestors had in themselves, and that they continue to have as shíshálh people. Comments about the “fanciness” of the old people are to be understood as a celebration of a connection to their ancestors, they are also often used as a way through which some older generations make relatively amusing and not-so-subtle comments about their distaste for the fashion choices of today’s youth. Thus, while these early studio portraits are sometimes too old to identify in terms of their subjects, they are always shíshálh in that they continue to provide a visual and material scaffolding for the fashioning (both literally and figuratively) of contemporary individual and collective identities, as well as marking the emergence of a uniquely local photographic history as the first photographic objects circulated among shíshálh people themselves.
Snapshots are arguably the most prevalent of all the photographic material I encountered in my fieldwork, and the genre of photography that has the most significance for shishálh families today, especially if we extend the definition of snapshot to incorporate born-digital photography. The expansive family photograph collections of community members are overwhelmingly composed of snapshots. In fact, there are shelves and shelves of photograph albums full of modern 4”x6” colour snapshot prints awaiting archiving in the back room of the
tems swiya. These have all been donated by families from the community, but were too recent to include in this current project. Their volume and ubiquity, however, are worth noting.

While a typical Euro-Western discourse around snapshot photography acknowledges the familial significance as central to the power of the snapshot, this is often confined to a very particular understanding of the Euro-Western nuclear family group as the primary locus of production, circulation, and reception (Batchen 2000; Zuromskis 2013). It does not, for one, make room for the expansive and alternative understandings of family that constitutes the Coast Salish world, the Northwest Coast, or the numerous non-Western and Indigenous frameworks that make up photographic relatedness. Neither does it address the ways these relationships mediate and structure the flows of photographic objects and knowledge, and the power this constitutes within larger domains of oral history and narrative cultural memory.

The snapshot, as a type of photography, historically emerged with the gradual spreading of cameras into the hands of non-professionals, reaching its more contemporary manifestation by the 1930s. Beginning in 1888, companies like Eastman-Kodak began producing camera equipment that was smaller, less expensive, and less cumbersome to operate (Gustavson 2011; Olivier 2007). These earliest models were still expensive to purchase, and the development of film was a complicated procedure for the amateur photographer. By the 1930s, these new tools had found their way into the hands and homes of everyday people, and film-processing techniques had become more readily available. What emerged was a type of photography never seen before. Where, previously, photography required a large and complex apparatus, a steady hand, and a still subject, the newer cameras were able to capture quick, fleeting moments, often spontaneous and completely vernacular (Batchen 2000).
The photograph collections of shishálh families resemble Euro-Canadian family photo collections in the way they incorporate snapshots. They are filled with images that capture day-to-day life, important events like weddings and baptisms, lovers, friendships, and, most importantly, family. They are the stuff of which the wonderfully mundane is made. They are the everyday. They are the materiality of that exciting “imponderabilia” that once so fascinated Malinowski (1922[1984]). A snapshot is much like culture itself—everything and nothing at once.

With the emergence of snapshot photography, shishálh family photograph collections expanded greatly during the 1930s and 1940s. shishálh access to cameras seems to have increased, owing, in part, to the availability of smaller and cheaper apparatuses mentioned earlier. Along with the increasing numbers of photographs being produced by shishálh people and saved in family collections during this period, comes a marked change in the style of photographs being made. The snapshot becomes the standard, displacing previous more formal genres, and photographs begin to take on a “vernacular” quality observed by scholars as unique to the medium (see Batchen 2008; Zuromskis 2013), as can be seen in Figure 2-7. Where before, photographs of shishálh people were larger group portraits taken in formal or official settings, or rigid studio postcards in faux Victorian parlours, shishálh snapshots become more representative of day-to-day life as perceived by shishálh people themselves.

The snapshot in shishálh territory, as elsewhere, poses a particular problem for anthropological and other kinds of photographic analysis owing to their commonality. In a recent interview, the art historian and theorist Geoffrey Batchen (2013) observes that there is something simultaneously universal and unique about the snapshot as a photographic genre noting that,
Snapshots are complicated objects. They are unique to each maker and almost always completely generic. They happily adopt the visual economy that mediates most photographic practices...You might say every snapshot is an authentic copy of a prescribed set of middle-class values and familiar pictorial clichés. That does not make them any less fascinating, especially for people who treasure them.

Theorists who have made an effort to examine snapshots continually engage with them within a pre-determined visual economy and photographic discourse that understands the snapshot as both a universal and an intimately personal genre (see Zuromskis 2013). Snapshots, as described by Batchen (2013) in the above quotation, are universally always somewhat the same, in both appearance and reception. While I do not completely disagree with this analytical perspective, it is embedded within a certain Eurocentric understanding of photographic production, circulation, and reception that leaves little room for other perspectives and histories, other cultures of photography. In anthropological writings about photography, an approach that would otherwise typically account for this, the snapshot, is relatively under-examined as a photographic genre and object.

The anthropologist Jay Ruby (1981), developing an early framework for an anthropology of photography, notes that the relationship between public and private domains of image production, circulation, and reception is extremely important for a consideration of what happens when images from different spheres are collected into one overarching archive (a topic I return to in Chapter Six). He inserts the snapshot into important ethnographic questions about how peoples’ relationships with photographs change and whether images can be, at once, both public and private. Despite this, the snapshot remains ethnographically absent from many studies that often favour other genres (see Pedri-Spade 2016 for a recent exception).

Looking at this public/private relationship with regard to photographs of, and by, shíshálh people, it becomes apparent that the snapshot clearly blurs this distinction. Their production is
distinctively more *private* in that they emerge from within the home, taken by *shíshálh* people, producing a “family gaze” (Haldrup and Larsen 2003), rather than the outsider ethnographic or authoritarian gaze characteristic of other photographic genres (Strassler 2010). At the same time, their circulation is locally more *public* in that their reproducibility and multiplicity of form point to the possibility of an expanded community-wide circulation. In this they share much with their immediate representational predecessor, the studio portrait postcard, which, while produced by non-*shíshálh* photographers, maintains a similar blurring of the public and private through the visual cues of the “sitting room” staging and the mobility of the postcard printing format.

Furthermore, drawing on Ruby’s (1981) early commentary, from an ethnographic perspective, the emergence of the snapshot marks a distinct shift in *shíshálh* (and other Indigenous) peoples’ affective relationships with photography as both a technology of representation and an object of circulation. It can certainly be argued that a similar shift occurs with the emergence of the snapshot everywhere. Local particulars, however, must be acknowledged in understanding exactly what kind of relational shift is occurring within certain visual economies (Poole 1997). In this case, the politics of representation embedded within previous forms of photography are displaced as the power of the gaze is redistributed into the hands of the formerly gazed upon. Thus, it is not only the content of the snapshot that is noteworthy here, but rather the significant shift in control of production, circulation, and reception that the snapshot embodies. Returning to Tsinhnahjinnie’s concept of “photographic sovereignty” introduced in the Chapter One, *shíshálh* snapshots are to be considered uniquely sovereign things.

This argument is perhaps a difficult one to make outright. I readily understand and acknowledge that widespread access to the snapshot introduced a more democratic
representational medium for all. I am also not trying to imply that Indigenous snapshots are different solely because it is the first evidence of an Indigenous photography. In fact, Indigenous peoples, in British Columbia and elsewhere, had been operating cameras long before snapshot technology (Askren 2010). Or, even more reductively, that snapshots of and by Indigenous peoples are unique because it is generally a medium more associated with the visual culture of settler societies. If snapshots are truly the vernacular form Batchen (2000) perceives them to be, we must ask not only “Why?” but also “How?” Thus, it is important to approach snapshots, and other photographic genres, within a broader local relational framework (Edwards 2012), what the historian James L. Hevia (2009) refers to as a “photography complex.”

Reflection on Categories

It is worth noting that my categorization of the various genres of shíshálh photography, presented above, perhaps performs an action antithetical to the overall goals of this dissertation—the further imposition of outsider categories. I do this to give the non-shíshálh reader a sense of the variety of ways in which photography has been realized in shíshálh territory. These categories do not necessarily reflect those of my interlocutors. In fact, all of these genres are more appropriately to be considered family photographs to shíshálh people, and ‘old pictures’ that generally bring about joy when viewed. It is in this spirit that I engage with them henceforth.

Conclusion—Towards a shíshálh Photography Complex

The ethnographic context examined here, and the various genres that make up the photographic history of shíshálh people, combine to produce an expansive field of how people
see themselves, and were seen by others, as well as the potential for a host of varied affective states as shíshálh people and others interact with, and within, this field. For my purposes here, situating the variety of photographic types discussed above within the larger ethnography and history of shíshálh people makes evident the array of contexts of production, circulation, and reception, as relationships of representation, that have contributed to this history. How these elements combine and re-combine in different scenarios requires an analytical model that engages photography not as a simple act or object, but as an assemblage of material and non-material components and forces.

In considering the past and present of shíshálh photographic history as dynamic assemblages of parts rather than static wholes, Hevia’s (2009) photography complex provides a model that allows for a consideration of photography as an active force composed of a host of human and non-human, material and non-material elements. The chapters that follow continue to explore some features of this shíshálh photography complex.

The family and community photograph collections of shíshálh people provide a different visual culture and history, an alternative to the standard way in which Indigenous peoples are often depicted or preserved by non-Indigenous cameras. I say “alternative” only in that they form an oral, visual, and material record that disrupts commonplace notions about Indigenous photographic encounters in relation to outsider gazes so accustomed to ethnographic images and text. What makes them significant, I argue, is that they stand in direct opposition to the ways photography and indigeneity have often been co-constituted in scholarly literature.

There are recent arguments that similarly seek to disrupt this dominance of the outsider gaze from an Indigenous perspective (Askren 2010; Lonetree 2011; Smith 2014; Pedri-Spade 2016). Despite this, however, the imaging and imagining of Indigenous peoples continues to be
too frequently situated within this perspective. Even studio portraits, which were an original locus of *shíshálh* visual agency and self-fashioning, remain constrained within the confines of an art history and anthropological canon that engages them primarily as historical objects in foreign archives, rather than as vibrant sociocultural agents (Blackman 1985).

Interpreting photos in terms of the locality of their existence—as cultural interlocutors, material things, and visual histories—provides access to a different imagining of life on the Sechelt isthmus and beyond. Their selective, curtailed, and sometimes denied circulation provides a screen that negotiates this access in ways that are particular to the individual or family that claims stewardship over them. It is to the family and its role in *shíshálh* culture that I turn now in the interest of establishing it as the primary network through which photographs, and all aspects of life, are negotiated.
Chapter Three: Family and Photography in shíshálh Territory

Introduction

This chapter examines the cultural complex that is family in the Coast Salish world. This is an essential starting point for a discussion of anything and everything Coast Salish. To begin, I analyze and synthesize anthropological discussions of family in Coast Salish territory, paying special attention to the power exerted by families in particular circumstances, often considered in relation to the control of various kinds of important resources—both material and ideological. I will then proceed to a discussion of the families and familial networks that made up my field site on the Sechelt isthmus. This discussion will examine the cultural particulars that constitute understandings of family and relatedness in shíshálh territory, and the ways these have been shaped by historical process—in particular, legacies of colonization and missionization.

It is probably safe to say that in the contemporary Coast Salish world, and quite probably in every society, few things are more important than family. However, the nature of family is as diverse as the cultures that make up our world. Anthropologists continue to strive to better understand how people make sense of relatedness to one another and define who is considered family and who is not, within the dynamic processes of culture. The Coast Salish world, as I use it here, is an Indigenous geo-cultural region that includes the islands of the Salish Sea on the inside of Vancouver Island, southern Vancouver Island, as well as all of Lower Mainland, British Columbia, and most of Puget Sound and the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State (see Miller 1989 for example). The term is used by anthropologists and other scholars, some of whom are themselves Coast Salish peoples, to describe an interconnected web of variegated economies and sociocultural systems. The Coast Salish world can similarly be understood as a very real affective state (Stewart 2007; Wetherell 2012), or “structure of feeling” (Williams 1977), among
Coast Salish peoples that emphasizes the complexity and uniqueness of these interconnections. Carlson (2010), as noted above, imagines this as a geography of “special tunnels” joining spatially disparate communities into one cultural universe. At the centre of this universe, I argue, the force that constellates all things around it, is family. Coast Salish families continue to stand at the interface and intersection of various streams of knowledge and object stewardship.

Throughout this chapter, I argue that shíshálh families mobilize power in relation to a host of external and internal factors—such as social standing and size of family. The power wielded by families in any situation is demonstrated in both overt and covert ways, and is necessarily influenced by constantly shifting intra-family politics, as well as inter-family relations. Family photograph collections, it will be shown, are active in the negotiations between individuals within families, between families and the larger collective community, and between the community and outsiders. These collections are not benign assemblages. They are mobilized and deployed, both physically and figuratively, in tandem with the transmission of various kinds of tangible and intangible culture, knowledge, and power that form a distinctly shíshálh photography complex (Hevia 2009).

Part of Hevia’s photography complex that I wish to introduce in this chapter, that reflects the nature of family in the Coast Salish world, is a shíshálh form of “archival power” (Carter 2006)—the control of knowledge, the ability to include and exclude, give voice to or silence (see Leopold 2014; Shepard 2015; Trouillot 1997). Archives and the power they exert over meaning are a central component of the photography complex. Family groups in shíshálh territory control the circulation of certain kinds of knowledge and objects. Families themselves (and the individuals within families) are archival entities and agents, controlling the circulation of multiple intersecting streams of words, actions, and things (Edwards 2012; Keane 2003; 2005).
Families perform the role of an archive and mediate numerous archival processes—both from without and within. These domains, and the ways they interact with one another, are central to my discussion of photographs and photography in *shíshálh* territory.

With fewer and fewer people participating in the commercial fishing and forestry industries, areas where families have historically exerted collective influence in the contemporary Coast Salish world (see Malone 2013; Miller 1989), family power is re-articulated in the control of other kinds of resources. I argue that, among other things, families have the ability to exert “archival power” (Carter 2006) in the ways they control the circulation of knowledge and objects of collective cultural importance (Bierwert 1999). I consider this to be archival power in that it ultimately establishes particular families, and family members, as controllers, or brokers, of particular kinds of knowledge and objects—of words and things (Keane 2003, 2005). For my purposes here, the archival power of families is realized through the stewardship of photograph collections and the cultural knowledge they materialize.

It is important to understand that photographs of *shíshálh* peoples and places—whether in the family collections of community members, in the archives of the *tems swiya* Museum, or in the archival collections of non-*shíshálh* institutions—are, first and foremost, to be thought of as familial objects. I argue this in the interest of indicating the numerous ways *shíshálh* families extend into the world—both physically and affectively, sometimes separating, but always recombining. In much the same way, families extend into the rest of this dissertation and permeate my discussion of cultural memory, materiality, and knowledge production in different contexts. I turn now to an examination of the Coast Salish family as it has been discussed ethnographically in the interest of situating my analysis within a larger genealogy of anthropological knowledge about the Coast Salish world.
Theorizing the Coast Salish Family

It is both impossible and impractical to discuss anything in the shíshálh world without returning, time and again, to the power and place of family, or better still, the power and emplacedness of family (see Bierwert 1999; Thom 2009). Families have formed the central political unit of shíshálh society since time immemorial and, while the role of the extended family group has adapted to immense change from both without and within (Merchant 2012), they continue to structure day-to-day life.

The Northwest Coast of North America, a “culture area” as defined by a legacy of Boasian anthropologists and others (Drucker 1955), is, more realistically, an incredibly diverse array of cultures, ontologies, and epistemic systems. This is not to say that there are not many shared characteristics and similarities between groups of people (Adams 1981). The entire Coast Salish world (of which shíshálh peoples are but a part) is defined by both a common linguistic stock and a generally similar ideological system (Miller 2008), of which the socioeconomic and political role of the extended family is a key component (Barnett 1955; Miller 1989, 2001; Suttles 1987). In fact, Miller (1989) asserts that the Coast Salish world is really to be understood as a collection of families.

In terms of social organization, Homer Barnett (1955, 241), working in various Coast Salish communities during the 1930s, observes that:

Among the Salish, the highest unit of common allegiance was the extended family. There was no tribe or state; hence, there were no offenses against or loyalty to either. There were no tribal officers; no council; no bodies for the enactment, adjustment, or enforcement of regulations. Action involving the rights of others was governed by a set of traditional and theoretically unchangeable rules.

Barnett’s and Suttles’ portrayal of Coast Salish society is perhaps problematically limiting and homogenizing, despite its lasting importance—it has become in many ways an “orthodoxy”
(Miller 2008). However, more recent ethnographic, ethnohistorical, and archaeological research (Angelbeck 2009; Bierwert 1999; Carlson 2010; Miller 2001, 2008)—not to mention the increasing published voices of Coast Salish intellectuals (McHalsie 2008; Paul, Raibmon, and Johnson 2015; Wilson 2008)—has greatly altered both the historical and contemporary landscape of approaches to understanding Coast Salish social organization and its role in producing contemporary identities. More attention is now paid to the dynamism of power relations, from both within and without, and the continually shifting roles of social actors within a system of complex and ever-changing conceptions of status and prestige. One element that remains prominent throughout all of this, however, is the understanding of the centrality of the extended, or “corporate” (Miller 1989, 2008), family group to Coast Salish society.

On the Northwest Coast, from Tlingit lands in southern Alaska to Nehalem territories in central Oregon and beyond, the understanding of family and relatedness, and how this is made manifest culturally, varies greatly. Customarily, in the Coast Salish world, social organization is characterized by what the anthropologist Wayne Suttles (1987, 16) defines as a “seeming looseness.” The central social unit is the (often) patrilocal extended family group. This group is composed of households, each with its own leader, that have rights to particular resource sites and inherited ceremonial prerogatives (Barnett 1955; Suttles 1987).

Communities, made up of one or more household groups, would be linked to other communities through marriage alliances, radiating ever outward in relatedness to create a broader social network. This web of relationships, all rooted in the connections between extended family networks, continues to provide Coast Salish peoples with a sense of belonging and a larger group identity (Carlson 2010).
In shíshálh territory, these networks of extended kin continue to provide people with access to important resources and oversee the distribution of various kinds of tangible and intangible wealth. They also maintain levels of responsibility that people have to one another in times of need. Barnett (1955) and Hill-Tout (Maud 1978) both note the ways the “old Sechelt” managed their individual territories and access to resources, particularly hunting grounds, which were definitively owned and guarded places. The salvage anthropological focus of Barnett and Hill-Tout fails to reflect that similar patterns of ownership and access were maintained even after the arrival of missionaries and the relocation of shíshálh people to the mission village of Sechelt.

Merchant (2012), however, cites numerous missionary and administrative records that mention the colonial necessity to continuously move with and monitor family groups during the summer months when they would abandon the mission village to labour, in both customary and settler economies, up the inlets of their territory. shíshálh families continue to maintain deep connections with their territories and regularly travel to them, particularly in the summers, to fish, hunt, gather foodstuffs, or simply just visit. One particularly popular event is an annual community boat trip to xenichin, a part of shíshálh traditional territory that is no longer occupied but from which a number of contemporary families trace their origins.

The connections established through marriage with other communities provide shíshálh peoples with further access to people and places far beyond the borders of their territory, such as fishing sites on the Fraser River and hunting territories on the Chilcotin Plateau. Family connections are more than just acknowledgments of relations; they serve important functions in a diverse range of economic, social, and spiritual arenas. It is thus important in a discussion such as this to not only consider what families are, but also what families do.
What families do in the Coast Salish world has been approached by anthropologists in numerous ways. Brian Thom (2009) observes that family networks continue to extend kin-based control, and proprietary ownership, of places on the land and water that maintain and define kin-group borders, while maintaining a relatively porous or permeable notion, and ideology, of territory throughout the Coast Salish world (see also Carlson 2010). This, however, is continuously being challenged by contemporary processes of land claims cases and treaty negotiations in British Columbia, as well as treaty negotiations in the United States, that require a different kind of cartographical rendering of territory, one that produces rigid borders between groups, and ultimately cuts through the intricate webs of Coast Salish family networks (see Miller 1996).

Numerous scholars working in the Fraser River Valley of British Columbia, and south of the 49th parallel among Washington State Coast Salish communities, have wrestled with the dynamic social and political power of extended family groups (Bierwert 1999; Jorgensen 1971; Malone 2013; Miller 1989, 2001). A central theme in these discussions is what Miller (1989, 2008) defines as the “corporate family group”—extended kin groups that provide members with various kinds of economic, social, ceremonial, and political support—and their relationship to the control of various kinds of resources, both tangible and intangible. The power exerted by Coast Salish corporate families is directly related to the resources they control. This can extend to fishing sites, ceremonial prerogatives, Band and Tribal political sway, interfamily relations, and so on.
For Miller (1989, 106), adopting a game theory analytic model:

The core social organizational element of Upper Skagit life is the family system. Mutual aid of all sorts occurs within families and the family system links members to the larger Coast Salish system…the family system generally channels the participation of members in the tribal political system. The term family is the Upper Skagit term for what anthropologists call factions….

The idea of families as factions is appropriate here as it provides for a more in-depth perspective on the political nature of the family group in Coast Salish society. Families are in constant competition with one another, either overtly or covertly, in various domains. Clearly, there are local particulars of these inter-family competitions, but the lens of family remains a central way to examine larger social negotiations in the Coast Salish world.

Thus “family,” as articulated by Miller (1989), among Coast Salish peoples continues to be a central cultural construct through which people understand and negotiate sense of place, attachment to territory, and notions of belonging, as well as managing access to and control of important resources and political power. Anthropological research into these areas continues to stress both the resilience of these features of the Coast Salish family, as well as analyzing the various ways these have changed as a result of various historical processes, both internally and externally. Like everything cultural, families are adaptive systems.

Molly Malone (2013), for example, in one of the most recent discussions of a Coast Salish culture, notes the enduring role of the family in Upper Skagit peoples’ relationships to what she terms “waterscapes,” and how these fuse with legacies of colonialism and contemporary cultural practice to produce a local historical consciousness. Crisca Bierwert (1999) weaves narratives of family throughout her examination of “figures of power” in two Coast Salish communities, highlighting both the resilience of families and the issues that
continue to plague them, in the various domains of power that animate and continuously reproduce a dynamic Coast Salish world.

Outside of anthropology, Tla’amin Elder, Elsie Paul’s teachings, as told to her granddaughter Harmony John and the historian Paige Raibmon, provide an important and powerful personal narrative of family life in the contemporary Coast Salish world (Paul, Raibmon, Johnson 2015). Much like Bierwert’s (1999) work, these narratives embrace day-to-day life in the Coast Salish world in an extremely visceral and intimate manner. Paul’s narratives consistently engage the idea of family from various angles, indicating its importance in the structure of her storytelling and overall historical consciousness. The co-production of the text with her granddaughter further shows the interconnectedness of family in the telling of this history, whether individual or collective.

It is this centrality of family, its omnipresence, and the numerous ways it influences contemporary Coast Salish society and culture, particularly with regard to understandings of place and belonging, and the mobilization of political resources, that provide an important framework for my consideration of family dynamics in shíshálh territory, a topic I turn to now.

Family and Relatedness in the shíshálh World

“Tell me your mother’s last name,” the Elder said to the young girl as the three of us watched black and white photographs appear and disappear on the Band Hall wall that served as a makeshift projection screen, “and I will tell you where you come from and who your family is.” The little girl, looking slightly bewildered, replied and was provided with a genealogy that stretched back generations and covered large expanses of territory. From this point on, the Elder would point out any of the child’s family members if they appeared on the wall.
This depth of genealogical knowledge and its sharing in contexts such as this are not uncommon on the Sechelt isthmus. Most shíshálh know themselves to be part of at least several large families. There are roughly a dozen large family groups to which everyone is related in some way. From these core family groups, smaller families, produced through marriage, radiate out laterally, forming a web of connection that extends across the Coast Salish world, and far beyond. During my fieldwork, whenever I was introduced to someone personally, or someone was being referred to in a conversation, it was usually done in a manner that provided a larger description of their family relations.

While keeping track of these broad family networks can certainly be a daunting task for an outsider, shíshálh do it with ease. It is part of the larger habitus of belonging and, as such, it is second nature. No one is “no one” if they are shishálh. The active tracing of these links into the past is a pursuit deeply important to some community members. As mentioned in Chapter One, one of the main projects being undertaken at the tems swiya Museum when I arrived in Sechelt was the production of genealogies. This kind of work must be understood as political. These genealogies provide evidence of a people and their occupation of place.

“Family” is both a constant and an ever-changing thing. It is a deeply cultural understanding of various social relationships. It structures not only how people understand themselves to be related to one another, but also where they come from. These family groups are not homogeneous entities. They do not always get along. There are internal fissures. Bruce Miller (1989, 120) has identified this reality within the Coast Salish world as a historical cycle of family formation, solidification, and eventual “fissioning.” As such, the families and the familial relationships discussed here are the products of ongoing social and cultural forces that respond
and adapt to a host of internal and external experiences. At Sechelt, there are at least two major family groups that owe their existence to this fissioning process in recent times.

Relationships between shíshálh families are generally civil, at least in public. On occasion an inter-family or intra-family dispute will turn public, engaging the wider community in a particular debate. Here, gossip often becomes the collective medium of choice for non-family members to weigh in. This is not to say that there are not apparent histories of tension between certain families that lie just below the sociable surface. Generally, whenever issues emerge at a public level that embroil the larger community, lines are drawn and allegiances formed by family. Ancestral spats continue to carry weight in the present. People do not generally like to air their grievances directly, but back channels often provide bits and pieces of information through which a fuller picture of a dispute might be reconstructed. Observations of public behaviour further provide hints as to who gets along and who does not—for example, where individuals and groups of people choose to seat themselves at public events. Like any community, there are many reasons that families sometimes do not get along. Unlike any community, there are local particulars to these situations that make them distinctly shíshálh, which are rooted in generation upon generation of shared culture and history.

In contemporary circumstances, politics at the Band government level is an area where most family groups overtly vie for power. This occurs in numerous ways, but typically, the Chief and Band Council elections that are held every two years are the forum for public family political competition. Nominations for positions in the Band government reflect the major family groups that often dominate from year to year. During my fieldwork, although the membership of the Band Council changed, the Chief councilor had been in power for many years. Part of the reason he was able to maintain his position was his membership in several relatively large family
groups, and an overall rapport with key community Elders. This, in turn, afforded him some sway in the key family groups to which he was aligned. This is an extremely visible arena of family power negotiation, and one in which most people participate at one time or another. However, there are other less obvious interactions that warrant discussion.

One source of tension that became apparent during my fieldwork was the constantly recycled, albeit often quietly whispered, assertion that certain families (these changed given the allegiances of the whisperer) were not “true” shíshálh peoples. These quiet accusations are further exacerbated (or, to some, confirmed) when certain individuals or families are rumoured to have been denied Band membership by the Sechelt Nation Government who, after the Self-Government Act of 1986, control Band registration (see Chapter Two). Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson (2014) has likened this performance to a kind of “reserve nationalism,” where issues of membership and status are wielded as key tools of political power within an enduring colonialist framework. Similarly, in the Coast Salish world, Michael Shepard (2015) has commented on these power dynamics within Nooksack communities in Washington State. Thus, the perceived ability to determine who does or does not receive Band membership (even when the rumours are just rumours) is sometimes discussed in relation to the particular families who are perceived to control political power at the Band government level at the time.

The divisions run deeper still. Individual or family perspectives on who is or is not “really” shíshálh correlate to traditional territorial separations, expressed as being between “coast” and “inlet” peoples—a division that became quite apparent in 2015 when a “rival” group calling themselves the Pender Harbour Indian Band emerged, challenging shíshálh claims to the coastal area (Gleeson 2015). The territorial separations existed well into the colonial-mission period. I was told by several people that the early geography of the mission village (now Band
Lands #2) was divided into four sections, each section representing the families that laid claim to the four ancestral territories that make up the *shíshálh* world. Each territorial group even had their own flag hoisted in the centre of their quarter. These flags are visible in the photograph below of *shíshálh* peoples at Mass, taken by the Bailey Brothers firm in the 1890s. It was not until the 1920s that all the territorial groups amalgamated under one group entity, despite having been rendered as such by anthropologists, missionaries, and government officials for generations. I have observed a similar situation among *Nuxalkmc* in Bella Coola, British Columbia (Solomonian 2009; also see Kramer 2006). While this amalgamation certainly produced a more outward collective identity that continues to inform a *shíshálh* present, particularly in terms of interactions with outsiders, the older territorial-based identities still play an important role.

Figure 3-1. “First Nations people attending Christian service,” c. 1890. Photograph by Bailey Bros. Courtesy: Vancouver Public Library (#19925).
Identities

In the 1920s, when the four territorial groups amalgamated under the larger banner of the Sechelt Indian Band, there was, at least on the surface, some degree of unity and the beginnings of a national identity. Over the generations since, this has only grown stronger. However, there still remains a powerful attachment of families to their territories of origin, along with a distinction between “coast” and “inlet” people, particularly with older people. I became aware of this one day while looking at photographs from the Pender Harbour area (the “coast”) with some Elders. At one point, we were discussing the families that lived in the area that they could remember, when one Elder spoke up saying, “I don’t know them. I don’t know those coast people.” In some cases, peoples’ ability to recognize and talk about particular photographs are conditioned by larger contexts of relatedness that have historically produced distinct individual identities that oscillate between territorial and familial affiliation on one hand, and a national collective identity on the other. In fact, as I will discuss more thoroughly in Chapter Six, the very act of producing an archive of community photographs works to emphasize a national identity through which other identities can be negotiated.

This multifaceted shíshálh identity underscores most of the day-to-day existence on the Sechelt isthmus, and traces its roots to the complexities of a pre-contact social organization that continues to resonate in the present. Malone (2013) observes a similar tripartite identity (individual-family-tribe) in her discussion of Upper Skagit Coast Salish peoples’ historical consciousness. John and Jean Comaroff (1992), in their analysis of ethnic relations in post-colonial Cameroon, present the notion of “nested” identities to describe the multifaceted sets of identity relations that emerge under particular historical conditions. In Northern Cameroon, individuals are “nested” within three distinct identities: ethnic group, northerner/southerner, and
Cameroonian—evoking the image of a kind of cultural *matryoshka* doll. In this dissertation, I am particularly interested in how individuals mobilize this three-part nested identity structuring of family, territory, and nation.

*Family Names and Structures*

The dozen or so main family groups, identified by a shared patronym, that comprise the *shishálh* community vary in both size and, in somewhat direct correlation, social and political power. Most of these groups originate either in pre-contact territorial organization, or more recent internal fissioning processes, similar to those noted by Miller (1989). There are currently several large families that continue to vie for social and political power, enlisting the support of smaller family groups along the way. Most family groups are headed by Elders, both women and men, who have become important culture bearers and knowledgeable people within the larger community. Contemporary *shishálh* family groups are, as they have always been, constantly being reorganized through marriage links within and outside the community. What I refer to here as the “main family groups” all contain offshoots of familial lines that emanate from a core group that traces its origins back to time (and place) immemorial, perhaps even back to the *s-pelem-uth*, the original supernatural beings that populated their territories (see Joe 1995; Peterson 1990). Today, it is often peoples’ surnames that connect them, although this is not always the case, since many people have different surnames than the larger family group to which they are affiliated.

The names of contemporary *shishálh* families reflect the disruption of colonialism and missionization. Many *shishálh* personal names do as well, although this is changing. An inquiry into the origins of post-contact *shishálh* names, a necessary adjunct to any discussion of
photography, yields a remarkable history and sheds important light on contemporary naming practices that continue to be essential to the maintenance of familial connection and power, a point I will return to shortly.

Of the many tactics and technologies of power at the disposal of early missionaries and colonial administrators on the Northwest Coast (and elsewhere), the re-naming of individuals with formal Christian names is a perhaps generally under-examined aspect, especially in terms of its lasting presence. The Oblates relocated shíshálh peoples from their ancestral territories and grouped them together in European-style houses at Sechelt in the interests of forming an ideal Christian community. As Lemert (1954) observes, the initial “success” of the imposed Durieu System is attributable to missionaries transposing new processes and practices onto pre-existing social forms. For example, shíshálh conceptions of social rank and status were translated into various ranked positions within the mission leadership and administration. Similarly, mission activities provided a venue for various cultural and social performances, albeit Christianized ones (Lemert 1954, 25). Even the Bible and church hymn books were translated into she shashíshálhem, their Indigenous language.

One social title that mirrored shíshálh status recognition was “Captain.” This designation also often became akin to an individual’s first name within the mission context. Upon relocation to the mission, other shíshálh peoples were given new Christian names, as is evidenced in the Blenkinsop census of 1876 (Blenkinsop 1876, Merchant 2012) as well as OMI records (Merchant 2012). This new naming system re-articulated social patterns, with extended kin networks receiving common Christian surnames, producing the large family groups that continue to exist in Sechelt today. Thus, to consider “family” today in Sechelt is to question the extent to which families themselves were produced by missionization, as much as reproduced in the
mission context. The formation of large, powerful families from the contact period onward through the mission era is evident, and these families continue to form the central social and political units for shíshálh. Similar naming practices associated with Catholic and other missionary organizations occurred during this period in communities throughout British Columbia and the Canadian sub-arctic (Moore 2007). The establishment of St. Augustine’s Residential School at Sechelt in the early twentieth century further exacerbated the processes of re-naming.

The many group photographs from the residential school period, which tend to be of student groups and other church-related congregations, are a source of “who’s who” conversations. Names are remembered and attached to much younger faces. And while sometimes a name cannot be recalled, or a face is unrecognizable, this act of photographic reactivation and reclamation counters the looming possibility of anonymity. I recall one day looking at some residential school photographs when one of the Elders I was working with identified a boy as being Johnny Louis. I immediately remembered a name I had encountered in previous discussions, Louis Johnny. When I asked if this was the same individual, I was told that, no, Louis Johnny was actually Johnny Louis’ father. I enquired further about this peculiarity and was told by the Elders that Johnny Louis was given the name “Johnny” upon entering school. They noted how it was a fairly common practice for the first generations of children to enter the school (boys in particular) to be given their father’s baptismal name as their last name, Keith Carlson (personal communication, June 2018) has noted a similar Oblate naming practice amongst Sto:lo of the Fraser Valley.

This would seem to indicate that the early mission-related naming practices brought to Sechelt and imposed upon shíshálh people follow a pattern that has been observed elsewhere in
Indigenous North America (Moore 2007). It indicates that even well into the twentieth century, children were still being given *shíshálh*, rather than English, names. If Johnny Louis had no English name when he entered residential school and was therefore given his father’s baptismal name as his surname, it can be presumed that he was only given a *shíshálh* name at birth. The practices of re-naming did not occur only within the context of missionization. The arrival of settler resource industries further contributed to changing *shíshálh* identities.

Beginning in the early twentieth century, *shíshálh* peoples became involved in the industries brought to their territory by new settler populations, a primary one being logging. Working for pay as hand loggers in various camps up the inlets of their territory, camps that were often built on the sites of traditional seasonal harvesting villages, *shíshálh* peoples encountered a number of things that would forever impact their culture and lifeways. At least one large *shíshálh* family owes their name to this moment. Logging remains a massive part of the *shíshálh* collective memory. Most older *shíshálh* men alive today have worked in the industry, and many older women remember engaging in logging-related work from time to time (see Roy and Taylor 2013). The earliest *shíshálh* loggers were men who still bore their *she shashíshálhem* names or, if given a mission name, had no official last name. One such individual was a man named Captain Joe Dixon.
The oral history of how Captain Joe got his last name was one recounted to me several times during my fieldwork when a photograph of him would come up during an interview. It is said that when he began logging, Captain Joe was known only by his mission title—Captain, and his one given name—Joe. When it came time for him to receive his first pay, he was required by the logging company to supply both a first and last name for their payment records. Not having a last name, he was required to come up with one on the spot or go unpaid. His foreman at the time was a man named Dickson (the different spelling is remembered). It is said that Captain Joe liked both the man and the name so he took it for himself. Whether he changed it from Dickson to Dixon initially, or whether the change occurred later is not known. Regardless, his adoption of
the name Dixon was passed on to all his family members and continues to be a prevalent family name within the community, as does “Joe.”

It is clear that, from the early contact period on into the twentieth century, there was a significant shift in shíshálh naming practices. The changes wrought during this period continue to manifest themselves in the present. But, while greatly suppressed, shíshálh indigeneity, and the cultural practices that constitute it, did not disappear and have seen a vital resurgence in the last half century. A key feature of this emergent, revitalized shíshálh cultural identity is the continuation of traditional naming practices.

Furthermore, these new names did not simply erase previous shíshálh naming systems. Often people operated under various names. Looking at photographs from the late mission period (circa 1880) on into the early twentieth century, Elders sometimes oscillate between Christian and shíshálh names. For example, depending on the Elder viewing the photograph and their knowledge of the “old names,” a photograph of a man named “Chief Tom” might be identified as being a photograph of “Tama,” which was his traditional shíshálh name. The act of remembering both sets of names indicates that both shíshálh names and Christian names were used simultaneously to some degree—that there was an overlap rather than a complete transition in one generation. Where possible, Steven and I tried to collect information about the traditional names of “old people” in photographs, rendering them as best we could in phonetic transcription.

An even more intriguing feature is the co-presence of “official” English (or French) personal names and essentially shíshálh-ized versions of them. Elders continue to refer to ancestors whose recorded names are, for example, Patrick and Susan as pat’lich and so-san. While these names may have originally emerged from an inability of she shashishálhem speakers to pronounce the new names, they have continued to be the preferred names for particular “old
people” when they are remembered, and although referencing imposed European names, are understood to be of the same order as the “authentic” or “traditional” shíshálh names that have re-emerged in the present.

Today, shíshálh names are given at public ceremonial events or within the privacy of the family. shíshálh names circulate alongside English ones, and individuals often carry, and actively use, both in different contexts. Oftentimes, many different individuals might hold the same shíshálh name and, in keeping with customary philosophy, certain names are considered to be more powerful or prestigious than others because of their accrued historical significance. In this sense, some older names are like the aura-bearing art objects so famously discussed by Walter Benjamin (1968). They are witnesses to history and testimonials of cultural “survivance” (Vizenor 2008). They are a marker of a complex indigeneity that negotiates a complicated past, and a precarious present.

For this reason, the holding of a traditional name is a serious responsibility for a person and not to be taken lightly. People take immense pride in them. Thus, something that was once commonplace—having an Indigenous name—has become sacred through its survival and persistence. In order to be powerful, names need to be used. Family photographs and shíshálh personal names are often talked about the same way, as things that need to be circulated and not hidden away. They work in tandem, giving presence to one another (Edwards 2012; Keane 2003, 2005). Only through their use, their public presence and circulation, are they able to survive and carry forward the knowledge that they embody. They are also fragile and need care. It is to the other side of this tandem, shíshálh family photographs and their stewardship, that I turn now.
As mentioned above, photography is not something overly, or directly, discussed in existing studies of the Coast Salish world. There are important exceptions. Pamela Amoss (n.d.) has catalogued the photographs taken by the anthropologist Marian Smith during her fieldwork with Puget Sound Salish communities in the mid-twentieth century. Caroline Marr (1996) discusses the historical motivations behind photography and the contemporary uses to which photography is put among southern Coast Salish communities, an incredibly important resource for my own research. Dan Savard (2010) and Margaret Blackman (1985) discuss photographers and photographs of Coast Salish peoples in their examinations of early photography studios in Victoria, British Columbia. I have elsewhere (Solomonian 2009) described Nuxalk (a Central
Coast Salish-speaking community) re-imaginings of archaeologist Harlan I. Smith’s fieldwork photographs taken in the 1920s, research greatly influenced by Leslie Tepper’s (1991) catalogue of the material. There is a particular gap, though, concerning the cultural and social “lives” (see Appadurai 1988; Wright 2013) of photographs and photograph collections within Coast Salish communities, and how photographs and photography intersect with broader cultural processes and practices at the local level.

In Sechelt, family photographs and collections are everywhere. They are at once both mundane and extraordinary things, dependent on the social contexts in which they are activated—around a kitchen table or in a memorial service in the community longhouse. They emerge from, and encapsulate, multiple interactions of people, places, things, and forms of power. As mentioned above, even photographs that are not in actual family photograph collections, or even in the community, are cherished as family photographs owing to the intricate connections that continue to bind them to a community’s cultural memory.

A recent collaborative exhibition between three Vancouver institutions (The Museum of Anthropology at UBC, The Museum of Vancouver, and the Musqueam Cultural Education Resource Centre) explored Musqueam peoples’ attachment to place, family, and community. In three separate exhibitions inspired by Musqueam’s successful resistance to the development of condominiums on the ancestral site of čəsnaʔəm, the idea of “belongings” was introduced to present the continuity of objects uncovered at the site and contemporary Musqueam technological knowledge and material culture (Muntean, Hennessy et al. 2014; Wilson 2016). Implied in the notion of “belongings” is a connection that transcends spatiotemporal separations and inserts these objects firmly within a larger framework of cultural continuity. *shíshálh* family photographs can be understood in much the same way. They are not mute objects. They are
deeply connected to people and the persistence of families. In many ways, they feel like they are people through the ways they are talked to and about, fought over, and held and cared for (see Krmpotich and Peers 2013 for a similar Haida example). They also have histories (Faris 1996; Tagg 1993).

**Origins**

The arrival of photography at Sechelt mirrors and extends the arrival of photography in other Indigenous worlds. Initially a technology of documentation and visual exploitation, photography is situated within a particular colonial experience and visual economy (Faris 1996; Morton and Edwards 2012; Poole 1997; Tagg 1993). These initial encounters with photography, however, should not and cannot be allowed to supplant a local experience and adaptation of, and to, photography (see Williams 2003). As such, I was greatly intrigued by the presence of a *she shashishálhem* term for photographs—*s-xel-us*—and for camera—*xel-us-ten* (Beaumont 2011). Even the act of taking a photograph is given a term—*xel-us-als*. The root word *xel* can roughly be understood as “making a mark or impression on something” (like writing), and *us* generally relates to the eyes, the face, or the whole person. This “making an impression of a face or person” that is represented in the photographic act/object was clearly of significance to the *shíshálh* speakers who gave it a name that directly connects the Indigenous language terms, and the practice of photography, to the representation of people, as well as to a larger culture of anthropomorphic representation signified by rock painting, carving, and other forms of aesthetic expression.

When these terms entered into the *she shashishálhem* language is, however, unknown. Several fluent Elders noted that the terms had been around “for a while” now, and that the “old
people” were responsible for the naming, indicating photography’s profound and enduring presence in past generations. Today, while the terms themselves are no longer actively used, they are important linguistic artifacts safeguarded for future generations in texts like the *Sechelt Dictionary* (Beaumont 2011). To offer a hypothesis as to the relevance of these terms for a contemporary *shíshálh* conception of photography is perhaps a stretch. This understanding of photography, as reflected by its Indigenous terminological rendering, is, however, helpful in understanding the value and meaning given to photographs and photography by past generations of *shíshálh*. As a technology and as a practice, photography, since its arrival in *shíshálh* territory, has been understood in terms of the way it represents people, the impressions it produces of people, and the connections it has to them.

As noted earlier, a similar cultural understanding of photography can be found in Christopher Wright’s study of photography in the Solomon Islands (2004; 2013) where people in Roviana Lagoon likened photos to “echoes” or “shadows,” acknowledging the inherent, but not complete, relationship between an often-singular photograph and its subject matter. Photographs in *shíshálh* territory seem to have been understood in much the same way by the “old people” that named both the technological apparatus and the objects it produces, as a trace or mark of the human referent (see also Marr 1996). These kinds of vernacular concepts are useful for understanding the legacy of photography in *shíshálh* territory, as will be discussed further in Chapters Four and Five.

*Making Collections*

Martha Langford (2001), writing about the relationship between orality, memory, and photography in an examination of Euro-Canadian family photograph albums notes the
individuality embodied in the photograph album as object. In *shishálh* territory, family
photograph albums and collections are collective, intergenerational products that are not to be
thought of in terms of individual ownership, despite the fact that individuals sometimes attempt
to lay claim to them.

*shishálh* do not consider photograph collections to be the exclusive possession of the
individual caring for them. I was reminded of this very pointedly one day when I referred to a
particular collection by the name of the Elder who cared for it. I was told, very clearly, that the
collection was certainly not the property of the Elder in question, but rather the entire family’s.
Thus, collections are idealized as family property. The reality may fall short of this ideal as
individuals may complain that the holders of photograph collections are stingy or unwilling to
share. In this way, discussions of photograph collections may become vehicles for chastising
improper social behaviour, and mediate larger intra- and inter-family politics.

The photograph collections possessed by local families vary in size and scope (see
Chapter Two for a more in-depth description). The extensive collections, held by the largest
families, are more like a visual history of the entire community, whereas some smaller
collections focus on particular family groups. Photograph collections are usually in the
possession of a single individual who acts as the family steward, but some larger families trust
their collections to several stewards.

The stewards of family collections are often older family members, usually women. This
stewardship role is, ideally, passed down along with the collections. For example, one steward I
spoke with mentioned that she intends for her photographs to go to her daughter after she passes.
When these kinds of decisions are not made or respected, however, issues can arise. Another
community member mentioned to me that they were supposed to inherit their mother’s collection
when she passed, however, “someone got to the house first” and made off with the photographs before she could claim what she felt was rightfully hers. These photographs have yet to re-emerge.

Family photograph collections take on many forms as well. One of the largest collections in the community has been gathered together through a host of preservative and presentational modes—matted albums (which are the standard), framed individual photographs, loose photographs stored in boxes, and photographs of all sizes glued to large pieces of bristol board. This collection numbers into the thousands and has come into being from families connected through marriage, and through multiple lines of extended family. It is more than a photograph collection in this sense—it is a material manifestation of the importance such systems of relations continue to play in shíshálh territory.

When I asked the Elder who cares for them about where her photographs had come from, she replied:

Well, some were my own and some was my mother’s. Johnny had some too…. But there was a lot of them in the drawer where Johnny was, ‘cause they lived here before they moved to that, where they were supposed to move in this other house and Johnny ended up [living] in the Bay and somebody took them. He had it all in a bottom drawer so there’s a lot of pictures we didn’t get…. You know the old homes around here…. I know my grandfather’s house next to the church here. I remember when I was a little girl I used to go in there and every one of them used to have pictures. Some like this you know, big ones with pretty frames. But I don’t know what happened to them, you know. They inherited them…. They’d pass away and they’d give the family all the pictures, you know. That’s how I got some of these ‘cause they belonged to Mollyann.

There is little to no visible organization to the collection, perhaps owing to the various streams of provenance that brought it together. The photographs are pasted to their mounts seemingly at random, or at least their organization stands as a testament to idiosyncratic stewardships over generations. Studio portraits, printed as sepia postcards, likely taken in the community in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries, sit beside snapshots from the 1940s.
The names and faces that can be recalled are representative of most, if not all, of the families that make up the *shíshálh* community today. There are others as well, not remembered but nonetheless connected. Sometimes important information like names or dates will be written on or beside the photographs, but often there is nothing, leaving the matter of recollection solely in the hands of the human interlocutor as activator. This is an essential role, as family stewards are knowledge brokers for the photographs they care for.

Stewards do not merely keep them safe, they have a responsibility to bring them out and share them with other family members or community members when requested. When I asked the Elder in charge of the family collection discussed above how often this occurs she replied, “Oh, off and on if somebody’s looking for something, or comes in and asks to look at them or something.”

It can be risky for stewards to lend photographs: “Yeah, that’s where there’s a lot of those missing from here, people taking it to do copies and they never brought them back.” This is quite clear. The albums and bristol boards are marked by gaps, empty spaces like missing teeth—an incomplete archive.

This was not the first time I had heard someone talk about photographs going missing in this way. Expressions of this kind, however, are rarely pointed at a specific person, even if the culprit is known. Rather, they are vaguely constructed disappearances, seemingly outside of anyone’s control. This recalls an expression I have heard many times in Bella Coola among *Nuxalkmc*—sometimes things “grow legs.” The fact that things like photographs do have a tendency to go missing, however, has instilled a degree of protectionism in people in order to preserve their family archives. This protective consciousness has spilled over into broader
concerns of safekeeping and preservation at the community level. It was, in fact, a major impetus for this project.

I was told of another time, when a non-shíshálh historian had come looking for photographs:

There was a guy, a friend of ours, he was taking everybody’s photos. He was doing a history of Sechelt. And I had eight albums that he came and got but I said ‘Don’t mix them with anyone else’s and I got 18 of them [photographs] missing when he brought them back.

Since then, the Elder has been more cautious about to whom she lends her photographs. This does not mean, however, that she does not want to share them with people. In fact, she noted several times the importance for younger generations within the community, in particular, to have access to family photograph collections like hers in order to “see and learn” from them. This is a sentiment I heard echoed many times by others during my fieldwork, emphasizing the larger collective importance—their national provenance.

The various material (as opposed to social) origins of family photograph collections are something more difficult to pinpoint. The arrival of photography itself in the shíshálh community has an interesting, if not vague, history. The oldest objects are the posed studio portraits, but finding out who was taking photographs within the community in the first half of the twentieth century is not a particularly easy task. Very rarely are actual photographers remembered—unless someone can claim a photo was taken by a family member, which happens on occasion and is occasionally also refuted by others. Knowing who took a photograph is, furthermore, generally something that people are not interested in. It is far more important for people to recognize who is in a photograph or where it was taken, or both. Guesses about the time frame are facilitated by either a recognition of the individual or individuals photographed, or a particular feature in the background. For example, if a photograph taken on the Waterfront has the first Catholic church
in the background, one will at least know it was taken before 1906 when the church burned down.

Cameras, it is recalled, were in short supply within the community in the early to mid-twentieth century. Two Elders remember that when they were young, a woman from the community named Mollyann had a camera and made her services available as a wedding photographer. As a result, wedding photographs are some of the most plentiful types of images in family collections. Photographic technology, I argue, was initially negotiated through pre-existing concepts of familial wealth and prestige concerning the control of resources. The possession of cameras became a marker of the status of particular families, and this continues to resonate in the community. One Elder commented that when she was young, cameras were generally possessed by “high-class people,” further emphasizing their role as status-bearing objects. Cameras became objects held by people and families of high status, thus incorporating them into pre-existing class systems.

“High-class” here must be understood within the particular sociocultural milieu. There are very pronounced distinctions of class among Coast Salish people, and even between Coast Salish communities (Carlson 2010; Suttles 1987). While not as hierarchical or as stratified as their Northern coastal neighbours, the Coast Salish class system continues to operate in the present through mobilizations of social, cultural, and economic capital. Attaching the possession of cameras to “high-class people” further extends the indigenization of photography in this context.

Given the general shortage of cameras within *shíshálh* families themselves, at least until the 1940s, the majority of the earliest “local” photographers seem to have been the various priests that came to work in the community when it was still a thriving Catholic community. One
Elder recalls a “Father Dave” who “took the pictures all around and up the tower of that old church.” Father Dave, it is noted, also gave her late husband a camera as a present when he left the Residential School. This became a prized possession and began somewhat of a family tradition, as her son is known today as an avid photographer, although he rarely shares or shows his photographs to others.

The priest perhaps most responsible for documenting the day-to-day life of the community was Father Vernon Campbell. Though no specific dates were mentioned, a photograph in the newspaper *Coast News* from 1947 identifies Father Campbell as the “priest at Sechelt Indian mission.” The correspondence records of the Oblate Missionaries place him in Sechelt at least from 1945 to 1951. He is remembered as “taking pictures all the time.” One Elder recalled that he even had his own “camera basement.” Upon further questioning, it was revealed that she was most likely referring to a makeshift darkroom where he would develop and print his images, a practice that was certainly emerging among amateur photographers in the 1940s. A third priest, Father McGrath, is said to have also taken a lot of photographs during his time there. The only trace I could find of him is an article in the *Ottawa Journal* newspaper from August 30, 1937, which refers to the transfer of an Oblate priest by the name of Father J. McGrath from Ottawa to Sechelt. Inquiring as to whether any of these priests shared copies of the photographs they took, or loaned out their cameras to community members, I was told that this was a common practice. This is supported by the number of photographs from the 1930s and 1940s within family collections, a time when not many families had direct access to cameras.

*shíshálh* family photograph collections, in all their variety, and like the families that control them, are not neutral or static things. They are mobilized within webs of relationships that mediate the circulation of knowledge and objects of various kinds. In this sense, they are
extremely powerful. In the final section of this chapter, I want to introduce the ways photograph collections allow families to perform certain kinds of “archival power,” as agents in numerous intersecting domains of familial knowledge organization and deployment.

Shíshálh Families and Archival Power

The archive is one of the central components of Hevia’s (2009) “photography complex.” Archives of all kinds are deeply entangled with the production of photographic meaning. For Hevia (2009, 81), “a photographic archive…is itself a new reality, one that is embedded in a unique Euro-American cultural formation that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century and continues to the present, and whose epistemological status requires attention.” The relationship between archives and power is a complex and oft-considered entanglement. The archive as a concept, as observed by Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook (2002), underwent an analytical refashioning in the latter part of the twentieth century. In particular, Jacques Derrida (1996) and Michel Foucault (1982), separately, but somewhat complementarily, present an approach to the archive that removes it from its traditional, apolitical, renderings and re-presents it as a social force of process and practice, intimately linked to forms and deployments of power-as-knowledge.

Following Rodney Carter (2006), “archival power” is manifested in the duality of inclusion and exclusion. The gaps in archival memory are representative of this, he argues. There is an implicit forgetting built into the very apparatus of saving-to-remember that is the will to archive. This, for Derrida in his “Archive Fever” (1996), makes the archive a space (and place) of inherent violence (Carter 2006; Derrida 1996; Manoff 2004). Interestingly enough, Sontag (1977) applies the same descriptor to photography, an archival technology par excellence.
Archives are a symptom of a society in turmoil. Derrida’s invocation of illness (fever, or a more encompassing mal in the original French title of the essay) evokes a distinctly negative, or unhealthy, image of the archive and the governing apparatus it constitutes. In its Deriddian rendering, the archive is a partial representation of history and memory conditioned by the technological processes of “archivization,” which determine what is to be included and excluded (Manoff 2004). For Foucault (1982), the archive is a central instrument in the deployment of discursive power, conditioning “what can be said” in a society by enabling a “system of discursivity” key to the deployment of power (Foucault 1982; Manoff 2004, 18). A common theme evident here is the understanding of the archive as an embodiment of social and political power. This has particular implications for considering a relationship between Indigenous peoples and archives, as well as considering Indigenous assertions of archival power.

In his essay, “Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Class Among the Coast Salish” (1987), the anthropologist Wayne Suttles importantly comments on the role of an Indigenous archival power contained within and mobilized by families. This helps me frame an understanding of family photograph collections as a continuation of this archival power. Suttles observes that an individual’s, and a family’s, social standing is often directly connected to the extent to which they “know their history” and can provide others with “advice.” “Advice” in Coast Salish society “consist[s] of genealogies and family traditions revealing family greatness, gossip about other families demonstrating how inferior they are, instruction in practical matters…and a good deal of solid moral training” (1987, 8). Thus, there is much significance implied in this perception of loss, or not knowing, of one’s history. To lose one’s history is to have no connection to the past. To have no connection to the past means, importantly, no family,
no roots, no place. “Knowing history” and providing “advice” are therefore to be understood as valuable resources, controlled by families and entangled with various mobilizations of power.

Conclusion—The Family as Archive

Coast Salish families are, and have always been, sources of and sites for the deployment of certain kinds of power-knowledge (Bierwert 1999; Foucault 1980). The kinds of power these groups exert varies, both through time and in any given social context. *shíshálh* family photograph collections are more than just sentimental, or even personal, objects. They are treasured belongings, on both individual and collective levels. They are also vital cultural resources and, as such, need to be considered in a broader context of Coast Salish relations of power that are intimately linked to various material and immaterial resources.

As I have noted above, the power exerted by corporate family groups in the Coast Salish world has typically been considered in relation to the control of land-based, riverine, and maritime resources, as well as more esoteric and bureaucratic domains of influence. Just exactly where photograph collections and their stories fit within this matrix is difficult to pin down. I choose here to engage them under the broader category of “archival power” (Carter 2006).

Archival power, as I invoke it here, is intentionally nebulous. It is perhaps best defined as the ability of family groups, which constitute particular knowledge communities, to extend or retract historical and cultural knowledge within the context of a larger community. It is also to be understood as the relationships formed between and within families with regard to the possession and transmission of kinds of knowledge. Lastly, it concerns the interfaces and boundaries of engagement between *shíshálh* and non-*shíshálh* peoples in various domains of interaction. Here, the archive, broadly considered, forms a “contact zone” (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991) in which
shíshálh people and others negotiate archival agency—the acts of inclusion and exclusion central to archival power.

Going forward, I want to consider the various ways in which shíshálh families use photographs to control cultural memory. The next chapter continues the discussion of knowledge and “advice” as important elements of Coast Salish society. More than just intellectual domains, as I have indicated above, knowledge and advice are directly linked to social power and standing. As will be shown, knowledge and advice draw on photography. I will examine shíshálh photographs as both mnemonic entities and as memorial agents, not merely as adjuncts to memory, but extensions or “prosthetics” of cultural memory itself (Baronian 2010). This returns us to a discussion of the semiotic qualities of photographs, including the things they point to, the directions they point in, and the words and actions they combine with to produce meaning.
Chapter Four: Intersections of Photography, Cultural Memory, and Oral History in shíshálh Territory

There wasn’t every Indian that was gifted with memory. There were certain people, male Indian or female Indian, were gifted with memory. I have met Indians in my time, in my travels up and down the coast where I have lost a name, I will say a mountain, and I would have a group of Indians heading back to our old villages up in the inlet. And I would turn to one, I would say, ask him the name of this mountain. And he wouldn’t remember. Then I would turn to others and finally I’d come to one that would remember every mountain, the name of every mountain, the name of every creek, the name of every bay and what happened here years ago, and what took place here years ago. It’s not every Indian were gifted with memory. – shíshálh Elder Clarence Joe (1965)

Introduction

I sat one morning with two Elders around a kitchen table scattered with half-empty coffee cups and large pieces of bristol board onto which were attached a small portion of an extensive family photograph collection spanning generations, some images dating back to the late nineteenth century. The Elders were old friends who grew up together on the Waterfront, also known as Band Lands #2. As children and adults, they spent countless summers up the inlets in their traditional family territories—ts’unay and xénichen. They shared many of the same experiences, in many ways entangled within, and witnesses to, the same unfolding history.

The photographs that were the topic of the day’s conversation, which had recently been discovered by one of the Elders under her mattress, were pasted to their paper mounts seemingly at random and were part of a much larger family collection that she cared for. Represented here—in the albums, on the bristol boards, and in the shoeboxes of the Elder’s collection—were not only generations of one person’s family, but a visual and material nexus of relationships, a processual representation of a community that has undergone massive changes over the last 150 years, but has maintained its cohesion and identity through adaptation.
We spent several hours going through photographs, barely scratching the surface. Asking as few questions as possible, I let the photographs inspire the stories. This technique, which is the foundation of the photo-elicitation method (Harper 2002), has been perhaps more appropriately termed by Celeste Pedri-Spade (2016, 49) as “visiting with pictures.” The images—their physicality and visual presentation—form the baseline for engagement, rooted firmly in the terrain of a shared cultural memory that places “memory at the intersection of individual and culture” (van Dijck 2004, 262). Conceptually attributed to Jan Assmann (1995), cultural memory (as opposed to the more structuralist orientation of Halbwachs’ [1992] “collective memory”) is a future-regarding, as well as a past-referencing, project that is key to the survival of a people, particularly under conditions of colonization or other repressive forces. Furthermore, cultural memory is both personal and social; an active, dynamic process of incorporation and reinterpretation. Thus, it is a distinctly creative practice of knowledge production in resistance to imposed ways of knowing (van Dijck 2004, 268).

Within this context, older photographs are presenced and connected through a living memory, through the stories people tell about, with, and through them (Langford 2001; Sturken 1998). The focus on narrative memories in this chapter is an attempt to move away from the confines of an assumed objective history in favour of a more inter-subjective mode of past-engaging, present-making, and future-regarding (Larkin 2002). It is an attempt to acknowledge the power of what was occurring around that kitchen table in the fusion of photographs and stories, and of words and things.

As the bristol board sections were passed between the Elders, the photographs were scrutinized, touched, pointed at, held more closely for a better view as they tried, sometimes in vain, to recognize or remember. Their voices slipped back and forth between English and she
shashíshálhem (their first language) as they conferred on various points or remembered names. Stories were told of childhoods spent in the waterfront community, the former Catholic mission. Stories of the old houses, churches, and community halls—the built spaces that defined and constituted the spatiality of their lives: “I dream of them sometimes,” one said. Stories of the “old people,” the women and men who had been their role models and cultural forebears. Stories of where people lived on the Band Lands and up the inlets of their territory, was a prominent theme.

The re-creation of spaces and places through stories served as a temporal anchor, often allowing people to figure out when a particular photograph might have been taken or who was in it. Other kinds of stories were told of the Residential School that used to sit atop the hill behind the house where we now sat, and about the mission community that it looked down upon. They also told stories about the summers when they would be free of the place and travel with their families up the inlets to their ancestral family territories, connecting with childhood memories.

When the session had ended and I was thanking the Elders for their time, one of them said simply, “It’s nice to see old friends again.” This statement points to the immediate simultaneity of past and present in that moment. These were not just old photographs, but old friends as well, brought forth in this context through a combination of sight, touch, and sound. A presencing occurred through the merging of orality, tactility, and materiality, all within the active performance that is cultural memory (Edwards 2005; 2009; 2012).

In these moments where photography and narrative memory combine, particular affective spaces are opened up. The range of emotions experienced by my shishálh interlocutors as they looked at, touched, and passed around old photographs is a complicated, but important interactive aspect to consider. Often, engaging with photographs produced noticeable excitement
and happiness, at times sadness, and at times frustration. These affective responses to
photography further embed particular objects in webs of social relations (Edwards 2012). The
stories included below can be considered as much expressions of emotion, as they are narrative
reflections on the past and present.

I have thought many times through the course of this research about the stories
photographs allow people to tell, the memories they evoke and contribute to, and the many ways
in which individual stories transcend the boundaries set by the image-object itself to become
something culturally meaningful. Often, personal narratives move well beyond what is depicted
in a photograph itself. These twists, turns, and tangents exemplify the myriad ways through
which photographs intersect with cultural memory.

Elizabeth Edwards observes that “photographs operate not only simply as visual history
but are performed…as a form of oral history, linked to sound, gesture and thus to the
relationships in which and through which these practices are embedded” (2005, 29). The past is
always a key part of the present and future. Active cultural memory becomes a key to its
transmission. The question becomes how do photographs help people remember? Answering this
question begins with an understanding that photographs are integrated with shíshálh oral history,
a history that has that been transmitted since time immemorial and that has resisted erasure
despite generations of colonialist disruption. The stories that emerge from the photographic
interactions described here are situated within the broader “memoryscape” (Butler 2012) of
shíshálh oral tradition, external documentary sources, and contemporary circumstances.

My discussion now returns to Webb Keane’s (2003; 2005) observations examined in
Chapter One. The link between photography and narrative exemplifies the meaning-making link
he establishes between words and things. This approach examines photographs as integral to the
transmission of oral history and the performance of cultural memory (Hevia 2009). Lastly, it demands an expanded exploration of how photographs act as a catalyst in this relationship of material and meaning.

This chapter will first survey material concerned with what can be termed the “cultural” attributes of memory. In so doing, I develop an analytic perspective that engages the personal, cultural, and social manifestations of memory in relation to photographs. I will begin with a discussion of some keys conceptions of memory that influence this perspective, then present ethnographic examples from my fieldwork that highlight the relationship between local memory and photographs.

My interest in this stems from a desire to consider the relationship between photography and memory from an anthropological and, more importantly, from a shíshálh point of view. As such, I wish to better understand how photographs—as visual traces and material things with a particular mnemonic function or role—engender a unique relationship between human agents that is culturally based and locally negotiated. I argue that photographs lie at the intersection of the intangible and physical cultural worlds, they are both memorial and material. While they are finite, physical things in a strict material sense (a topic I take up further in Chapter Five), they are also boundless bricolages (perhaps even bricoleurs) (Lévi-Strauss 1968) of immaterial, often ephemeral, encounters with the past and present. They are part of narrative and performative processes, articulating personal and collective memory (Edwards 2005; 2009).

My discussion necessarily navigates between dominant Euro-Canadian history, and local Indigenous cultural memory in the interest of drawing attention to processes of Indigenous historicization—a performance of particular histories that stand in direct subversion of, or resistance to, dominant narratives. The goal here is to articulate the role of these photographs in
the current performance of *shíshálh* cultural memory as a form of oral history-making, without reducing them to lifeless archival documents. The goal is to stress their vibrancy. They are not just photographs—they are old friends, they are *shíshálh*. I will now briefly sketch out an analytic perspective on memory that reflects these realities.

**Developing an Anthropological Approach**

*Cultural Memory in the Coast Salish World*

I want to return to the observations of Suttles (1987) concerning the importance of “knowing one’s history” and being able to give “advice” discussed in the previous chapter. Knowledge of history and family defines the worth of a *shíshálh* person. In fact, Suttles claims that, in his “inverted pear shape” model of customary Coast Salish social classes, the few who made up the lower class were often those who had “lost their history” and were therefore unable to provide advice: “High-class people preserved the knowledge of their own heritage and valued it, and possessed a knowledge of good conduct. Low-class people were those who, through their own or their forebears’ misfortune or foolishness, had lost their links with the past” (1987, 8-9).

Recall the story of the Elder and the child from the community photograph night that began the last chapter. In explaining to the child the web of relationships that constituted her family, the Elder simultaneously identified herself as someone who knew their history. The “advice” the Elder passed on to the child has a second important component—place. Not only did she communicate a genealogy, but also *where* the child’s family came from. Places and place-knowledge are integral to *shíshálh* cultural memory.

Places are, as observed by the philosopher Edward Casey (1987), “containers of memory.” Similar to the Western Apache studied by Keith Basso (1996), *shíshálh* cultural
memory is deeply entangled with their relationship to their landscape, to their territory, to “as far as the eye can see” (Merchant 2012). According to Basso, the stories the Western Apache tell, and the places they go, either physically or in memory, inform the individual and the collective understanding of the present. Thus, if for the Western Apache, a “sense of place” is a cultural activity (1996, 143), then it is one heavily reliant on a knowledge of the past. The same can be argued for shíshálh peoples. shíshálh place-knowledge is an essential part of their oral histories and advice-giving.

shíshálh place knowledge has been impacted by language shift and the imposition of Euro-Canadian systems of place-naming. shíshálh Elder Clarence Joe (see quote on page 141) discusses the intimate relationship between memory and territory, that is fundamental to shíshálh knowledge of their history. But there are a few “gifted with memory,” who can remember the names of places on the landscape and what happened there. Saying, “finally I would come to one that would remember,” he expresses the struggle to find those who can remember. His sadness comes from a recognition that the very knowledge that made one fully human, the knowledge of one’s territory and history, is all but gone. For Clarence Joe, the power of those places can no longer be experienced if they are not remembered.
Crisca Bierwert, in her ethnography *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River: Coast Salish Figures of Power* (1999), presents the problem of representing place as inherently powerful, not merely inscribed with power, as is often the Eurocentric interpretation (1999, 39).

The above photograph of Clarence’s father, Basil Joe, is perhaps a representation of this. In the photo, Basil is shown sitting by a seemingly ordinary fresh water spring in *shíshálh* territory. What is remarkable (powerful) is that this fresh water spring happens to be on a tiny rock of an island in a salt water inlet. The inherent power and sacredness of this rock island and its fresh water spring are still talked about by *shíshálh* people, the spring mythically attached to their survival during times of catastrophe. Its sheer inexplicability continues to astound. While Clarence mourns the loss of knowledge of his father’s generation, the photograph allows this place to be remembered and talked about, particularly by their family members whom I spoke with during my research. The power of this place is enacted, in part, by passing on the stories.

and experiences of ancestors. This adds a new layer to *shíshálh* experience of their landscape as people continue to activate this power through ritual practices such as spirit bathing.

Coast Salish place-knowledge is layered with different experiential levels and regimes of knowing—marked both spatially and temporally, materially and spiritually, and, importantly, *familially* (Bierwert 1999, 46; McHalsie 2008). Bierwert argues that the endurance of this kind of knowledge, maintained through cultural memory, is important in order to prevent Western meanings from becoming the “exclusive” ones by which a place is known and experienced, constructing all other ways of knowing as “relics” (1999, 69-70). Similar tensions, she extends, exist between writing and oral tradition (1999, 120-124), whereby outsider textual representations are thought to negate oral knowledge, a now-classic conundrum of contemporary indigeneity (see Cruikshank 1998; 2005). These tensions continue to affect conversations about knowledge and power within Salish communities and beyond. Forgetting, or the fear of it, and its consequences, motivates people to remember, and provides memory with its dynamic qualities. Hence, forgetting, or the fear of it, becomes a productive force (Auge 2004; Connerton 2008).

In his essay, “Seven Types of Forgetting” (2008), the anthropologist Paul Connerton attempts to better position the role of forgetting in the production of cultural memory. Connerton observes that remembering has been seen as a virtue and forgetting as a failing. While this view of forgetting might resonate with a traditional Coast Salish conception, the *shíshálh* people whose stories contribute to this dissertation all exist under the weight of particular historical trauma that impacts knowledge. The acts of remembering and forgetting discussed throughout are inherently political for that very reason. They are, by their very existence, evidence of both colonial disruption and a powerful struggle against the forces of silencing and erasure (Trouillot
An anthropology of memory must therefore address this reality, this resistance and reclamation, as a practice of cultural sovereignty and active decolonization (Pinkoski 2011).

A Pluralist Approach

I argue that a thorough anthropological treatment of cultural memory requires a blending of analytical features. Memory is the articulation of an ongoing dialectic of remembering and forgetting. As such, an examination of memory in any particular local context needs to address the multiple axes on which it operates. I argue, therefore, for a pluralist approach to memory that engages memory first as an individual experience that is both emplaced and embodied through cultural knowledge (see Basso 1996; Casey 1987; Ricoeur 2004; Thornton 2008). Secondly, memory is discussed as a shared, collective process (Fentress and Wickham 1992; Halbwachs 1992; Tonkin 1995), and, lastly, as a political practice (Gordillo 2004; Flores 2002; Trouillot 1997).

Unlike a typical Western understanding that privileges the individual self and body, I argue that shíshálh peoples engage the world through an expanded sense of connections (Gell 1998; Strathern 1988; Wright 2004) that simultaneously understand the individual to be connected through various kinds of social relationships to both human and non-human persons, the landscape, and a host of “vibrant matter” (Bennett 2010), each enacting their own agency. This is indicated quite clearly in the idea of shíshálh itself. Shíshálh, encompasses not only people, but also “things and traditions,” as well as the landscape and sentient beings within it (Beaumont 2011, 821). The numerous family snapshots of people sitting on or around a very prominent transformer stone at ts ’unay evokes the connection between people, place, and
sentient beings. This stone connects them to the very beginnings of time, to the *s-pelem-ulh*, and people continue to visit it and talk about it.

Building on this notion of interconnection, cultural memory can be understood as a shared social experience (see Fentress and Wickham 1992; Halbwachs 1992; Tonkin 1995). This shared domain of cultural memory takes on a pedagogical role—cultural memories are “teachings” (Halbwachs 1992, 59), or, in the Coast Salish vernacular, they are “advice.” Cultural memory is based on shared experience and processes of remembering and forgetting.

Lastly, cultural memory is a political activity that responds to and/or enacts particular forms of power within processes of historicization. This more politically situated approach to cultural memory engages, for example, the relationships of power involved in the production of collective historical narratives (Flores 2002; Trouillot 1997) and the sometimes-tense relationship between marginalized “local” memories and national histories (Gordillo 2004; Swedenburg 2003). The multiple approaches discussed above constitute a robust anthropological study of cultural memory, what Edward Casey terms “memory beyond the mind” (1987).

*Storying Photographs*

The *shíshálh* world extends “as far as the eye can see” (Merchant 2012). The link between memory and photography in Euro-Western culture is similarly premised on the role of seeing (Barthes 1982; Berger 1990; Ricoeur 2004). The link between memory and photography is, however, also based on saying and doing (Edwards 2009, 2012; Edwards and Hart 2004). I have chosen to use the concept of “storying” in this chapter to describe the material-haptic

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8 In Coast Salish cultures, transformers are supernatural beings who created the Earth. Transformer stones are evidence of human ancestors or animals changed into stone by the Transformers. I have chosen not to include a photograph of the stone to respect its sacredness.
interaction that blends photographic objects and narrative cultural memory. Storying, as an activity, as opposed to storytelling, attempts to position both photographs and their human interlocutors as agents in the larger production of oral history (McCormack 2004). Orality joins with the pointing quality of photographs, as words and objects combine to produce meaning (Keane 2003; 2005). As such, photographs operate as culturally informed indexical signs (Pierce 2006), and as signposts—pointing the direction to various elsewheres.

Historian Martha Langford (2001) discusses the context of a larger oral historical structure that photographs and, in her example, family photograph albums, materialize. Photographs require an “oral recitation” (2001, 87). They are given life by being talked about. This relationship between photography and orality is what “shape[s] experience into memories” (2001, 122). Orality is key to photographic performance (Langford 2001, 157; see also Edwards 2005). Langford introduces the “oral-photographic framework” as a method for “expanding contextual readings and reinstating the album in its raison d’être, its relevance to an audience” (2001, 199), and one that “greases the wheels of retrieval, reinstating and expanding the repertoire of remembrance” (2001, 201). Langford’s oral-photographic framework has much in common with Hevia’s (2009) photography complex and Keane’s (2003; 2005) observations on the intricate relationship between words and things. It acknowledges the sociality of photography as part of a larger body of material and affective assemblages through which meaning is produced.

For the remainder of this chapter, I want to focus on what Annette Kuhn (2007), building on Langford’s (2001) oral-photographic framework, terms “memory-work” to explore key topics, events, and narrative themes that become evident when talking to shíshálh people about their photographs, and experiencing shíshálh people looking at and talking about their
photographs. This exploration of *shishálh* memory-work “combines close readings of a photograph or photographs with the ethnographic work of performative viewing” (Kuhn 2007, 291) in an attempt to position a point of engagement with the larger photographic complex at work (Edwards 2012; Hevia 2009). As well, it highlights the important work done by photographs as “pointing” objects in relation to the telling and performing of history. While some of these stories focus on particular photographs from both family and community collections, there are others that use photographic encounters to engage broader individual and community histories and experiences.

The following sections are connected in that they explore how photographs evoke emplaced cultural memory, navigating the past not only in terms of disruption, dispossession, and disconnection, but also as resistance and resilience. This became very clear to me when I first saw a photograph of a dozen or so houses perched precariously on a rocky outcrop that could hardly be called an island.
Re-Placing the Remembered Landscape

On September 18, 2014, members of the shíshálh Nation, led by Chief Councilor Calvin Craigan and Cultural Director Candace Campo, gathered at kalpilin (Pender Harbour) to do something that had not been done in the area for many generations—raise a longhouse. Chief Craigan referred to the construction of the longhouse as a “rehabitation” of shíshálh lands, a symbolic “reversal of order” (Gleeson 2014). About 30 minutes from Sechelt, a distance of approximately 40 kilometres, a tiny settler village now stands on what was once a major winter village site for shíshálh peoples. Families from throughout the territory would collect at kalpilin in the winter months—a time of feasting and intense ceremonialism (Barnett 1955; Maud 1978). Elder Clarence Joe, in a 1965 interview, recalled the importance of this place as a site of gathering, interaction, and ceremony:

The Sechelt Nation usually held their potlatches and their big tribal gatherings at Pender Harbour. Pender Harbour was greatly used by the tribal gatherings. Part of the Vancouver
Island Indians used to be invited to Pender Harbour by certain chiefs at that time. Squamish Indians were invited, (various tribal names), the lower Fraser Valley and part of -- right immediately across the border. Of course, there was no international border in those days. People were invited and they spent many weeks and months at Pender Harbour. Of course, they also were invited into other gatherings by other tribes, but this is where the Sechelt Nation had their tribes and they'd feast there for weeks and months. And these are occasions where these foods are highly used, these meats and berries and fish.

The arrival of settlers and missionaries saw the abandonment of these dwelling patterns and the gradual physical displacement of shíshálh peoples from this place (Merchant 2012).

Since this displacement, the Pender Harbour area remains a place of immense tension between shíshálh and non-shíshálh peoples. Increasing settlement and development in the area has only exacerbated this. In August 2014, the shíshálh Chief and Council issued a takeover notice to the province of British Columbia for the Pender Harbour foreshore, an area that has for many years been hotly disputed (Gleeson 2014), particularly with regard to the expansion of boat docks that shíshálh feel are impacting their resource rights. At issue is shíshálh involvement in the management of natural resources, particularly water rights and forestry, and the ongoing development of the foreshore region of Pender Harbour (Gleeson 2014). Stories of racism and hostility, even outright violence, experienced there abound within the shíshálh community. One shocking story recounted to me during my fieldwork involved a group of community members being shot at while looking for archaeological sites in the area.

In putting the province on notice, Chief Craigan was attempting to put pressure on the provincial government to seek an appropriate reconciliation, something they had been stalling on for several years. The raising of the longhouse on provincial land further emphasized shíshálh commitment to asserting their rights within this part of their traditional territory, this spatial reclamation giving presence to reclamations of other kinds. Recently, however, shíshálh claims
to the Pender Harbour region have been challenged by a new community identifying themselves as the Pender Harbour Indian Band (PHIB) (Gleeson 2015). While still in process of achieving federal recognition as a Band under Canada’s Indian Act, the PHIB, who claim to number some 30 individuals, asserts that they are the rightful Indigenous occupants of the region. These layered contestations of place, and the stories they engender, which ultimately emerge from the existing Aboriginal Rights and Title of shíshálh peoples, and their subsequent disavowal by colonialist governments, permeate much of shíshálh experiences of their territory.

One day in late November, Steve and I got in his van and headed down the highway, out of shíshálh territory, to a town called Gibsons Landing located about 30 minutes from Sechelt. Gibsons is home to the Sunshine Coast Museum and Archives, an institution that has had mixed relationships with local shíshálh and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) communities over the years. It is an important place for Skwxwú7mesh peoples, thought to be where their ancestors first descended to Earth (Fortney 2009). We went in search of one particular photograph that he knew was in the museum’s collection, and one that was very popular within the shíshálh community, although the tems swiya Museum’s copy had long since gone missing, a recurring problem already noted. It was a photograph of a place in the Pender Harbour area known locally as “Indian Island,” skwiitsa in she shashilhalhem, or the Skardon Islands in English. The photograph (see Figure 4-2), taken some time in the 1920s by a local photographer named A. P. Harrold, depicts a cluster of plank houses densely packed on an outcropping of rock. What is hard to discern from the photograph is that this rocky outcrop is really two tiny islands, separated by a significant distance from the forested mainland behind it. It is here that numerous generations of shishálh families made their home in the face of ever-increasing assimilative pressures by missionaries, Indian agents, and other colonial authorities.
One story of these islands involves the production of settler space in British Columbia through the various versions of land dispossession with the creation of the Reserve system. As the geographer Cole Harris (2002) observes, the clearing of Indigenous land in British Columbia occurred through a systemic process of usurpation, justified by an ideological apparatus that firmly understood the landscape as un-owned. The Skardon Islands represent the only Reserve land in the Pender Harbour area, now officially “sekaleton Band Lands 21 and 21A.” These tiny islands were all that was given to shíshálh people when the land surveyors entered Pender Harbour—two tiny islands with no source of fresh water.

As an official “Indian Reserve,” the Skardon Islands became the only lands where shíshálh people were legally allowed to live in the area. The remainder of the Pender Harbour area was opened up for settlement and development. In an interesting twist, however, the relative isolation of this location from the main shíshálh Reserve, the Catholic mission community of Sechelt, provided individuals and families with a safe haven of sorts, a place away from the authoritarian, theocratic structure of the mission settlement. It was a place where their lives could continue relatively uninhibited. The storying about skwiitsa that I witnessed during my fieldwork—the stories told in conjunction with the photograph in Figure 4-2—while acknowledging the larger systems of power that forced people to this place, emphasizes this place as a safe haven.

According to Elders who have stories of the island, some families lived there year-round while others would come and go throughout the year. They agree that members of the Julius family were some of the original families to move there, although the original reason is not recalled. The Johnson family, it is noted, was also well established on the island. Also, the Billys, Jeffries, and Pauls. skwiitsa, they remember, was also a temporary stopover for many,
marking the general impermanence of the place as somewhere to “stay,” rather than “live.” I have heard this linguistic feature many times. “Staying” rather than “living” in a place can be argued to reflect many things—from the precarity of dwelling under the experience of the colonial Reserve system to the fluid nature of customary living patterns, which always involved an ongoing rotation between places within their territory (Thom 2009).

As more and more houses were constructed on the island, many people would use it as a place to sleep for a night or two during larger circuits of travel. As one Elder noted, “The people of them days, they always travelled. So, they’d stop there, you know. Overnight. But there’s some that stayed there. That’s the way it was.” Another further noted, “We never thought about locking doors. Sometimes you go to the store and get back and there’s people sitting in your living room. I remember some of them homes they were just one big room. They just put blankets around like curtains to divide the room.” This sociality of the family home is something constantly recalled by many, a re-articulation of shíshálh dwelling even under conditions of colonial architecture, echoing the plank houses of their ancestors (Barnett 1955).

People use skwiitsa as a temporal marker. They recall certain events in terms of whether or not they were on the island at the time. One Elder in particular continues to associate the place with where she was “staying” when news arrived of a community member’s death overseas in Poland during the Second World War:

I was on that island when Stan passed away. ‘Cause them people came to the island with I think it was about three medals they had for him. And Johnny and Louis Johnny were in the [logging] camp so we had to get on the boat and go over and get them.

She further recalls Stan being drafted into service and how his family moved to skwiitsa to try and prevent their other children from being taken:
When they took him, they were trying to get Johnny [his brother] to go too. But his dad [Louis Johnny] said ‘No, just one of my sons are going.’ And then it ended up with Albert going across too. And they wanted Johnny to go too and he said, ‘that’s enough.’ And he took Johnny and brought him there to keep them from drafting him.

People remember skwiitsa as a safe haven, a refuge, where families sustained one another. People are clear that conditions of poverty, racism, and a desire to escape both missionaries and state agents motivated them to move there. At the same time, many recall the bonds that united the island’s community, and the marauding flock of wild ducks that lived alongside them.

Other shishálh Elders have similar memories of the island that combine accounts of the hardship with the resilience of families. Most of the Elders and older community members alive today who have memories of skwiitsa were young children when they spent time there. They recall the houses with a sense of incredulity. How so many families could persist in such a place is an immense source of pride for people today. For some, the island is the first place they knew. As one Elder recalled, somewhat sarcastically, laughing,

We had ocean-front property there! That was the hungry 30s. No welfare, no nothing. So, it was pretty tough there. On the front right there [looking at a photograph] was where Uncle Patty and the Baptistes lived, like there was a little street. The Billos were right in the middle. And the old lady Mary, she had a house. And Tom Julius. Old Vera Jeffries was born on that island too. That’s where I was born!

The oldest of a group of siblings we visited with during the project, she has detailed recollections of her childhood on the island. While her brother had spent time on the island as a small boy, he cannot remember the place at all. Similarly, many people “know” the island through the stories of others. These stories of skwiitsa have permeated a larger cultural memory that engenders an intergenerational dialogue of place. In this sense, places within shishálh territory are layered with memories. Similarly, so are photographs. The photograph of the houses on skwiitsa is immediately recognizable, even to people who have never been there.
The residence of shíshálh people on the island, it is said, ended almost as suddenly as it began. Access to food and fresh water was difficult, staying on the island long term also led to disconnection within family groups. Eventually people abandoned the island, with most returning to the mission village at Sechelt. The photograph of skwitṣa, however, allows for a return to that time and place in the way it brings forth a multitude of stories that engage with far more than the image itself.

The photograph and the stories associated with the island combine to form a larger cultural memory that illustrates the layers of individual experience, shared knowledge, and politics of place. Individual stories centre on the narrator’s personal recollections for which the island has become an anchor (Casey 1987; Thornton 2008). While individual narratives vary in terms of dates and events, the photograph and the place itself provide a central framework that connects them. The remembered place collects the stories into a larger cultural memory that is shared by those who have experienced it, and brings in those who have only heard about it from their relatives and ancestors.

The location of skwitṣa, off the foreshore of Pender Harbour, continues to make it an important location culturally and politically. skwitṣa and this photograph become symbolic markers of shíshálh resistance to the numerous external forces that sought to control their lives. Thus, memories of the place are connected to a larger historical backdrop of colonial displacement and dislocation, as well as to recent performances of reclamation as practices of sovereignty. The continuing dispute over shíshálh Indigenous rights in the area make this photograph, and the stories it brings forth, politically charged as both bear witness to a history of oppression, but also to a people’s attempts to resist and subsist.
Subsistence activities of various kinds are plentiful in *shíshálh* cultural memory and oral history. Labour, in both customary and settler economies, underlies *shíshálh* experience with land and waterscapes. The following stories of working and water are given material form by numerous photographs. These stories are connected by the theme of labour, travel, resource practices, and the ongoing centrality of waterways to *shíshálh* lifeworlds.

**Working and Water**

![Image of skiffs](image-url)

*Figure 4-3. “Skiffs,” c. 1930. Courtesy: *tems swiya Museum (#3.006).*

*shíshálh* life is, and has always been, intimately connected to water. Water permeates *shíshálh* oral history. Creation stories directly reference the skill of canoe-making as one of the important gifts given to *shíshálh* peoples by their first ancestors, placing the need to navigate waterways as a central component of existence (Peterson 1990). The ancient pictographs that
cover inlet rock walls quite literally illustrate the power and importance of these waterscapes, a feature observed elsewhere in Indigenous British Columbia (Arnett 2016).

These inlet systems are in many ways the lifeblood of the people. These revered waterways provided, and still provide, many things for shíshálh, who continue to recall them in stories. They connect people to places, and they are places themselves. They provided refuge in the past, much like skwiitsa, from both marauding coastal enemies and domineering missionaries (Merchant 2012). They are also sometimes seen as sources of danger, hiding sea serpents like chain-ko, or mythical great white whales, in their depths. They can also be violent, requiring expert navigation skills and important cultural knowledge—the perfect venue for the transmission of advice.

You would be hard-pressed to find someone in the community who has not been on a boat at some point in their lives. Contemporary stories of water engage many themes. A prominent theme is labour. While commercial fishing as a source of income has declined significantly in recent years, older generations recall, with a mix of both pride and longing, how many boats there were in the local fishing fleet. One particular photograph in a family collection that shows half a dozen fishing boats moored together is extremely important to one Elder we spoke with: “These are memories, when guys are all tied up.” He spoke a lot about his days as a fisherman as we looked through photographs, repeating on several occasions how the photographs “are memories.” He told stories of the trips he would go on, the places he had been to, the times on the water, both good and bad. At one point, one of his grown sons entered the room and was excited to see that it was “old picture time.” He joined in with stories of accompanying his father on fishing trips up north to Prince Rupert and beyond when he was a small boy.
Photographs of both *shíshálh* women and men working in the commercial fishing industry make up a substantial portion of both family collections, and those of the *tems swiya* Museum (see Chapter Two). Following a pattern evident up and down the Northwest Coast, men generally worked on fishing boats, while women (often accompanied by their children who were too young to remain behind) laboured in canneries (Knight 1978; Lutz 2009; Menzies and Butler 2001). Often these forms of labour took entire *shíshálh* families far outside of their territory to more northern environs like Klemtu and Goose Bay, British Columbia. Photographs of *shíshálh* cannery labour also reveal a significant number of young children with their parents. More than just spaces of labour, canneries were transformed into family places as well. *shíshálh*, and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, also came together in the canneries.

Many *shíshálh* Elders alive today, women in particular, have stories of the canneries. They worked in them in their younger days or spent time in them as children, or both. They frequently recall the buildings where they worked and lived, as well as the people from all over British Columbia they met there. Canneries, and other spaces of Indigenous labour, such as hop and berry fields, were therefore also places of mixture. These were what the theorist James Clifford (1997), following Mary Louise Pratt (1991), terms “contact zones,” provided places and spaces of diversity beyond the borders of both reserve and ancestral territory. Here too, as well as through other forms of labour (particularly in forestry), *shíshálh* peoples engaged with settler society in a work-for-pay scenario (see Lutz 2009).
While water provided *shíshálh* people with an entry point into a resource capitalism economy, the relationship between *shíshálh* people and water has a much deeper history. There is one particular place that is quite prominent in *shíshálh* cultural memory, a place both feared and revered in equal measure. A place that continues to inform a sense of *shíshálh* cultural identity. A place that is always talked about in concert with photographs, and with stories of water and travel.

This place goes by many names. In *sheshashishálhem* it is known as *s-tl’i-kwú*.

In English, it is called the Sechelt Rapids, or, more commonly, the Skookumchuck Rapids, or simply “the ‘Chuck,” a name derived from the Chinook Jargon, a pidgin language created during the fur trade on the Northwest Coast, meaning “strong” or “mighty” water. The rapids form in a location known as the Skookumchuck Narrows. At this point, the tidal flows from Jervis Inlet and Salmon Inlet merge with those of Sechelt Inlet, funneling 200 billion gallons of water through an opening less than 100 metres wide. For recreational kayakers and other water sports enthusiasts, it is one of the largest standing waves in North America, and they flock to this place by the hundreds when “the ‘Chuck’ is workin” at high tides.

This is both a famous and an infamous place. Local mid-century newspaper accounts describe the area as “violent,” where the water “shakes the earth”. The inherent wildness of the place for the area’s settlers is further reflected in their desire to, at least jurisdictionally, tame it.

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Figure 4-5. “Skookumchuck Rapids,” c. 1930. Photograph by William Griffith. Courtesy: Sunshine Coast Museum and Archives (#1102).
Thus, by the 1950s, there was a growing call to enhance tourism and access to the area by making it a provincial park: “The Sechelt rapids, better known as the Skookumchuck, could without a doubt, be one of the great scenic attractions of this province and a tourist potential of inestimable value if access was made available to the general public” (Coast News 1966). This “public access” was predicated on, among other things, the appropriation of shíshálh Reserve lands in the area. The official establishment, in 1957, of the Skookumchuck Narrows Provincial Park, as a preserved conservation area, thus further restricted shíshálh resource harvesting at s-tl’i-kwu.

Within the shíshálh community, stories of the “Chuck” abound. Most older people, and many younger people, have navigated it at some point in their lives. For those who grew up on the Band Lands, s-tl’i-kwu was an aqueous border that needed to be crossed in order to reach their homelands up Jervis Inlet. This is a dangerous place, not to be approached without extreme caution bordering on reverence. People die here. The last reported death occurred in 2012, when two British Columbia Coast Guard volunteers drowned in the narrows (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2012). According to shíshálh oral history, as told to local archivist Helen Dawe sometime in the 1970s, this location is also where one of the last battles with raiding Kwakwaka’wakw occurred in the early nineteenth century (Dawe 1990).

There are various ways in which the rapids figure into contemporary shíshálh stories of places. They are a ubiquitous figure in narrative renditions of movements through shíshálh territory. The rapids have also come to symbolize shíshálh knowledge of their homeland. Moving through the rapids is no easy feat, and shíshálh people have been doing it expertly since ancient times—in canoes, skiffs, and now power boats. Navigating the rapids has become a shíshálh rite of passage, a sign of cultural expertise. Older people remember being tied to the
masts of boats as children when travelling through the rapids so they would not fall overboard, particularly when the water was really “boiling.” Despite this caution, they also note that this was not in fact a place to be feared. It held valuable resources, as the memories below indicate.

The fast-flowing waters provide for a unique ecosystem, one in which the *shishálh* delicacy *umptun* (sea urchin) flourishes. One Elder recalled that it was such an important resource-gathering site that there was once a longhouse on the foreshore at a location called *chachulilhumunum* and that access to the resources in the area was communal property. In a culture where ownership of resource sites is strictly controlled through family lines (Barnett 1955), this is quite rare.

The bountiful resources of *s-tl’i-kwu* are recalled by many. In one photo-elicitation session a family remembered the place fondly while looking through their albums and talking about photographs of hunting and fishing. This selection from that conversation is between Steven, me, a husband and wife, and the husband’s older sister who are all community Elders. Their experience of the rapids is an intimate one, based on years of travel and resource harvesting on the water:

- S: I know one of the areas of the territory that has so much abundance for the community is the Skookumchuck. Did you guys use the rapids when you were growing up?
- E: I remember the last time we went fishing there with Alfred August. He was fishing for cod. He has a little putt putt too. Didn’t have a big motor. It just, you know, pulling another one that was filled up with water. He’d put his live…whatever we caught there, cod. I guess he went to Chinatown. They kept them alive in this other boat. They’d just take them like that. No freezers.
- S: You guys remember going through the rapids when you were growing up?
T: Oh yeah (laughs).

E: I’d find a place to hide I tell ya. (laughter)

T: We were jigging there and the tide was really flat. Then the tide just dropped like that, about three foot. We were jigging over here and then all of a sudden, we got the edge and… (points to D) lost it! (laughter). Hysterical, screaming away! And I just told her “Oh all you gotta do is just start the motor.” (laughter)

D: I have this intense fear of black water.

T: Screamin’ away, by Jesus.

T: Yeah, we were fishing in here and we were picking umptun over here on the other side of the island.

D: Oh, I wish for that.

T: Yeah, we’d pick umptun, dig for clams, jig cod, chillpee [a type of fish]. Yeah, I still remember her going crazy. That’s when your grandparents would come through. When it was really boiling.

S: I remember my granny telling me that. That’s our people, they knew how to get through it.

T: There’s so much food in there.

D: We were just talking about that, all the food we miss getting from there. Umptun, chillpee. His mom used to say, “Go get me some umptun, I need a good night’s sleep.”

S: One of the things that was brought up with M and Y was family spots in the territory. You don’t tell people, right? (laughter). That’s your spot to get really good resources!

T: My dad used to spear octopus and rock cod at night there in the Skookumchuck. There’s a little island there. There’s a nice little clam bed in there. There’s cockles in
there too. But at night there, when the tide dropped, that’s where he used to go. He used to have a little can with a candle in there. Put a light there and spear octopus and rock cod.

- D: Really clean food through there.
- T: In the wintertime, the tide only drops at night.
- A: Is that a place where everyone in the territory would come to fish or was it only specific families?
- T: I think it was used by a majority of the Band membership because of the abundance. Everything was there. You had cod. All the shellfish. Even deer around there.
- S: Well it’s almost inaccessible to the common person.
- T: It’s a park now so it’s pretty much… (i.e., you can no longer really get resources from there.)

Embedded in this back and forth narrative are many layers of meaning attached to the place. There is the danger of the rapids. The fear it evokes in people who have not yet mastered its rhythms. There is also the bounty it provides, its vital role in the survival of *shíshálh* people for generations, and the knowledge required to harvest the resources that was shared within the community.

The stories of *s-tl’i-kwu*, and all the photographs of people on the water, testify to the enduring place-knowledge of *shíshálh* people. The photographs prompt memories of cultural expertise and expressions of the changing relationship between *shíshálh* peoples and their landscape as a result of the incursions of settler society. The Skookumchuck Narrows are now a provincial park and *shíshálh* resource use in the area has been significantly curtailed, if not altogether stopped. No one talks about this place as a bountiful resource site anymore.
Conversations are always in the past tense. However, *s-tl’i-kwu* continues to be a marker of contemporary *shíshálh* individual and collective identity. People continue to speak with pride about being able to navigate this treacherous place, and they continue to do so on a regular basis as they travel up their inlets. They speak humorously of the *kwalitens* (white folk, outsiders, other-siders) whom they have had to help through the rapids at one time or another. *s-tl’i-kwu* remains a source of pride, a central fixture of a contemporary indigeneity. Like work involving water, other resource-based practices continue to connect *shíshálh* to their land—past, present, and future—in ways that they believe affirm their sovereignty, their rights and title as Indigenous peoples. There is one photograph in particular that, especially for Steven, embodies this reality.

Practicing Place Sovereignty

The discourse on what is officially known as “Aboriginal Rights and Title” in the province of British Columbia has a very long history, arguably dating back to the surveying of the province’s earliest Reserves in the 1850s (Harris 2002). Though continually debated in provincial and federal courts of law, the existence of Aboriginal Rights and Title is affirmed in the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and re-affirmed in Section 35 of Canada’s Constitution Act. From an Indigenous position, access to and control of resources in their traditional territories, and sovereign control of their ancestral lands are key rights and title issues. From the federal and provincial legal position, much of the debate focuses on what these rights actually are, and how title is to be defined and, ultimately, proved.

This requirement to prove the existence of rights and title in a court of law is an often-challenging position for Indigenous communities and their legal representatives. As per the Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling in Delgamuukw v. British Columbia (1997), the oral histories of Indigenous peoples are to be heard by the courts as valid forms of legal evidence. Though a groundbreaking change, proof of sovereignty remains difficult to demonstrate. It is within this context that a photograph titled “The Goat Hunters” begins its work.

Preliminarily catalogued as #872 in the TEMS SWIYA Museum’s archive, “The Goat Hunters” is considered by my co-researcher Steven to be one of the most important images in the collection. It also shows up, not surprisingly, in the massive family photograph collection of a community Elder, most likely its original source. The 4”x4” sepia photograph, taken around 1930 by an unknown photographer, is weathered and creased from use, and its bottom left corner has been torn off at some point in its life. It is titled in the museum’s database, and colloquially known, as “The Goat Hunters.” The photograph, taken somewhere near xenichen at the top of Jervis Inlet, features three men butchering a fresh kill of mountain goats. The hunters have
tentatively been identified by Elders as Joseph Paul holding up the pelt, James John or Louie John in the middle, and possibly Renee John on the left-hand side (almost erased by the torn corner).

This is one of the first photographs I was shown when I arrived in *shíshálh* territory. Steven, brought it up on his computer screen at our first meeting as a way to explain the work he had been doing. For him, and the *shíshálh* Nation Rights and Title Department, the photograph of the mountain goat hunters is clear evidence of *shíshálh* peoples exerting their Aboriginal rights within their territory by hunting mountain goats. It is a cultural practice that affirms *shíshálh* continued use and knowledge of their ancestral territory. The photograph itself is, therefore, not just evidence of a single event, but a material testament to a host of cultural practices and forms of knowledge that date back to the earliest oral history of the *shíshálh* people.

More than a source of food and clothing, mountain goat hunting provides the event-space that frames and gives context to a host of *shíshálh* moralistic and spiritual teachings, to the sharing of advice (see Barnett 1955; Maud 1978). To this end, *shíshálh* oral history is replete with references to mountain goat hunting. Often, stories that involve mountain goats also involve some form of catastrophe that befalls the protagonist(s).

There is, for example, the story of two brothers who, while out mountain goat hunting, became trapped in cave for an entire winter. This cave happened to be the same cave in which their ancestors had sought refuge from a great flood many years before (see Merchant 2012; Peterson 1990). After waiting out the winter, the hunters returned to their village at *xenichen*. As

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9 Cataclysmic flood stories of this kind exist in many of the oral histories of Northwest Coast peoples and are particularly prevalent in the oral histories of Coast Salish communities (see Carlson 2010).
they approached the village, the two hunters asked some children where they could find their wives. To the first hunter, the children answered, “She thought you were dead and she has gone to live with another man….” The second brother was told by the children that his wife, *klaya-klaya-kle’*, had remained faithful to him and was waiting for him at home. As a result of this, the second brother put up a feast to honour his wife and made for her a swing with ropes of braided mountain goat fleece. *klaya-klaya-klye’* was then seated on the swing and pushed back and forth by the chiefs and became celebrated as the embodiment of what was thought to be a virtuous *shishálh* wife (Peterson 1990, 9).

In a second story, a mountain goat hunter from *ts’unay* and his wife were hunting near what is now known as Moorsam Bluff. The skillful hunter cornered an entire herd of mountain goats on a ledge. Down below in their canoe, his wife began, before he had successfully killed the goats, to compose a victory song to honour his return. All of a sudden, a goat spun around quickly, knocking the hunter off the ledge. As she watched her husband fall to his death, the woman changed her song into a mourning song for him. This song, it is said, became a very popular one for the people of *ts’unay*, who incorporated it into their paddling chants so as to ensure caution and safety during their travels (Peterson 1990, 8).

While mountain goat hunting provides the background context for *shishálh* oral histories that confer some kind of moralistic or spiritual “advice” (Suttles 1987) on the listener, and/or celebrate important ancestors, it also is implicated in the functioning of larger *shishálh* sociocultural processes and practices. For example, it customarily featured prominently as a major part of male coming-of-age rites. Oral histories also tell of an almost vertical rock wall in *lek’wemin* (Jervis Inlet) that was the site of an important rite of passage. Young men of a certain age were required to race up the rock face, which was made even more precarious by the
addition of fish grease. Only the strongest would reach the top, demonstrating their suitability for hunting goats (Peterson 1990).

Not just anyone could become a mountain goat hunter. To be a successful mountain goat hunter also meant that one was of noble birth and status and had been proven worthy of the arduous task (Barnett 1955, 95). In fact, Kennedy and Bouchard (1990, 445) observe that, “Only a few Northern Coast Salish men obtained the skill necessary to hunt mountain goats. Evidently certain families had their own mountain goat hunting territories. Family expeditions would sometimes camp in the mountains, the women drying the meat while the men hunted.” The overall rarity of the practice through time, owing to the high level of skill required, makes this photograph of the goat hunters all the more precious.

Goat hunters were and are revered individuals, cultural superheroes. Thus, it is no surprise that mountain goat hunting embodies highly regarded shíshálh personal characteristics such as fearlessness, strength in both body and character, agility, and an intimate knowledge of the landscape and an almost spiritual relationship with the prey (Peterson 1990, 48-50). In fact, spirit help is extremely important. This was highlighted in a story told to the anthropologist Homer Barnett in the 1930s by a shíshálh man named Joe LeDally:

Joe Dally [sic] was once hunting mountain goats in the mountains near Sechelt. One evening he killed one and sat down to rest. He fell asleep and heard a goat singing: “I’m free now. I’m not killed. Only my partner is.” This became his song, the one he used while hunting (Barnett 1955, 93-94).

For LeDally, this encounter with the mountain goat and this gift of a song are what conferred upon him his hunting power through spiritual help. Mountain goat hunting is thus embedded within a host of ritual practices, such as ritual bathing and song, which continue to be of deep importance for shíshálh people in affirming and seeking spiritual aid (Barnett 1955, 92). One
avid hunter explained to me the continuing importance of this spiritual aspect, remarking on the different way he *feels* hunting in *shíshálh* territory versus hunting elsewhere.

Finally, mountain goat wool appears in *shíshálh* oral history and early ethnography as a key form of wealth and currency. Mountain goat wool was fashioned by women into blankets, which *shíshálh* remember were traded as far away as southern Vancouver Island (Peterson 1990, 82). Along with mountain goat wool, Hill-Tout (Maud 1978) mentions the use of dog wool, which has also been noted as a unique Coast Salish weaving resource (Lutz 2009).

Mountain goat wool from *shíshálh* territory, and blankets made by *shíshálh* weavers, circulated through the pre-contact Coast Salish potlatch system, replaced only by the arrival of Hudson’s Bay blankets in the mid-nineteenth century. Mountain goat wool was, therefore, an important commodity. *shíshálh* trading partners on Vancouver Island had little access to goat wool and thus paid highly for it according to Barnett (1955, 256), who refers to the material’s “preciousness.” Thus, *shíshálh* acquired wealth and status through the harvesting of mountain goat wool and the production of blankets. This position was diminished with the arrival of Hudson’s Bay blankets and other trade commodities (see Lutz 2009).

In the current period of decolonization, *shíshálh* have again taken up the practice of weaving wool blankets. As mentioned in Chapter One, the *tems swiya* Museum holds regular weaving classes for community members, mainly women, who honour the practice of their ancestors. Currently, the wool is purchased rather than harvested, but this might change in the future.

As with blanket weaving, cedar root basketry, continues to be a powerful aspect of cultural identity for *shíshálh* women. *shíshálh* harvest the cedar roots used in basket weaving throughout their territory. Often family groups will go out together in search of ideal roots. As
one man laughingly recalled, “I think that one time we gathered all of them up!” Like wool blankets, cedar root basketry was used both used locally and as trade goods.

There are numerous photographs of women weaving baskets in family collections, the collections of the tems swiya, and in collections held by other institutions. A locally famous series of photographs that originate from a family collection, but that have circulated into wider spheres of the shíshálh national imaginary, are of a woman, a revered “old person,” named Maryanne Jeffries, weaving a giant cedar root basket. The oval basket, which probably measured 3’x 4’, is primarily woven from lighter-coloured roots and embroidered with the name “Champ” in large letters along its front side. This basket, perhaps some of Maryanne Jeffries’ finest work, was commissioned, so I was told, by a non-shíshálh resident of “the other side” sometime in the 1950s as a dog bed for their Great Dane, presumably the basket’s namesake.
There are many photographs of Maryanne and the basket, in both the *tems swiya* Museum’s archives, and in family collections. Some are photographs of her in the process of weaving it, some are after its completion, with Maryanne proudly displaying her work for the camera. The photographers, as in so many cases, are unknown. While Maryanne is credited with weaving countless baskets, this one in particular was clearly significant enough to warrant thorough documentation, in both photographs and memory. It becomes important to unpack the myriad connections these photographs have to *shishâlh* life, in both the past and present, to better understand their significance.

Photographs of the “Champ basket,” when shown in small-group photo-elicitation sessions or at larger community events, always generate robust discussion. Community
members, especially women, take collective pride in the legacy of basket weaving, but also comment on how it reflects the history of the relationships *shíshálh* peoples have with outsiders.

I can recall one evening when a large group had gathered in the Elders Boardroom in the Health and Wellness building at the *shíshálh* Nation office complex. About 20 people, mostly between the ages of 40 and 80, sat around the large table. Several photographs of baskets and basket-makers flashed across the large projection screen at one end of the room. The conversation among attendees focused on the basket-weaving skill of *shíshálh* women. Each weaver, people said, had their own distinct style. You could easily tell a Maryanne Jeffries basket from a Mary Jane Jackson basket from a Theresa George basket, and so on. These aesthetic features were their trademarks.

One of the attendees was the late Elder, *sxí-xiy-xay* (Theresa Jeffries), granddaughter of Maryanne Jeffries. *sxí-xiy-xay* eloquently reflects on the power of her grandmother’s work in her essay, “Sechelt Women and Self-Government” (1991, 88-89),

She was a basket weaver *par excellence* and used to trade baskets to clothe us. In the spring, when it was time, we would gather the roots. We always looked forward to it because it was an occasion for teaching and an occasion for affirmation of the family and our traditions. She would teach us to recognize the right cedar trees, pinpoint the straight roots, and gather far enough from the tree so that the tree would survive. Through stories and myths, she would teach us about our family, our history, and our responsibilities. It was always in the language of the Sechelt, and there was always a lesson to be learned.

In her narrative, cedar root basket-making is deeply embedded within *shíshálh* place-knowledge and its transmission. It provides an occasion for passing on knowledge, or kinds of “advice” (Suttles 1987).

Cedar root basket-making was a specialty throughout the Coast Salish world (Stewart 1984, 174). Originally produced as containers and carry-alls, which were important trade goods, cedar root baskets found their way into Northwest Coast souvenir and art markets by the late
eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As a result of this growing desire for cedar root baskets by non-Indigenous collectors, shíshálh women began weaving them as a source of family and community income. It was noted by several people during my fieldwork that part of the funds used to build the original church and school at Sechelt were from monies earned by women through basketry. Amateur ethnographer Charles Hill-Tout describes the practice in detail as he witnessed it in 1904:

Some of the women were very skillful [sic] in making the cedar-root basketry of this region. Even now, they make large numbers of them for sale to tourists, receiving from five to fifteen dollars a basket, according to size and quality. They had received an order just before my last visit too them, and many of the women and girls were busy carrying it out.... (Maud 1978, 105).

The new economy that developed around cedar root baskets altered their context of production and was an early “contact zone” (Pratt 1991; see also Clifford 1997) between shíshálh women (primarily) and various non-shíshálh worlds. In the true spirit of Pratt’s contact zone, the exchange of cedar root baskets for money and other goods placed shíshálh women in a new intercultural space that was fraught with power relations and negotiations. It should be no surprise that this is not always talked about in a positive way. In fact, when shíshálh people discuss this, it is often with an air of anger about what their ancestors had to do to earn a living, and how they were exploited.

This was communicated to me very clearly by sxi-xiy-xay one evening at her home on the Waterfront: “Do you know she was only paid $75 for that basket!” She continued to tell me how long it had taken Maryanne Jeffries to make the basket, how much time she had spent gathering the materials. To her, these photographs were an example of shíshálh exploitation, as much as it was an example of her grandmother’s artistic talent. It was as if the circulation of cedar root baskets in this contact zone, their commodification by it, worked to somewhat sever, or obscure
the deep significance of baskets to *shíshálh* peoples. And for a while, no new baskets were produced. Today, no one knows what became of the Champ basket. Though many of the baskets made and traded during this period have been returned to the *tems swiya* Museum from the private collections of Sunshine Coast residents and others, this one has not.

Steven and I spent many hours with a woman who was one of the last to learn from older weavers like Mary Jane Jackson. She showed me the last basket she made before the arthritis in her hands became too unbearable. In much the same way as the passing of language speakers continues to threaten *shíshálh* and other Indigenous communities, the knowledge embodied in practices like basket weaving is equally precarious. Within the *shíshálh* community, however, there has been a reinvigoration. Younger generations have become interested in cedar root weaving and other cultural handicrafts.

As mentioned in Chapter One, during my stay in Sechelt, I helped a group of younger students with a digital storytelling project. One of the students was the granddaughter of the basket weaver I had talked to. Her digital story focused on her grandmother’s legacy. Using archival and contemporary photographs, it examined the history of basket weaving within the *shíshálh* community and its ongoing importance as a cultural practice. Watching the images of her story move across the projection screen in the Band Hall, I was not surprised to see a photograph of Maryanne Jeffries and the Champ basket, a photograph that at once embodies the collision of customary practice and the commodification of culture.

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10 Digital storytelling, as a method, uses a combination of still photography and recorded narrative to tell a personal story. Digital stories have been extremely successful in communicating experiences of trauma, telling life histories, and passing on forms of cultural knowledge. This project was funded through Capilano University, which has a campus in Sechelt.
In a contemporary setting, the photograph of the goat hunters and the photographs of Maryanne weaving the Champ basket provide both a visual and material affirmation of a dynamic cultural continuity. The practice of goat hunting, so central to shíshálh oral history and territorial sovereignty, remains a marker of existing shíshálh Aboriginal Rights and Title. The memory and practice of basket weaving serves as a locus of interaction between shíshálh and their cultural landscape, as well as interaction between shíshálh and outsiders. In the current era of land claims, the ability to demonstrate these ongoing material and spiritual connections to place and practice serves a vital purpose in pressing forward the goals of self-determination. The photographic record, it is believed, assists in this project by giving visual and material form to an oral history and cultural memory of emplaced cultural practices. It is a form of proof, a manifestation of the evidentiary or “forensic” (Wright 2013) power of photography, not as universal qualities, but as socially and culturally mobilized categories of connection. This is a culturally informed indexicality with relevance for the present, one that connects shíshálh to remembered ancestors and ancestral practice in their territory.

While the ancestral landscape of shíshálh territory locates and collects the cultural memories and oral histories that photography animates, the built environment of the Waterfront is also the subject of both numerous photographs and stories. People talk constantly about the old houses and Band hall, the churches, who lived where, and the changes that have occurred with time. There is one place, the Catholic mission and St. Augustine’s Residential School, that stands out from others. It is a place, or better non-place (Auge 2009), that continues to resonate in the individual and collective memories of shíshálh peoples, and affects the ongoing politics of recognition and reconciliation.
“We Were Hungry All the Time:” The Colonial Space of The Catholic Mission and Stories of St. Augustine’s Residential School

On the northern side of the shíshálh Nation administration complex is an often-empty gravel parking lot. Marked as overflow parking for the hospital across the street, there are usually no more than two or three cars in it unless a particularly good movie is showing at the Raven’s Cry theatre next door. Driving by on the Sunshine Coast Highway, the main road through town, it is hardly remarkable, if noticeable at all. Few people new to the area would know that at this location, for almost a century, stood St. Augustine’s Residential School. Originally a wooden building completed in 1904, St. Augustine’s (also known as the Sechelt

Figure 4-8. “Opening ceremonies at St. Augustine's Indian Residential School at Sechelt conducted by the Roman Catholic clergy from Mission, B.C.,” c. 1904. Photograph by Phillip Timms. Courtesy: Sechelt Library (#6.684).
Indian Residential School) housed upwards of 50 shíshálh children, as well as children from neighbouring communities like Tla’amin (Paul, Raibmon, and Johnson 2015).

St. Augustine’s Residential School, although no longer standing, is a looming spectre in the community. The empty space is a kind of ruin that continues to evoke emotion and affect (Gordillo 2014). Most older shíshálh people have some memory associated with the place, which was originally built with funds raised by the community itself. People recall that shíshálh peoples of that time so desired an education for their children that they paid for and built the original wooden school with their own labour. When it burned mysteriously in 1917, a larger brick structure was constructed in its place that operated until 1975. Elder Clarence Joe (1965) poignantly recalled the school:

So, in 1902 they decided to build a school. The first Indian Residential School was built here just where our present school is now. They built it themselves with their own pocket money and they maintained that school by themselves. They fed the school, they brought down meat….There was over a hundred of us at that school they build…. They burned down the school that I was referring to a little while back here, the one that was built by our forefathers. That was destroyed by fire in 1916…. There was a lot of Indian children that run away from this Indian school. They'd walk for miles to get home to their parents. The Indian parent is not like the non-Indian parents, we're so attached to our children....(Recollections of the school and the mission community continue to permeate shíshálh cultural memory. It is difficult to describe, in any concrete sense, the way shíshálh people react to the legacy of St. Augustine’s Residential School, and the presence of the Catholic Church. The diversity of emotions is impossible to articulate. The Elders and other older community members I worked with on this research all had some experience of the place. St. Augustine’s, and the larger mission settlement, are a spatial and temporal palimpsest. While little remains physically, the traces of its presence still exist in memory and story—and in photographs.
Images of the school and the mission community similarly permeate *shíshálh* photographic history. At the outset of this project, a significant portion of the photographs in the *tems swiya* Museum were connected to the presence of the Catholic Church in *shíshálh* territory. The photographs of St. Augustine’s and the Catholic community vary in type and trope. Many were produced by outsiders and circulated as visual testaments to the benefits of religion to the project of civilization. There are photographs of the school itself, the building and its grounds, either on its own or set back on the top of the hill, overlooking the mission community. There are photographs of groups of students, nuns, and priests posed in front of the building, boys on the left and girls on the right. There are photographs of *shíshálh* peoples clearing the ground on which the school was built. Even though the building is not yet there, these are nonetheless photographs of St. Augustine’s.

This photographic record speaks to St. Augustine’s and the Church as being the locus for social events. There are photographs of performances—ceremonies, dances, processions, Passion Plays—all with the imposing backdrop of St. Augustine’s or Our Lady of Lourdes Church. There is a marked formality and foreignness to these photographs. They are rigid, official, and bleak. While there are many photographs of the church building in family collections, particularly wedding photographs, there are no photographs of St. Augustine’s in any of the family collections I saw during my research, although there are many members of local families in photographs of St. Augustine’s.

In many of these images, *shíshálh* are rendered as the ideal Christianized colonial subject (see Chapter Two), pious and industrious. There are other narratives and other photographs, however, that disrupt this dominant narrative and gaze. A well-known photograph in the community today is of a group of men and a child sitting on the steps of Our Lady of Lourdes
Church sometime around 1930. Like the photographs of the goat hunters and Maryanne Jeffries weaving the Champ basket, this too has become iconic.

![Figure 4-9. “Sechelt Men on Church Steps,” c. 1930. Photographer unknown. Courtesy: tems swiya Museum (#9.028).](image)

The men in the photograph have been identified by Elders over the years as Chief Tom (possibly Tom Timothy of *Tla’amin*), Alexander Williams, Billy Johnson, Charlie Roberts (who features prominently in the ethnography of both Charles Hill-Tout and Homer Barnett), Alex Paul, Joseph August, Chief John, Joe LeDally (a key collaborator of Barnett’s), Wilson (no last name provided), John Baptiste, Frank Eugene, and a man known as Hahma. The child is Vi Jackson. While on the surface this image appears like any other group portrait, its oral history tells a different story. People say that the photograph was taken by a *shíshálh* community member (whose identity changes depending on who you are speaking to, and to which family they
belong) and that the gathering was not simply a group portrait opportunity, but documentation of the ongoing pre-mission sociopolitical system. It is said that the men, all leaders and family heads, would gather on the church steps after Mass every Sunday to discuss matters of a political nature, in their own language. This is remembered as being an updated form of how such gatherings would have occurred before the arrival of missionaries. The re-articulation of this sociopolitical structure within the mission context is, for people, an indication of an enduring *shíshálh* cultural institution that defied the imposed frameworks of mission life.

Similarly, photographs of church ceremonies carry with them an oral history that connects them to the living cultural memory of *shíshálh* people. One in particular stands out in my mind. It is a photograph of the interior of Our Lady of Lourdes Church. A Mass is going on. The photograph is taken from the choir loft, looking down onto the gathered congregation. A small child looks backward, directly into the camera. Showing this photograph to two Elders one day, we learned about the event the photograph was taken to commemorate. It was the funeral and memorial of Stanley Louis, the young *shíshálh* man who was killed and buried overseas in Poland during the Second World War discussed above. The child, we found out, was Elder Arnold “Flash” Jeffries as a little boy.
Further conversation revealed the social placement of the congregation. The back rows are filled with the “old people,” identifiable by their dress. The “old ladies” all wear shawls over their heads, a practice not continued by later generations. As one Elder explained, “they would have one for every day, and one for church that they would fold away.” These kinds of details connect the photograph to living cultural memory and provide an oral historical account of production that importantly embeds these photographs within larger social and historical practices and processes. These kinds of memories, and their storying, brings these photographs to life. More than simply providing information, this type of storying creates forms of cultural metadata that incorporate various photographs and memories into a larger web of local historical consciousness.

Figure 4-10. “Sechelt Church Interior,” c. 1940. Photographer unknown. Courtesy: Joe Family Collection.
While the examples discussed above engage photographs of the Catholic mission through an examination of the oral histories of their production, there are other photographs that affect a more visceral experience. The many photographs of St. Augustine’s Residential School materialize, and make visible, an extremely complicated and complex period of shíshálh history that is still very much in the process of being resolved.

On June 17, 2015, the tems swiya Museum launched an exhibition entitled “Residential School and Resiliency,” which I returned to the Sunshine Coast that summer to attend. It featured a large number of historical photographs from the community and sought to engage the legacy and impacts of St. Augustine’s from the perspective of survivors and their descendants. The exhibition included educational panels derived from interviews with community members who had attended this school, a public forum, and more. It brought together the community and the larger non-shíshálh public of the Sunshine Coast and surrounding area in a dialogue concerning the school and its relationship to contemporary shíshálh life. The Facebook page for the event was full of comments from both shíshálh and non-shíshálh supporters. Indigenous peoples from other parts of British Columbia and Alberta who attended the school were also encouraged to participate by contributing stories and photographs.

The event was completely community-driven. Community members were encouraged to bring photographs and other material to be scanned into the tems swiya Museum's database collection in the interest of expanding knowledge and resources about the school. As stated by the museum, the exhibit intended to provide:

an insight to what people may know or not know about the Indian Residential School, its legacy and impacts on Aboriginal People in our country…. St. Augustine Indian Residential School was situated where our House of Hehiwus and our local hospital resides today. 39 different First Nations Communities throughout most of BC and parts of Alberta attended the St. Augustine IRS in Sechelt. Many of our grandparents and parents attended the school as both residential students and day scholars…The purpose of the
exhibit and forum is to inform, share, and educate the community, the Sunshine Coast and visitors, on our experiences during the residential school era that, by law, forced our parents to send their children or face imprisonment.

“Residential School and Resiliency” emerged as one of the first major exhibitions to be launched at the newly renovated and reinvigorated, tems wiya Museum space since it re-opened in the summer of 2014. Organized by a community-led curatorial team made up of museum staff and advisors, the exhibition represented the latest in shíshálh efforts to confront and, ultimately, assert control over the spectre of St. Augustine’s and the Catholic mission in their community.

This process, which arguably began with the demolition of the school building itself, has been increasing in momentum in recent years. In 2012, the shíshálh Nation, along with the Tk’emlups Indian Band, launched a class action suit against the federal Government, seeking compensation for community members who had attended residential schools as day scholars (as many shíshálh youth had). Day scholars had previously not been able to access the compensation offered to other residential school survivors known as the Common Experience Payment. The lawsuit has recently been certified in federal court and, barring an appeal from the Crown, will move forward.

This exhibition coincides with a much larger national and international awareness of the Residential School system in Canada, in part due to the publicity around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), a public enquiry into residential schools across the country (see Niezen 2013). In May 2015, the TRC released its final report after five years of statement gathering from residential school survivors, former employees, policy-makers, church organizations, and others. Among its many observations, the very first lines of the TRC's final report make clear the consequences of history:
For over a century, the central goals of Canada’s Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as “cultural genocide” (TRC 2015, 3).

The “Residential School and Resiliency” exhibition was, therefore, also a demonstration of what Anishinaabe theorist Gerald Vizenor (2008) terms “survivance,” an ongoing declaration of shíshálh enduring presence and solidarity in resistance to attempted historical erasure. Central to Vizenor’s theorizing of survivance is the power of stories, stories that speak out against dominant narratives and discourses.

As a community-driven exhibition, “Residential School and Resiliency” gives further voice and presence to those impacted by St. Augustine’s and the Catholic Church, in both the past and in the present. It is at once a materialization of cultural memory and a re-emplacing of historical consciousness. The words and photographs that combine to tell these stories are themselves active components of a much larger process of survival and reconciliation.

At the outset of our project-planning discussions, long before “Residential Schools and Resiliency” had been conceived of, I, along with my advisors from the shíshálh Rights and Title, and Cultural departments, had raised the topic of how to best incorporate the large number of photographs from St. Augustine’s. One community member we consulted noted that the school was a part of shíshálh history and, for better or worse, a major component of contemporary shíshálh cultural identity. Thus, it was considered essential to discuss related photographs, “You can’t erase the history.” Understanding the residual trauma such photographs could trigger, we decided to include them in photo-elicitation sessions only with consent of the participants.

The narratives I will discuss are not necessarily what one would expect. They are not
direct descriptions of individual residential school experiences or trauma, so much as the larger collective rememberings of a kind of affect, or structure of feeling (Williams 1977), produced by the residential school experience. There are two reasons for this decision on my part. First, as mentioned above, the *shíshálh* Nation is involved in a class action suit with the federal Government over compensation for the many day scholars within the community who attended St. Augustine’s. Therefore, confidentiality has to be respected and, in the interest of supporting this suit, no direct testimonies will be used in this dissertation. Secondly, these narratives are a direct product of the photo-elicitation process. They represent the stories that emerged from viewing photographs of the school. They are not produced by question and answer interviews; rather, they are open-ended recollections that emerge from a particular encounter with a particular photograph, or photographs. As will become clear, these stories often far exceed the borders of the photographic image-object, its content, and travel to places far beyond the walls of St. Augustine’s.

I focus here on three distinct themes that emerged from photo-elicitation sessions with community members. The first engages the place and space of the school itself, the experience of its material presence. The second examines narratives of hunger. The third theme discussed is that of escape. Community members use the concept-metaphor of “hunger” to discuss a host of different experiences of St. Augustine’s. This metaphor speaks not only to physical hunger, but also to other kinds of starvation—a hunger for family, culture, and community that was imposed through the dislocation caused by forced school attendance. The theme of “travel” enters into my discussion of photographs in *shíshálh* territory in several different ways throughout this dissertation. In the context of St. Augustine’s, travel (here as escape) becomes an imaginary device through which photographic interlocutors conceptually re-organize and re-spatialize their
experience of attending the school. Through these themes, I attempt to situate the photographic history of St. Augustine's within the living cultural memory of the shíshálh people who attended the school.

St. Augustine’s remains prominent in both photographic archives and the cultural memory of the shíshálh community. The building still has a haunting presence in the community, despite its demolition. While memories of travel and summer present an alternative response to the experience of residential schooling, there are very visceral memories of St. Augustine’s as a place. Carr (2011) has recently examined the architectonics of the Indian Residential School System, noting that the buildings themselves need to be examined in terms of the ways that their design contributed to their experience as a place or, as he argues, a non-place. The non-placeness of residential schools contributed to both the isolation and separation experienced by students, and continues to constitute an ongoing “difficult heritage” (Macdonald 2008) for survivors, and the Canadian state. This is reflected in the stories I turn to now.

One day, Steven and I visited a couple who lived in “the Bay,” another shíshálh neighbourhood down the road from the Waterfront. They had both spent time in residential schools, in Sechelt and elsewhere. One had been sent away for a time to another notorious school in the Fraser Valley of southwestern British Columbia, near the U.S. border, because they kept “acting out” at St. Augustine’s. It did not come up directly, but I had heard from others that they both suffered in the schools. The school building itself became the location for their early memories of one another as well. Another couple we interviewed had a similar experience. Of the many things they remember about their time in the school, they remember each other. In both of these cases, the photographs of St. Augustine’s, and the stories people told, were quickly transformed into kinds of love stories. While the school might have been where their time
together began, it was certainly not where it ended.

We sat in their living room in a kind of semi-circle around a coffee table covered in photographs. Steven and I had come prepared with printed copies of photographs from the archives for them to look at. I also plugged my MacBook into their television and showed them other photographs we had already digitized. They told stories about many things during our two-hour session, but St. Augustine’s occupied a significant portion of the conversation. The stories they told were often laced with bits of humour, at times eliciting raucous laughter. When they spoke about their school experience, they both emphasized the way they and other students enacted small resistances to their situation—what the anthropologist James Scott (1987) has conceived of as “weapons of the weak.” Pranks and misbehaviours, typical of any child, in the context of the oppressive environment of the school, became active forms of revolt. Recalling their school experience through the lens of “acting out” becomes a form of empowerment. Through these stories of misbehaviour, they both recalled and negotiated an extremely traumatic period in their lives from a position of agency. This resistance-as-agency extends into other stories of the school as well.

A second prominent theme in peoples’ stories of St. Augustine’s that emerged from photo-elicitation sessions is the metaphor (and reality) of hunger. One Elder, while we were looking through photographs of the school simply sighed and said, “We were hungry all the time.” The physical sensation of actual hunger that is expressed in many peoples’ stories is simultaneously transposed onto a larger hunger—for family, culture, home. Merchant (2012) has noted this as well in his research with shíshálh community members. 11 These stories of hunger are often juxtaposed with discussions about the bountiful supply of food that was to be found

11 Personal communication, 2013
outside of the school, either in the mission community or in traditional territories. In recollections of hunger, the stories often turn to summer and escapes up the inlets with family, where the central purpose was to fish and produce foodstuffs for the coming fall/winter, or to work in logging. These were the times when all hunger was satiated.

In other stories, the hunger of St. Augustine’s is contrasted with memories of the sustenance just beyond its walls, but often just out of reach. The Waterfront neighbourhood is often remembered as being a place where food was plentiful outside the fences and walls of the school. Many Elders longingly recall the numerous fruit trees that used to run through a now-empty field between rows of houses, another palimpsestic trace on the landscape. As a whole, photographs of the Waterfront are often storied in this way, through the remembered living landscape.

Figure 4-11. “View from Sechelt Hotel looking over to the Sechelt First Nation's village, residential school on the left and Our Lady of the Rosary Church centre right,” c. 1904. Photograph by Phillip Timms. Courtesy: Sechelt Library and Archives (#6.6.118)
There are only a few photographs in which the trees are actually visible (see above), but they are vividly remembered despite this, almost airbrushed into the photographs through narrative. *shíshálh* originally planted the trees at the behest of missionaries who wanted to turn them into individualist agriculturalists, rather than collectivist complex hunter-gatherers. As such, the fruit trees, it seems, were by no means communal property. There are numerous stories of thieving children being thwarted by an “old person’s” craftily placed traps during attempted summertime raids.

The hunger children experienced in the school produced resistances to the system from the surrounding community. Several project participants talked at length about how the older people would sneak them food through the fence surrounding the school grounds. This would often be fruit or something small, the same fruit they would have otherwise punished them for trying to steal. In this context, smuggling food was a deliberate act of defiance towards an institution that was, literally and figuratively, starving their children. These actions must be considered as another important weapon of the weak—as ways *shíshálh* enacted forms of agency in direct resistance to larger imposed structures of power in their community.

Finally, while the school building and Waterfront community are the locus for many photographs and stories of St. Augustine’s, they are just one part of the memories. As has been observed earlier in this dissertation, many *shíshálh* Elders have memories and stories of places in their territory where their families originated (see Chapter Two, for example). They travelled there with their parents as children, and many continue to travel there as adults. As discussed in this chapter, the relationships *shíshálh* maintain with their territory are the product of numerous intersecting events and processes. I want to focus on the almost imaginary landscape that is produced through cultural memories of other places, in this case, the experience and presence of
the Residential School. One photo-elicitation session in particular comes to mind.

Sitting in an Elder’s kitchen one morning, Steven and I showed her and her daughter some old photographs of the mission community. This selection featured, among other things, photographs of St. Augustine’s, generally school group photographs with children, priests and nuns posed in front of the building. I wondered how she, a survivor of St. Augustine’s, would react to the images. At the same time, I am not sure what I expected. She looked at the photographs for a long time then replied with this:

I remember when I was in ts’unay one time and I caught a salmon with a jigger! There was a boy that was on the other side who said, ‘I got one.’ He was pulling it up and I thought I better be pulling my line up ‘cause they are drifting together and here it was on my line! I took and opened it up and barbequed it.

This was not a singular incident. When photographs of the school and students came up in our session, she would almost immediately begin talking about somewhere else as in the above statement. This was not a way to avoid talking about St. Augustine’s, but rather her way of talking about, and negotiating, her experiences and memories of St. Augustine’s. Photographs of the school were a background for, and narrated through, her stories of summertime, when she could leave school and travel up the inlets to ts’unay with her parents and siblings. This was where her family was originally from and they returned there each summer to fish, garden, and be together with other shíshálh peoples outside of the context of the mission/Reserve. For her, as a child, this was a time to play. This was where she was actually a child. No stories of play and fun ever emerged in peoples’ stories of St. Augustine’s. The summers were moments of freedom from the imposed structure of the school, and it was this that she chose to remember and tell stories about.

Many of her memories centred on ts’unay as a place, an indication of the deep
connections many *shíshálh* people maintain with their ancestral territories. In this sense, the return to ancestral territories; the escape from the Reserve community; and the performance of traditional activities of fishing, hunting, and gardening are positioned as cultural antidotes to the imposed and controlling experience of the school. The juxtaposition between incarceration and unfettered freedom is realized in these stories of “escape” that, if only temporarily, maintained an important connection to her family and culture.

St. Augustine’s is a delicate and precarious subject to consider. While clearly emerging from a coercive and unequal power relationship between *shíshálh* peoples and the Oblate missionaries (and later the federal Government), it was established in response to the community’s desire to have their children educated in a Euro-Western tradition—again a product of the problematic influences of the assimilative politics of fear. The people who built the place with their bare hands could not have foreseen that it would turn into an oppressive institution that would fundamentally alter their way of life through the ultimate imprisonment and abuse of their young.

The photographic record of St. Augustine’s on the top of the hill overlooking the Catholic mission community below, collides head on with stories of its survivors, and of survivance. The stories people tell of this (non-)place at once reflect personal experiences and a cultural memory of trauma that continues to impact generations of survivors and their descendants. The stories I have chosen to offer here are not direct testimonials of abuses, which I have chosen not to include, although these most certainly occurred.

These stories are the product of the unique relationship between photography and cultural memory that provides a different kind of narrative life, and practice of storying, for the photographic record of the school and the Catholic mission. They displace the foreignness and
officialness, the ultimate violence, that is sometimes initially experienced upon viewing such photographs. They insert a \textit{shisháhl} presence into this history that, while born of the racist assimilationist politics of a colonial state, becomes a testimony to the power of the survivors as more than victims. Finally, these stories intersect with other efforts from within the community, such as the Residential School and Resiliency exhibition, to engage this history. They are one of the ways people seek reconciliation and compensation—not through forgetting, but through an active recognition and negotiation of the past in the present. Photography, in these examples, gives both material form and visual substance to this larger history. It also provides an open-ended imaginary landscape in which local counter-narratives, other stories, can be crafted.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The examples of storying, as the combined product of narrative and visual image, discussed in this chapter all engage the various ways that photographs and photography in \textit{shisháhl} territory actively contribute to the expression of cultural memory and the transmission of oral history. In focusing on the stories people tell with and about particular photographs, I approach the construction of photographic meaning through the interaction of words, both written and spoken, with material objects (Keane 2003; 2005).

The emphasis on cultural memory in this chapter recognizes that individual photographs, and larger systems of photography, both enact and are enacted by local experience and historical consciousness. The photographs discussed here are at once emplaced and embedded by forms of memory-making and communication. At work are various streams of history and layers of memory that make up a \textit{shisháhl} photography complex (Hevia 2009). As such, while highlighting narrative cultural memory and its role in the present, I have situated explorations of
photography within various domains of past-knowing—oral tradition, ethnography, settler colonial history—to engage the larger systems of meaning in which photographs operate and are operationalized.

I emphasize place-knowledge and place-practice in this consideration of what memory and history can do with photographs. Using these examples, I examine how the past is shaped by individual recollections and collective memorial schemata, as well as an acute political consciousness informed by shishálh experiences of and interactions with outsiders, particularly colonial agents, missionaries, and settler society. While shishálh share these experiences with other Indigenous groups, these memories are uniquely shishálh and therefore work to produce a particular and localized photography complex.

The examples discussed above engage the visual aspects of photographs with little or no investigation of their material activation, their agency as objects. The relationship between photography and forms of cultural memory in shishálh territory indicates the culturally ascribed and informed indexical features of the photographic object (Bell 2003, 2008; Berger 1990; Geismar 2009; Pinney 1997, 2003; Ruby 1981; Sontag 1977; Tsinhnahjinnie 2003). The discursive or narrative assemblages formed between particular photographic objects and their human counterparts, the words and things that combine to produce meaning, require consideration (Keane 2003, 2005). Rather than simply providing a mnemonic referent for the rememberer, photographs open up, or point to, an entirely new space of memorial activity and potential.

This space extends beyond the border created by the object itself. It reveals a kind of portal, like Carlson’s (2010) “special tunnels,” that defies boundaries, either spatial or temporal. But, there are other kinds of cultural memory, forms of public performed memory—moments
when, through ritual activation, photographic objects in fact *become* the embodiment of the person they represent. In the next chapter, I examine the agentive power and capabilities of photographic objects, which propel both individual and collective cultural memory-work.
Chapter 5: Performing and Experiencing Photographs as Cultural Objects

Introduction

In October 2010, the “Sechelt Image” (since renamed “Our Grieving Mother”), an ancient stone carving, was reclaimed from the Museum of Vancouver by the shíshálh Nation. Then shíshálh Councillor Robert Joe commented that the reclamation “helps us identify who we are as a Sechelt Nation. It brings back a lot of pride, honour and dignity” (Roy 2010). Former Chief councillor Gary Feschuk further noted that “the Sechelt Image documents our history…our Elders have been trying since 1976 to have it come back – and now it is” (Stueck 2010). This moment embodies shíshálh rights to self-determination and cultural sovereignty that are, along with the stewardship of their traditional territory, directly linked to objects of cultural importance. “Things,” too, are shíshálh.

Figure 5-1. “The Sechelt Image,” c. 1921. Photographer unknown. Courtesy: Sechelt Library and Archives (#6.6.1)
This chapter explores the implications this has for a consideration of photographs and photograph collections as powerful things in the shíshálh world. I argue that attention to materiality, to the agency and performance of objects, is key to understanding what photographs “do” in various contexts, and is, therefore, central to fulfilling what Ruby (1981) refers to as an “anthropology of photography.” Building on this, Nuno Porto (2004) supports an ethnographic approach to photographs in order to best analyze “the articulations between photographs’ material system and their biographical careers” (2004,113). Porto argues that as photographs’ “biographies” extend and expand through multiplicity and context, they take on new social roles (2004,118).

Each version of an image has a different biographical career based on the material system it enters into, forming a constellation of “multiple originals” rather than mere copies (Porto 2004, 122). He concludes that:

To inquire into photographs as objects makes it possible to address the issues of circulation and consumption ethnographically…None of these actions is to be seen in images alone. Operating as mediators of social relations, portraits are activated in networks of interaction, in specific situations, relating agency and agents with separate agendas, at concrete places, at particular timings, under specified motives (Porto 2004, 129).

Despite the emphasis on “multiple originals,” Porto’s discussion is anchored to an understanding of the photograph as an inherently and infinitely multiple object. Photographic reproducibility has been one of the historically salient, if not ultimately ambivalent, features of the medium, both something to be championed and wary of (Benjamin 1968). While not coeval with the emergence of the technology, the possibilities of reproducibility continue to be a defining feature of the medium, one that is particularly accentuated in the digital age. This is, however, a perhaps particularly Western photographic rhetoric. In some cultural contexts,
singularity is a defining element of photographic power (Wright 2004, 2013). This power is made possible because of the singularity of the photographic object. In these cases, a Benjaminian (1968) “aura” is ironically returned to the very objects that he considered as signaling its demise. Similar to Wright’s (2004, 2013) understanding of the “distributed self” among Roviana Lagoon folk, photographs in shíshálh territory must be understood in terms of the way they manifest and perform relational connections—people, places, things, and knowledge.

In shíshálh territory, photographs are both singular and multiple things. Particular images, such as those discussed in the previous chapter, exist as multiples, their significance and iconicity bound up with their dispersal, thus maintaining what Porto (2004) refers to as a “multiple originality.” There are other images that are singular, stewarded, and even actively controlled, by individuals and families. Sometimes coveted, even stolen, the existence and precarity of the singular object contributes to its significance, even sacredness, in different ways—in many cases, as a motivation for digitization for safekeeping. For example, one person I visited during my fieldwork showed me a photograph of his mother that had recently been gifted to him by relatives in Washington State. This was the only photograph he had ever seen of his mother. A precious object, it was, for him, a material connection to a past that had been taken from him through the dislocations caused by the Residential School. This singular object connected him with his now-deceased mother in a direct way.

While I never heard people explicitly talk about photographs containing an essence of the depicted person or people, I argue that the ways they are performed in particular contexts entangles them with something akin to the notion of distributed personhood discussed by the anthropologist Alfred Gell (1998) and others (see Deleuze 1992; Strathern 1988). Furthermore,
as objects, photographs exist within a particular vernacular photographic ontology that understands not only people, but also objects, places, and ways of knowing as also *shíshálh*. As *shíshálh*, photographic objects enter into unique relationships with their human counterparts and are performed as embodiments of them in certain circumstances.

As copies or as originals, photographs in *shíshálh* territory are not only a visual presence, they are a material one, and the relationships they enter into, their biographies, are directly tied to this. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the content of particular photographs clearly contributes to their role in the processes of cultural memory-making. The performance of photographs as objects further expands a *shíshálh* photography complex (Edwards 2012; Hevia 2009) and extends an understanding of the relationship between material and meaning in a particular cultural context (Keane 2003; 2005).

In his recent study of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the anthropologist Ronald Niezen (2013) proposes that as anthropology expands its inquiry into new domains of interaction, at times beyond even human interrelationships, the very *ethnos* of ethnography must be reconsidered and retooled. No longer are the communities anthropologists work with bounded by a strict adherence to categories like “ethnicity” or even “culture.” This is a topic that has been under debate within the discipline for almost two decades (see Abu-Lughod 1993; Appadurai 1996), which requires ongoing reflexive attention. As such, Niezen (2013, 6) asks, “where is the ethnos when the subject matter goes far beyond any one group, community, profession, or other territorialized, stable marker of identity?”

In approaching the world as populated with material things that exert their own culturally defined forms of power and agency (Latour 1993), ethnography also needs to expand the parameters of what, by its very nature, it establishes as a group, community, culture, and so forth.
In short, does anthropology need to be anthropocentric? Over the last decade, this has been debated vigorously and fruitfully within the discipline—first as the “species turn” and, later, the “ontological turn” (Barad 2007; Haraway 2008; Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2006; Kirksey and Helmreich 2010)—the common goal being an extension of anthropology beyond an anthropocentrism. A central body of theory that I draw on addresses this question through a discussion of materiality, or the relationships between people and objects.

In particular, I wish to explore what Jane Bennett (2010) refers to as the “vital materialism” of photograph collections. I want to engage the concept of “interagentivity” (Descola 2014; Ingold 1997) that, while being originally constructed to discuss human-animal relations, serves as an important conceptual scaffolding for considering what photographs “do” as things. I address contemporary ideas about the materiality of photographic objects (Batchen 2002; Edwards and Hart 2004; Pinney 1997; Wright 2013) in the interest of connecting them with what I understand as a shíshálh perspective and performance of materiality and thing-power. In so doing, I hope to begin to consider an appropriate “mode of address” (Bhabha 2004) from which to begin thinking about photographs as active, and the human bodies, movements, and voices that give them this presence.

Materiality, as a concept and body of theory in anthropology is particularly nebulous, even as it appears to be gaining traction and popularity in a variety of disciplines. At its core, an anthropological concern with materiality is an attempt to consider the relationship between human and object worlds—to not only interrogate the imposed divisions forced between them, but to also examine the diverse ways in which they are entangled and mutually constitutive (Miller ed. 2005). I am most concerned with addressing this mutuality, which is a key concern of Bruno Latour (1993) in his seminal work, *We Have Never Been Modern*. Latour challenges the
underlying assumptions of modernity through a critique of many of its commonplace ideas, such as the forced separation of subjects and objects (1993, 10).

Latour posits the idea of the “quasi-object” and the “quasi-subject,” arguing that there is no such thing as absolute, or “purified,” objects and subjects, but rather there exists a hybrid mixture of quasi-objects and quasi-subjects within a larger system of interaction. In his emphasis on the “relational network,” Latour contends that nothing stands in and of itself. Rather, everything is bound up with the flows and trajectories of all other things (see also Edwards 2005).

In moving away from the purifying language of objects and subjects, things—all things—become interlocutors worthy of anthropological attention. Introducing the idea of “thing-power” (2010, 3) as a way to “attend to the it as actant” (emphasis added), Jane Bennett (2010) seeks to understand the vitality or vibrancy of matter through the concept of the “assemblage.” The assemblage is best understood as the “event-space” (2010, 23) in which vibrant matter of all kinds come together in “throbbing confederations” (2010, 23). Assemblages are thus heterogeneous, dynamic, sometimes fleeting, entities that are more than just the sum of their constituent parts.

This ever-intermingling and co-constitution of human and non-human worlds fits nicely into Hevia’s (2009) fashioning of the photography complex as itself an assemblage of assemblages. For are not photograph albums and archives types of assemblages? A key feature of the assemblage is the relationship between its “material” and “expressive” components (DeLanda 2006), its layers of interaction. In the case of, say, people and photographs, the photographic objects (as material) form assemblages with the expressive (words, sounds, gestures) characteristics of their human counterparts. The first part of this chapter focuses on two
key event-spaces, two assemblages, encountered during my fieldwork in *shíshálh* territory—a family memorial feast and a public Remembrance Day ceremony.

**The Event-Spaces of *shíshálh* Photographs**

*A Memorial Feast*

On August 25, 2012, I attended a memorial feast put up by a friend’s family in honour of their deceased relative (originally of Rivers Inlet, *Wuikinuxw* territory). The feast took place at the *shíshálh* Nation’s longhouse, a large rectangular structure built from broad cedar planks and massive logs harvested from *shíshálh* territory and meant to replicate the extended family dwellings of *shíshálh* ancestors (see Barnett 1955; Suttles 1987).

The vertical posts of this building are ornately carved in the style of traditional Coast Salish house posts. The two longer walls of the structure are lined with bleacher-style seating. On the southern wall is a large wooden screen, painted with the double-headed eagle, the official emblem of the *shíshálh* Nation. This screen serves a dual purpose of obscuring from view the kitchen and bathroom areas and, more significantly, serving as the ceremonial backdrop for all the work being done in the space, whether it be speeches, singing, dancing or a host of other performances. In the centre is a large fire-pit area, above which a smoke hole is cut into the planked roof. This is a multipurpose, largely public, space that hosts a number of community events in the spring, summer, and fall, but is exclusively for spirit dancing during the winter months. Many of the events hosted here are open to all, both *shíshálh* and non-*shíshálh*. This one, however, was special and thus closed to everyone but invited guests.

In attendance were many people from the *shíshálh* and the larger Sechelt community, as well as extended family from Squamish, Rivers Inlet, and Bella Coola. While the entire event
was spectacular, with presentations and dances from visiting relatives and *shishálh* performers, I want to focus on the final event of the night in detail, what was really the climax of the family’s memorial work. This was a performance my friend simply called the “photo presentation” and, when asked about its origins stated, “It’s just what we do here,” thus anchoring it to a long-standing tradition of public remembrance.

“It’s just what we do here” does, in fact, warrant some further explanation. The usage of photographs in this manner has been observed elsewhere in the Coast Salish world. Caroline Marr, in her seminal “Marking Oneself: Uses of Photographs by Native Americans of the Southern Northwest Coast” (1996, 55-57), observes that:

The first widespread usage of photographs recorded by ethnographers was in commemorative ceremonies. In 1913, Homer G. Barnett observed a commemorative potlatch among the Cowichan of Vancouver Island and described how figures made from cloth representing the deceased had been replaced by photographs. When photographs were used, “they were wrapped up in a mountain goat wool blanket, which added a sacred element and perhaps protected the visitors from spiritual powers until the appropriate moment when the photograph was unwrapped and displayed.” At this time, the host announced the names of those people being honored and began to sing the “cry song.” ….The use of photographs in commemorative potlatches continues to this day. In 1987, a ceremony took place at the Swinomish Reservation for Fred Cayou, Sr., who had passed away four years previously. One thousand people gathered to sing Cayou’s *seyowen* song one last time, and then sent it to join him in the spirit world. The singers carried pictures of Cayou around the smokehouse while chanting in slow procession. There were two images: Cayou the handsome soldier in an army uniform, and Cayou the Indian painted on a drum….Another ceremonial use of photographs took place in 1989 when a mother hosted a giveaway service to honor her deceased son at the Indian Shaker Church on the Muckleshoot Reservation. With money that she had saved for more than a year, the mother purchased blankets, cups, dish towels, toys, and framed pictures of her son’s closest friends to distribute to the guests. This gesture symbolized the giving away of her grief. As part of the service she also passed around a photograph of her son, “so that the guests could better remember him.”

Marr’s examples all help to better contextualize the events that unfolded at this memorial feast, both in terms of the performance of photographs and the larger material assemblages enacted in this mimetic transition, to which I now return.
Back in the *shíshálh* longhouse, the floor was ceremonially cleared and purified with cedar boughs after the final visiting *Wuikinuxw* dance performance. The host family then called four people from the crowd to act as witnesses to the work being done. There were two relatives from Rivers Inlet (*Wuikinuxw* territory), one man from the *shíshálh* community, and a *Skwxwú7mesh* Elder who was originally from Sechelt and a member of the host family.

After the selection of the witnesses, clean blankets were laid in a square on the floor on top of the cedar boughs. A large chair was then brought into the centre of the room and set on top of the blankets and boughs. The chair was a plastic lawn chair, most likely obtained from the local Canadian Tire store. The chair itself was then draped in more blankets, another act of ceremonial cleansing that seemed to change its status from an everyday lawn chair to a significant ceremonial object, an active participant in the performance that was to follow. After the chair had been suitably dressed, two women were chosen from the larger crowd of attendant witnesses. They were dressed in woven sashes and adorned with cedar headbands, then directed to stand in front of the chair. At this point, the entire host family left the hall.

The space was silent, save for the odd bit of chatter among the larger crowd or the playful banter of the young children in attendance, as everyone waited for the return of the family. After about ten minutes, the longhouse doors opened again and the family re-entered the hall, led in by the *xwamstut* singers, the ever-present ceremonial and cultural ambassadors of the *shíshálh* Nation. At the head of the family procession was a woman carrying a small bundle wrapped in a blanket. Behind her came the rest of the family in single file. The singers, family, and bundle all did a circuit of the dance floor. After their round was complete, the bundle was placed on the chair in the centre of the floor and unwrapped. It contained a framed 8”x10” colour photograph of the relative being commemorated.
The photograph was a standard modern studio portrait. Shown from the shoulders up, the subject appeared in a sweater and glasses. She sat facing the camera, head tilted slightly to the side, in front of a dark-toned colour backdrop. The frame was basic, plastic, nothing ornate. The overall effect of the object was its commonness, a feature that actually contributed to its radiance moments later. The bundling, or wrapping, of the framed photograph is important to consider as well.

It was wrapped in a blanket. This blanket, it was indicated, was special, more so than the others used in the ceremony. While the blankets used to cover the floor and the chairs were machine-made and store-bought, this one was hand-woven wool, the last blanket the deceased woman had ever made. Chip Colwell (2017) has recently observed that, “The purpose of the wrap is encompassed within a broader human practice of using one object to frame another object as important.” Much like the function of picture frames, the wrapping of the photograph further heightened its significance as something unique and special, something revered and sacred. But there is wrapping and then there is wrapping. By deciding to mask the framed photograph in the last woven blanket made by the deceased woman, the family was making a conscious decision to directly connect the photograph with other powerful things from her life, and to combine one cherished heirloom with another. Thus, the wrapping itself is not benign, but works to heighten the overall power of all confederated things, it is part of the assemblage at work, as were the human bodies thus ceremonially activated.

The two women, who had this whole time been standing sentry-like in front of the chair, now moved forward and picked up the photograph. One took it in her arms and the other produced a flashlight. The photograph was then slowly paraded around the darkened room, illuminated by the flashlight for all to witness. All the women in attendance were then publically
paid money to act as witnesses of this. It was explained by the family’s speaker that this act was to allow everyone, both family members and larger community, to “let go” of their deceased female relative and move forward.

After this solemn circulation, the photograph was placed back on the chair in the centre of the room. The host family then proceeded to take one final walk past their relative, laying money down on the blanketed floor at the feet of her chair. The photograph was then re-wrapped in the blanket that had concealed its entrance into the longhouse. Re-covering the photograph signified that this was the last anyone was to see of her in this space. The photograph, it was stated, needed to be re-bundled because it was still too hard for the family to see it. The photograph and blanket, along with the chair “she sat in,” were gifted to her sister from Bella Coola (Nuxalk territory). The family’s speaker then explained to everyone in attendance how important it was for the family to “keep the image inside of them” until they are strong enough, healed enough, to physically look at it again.

After this final sequence in the performative repertoire that formed the “photo presentation,” the host family filed back out of the longhouse. The lights were raised again and the floor cleared. The memorial service transitioned to its final phase, a name-giving ceremony for close to half a dozen extended family members. The photograph that had played such an important role in presencing the memorialized relative was placed, wrapped in its blanket, caringly to the side, its work complete.

Performing Portraits

Another shishálh example that certainly falls under the declaration “it’s what we do here,” is the November 11 Remembrance Day ceremony. Remembrance Day takes place in
Canada (and all Commonwealth Countries) every year on November 11, the observed date of the end of the First World War, to commemorate soldiers who have fallen in the line of duty. For most of Canada, it is a government holiday.

Every year, the shíshálh Nation hosts a ceremony to honour the veterans from the community, some of whom never returned (see previous chapter). This annual event, which actually marked the beginning of my fieldwork, incorporates specific photographic embodiment, similar to that examined above. It has further significance because of the way photographic objects are brought into the performative arena via the person of a “holy man,” who performs the ceremony every year. As with the previous example, light plays an important role in transforming the photographic objects discussed here, embellishing what can only be described as their radiance or vibrancy (Bennett 2010).

Figure 5-2. “Stan Louis in Uniform,” c. 1940. Photographer unknown. Courtesy: tems swiya Museum (#9.053).
*shíshálh* veteran photographs are quite numerous. From the First World War onwards, *shíshálh* peoples have served in various arms of the Canadian military, in both peace and war. Photographs of Indigenous veterans are a complicated genre (Strassler 2010). They occupy a similar “official,” and therefore colonial, register akin to the residential school photographs discussed in the previous chapter. Many of these official military portraits, which appear in the family collections of *shíshálh* family members, are cherished belongings. Multiples circulate throughout family networks and, as mentioned above, many have been framed and hung in community spaces like the *shíshálh* Nation Elders’ Boardroom, becoming powerful public objects.

As the Remembrance Day event proceeded, community members gathered in a semi-circle around the framed portraits of the *shíshálh* veterans that line the back wall of the Elders’ Boardroom. All veterans are represented here in their uniforms, most being their official military portraits, save one for whom a uniformed portrait could not be found. In the middle, between people and portraits, was a distinguished guest, a *Skwxwu7mesh* “holy man,” as was explained to me by another attendee. I later found out that he is a minister in the Indian Shaker Church and a regular attendee at *shíshálh* community events.12

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12 The Indian Shaker Church is a uniquely Coast Salish religious community that emerged in the 1880s in Washington State (see Barnett 1957; Gunther 1949; Suttles 1987). The Shaker Church, which Homer Barnett (1957) would call a “messianic cult,” was founded by John and Mary Slocum after John Slocum’s apparent resurrection and prophetic vision involving a trip to Heaven and an order to start a new religion. The Shaker Church involves a blend of Christian and Indigenous spiritual practices. Although it is now recognized as a Christian denomination, in its early years especially, it stood as a unique form of religious resistance against imposed Euro-Christian beliefs. It can be understood, as Suttles (1987) observes, alongside other prophetic religious traditions, such as the Ghost Dance, which were a direct response to the trauma of colonization.
The Shaker minister lit a candle (a significant part of Shaker Church ritual practice, see Marr 1996) and approached the portraits. He moved slowly from left to right. In front of each portrait he would stop and hold the candle close, moving his free hand up and down, left and right, several times—the sign of the cross. As he did this, he sang to the portraits. I never found out what he was singing, and I am not sure anyone in the crowd knew either. It did not seem to matter. When he had blessed every portrait, he turned and faced the crowd. In much the same fashion, he proceeded to bless every individual gathered there.

The use of the candle recalls the flashlight in my previous example. Here again, this beam of light in all its radiant quality served as transforming force and connector between those gathered and the framed portraits. The portraits of the veterans were animated and activated in this space—by light, song, and collective commemoration. They were presenced in a way that established a direct connection between these ancestors, their gathered family members, and the larger community. This was a fleeting moment of transition. The “vibrant matter” (Bennett 2010) of these photographic objects existing only within the event-space of this annual ritual performance. After the event, these particular portraits returned to their previous state, awaiting the next Remembrance Day ceremony.

Discussion

The momentary transition, or change in state, of photographic objects indicates the ways they take on new social roles (Porto 2004, 118). Photographs are activated, and re-activated, in culturally specific ways. They take on a new life, if only briefly. The photographs discussed in these ethnographic examples act in this manner.
In his ethnography, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (1993), Michael Taussig discusses the powerful nature of kinds of embodiment, which he dubs *mimesis*. For Taussig, mimesis is a moment of “magic” where “the replication, the copy, acquires the power of the represented” (1993, 16). These photographs, through particular forms of mimetic magic (Taussig 1993), *become* the embodiment of the memorialized, part of a larger assemblage of expressive and material forms, of human and non-human participants. That there is a certain brevity or impermanence to this is what makes these moments all the more significant, more sacred. The ephemerality here is directly linked to the production of a collective affect among participants (Edwards 2012).

Elizabeth Edwards observes that photographs are “relational objects,” and as such:

>[m]ateriality is central…because…it is the fusion and performative interaction of image and materiality that gives a sensory and embodied access to photographs. This places photographs in subjectivities and emotional registers that cannot be reduced to the visual apprehension of an image… (2005, 27).

Edwards makes clear that the visuality of a photograph is entangled with its physicality. As such, its materiality constitutes the larger visual and physical presence of the photographic object. In this relational model, “photographs operate not only simply as visual history but are performed, I shall argue, as a form of oral history, linked to sound, gesture and thus to the relationships in which and through which these practices are embedded” (2005, 29).

Edwards (2005, 29) continues, “this way of thinking about photographs in relation to history strengthens their integral position in constituting alternative histories, which are embodied in objects, song, movement and bodies” and as such “is particularly persuasive outside the confines of Western photographic theory, which has dominated analysis of photography, and more generally in anthropology” (2005, 28). As primary constituters of relationships with the
past, photographs in shíshálh territory are deployed as powerful cultural objects with unique meanings, in unique circumstances, enfolded into larger performative processes, shaped by local meanings.

As this act of “presencing” is something that occurs in a number of shíshálh ceremonial events it has become tradition—“it’s what we do here.” It is, therefore, a mutually understood ritual performance, something all (or most) participants have experienced before. It is, furthermore, embedded within a distinct feature of public memorial practice up and down the Northwest Coast (see Kan 1989; Marr 1996), where animated material things convey ritual meaning.

Various kinds of embodiment are central components of ceremonial practice and cultural production on the Northwest Coast (Clutesi 1969; Glass 2004; Kan 1989; McIlwraith 1992; Townsend-Gault 2004). The Kwakwaka’wakw Hamatsa dance, so famously studied by Franz Boas (1920), is perhaps the Ur-example of ritual embodiment as described by the ethnography of the area. While this often involves actual humans enacting various ceremonial roles, objects too become incorporated in these embodied performances.

The incorporation of photography into Indigenous commemorative ceremonialism on the Northwest Coast is arguably anchored in the Potlatch Ban of 1885, which prohibited customary ceremonial practice, along with its objects, in the interest of assimilation and conversion to Christianity (Cole and Chaikin 1990). It is no coincidence that photography makes its entry into Indigenous ceremonialism at a point when previous modes of commemoration were made illegal (see Gmelch 2008; Williams 2003).

There may have been some influence from Euro-Canadian society as well, as photographs were finding their way into the after-death rituals of Victorian society (Marr 1996).
Therefore, the mimetic power of photographs, I argue, was both a suitable substitute for and, more importantly, an *allowable* and *acceptable* form of object reverence that Indigenous peoples on the Northwest Coast could turn to in the face of cultural criminalization.

In *shíshálh* territory, the large, inter-community (often) winter ceremonial gatherings referred to by anthropologists and others as “the Potlatch” appear to have been active at least until the arrival of missionaries in 1862. Conversion to Christianity profoundly altered *shíshálh* ceremonialism two decades before the Potlatch Ban. Today, no official potlatches are hosted by families, but numerous public events occur, often hosted by the larger *shíshálh* Nation, that incorporate revitalized adaptations of customary performances such as songs and dances. There has also been a significant increase in Spirit Dance practices, a deeply sacred and very secret repertoire. During the winter months, the *shíshálh* Nation longhouse is closed to all but dancers and their supporters, who come from both the *shíshálh* community and elsewhere. Families also, as indicated above, continue to host memorial and funeral gatherings for their deceased loved ones, and whenever a family member passes away there is a community-wide call for photographic contributions to the funeral ceremony.

The ceremonial enactment of objects like photographs (and flashlights and candles and blankets and chairs) indicates a powerful entanglement of the quasi-object world with the spiritual or ceremonial, in a distinctly (post)colonial present. Here, things act as brokers of the past, connectors to the intangible, makers of the sacred. While this is perhaps more easily understandable for the more “classic” accoutrements of Northwest Coast ceremonialism (i.e., masks, dance regalia, sacred whistles and rattles, and so on [see Askren 2011]), it is the almost mundaneness, everydayness, and/or newfangled-ness here that is significant. In these instances, human bodies, framed portraits, a plastic chair from Canadian Tire, a hand-woven wool blanket,
less important store-bought blankets, flashlights, and candles unite the past and present, the spiritual and physical worlds, as well as diverse Indigenous territories, epistemologies, and ontologies. This, too, is a shíshálh photography complex at work (Edwards 2012; Hevia 2009). The work photographs do is extended and enfolded into pre-existing understandings of ceremonialism and its socio-symbolic purposes.

At the centre of everything is the power of family. Family enables a collective display of remembrance, as well as a way to mediate social relations among human and non-human participants. The family, as locus of remembrance and unit of performance, connects the “photo presentation” and Remembrance Day ceremonies to a larger community and a cultural history.

This sociality and relational quality of photographs as quasi-objects, as things, extends into affective and material interactions between shíshálh and others. I wish to transition now to a discussion of photographs as “contact zones” (Pratt 1991) between shíshálh peoples and others and elsewheres. Circulation is a defining feature of photographic quasi-objects. Materiality, and the notion of the photography complex remain central vantage points from which to view and consider the “work” photographs do. As objects that circulate outside of shíshálh spaces, photographs of shíshálh people and places are nonetheless involved in the production of knowledge about the people and places they depict. Various contexts and modes of engagement, flows of history, and relations of power influence these interactions.

**Moving Images—shíshálh Peoples, Elsewheres, and the Affect of Photographic Contact Zones**

This section addresses the circulation of photographs of shíshálh people in a broad sense. I am primarily concerned with circulation beyond the “local” context. Here, the local is perhaps
best categorized as a sense of familiarity rather than any particular spatial or geographical orientation. It is, as noted by Sahana Udupa (2015), more of a structure of feeling (Williams 1977) or affective comportment, a theme underlying much of my discussion in this chapter, and throughout this dissertation. Thus far, I have focused on local constructs of materiality and memory, showing how individuals and families make use of photographs. Now, I wish to shift the focus to a different domain, one in which photographs circulate farther afield. This discussion focuses not only on the circulation of photographs as things, but also on the circulation of the bodies, memories, knowledge, and histories they give form to.

In one sense, the movement of photographs of shíshálh folk is embedded within and representative of the movement of actual shíshálh bodies—across cultural geographical boundaries. In another sense, the movement of photographs of shíshálh people is in many ways out of their control altogether. In these circumstances, “something” (Stewart 2007) of shíshálh people and culture enters into spaces—both tangible and intangible—they might not have otherwise encountered, or that are at odds with their day-to-day realities—the unfamiliar. In these moments, photographs become types of “contact zones” as well (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991). They become a space of encounter between shíshálh bodies and others; they mark out a shíshálh presence in non-shíshálh spaces; they are participants in conversations about culture, indigeneity, place, and history. In all of these cases, a type of translocality (Appadurai 1996; Escobar 2001) is inscribed onto photographs and the peoples and cultures they depict. shíshálh people have always performed a type of translocality within the Coast Salish world. I am concerned with the ways that, through circulation, photographs of shíshálh peoples emerge as translocal things.
I examine two different contexts of the circulation of photographs and people. The first examines the public display of photographs of *shíshálh* people in the larger community of Sechelt, and the ways these photographs contribute to particular narratives about and experiences of indigeneity in this place that has been obfuscated by colonialism. The second examines the circulation of photographs of *shíshálh* people as ethnographic “types” and curiosities in the form of postcards and other popular media. It focuses on a particular postcard recently uncovered in the United States, the context of its production, and its reunion with a *shíshálh* photographic history and family.

By examining the circulation of particular photographs, I will trace out the movements of *shíshálh* peoples and culture. I want to examine how photographic movements might work to dislodge what Lissa Malkki has referred to as the “spatial incarceration of the Native” (1997). I argue that individual *shíshálh* photographs and photograph collections are material extensions of *shíshálh* lives, and that these lives are not bounded by imposed spatial and temporal frames of understanding of Indigenous peoples that have often been perpetuated by anthropologists and others, and which have been challenged on many fronts (Fabian 1983; Gupta and Ferguson eds. 1997). Similarly, I want to pay attention to movement and fluidity. In doing this, I want to stress that movement, fluidity, and dynamism are all things that characterize *shíshálh* history and culture.

However, this does not undermine the very real boundedness that is embodied in the existence of *shíshálh* ancestral territory, and the various efforts to reconnect and reclaim, both physically and culturally, this space from generations of colonial displacement. Both *shíshálh* and non-*shíshálh* identities are constructed and disrupted through the experience of photographs of *shíshálh* peoples in primarily non-*shíshálh* spaces. In these moments, photographs perform
their inherent elasticity as quasi-objects onto which multiple memories and histories are imposed, buried, and uncovered. Deeply tied to narrative and context, I argue that the in/visibility of photographs makes them powerful contact zones (Taussig 1999; 2006; see also Solomonian 2014). In/visibility operates as a relationship of looking and knowing (see Gaines 1986) in a complex network of human bodies; material objects; and more intangible forces of history, memory, power, and protocol. In/visibility is a product of sense and affect. It is at once both experience of absence and presence (Taussig 2006).

This aspect of in/visibility struck me one morning when I overheard, “I really don’t see any Native people around. I mean I know they’re here, but you just don’t see them on the street,” next to me in the coffee shop that often substituted for my office during my stay in shíshálh territory. The two interlocutors were tourists, only here for a short time I guessed, a few days, maybe a week. It was summer. There are always tourists. However, even in their fleeting adventure into this place, their commentary nudged a larger topic. It is a question of presences and absences, and, again, the perception or feeling thereof—in/visibility is an affective state.

shíshálh people are literally everywhere around this town that sits on what was once a harvesting site called ch’atelich or “outside,” in reference to the bay that forms its southern border. Their physical non-presence (or the appearance of it) “on the streets” in this particular anecdote has myriad explanations—work, school, feast, funeral, or soccer game (the most likely culprit given that it was summer). Even in instances of their not physically “being there” in the imaginations of non-shíshálh observers, shíshálh Indigeneity and presence, are materially inscribed on the landscape in many ways—through the carved totem poles that greet you as you enter town, the Band’s government offices directly across the road, street names, place names, and a host of public imagery, to name but a few examples.
“Contact zones” (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991) emerge from interactions between diverse materialities and are not predicated on human-to-human interaction. To encounter anything understood as shíshálh (people, places, things, and knowledge) is to engage a contact zone. So, what exactly is at work here, in the spaces opened up in these movements between presence and absence, people and things, places and knowledge, and how might we better understand these sites of emergence in the everyday? I present two “object stories” of photographs that produce two different shíshálh contact zones. The first is a 4’x6’ enlargement fixed to the wall of a local Sechelt grocery store. The second is a postcard of two shíshálh babies I purchased from the online auction website, eBay. Both of these photographs are unique objects that circulate, or have circulated, in diverse ways outside of a shíshálh familiar.

The following positions these photographic objects in terms of their relational materiality (Edwards 2009; 2012) within the context of distinct spaces of Indigenous/settler interaction, and the potential affective states produced in these moments. These contact zones emerge within certain regimes of in/visibility, concealing and revealing as they work (Taussig 1999; 2006). These are moments in time and, like the performances discussed in the previous section, they are fleeting. My goal in what follows is to trace, as effectively as possible, potential scenarios, based largely on my own interaction with photographs, as well as their insertion into larger relational fields, both contemporary and historical.

Object Story #1: wawa and tlaiakmut Go to the Grocery Store on the “Other Side”

Sechelt is a town divided, both spatially and culturally, between the shíshálh community and what they often refer to as “the other side.” This settler space is characterized by an ongoing tension with the shíshálh community, tension that at times has boiled over into outright
animosity, even violence. This settler space also extends into areas where shíshálh peoples, or photographs of them, participate in encounters defined by particular “colonial proximities” (Mawani 2009) and Indigenous re-territorializations (see Chapter Four). I have heard the “other side” also used to refer to other non-shíshálh spaces. Vancouver Island, where many shíshálh peoples have extended family, is considered the “other side” since it is quite literally on the other side of tsain-ko, or the Salish Sea.

I have also heard the United States referred to as the “other side” in acknowledgement of the imaginary line that is the 49th Parallel, a real presence in the lives of Coast Salish and other Indigenous peoples, as it cuts across familial connections (see Miller 1996; Simpson 2014). Thus, the “other side” is mobilized as a term to denote spaces and places where shíshálh peoples feel disconnected, excluded, or simply not at home—the unfamiliar. The “other side” is therefore also best considered as an alternative structure of feeling (Williams 1977), in contrast to the local. This is manifested in the particularities of encounter and experience more than in a single location. Thus, there are many “other sides” in the shíshálh universe, and they are encountered and experienced in different ways.

One of the oldest, and most locally “famous,” photographs of shíshálh people features a couple remembered as wawa and tlaiakmut, with their canoe, on the beach near what is now Sechelt. Taken around 1880, according to the tems swiya Museum, it has been attributed to an unknown photographer. It has been extensively reproduced, and I have seen it many times before in different spaces, in particular on the walls of the shíshálh Nation Rights and Title office, and in the tems swiya Museum. It is a revered photograph, one showing the “old people,” and one with which most shíshálh people are familiar. Besides the copies in the shíshálh Nation Rights and Title office and the tems swiya Museum, versions also exist on the “other side.” The copy I
want to pay attention to here hangs above the express checkout in a grocery store in downtown Sechelt.

A fourth-generation family business, the grocery store is an iconic marker of settler identity and settler space in the town of Sechelt. Known colloquially by many shíshálh peoples as “kwaliten’s”—the shíshálh word for “white people”—the store positions itself, by its branding as a “Heritage Market”, within the settler “heritage” of this place. A number of 4’ x 6’ framed archival photographs depicting the history of the town, and the place of the family business within it, run around the entire store, illustrating the growth of Sechelt as settler space.

Here, wawa and tlaiakmut appear, nameless, among a sea of other historic, and historical, faces and places. And this is perhaps the best way to describe the feeling of this moment. They are historical, the rest are historic. The presence of wawa and tlaiakmut in this teleological
narrative is palpable. They begin the story. Their faces and bodies, their very materiality, present a primordial indigeneity that, as one makes one’s way around the store, is surpassed, tamed, converted, or otherwise obfuscated. The most powerful representation of this is another photograph showing settler Sechelt residents playing tennis, with the spectre of St. Augustine’s Residential School and the mission community looming in the background. In/visibility is at work as the bodies and faces of wawa and tlaíakmut are subjected to a variety of gazes that touch only the surface of the image. Here something is felt, is made known, and simultaneously negated by fleeting glances.

shíshálh peoples and places are commonly incorporated into the settler history of Sechelt and the contemporary heritage imaginary of the town. As part of my fieldwork, I sat on the District of Sechelt’s Heritage Advisory Board for several months before it was disbanded. During the meetings of this group, questions were raised about how to better incorporate the shíshálh community into the various public events the Heritage Advisory Board was tasked with overseeing. There was no one from the shíshálh community on the Board. Knowing that I was an anthropologist working with the community, Board members would frequently turn these questions my way, despite my stated lack of ability to provide any concrete answers. My time spent on the Advisory Board, as well as my fieldwork sojourn within the larger Sechelt community, made clear the rather complex relationship between the shíshálh community and the larger Sechelt, and Sunshine Coast, population. There were many individual relationships that transcended these obvious divides; however, on a more general collective level, ongoing tensions and complications were evident.

The photograph of wawa and tlaíakmut in the Heritage Market is one of the few public visual traces of shíshálh presence on the “other side.” The erasure or in/visibility at work here is
so starkly obvious when contrasted with the overt presence of the Band Lands that it almost seems unreal. Stepping from one space into another is abrupt and jarring. As almost a lone beacon of shíshálh presence, the photograph of wawa and tlaiakmut must be considered in terms of its role as a contact zone, if only briefly, between shíshálh indigeneity and a legacy of settler encroachment.

In the closing section of his book, Defacement (1999), Taussig turns his discussion of revelation and concealment to the face, noting, “[v]ision gives way to presencing in the very act of looking….Vision melts into faciality and faciality beckons both language and truth in an astonishingly mystical movement beyond our knowledge” (1999, 223). What do the faces of wawa and tlaiakmut make known and what do they conceal when “faced with other faces” (Taussig 1999)?

On one level, we can observe the power relationships presented by the sense of in/visibility here. The inclusion of wawa and tlaiakmut in this visual heritage of Sechelt incorporates them into the settler imaginaries that begin with the arrival of loggers, missionaries, entrepreneurs, steamships and tourists. It imposes a depth. It marks a break between new and old, the historic and historical. It conceals current questions of shíshálh rights and title within their unceded traditional territory by defining this as settler space. It allows, even if momentarily, shíshálh indigeneity to slip into past-ness while simultaneously acknowledging its inclusion in narratives of the present.

We (I) must also ask what else in/visibility makes possible in these moments. As settler space is permeated with contact zones that are not just characterized by human interaction, an attention to materialities, to the place and role of quasi-objects, might reveal other kinds of disruptions and unsettlements. By way of a conclusion, I have very few answers. I know that the
photograph of *wawa* and *tlaiakmut* is, for *shíshálh* people, an image of their ancestors, of family. Their names, while absent in this case, are known and remembered in others. When shown to Elders, the photograph inspires stories and memories that counter the narratives imposed in other moments. It reinforces an attachment to territory and community, to a sense of presence that denies the permanence of settler histories.

A knowledge of what might be considered a *shíshálh* conception of materiality, as discussed above, is helpful here too. As the term *shíshálh* itself incorporates not only people, but also places and things, this photograph is *shíshálh*. This image is not merely an embodiment of ancestors, but a presencing of them in this space. This is a different kind of depth and, while concealed by certain revelations of surface, it is nonetheless there, protected. *wawa* and *tlaiakmut* might then be actants in a Latourian network, agents of a Taussigian public secret, one of which we are all a part. And here in/visibility, as an affective surge, might bring all of us face to face with the tensions that characterize this place.
Object Story #2: The “Sechelt Twins” Visit Milwaukee (After a Brief Stop in Gas City, Indiana and Maybe Montana)

The archives of the Milwaukee Public Museum are an unlikely place to find shíshálh people, especially a pair of babies known only as the “Sechelt Twins,” but they are there. How they came to be there is a story that also exemplifies the production and circulation of photographs of shíshálh peoples in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries by itinerant professional photographers. It is also a story that perfectly captures the movement of shíshálh families during this time, both physically and virtually, into places and spaces within, and sometimes far beyond, the borders of their ancestral territory.

The “Sechelt Twins” is a photograph of two shíshálh babies. They are both bound in traditional cradle baskets made of cedar roots, cedar bark, and cloth. One is crying while the other looks on, hand in mouth, at something beyond the camera. The cradle baskets are lying on what appears to be a bearskin rug.
Quite by happenstance, I stumbled upon the photograph of the Sechelt twins while trying to track down a photo of shíshálh performing a Christian Passion Play (re-enacting the crucifixion story of Jesus Christ) for the tems swiya Museum archives. The first version I encountered was on the popular image-sharing website, Pinterest, a user-curated digital platform for collecting and circulating images and other media. The photograph of the Sechelt twins was posted along with other images under the label “twins.” It immediately caught my eye because I had never seen it before.

It became even more intriguing when I emailed it to Steven and he had never seen it before, which is a rarity. He showed it around the office and wrote back that one of his co-workers might remember seeing it in a community Elder’s family collection at some point but could not be certain. His co-worker did recall that, if in fact this was the photograph they remembered, no one could identify the babies. I decided to try and dig a little deeper into the story of the photograph and the context of its origin.

The “Sechelt Twins” was originally released as a postcard by R. Steinman and Company from St. Paul, Minnesota, a firm that specialized in “postcards, advertising merchandise, and novelties” (Wilson 2004, 14). I was able to track down one of these postcards on the auction website eBay from a dealer based out of Ohio. The postcard that arrived in my mailbox was originally postmarked April 22, 1907, and mailed from Redfield, South Dakota. It was addressed to a Burr Smith in Gas City, Indiana.

As a postcard, the photograph of the “Sechelt Twins” is a multiple object. How many copies there were in circulation, and how many might remain, is unknown. As postcards they move, at least once, circulating an image and imaginary of shíshálh people into foreign spaces. As postcards of Indigenous bodies, they share in the legacy of a colonialist visual economy that
employed representative tropes and moveable objects (like postcards) in spreading exotic imagery of the “natives” back home (Faris 1996; Poole 1997; Stokely 2015).

Getting a sense of the relationships involved in the taking of the photographs that would become postcards is challenging. As Stokely (2015, 115) observes, “[t]he actual participation and the understandings of Indigenous subjects is perhaps the least understood aspect of postcard production and distribution. Photographers did not usually document their subject’s lives or thoughts, and few Native people have recorded their memories of the process.” In shíshálh territory, while the production of this particular photograph, and subsequent postcard, is not remembered, the postcard industry certainly is.

The “Sechelt Twins” is not the only postcard representation of shíshálh peoples produced by outsiders, and many of the earliest family portraits held in personal collections are in the form of postcards. Furthermore, it seems that from very early on, shíshálh people were participating in the new image industry generated by postcards and other for-pay photographic encounters. Some Elders I talked to during my research distinctly remember at least one older man who, during their youth, would pose for tourists for money. With the particular postcard in question, there is little information in the community about its production. There is a little more information elsewhere, however.

There is nothing written on the postcard except the address of its intended recipient. There is no way to tell who sent this image of two babies swaddled in traditional cedar root cradle baskets, to Burr Smith, or why they sent it in the first place. What did Burr Smith think of this photograph? What did he do with it? Who did he show it to? What stories did it conjure up? The traces expand, almost frustratingly. While awaiting the arrival of the postcard, which now
resides in the *tems swiya* Museum archives, I tried to find out as much information as I could about the photograph. This led me to the archives of the Milwaukee Public Museum.

There are actually two versions of the “Sechelt Twins” in the Milwaukee Public Museum archives. One is identical to the image that was printed on the postcard released by R. Steinman and Company. The other is an uncropped version that reveals another child, a young girl probably about age three. She is clothed in a cotton dress and bonnet, and is looking unsmilingly into the camera. This version of the photograph reveals even more details. The photograph was clearly taken outside, and there is a wrapped bundle to the left of the twins. Leaning against the bundle is an unidentifiable object that resembles a baseball bat or club. It also becomes clear that the twins were not lying on a bearskin after all, but were propped up against a wall on which a bearskin is hanging.

![Image of the Sechelt Twins](image.jpg)

Figure 5-5. “The Sechelt Twins, Vancouver,” c. 1905. Photograph by Sumner W. Matteson. Courtesy: Milwaukee Public Museum (#44297).
The two “Sechelt Twins” photographs are part of the archival collection of Sumner W. Matteson. Matteson, born in Iowa in 1867, was a photographer and accomplished cyclist, active between the years 1898 and 1909. He self-identified as a “travelling correspondent” and roamed the American West, often by bicycle, taking photographs of local Indigenous communities as well as other subjects (Milwaukee Public Museum 2012). He is referenced frequently in James Faris’ (1996) now-famous study of the Navajo experience with early photography and photographers. What did Matteson think the day he encountered the Sechelt Twins? Assuming for a second that the babies he photographed were actually biological twins and not paired together as an ethnographic prop, did he know how important they were?

Twins in shíshálh culture are so much more than a quirk of biology. According to Homer Barnett (1955), they were thought to be bestowed with, or predisposed to, supernatural powers, and their birth was thus an event around which much protocol was enacted. There were periods of isolation for both parents and children, along with other social avoidances. Both mother and father were also thought to have inherited supernatural powers from the birth of twins. Mothers, in particular, were supposedly gifted with the ability to cure rheumatism. The families of twins were cared for during their isolation by extended family members. Twins were not introduced into society until after the period of seclusion had ended. Their introduction was witnessed at a feast in their parents’ house. Here, they were paraded around the room, one parent holding each twin. For the rest of their lives, they were considered to be sacred beings who could, if necessary, manipulate the weather and, importantly, sense the arrival of salmon. In fact, they were believed to be salmon and, upon their deaths, would return north to the home of the salmon (Barnett 1955, 135-136).
It is almost certain that Matteson knew nothing of this when he stumbled on the Sechelt Twins. Perhaps he was given this important information by the twins’ parents. Perhaps not. Exactly when and where he encountered the Sechelt Twins and their (apparent) sibling is difficult to pinpoint. According to the Milwaukee Public Museum, the photographs were produced sometime around 1905 in Vancouver, British Columbia. This date of production would correspond with the 1907 postmark on Burr Smith’s postcard, but not with Matteson’s biography, which, according to the Smithsonian Museum, places him in Vancouver in 1908, a year after the postcard was sent to Burr Smith. In 1905, Matteson was supposedly in Montana photographing Assiniboine, A’aninin, Apsaalooke, Pikuni and Northern Tsitsistas/Suhtai peoples around the Fort Belknap Reservation (Smithsonian Institution 2016). Needless to say, this chronological puzzle makes the timing of the encounter even more complicated—and the next twist even more so.
The above photograph is entered in the *tems swiya* database as item 9.001. It is titled “Slow George and Family” and is listed as having been taken sometime around 1910 at *ch’atelich*. Captain Slow George is the only individual identified. The others are listed as “unidentified children and man.” Captain Slow George is also the “Chief George” recorded by the McKenna McBride commissioners in 1913. The one thing that is clearly notable about this photograph is that it is of a family. While the title leads one to believe it is of Slow George and his family, the mother (or mothers) of the children are not shown. In theory, it could also be Slow George posing with someone else’s family, perhaps the unidentified man’s, but that’s unlikely.
That only Slow George was recognized when the photograph was shown to Elders by *tems swiya* Museum staff over a decade ago, speaks to the gaps produced through photographic encounters and the passage of time. Guesses as to the identities of the children and man may have been made, but nothing concrete was recorded in the archival record.

I came across the photograph of Slow George and Family while putting together representative collections of group portraits labelled in some way as “family” in the *tems swiya* Museum collection. It is a fairly “famous” photograph in the community. Then I realized something. It was the bear skins that initially tipped me off. The Sechelt Twins and their “sister” were part of Slow George’s family! Only one baby is present in the photograph of Slow George, but it is most certainly one of the Sechelt Twins. Also, the older sister (shown in Figure 5-3) can be seen standing just to the right (when viewed from the front), of the unidentified man who cradles the “twin” and, for some reason, a French horn (perhaps connecting him to the community brass band).

While not by any means giving closure to the story, the connection between Matteson’s two photographs in the Milwaukee Public Museum Archives, the Sechelt Twins postcard, and the photograph of Slow George and Family in the *tems swiya* Museum collection, reveals a much richer context of encounter and circulation. The “Sechelt Twins,” along with “Slow George and Family” as a series, or family, of photographs, ultimately raise more questions than they answer. Perhaps this is the point of this exercise—the need for ongoing exploration into the intricate relationships revealed through photographic encounters.

The multiplicity of objects and the history of their production and circulation (even if somewhat veiled) does reveal a particular contact zone (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991) between *shíshálh* families and others that continues into the present. The postcard, a highly circulateable
object, received by Burr Smith in 1907 in Gas City, Indiana, was not the only one of its kind. Nor was it the only photograph of shíshálh peoples to be rendered into postcard form. The multiplicity of versions of this photographic moment of encounter pieces together and reveals the rhizomatic construct that is “family,” within and beyond the shíshálh world. I mean here that “family” extends far beyond clear relations of affinity and consanguinity. Family becomes more like a social force, produced by both local understandings and outsider renderings.

Discussion

Photographs of the cultural “Other” have always been contact zones of sorts, usually grossly unbalanced ones (see Edwards 1992; Faris 1996; Pinney 2011). The idea that settler-colonial identities/fantasies are constructed in direct relation to particular inherited knowledge about the people and places being “settled,” and I use the term broadly, is not by any means new (see Poole 1997). Nor is it new that photography, beginning in the 1840s, with its essentially unquestioned visual veracity and assumed realism, played a large role in these imaginings. As Pinney notes, “it was precisely photography’s [assumed] indexicality…which gave it such importance in the colonial imagination” (1997, 20). In these situations, however, those being photographed can never participate. The domination of the gaze is apparent, and the photograph is less a contact zone than a form of colonization (Tagg 1993). That this colonial encounter on the image’s surface continues into the so-called post-colonial era should not be surprising.

Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins observe, in their now seminal Reading National Geographic (1993), that images of non-Western peoples continue to be fodder for the problematic propagation of false ideas about Western cultural sophistication, and a reification of erroneous beliefs and assumptions about the cultural Other. James Faris’ The Navajo and
Photography (Faris 1996) reaffirmed this lamentation. That this has continued into the twenty-first century should not be surprising.

The medium of photography is often one of manufactured distance and disconnection. Photographic encounters are still, commonly, encounters at a distance—spatial, temporal, social, and cultural. In this context, they indicate a perpetuation of a colonialist fantasy in the Other-as-distance, rather than the perhaps more intimate proximities that characterize certain emergent settler spaces (Baloy 2014; Mawani 2009). By fleshing out the photograph-as-contact-zone in certain settler settings, I have examined the everyday sites from which particular contact zones might emerge, and the role of in/visibility in these moments.

Photographs of shíshálh peoples are produced and appear in numerous spaces of contact—places of labour and public performance, online and physical museum archives, publications on the history of the Sunshine Coast and British Columbia, as collectible postcards, hanging on the walls of public places, or recreated as a mural in the heart of downtown Sechelt. By considering the ways these photographs become contact zones, I have engaged moments that are not necessarily predetermined or intentional, moments that are not so much sought as stumbled upon, moments that are remarkable in their mundanity, moments that might best define the relationship between in/visibility and settler affect—the commonplace rendering of places and peoples as conveniently conquered (Edmonds 2016; Stewart 2007).

The two object stories examined here attempt to situate particular photographic objects within broader fields of encounter. While certainly not the only spaces in which photographs of shíshálh peoples enter into these relationships, they indicate the myriad forms these encounters might take. They extend the presence of shíshálh indigeneity into the world, disrupting, if only
briefly, the in/visibility that so often characterizes the settler gaze. These photographic objects gaze back.

**Conclusion**

Whether framed portraits of departed loved ones, snapshots pasted to pages of albums or tucked away in shoeboxes, blown-up archival images on the wall of a grocery store, or collectible postcards produced and circulated in faraway places, the material forms of photographs of *shíshálh* people must be considered as a key part of understanding what they “do” as objects.

The examples and ethnographic vignettes examined in this chapter attempt to reveal the various ways through which photographs, as objects, operate as culturally salient belongings. As objects, photographs are activated in a host of different scenarios and become part of larger assemblages of material and expressive forms. These contexts of activation are diverse and, often, fleeting. They indicate the elasticity of photographic objects as they move between different “regimes of value” (Myers 2001) and spaces of contact. The relationship between materiality, affect, and action in all of these scenarios reveals the multiplicity of ways through which photographic objects gain and impart meaning.

The scenarios examined here engage with two distinct fields of object sociality. The first is the mimetic materiality of photographs as performed within the context of *shíshálh* ceremonialism. In these contexts, particular photographs, as singular objects, are activated through a vernacular mimetic magic. As memorial objects, they embody and presence the corporeal forms they trace. They exist within an assemblage of diverse material and expressive gestures, which all contribute to the power of the moment—the *something* (Stewart 2007). In this
role, they are temporary things. The change of state brought forth through this mimesis is as fleeting as it is revealing. In these moments, photographic objects stand at the interface between human and non-human worlds. They give presence to loved ones long gone in ways that are wholly local. They form part of a common-sense performance of cultural memory that is *shíshálh*. They are embedded within a local understanding of connection, webs of interrelations that extend outwards into the world while remaining fully grounded in the power of family and community.

Photographic objects also stand at the interface between the *shíshálh* world and others. In approaching these interactions as such, I do not mean to reify a distinct border or essential difference between a “*shíshálh* world,” so conceived, and elsewhere. I do not mean to perform another type of purification (Latour 1993). Rather, I examine the ways in and through which objects serve as actors, as brokers, in unsettling or making more familiar otherwise unfamiliar places and spaces. The objects in question perform acts of overlap, or, in the terminology of Edwards (2012), a “laminating of the disparate.” The question surely arises, however, as to whether digital objects, or the digital surrogates of photographic objects, can do the same. This will be addressed in Chapter Six.
Chapter 6: From Shoebox to Hard Drive—Preserving Cultural Memory, Making Archives, and the Transformation of Family Photograph Collections

“Often photographs are passed down, but the stories that go along with them are not.”
- Steven Feschuk

Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on the theme of knowledge production and knowing. To do this, I examine more closely the community-directed digitization project that I participated in while in the field. While knowledge is perhaps a broad category, and one that certainly runs throughout the entirety of this dissertation, I want to examine it here in terms of the relationship between photography and the production and preservation of community knowledge. In focusing on the digital domains of this endeavour, I aim to unpack the particular archival processes at work in the interest of discussing how both photography and knowledge shape, and are shaped by, interests of heritage-making, preservation, and cultural protectionism.

If the interplay between cultural memory and materiality, is, as I have argued thus far, central to connections with “knowing history” and giving advice (Suttles 1987)—that primary Coast Salish socio-ethical complex—and if photographs are to be considered advice-bearing objects, then the ways these histories are preserved and circulated at the community level, and to a wider public, requires attention. In preserving photographs and stories, one is preserving advice. In this chapter, I examine the transition from the stories of shíshálh peoples, and the photographs that produce them, to a documented and digitized representation of an entire community’s heritage. There is, I argue, a particular political aspect to this that emphasizes local imaginings of the past, present, and future, and how these are translated and mediated both
within and without the shíshálh community. I focus on the ultimate goal of my research project in shíshálh territory, which is the collection and digitization of photographs and stories for a community digital archive. This process, and the envisioning of the product, illuminate local issues of ownership and cultural property that come to the fore in this movement to new “regimes of value” and regimes of knowledge.

I emphasize the myriad ways in which ideas about the ownership of photograph collections, and the stories they attach to, are not always seamlessly shifted in these transitions. This raises questions of “the archive,” its constitution and potential multiplicity of form, as a knowledge- and advice-preserving entity. I begin with a discussion of the digital format and how it has been absorbed into articulations of identity and historical consciousness in shíshálh and other Indigenous communities. I then take a step back to consider other kinds of preservation activities that return to, and emphasize, a more analogue, embodied, social form of stewardship. This chapter, then, returns very directly to the force that structures all—family—and the archival power it carries, even into digital domains.

My purpose here is not to present an analysis of a finished product, for there is still much work to do. Instead, the goal is to provide an ethnographic description of a work in progress. I focus on the process as it transpired during my fieldwork, the accomplishments and setbacks, the diverse opinions and ideas that constituted the field of practice, and the potential for future endeavours. To begin, I wish to situate the shíshálh Nation Historical Photograph Digitization and Research Project (hereafter known simply as “the project”) within the broader sphere of community-driven heritage projects, both online and offline, and to trace the emergence of a shíshálh digital-scape that continues to grow.
Making (Digital) shíshálh Heritage

Photographs, as advice-bearing objects, are propelled into different “regimes of value” (Myers 2001), and regimes of knowledge, by the conversations that are had with, and about, them. I engage with two distinct “conversations” here. First, I address what I observe to be an official preservationist discourse, which is carried on by employees and representatives of the shíshálh Nation Government—researchers, department heads, government officials, and so on—about the management of photograph collections, and attendant knowledges, as heritage materials, and their transmission to both shíshálh and non-shíshálh publics. Here, the language is often bureaucratic, referring to “putting things on record” and “getting information.” In other words, it’s about amassing rather than transmitting.

Second, there is what I consider “family talk,” which involves the discussions between, and about, family members in relation to collections of photographic objects (and other forms of cultural patrimony), and their stewardship. In this sphere, conversations focus more on the need to pass on knowledge to future generations and to transmit advice. To be clear, shíshálh social actors sometimes navigate and mediate both of these positions. In fact, this occurs quite frequently. Furthermore, in establishing these two distinct categories, I do not mean to imply, or force, their inherent separation. There are certainly many issues that overlap. My goal here is to engage with the different registers in which conversations about heritage materials take place, and with the kinds of politics that are revealed.

The central purpose of the research project upon which I based my fieldwork in Sechelt was the digitization of family photograph collections within the shíshálh community, and the collection of narrative memories associated with them. This work had already begun to some degree by the time I arrived on the Sechelt isthmus in the fall of 2011. Steven Feschuk had
already spent hours scanning photographs, slides, and negatives in the tems swiya Museum archives and had made significant headway on the family collection of one community Elder.

At this initial stage, the primary objective was to compile historical photographs for use in the ongoing Rights and Title research being conducted by the shíshálh Nation. The recorded narratives were intended to expand the metadata information about photographs already in the tems swiya Museum’s collection, as well as to bolster the oral history archives in the Nation’s official care. This research was deeply entangled with larger shíshálh claims for the acknowledgment of their Rights and Title as Indigenous peoples, and the various ways oral history, cultural memory, and culture are mobilized in the interest of securing this goal. Archives, whether the mining of existing ones or the production of new ones, are a central component. I will next discuss the shíshálh community’s expectations regarding digital preservation and circulation, as I understood it during my fieldwork. I will then examine how these, at times, heterogeneous and conflicting perspectives both enfold and displace more analogue practices of preservation.

When I arrived in Sechelt, there was already much discussion and action underway concerning the planning and undertaking of various digital heritage projects. At the shíshálh Nation offices, the GIS (Geographic Information Systems) Department was working in tandem with the Rights and Title Department preparing virtual maps of shíshálh traditional territory. This project incorporated information from the locations of ancient village sites, as well as important mineral deposits and timber lots, in the interest of rendering a comprehensive mapping of the territory and all its integrated layers.

Through an agreement with the Canadian telecommunications giant Telus, hours upon hours of videotaped material was being digitized. Similarly, audio material—interviews with
community Elders, cultural events, songs and stories—were being transferred from their original analogue platforms, to digital ones. Researchers in Rights and Title were working with a newly created digital database that incorporated scanned historical documents, photographs, and more—streamlining what amounted to years and years of work in the interest of mounting evidentiary support for potential legal claims. At the same time, ongoing work by community researchers, contracted experts, outside researchers, and archaeologists continued to generate more information about shíshálh occupation of their territory, deep family connections, and the survivance of the people. What can only be described as a digital heritage industry was hard at work.

All the material being generated, either analogue, newly-digital, or “born-digital” (see Hennessy 2012), was, and is, heavily controlled by the Nation’s administration, with access to it determined by department and project. This is not digitization in the interest of open access and sharing—it is, returning to the early observations of Eisenlohr (2004), about increased control of access to and circulation of this material. During my time in Sechelt, no one at the official level was talking about public, or even full community, access. In fact, when I arrived, the tems swiya Museum had recently turned down a large digitization grant from the University of British Columbia because the grant stipulated that the digitized material be accessible to the larger public.

The interests being expressed at the official level were, at this point, directed more towards accumulation than dissemination. On one level, the strict protocols imposed by the Nation’s administration on access to, and circulation of, digital material can be understood as a direct product of their ongoing relationship with the settler Canadian political and legal systems, and the mistrust or apprehensiveness born of that history. Indigenous protectionism of all kinds
emanates from the legacy of misuses and abuses that defines the contemporary juridico-political terrain (see Kramer 2013; Townsend-Gault 2004). In particular, where issues of legal evidence and testimony come into play, the control becomes even stricter. No one, myself included, wanted to jeopardize any potential legal interests the Nation might pursue. Thus, the desire, at the administrative level, to exert and maintain complete control over heritage materials is a reflection of the importance of those materials to the interests of, among other things, shishálh Rights and Title, and the perceived potential harm that could arise if those materials were to fall into the wrong hands.

On another level, the control of digitized material serves the interests of extending shishálh cultural sovereignty into new areas. For shishálh community members, access to the digital photograph collections is theoretically open. All the material contained in the tẹms swiya database is there to be used, although its use is facilitated by the tẹms swiya Museum. However, follow-up research is required to better assess how the collections are actually being used by community members.

Throughout my fieldwork, whenever there was a discussion about where to put, and what do with, the photographic material being digitized, there was an expressed concern by the administration that complete public access to this material would result in, or help to facilitate, its theft. The fact that a digital photographic image can be so easily copied or saved from the Internet, something people now do all the time, is an immense problem when issues of cultural and intellectual property are at stake. Community access to digitized photographs is one thing; completely open outsider access is another. This emphasis on control is not to imply that the larger shishálh community, or the Band administration, is against the digital sharing of
photographs and other material with the outside world, they just want that sharing to be conducted on their own terms—whatever those might be at any given juncture.

The perspectives that influence the protocols imposed on digital heritage at any point in time must be understood as dynamic and contextual. When I was doing my fieldwork, the control and protection of preserved materials was a central objective. These strictures might very well shift in the future towards a more open-sharing style of heritage management. In fact, the recently revamped shíshálh Nation website contains 16 digital images produced through the project for public access, under the heading “Our Ancestors. Our Heritage.” These images contain basic (and limited) captions regarding content and are watermarked with the Nation’s double-headed eagle logo, which has become something of a corporate brand.

This is not the only completely public digital space supported by the shíshálh Nation. Recently, the Band has initiated several Internet-based projects in the interest of sharing shíshálh culture with a more global audience. Former Chief Councillor Calvin Craigan, during his tenure, maintained an active Twitter account, which he used to both disseminate pertinent information about community events and happenings, as well as to make larger political statements about shíshálh sovereignty and larger affairs in Canadian/Indigenous relations.

The shíshálh Nation has also developed a YouTube-based program called “Voices of shíshálh,” that was hosted by Craigan. All the episodes are also available on the Nation’s official website and broadcast on Coast TV, the Sunshine Coast’s local television network. Each half-hour program is filmed in the Nation’s longhouse and features Craigan interviewing guests on particular political and cultural issues. Interestingly, “Voices of shíshálh” references the title of a former community newspaper, the show becoming its digital counterpart. Hence, the YouTube show extends this analogue media into a virtual space.
To date, guests have included then Liberal Party leader, Justin Trudeau (now Prime Minister of Canada), BC premier Christy Clarke, and actress Jane Fonda. As stated on the Nation’s website, “The issues are hard hitting and the questions are focused on First Nations and the role they will play as the future of Canada is being shaped politically in this century” (*shíshálh* Nation 2016). An assortment of other short videos hosted on the Nation’s website tell the history of the *shíshálh* Nation, address important political concerns impacting the community, cover cultural events and practices, and engage with broader geopolitical issues in a local context.

Finally, and most recently, the *shíshálh* Nation, in collaboration with the Canadian Museum of History and the University of Toronto, participated in a ground-breaking exhibition of digitally reconstructed ancient ancestral remains. It was launched on July 1, 2017 at the Canadian Museum of History, with a secondary exhibit being constructed for the *tens swiya* Museum, which has yet to open. The exhibit features the digital faces of five *shíshálh* ancestors—an adult man and woman, two teenage boys, and an infant—whose remains have been dated as approximately 4000 years old. These remains were discovered in 2013 by archaeologists from the University of Toronto, working in collaboration with community researchers.

At the time of the exhibit’s opening, Chief Councilor Warren Paull proclaimed, “To look back on some of our people that existed within our territory 4000 years ago, and to be in close proximity of their images — it's a humbling experience…. I see cousins. I see family.” This statement shares an interesting correspondence with the feelings expressed by *shíshálh* when they look through old photographs. Mark O’Neil, President and CEO of the Canadian Museum of History, emphasized the importance of collaboration, noting, “We've been able to work with
the community’s descendants to make sure that we have conserved and presented, interpreted the story of this family properly” (Canadian Museum of History 2017).

These digital projects all share a distinctly public focus. While perhaps continuing the public cultural work done by shíshálh Elders like Gilbert Joe over two decades earlier (see Chapter Two), these recent forays into public digital culture, alongside other projects that apply digital technologies to a host of heritage-related matters (GIS territory mapping, D-stretch imaging on archaeological sites, and so on) are indicative of shíshálh cultural dynamism, as well as a broader emergent digital indigeneity.

Through various platforms, shíshálh peoples, and other Indigenous communities, are making themselves visible to new audiences and publics, in new spaces of interaction. The political nuances of these new “tactics of revelation” (Taussig 1999) are important for anthropology to consider. In embracing digital technology, shíshálh political and cultural leaders are at once creating new contact zones (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991), while simultaneously dictating the terms of engagement by exercising control of the mediation. This is a different type of engagement, a new position of in/visibility that puts control in the hands of those formerly erased or obfuscated.

Indigenous mediations must be understood as a distinct, tactical, mobilized form of “talking back” that represents increasing Indigenous efforts to incorporate media on their own terms, at the local level (Ginsburg 1994). Destabilizing the technological/representational hegemony in which Indigenous media is rooted is itself part of the process of distinction. Following Ginsburg, attention must be paid to the tensions and negotiation inherent in mediation and its direct connection with the larger concerns of indigeneity itself. Thus, Indigenous media
production, rather than being regarded as an end product of identity representation, is itself part of the ongoing process of identity construction, ever-emergent, that must seek to address a multitude of interests.

On the Sechelt isthmus and elsewhere, these emergent forms of representation collide with older ones. I will return to a discussion of photographic digitization and circulation shortly. First, however, I want to examine ideas of ownership and property, and the multiplicity of understandings this incorporates, that are important for understanding issues that emerge with, and through, digital projects. I examine these through a return to family and the spectre of fire.

On Families and Fire: Photographs and/as Property

Fire is a powerful force in the shíshálh community. It both takes away and cleanses. It marks, chronologically and spatially, the comings and goings of peoples, places, things, and knowledge. Sitting around a family table one day with a group of siblings, now community Elders, a photograph of one of the Catholic churches burning came up in our discussion. At least two churches have burned down on the Band Lands since the arrival of missionaries in the 1860s. “I’ll never forget the sound the church bell made when it came crashing down,” one said. Looking at the photograph, I could almost hear it. This sensory relationship to a particular image is interesting. Very rarely do photographs evoke memories of sound by themselves. In this case, there was no memory of seeing the bell fall—only the sound it made and the presence of fire. The discussion then turned to another story of fire, a story about one of the other siblings accidentally setting fire to the family’s seasonal home at ts’umay. No one talked about the church again, but fire remained a theme.
Like this family, many others have stories about fire. Stories of family homes being destroyed by fire are prominent in the community, an unfortunate feature shíshálh people share with many Indigenous communities in the area, a direct result of the under-funded state-controlled housing conditions on Reserves. In these instances, fire is a source of immense loss. Fire consumes treasured belongings and, sometimes, the memories attached to them. At its worst, fire takes away people.

Photographs have an interesting relationship to fire, as it is sometimes cited by people as a reason they do not have any old family photographs. Many family albums, it seems, have been “lost in a fire” at one point or another. This became such a recurring explanation during my fieldwork that I began to wonder if “fire” had become metaphorically synonymous with other
kinds of disappearances or destructions. I am reminded of Jennifer Kramer’s (2006) discussion of theft among Nuxalk community members in Bella Coola, BC and the various ways particular kinds of disappearances are culturally negotiated. Perhaps, in some cases, “fire” stands for more than the consuming force of actual flames and smoke.

Accusations of theft, either directly or indirectly, with regard to photographs and other precious things do occur. I heard from several people about how many of their family’s photographs had disappeared over the years. As one community member put it in reference to missing photographs, “Yeah, it’s like that…We know where they are but….” she trailed off. Similarly, recall the story from Chapter Three where photographs lent to a family friend were never returned. Even the tems swiya Museum has had numerous photographs go missing from the back room. In fact, this was one of the driving forces of the digitization project that facilitated my research and presence in the shíshálh community. The museum and its overseers, at both a curatorial and administrative level, wanted to develop a digital database collection for community use and photograph preservation. In doing so, community members could view and get copies of digitized material without needing access to the actual photograph from the museum’s archive, thus ensuring the safety of the physical archives.

This is not to imply that the director and curators of the tems swiya Museum were, or are, distrustful of community members, but previous experiences of losing archival material (and displayed objects) has prompted a move towards increased forms of protection, as well as new avenues of preservation. Fear of theft is also a driving factor in some people’s reluctance to share their photographs with others, sometimes even with other family members. Steven knew this quite well. Often, he would bypass a potential project participant, knowing that they would be reluctant, if not outright opposed, to sharing their photographs with anyone. While always
unfortunate, these particular moments emphasized, again, the deep importance of photographs to people, even to the point of accusations of stinginess.

These moments also raise questions about the relationship between photographs and understandings of property. In *shíshálh* territory, it seems that photographs intersect with every type of property ownership found in the contemporary Coast Salish world (Suttles 1987). They can be individually owned, family owned, or community owned, and, oftentimes, all three simultaneously. Within these multiple intersecting regimes of ownership, family is the one most invoked, particularly when a certain family member is seen to be hoarding photographs as personal or individual property. There are often different opinions about the ownership of photographs. The next section provides an interesting example of a photographic property claim that I argue incorporates both the memorial and material aspects of photographs examined in the two previous chapters, as well as the ever-present effort to “know one’s history,” provide advice, and preserve knowledge.

“Property of the Sechelt Indian Band, Donated by Sarah Baptiste”

Suttles’ (1987) discussion of knowledge and advice in the Coast Salish world, examined in Chapter Four, also provides an ethnohistorical perspective on the relationship between regimes of property ownership and corresponding social status. As Suttles argues, in the Coast Salish world, private property, often understood in terms of knowledge or “advice,” as well as other forms of intangible property, remains a key marker of upper-class standing. Those without access to various kinds of private property, those who have “lost their history,” are considered to be less-than-moral persons and, therefore, of a lower social standing. It becomes clear that contemporary articulations of ownership, of both tangible and intangible property, must be
considered in relation to the status they provide the individual owner, or property-owning family. In a place like Sechelt, where family is everything, while some people might consider photographs to be personal possessions, they are always embedded within the matrix of family, and thus always family property to someone.

At the beginning of my research in *shishálh* territory, I came across a number of photographs in the *tems swiya* Museum’s archival collection that I had seen before. These photographs were a few of the many retrieved from other archives. They were copies of photographs held in the collections of the City of Vancouver Archives and the Province British Columbia Archives in Victoria, BC. Turning them over, I noticed that in the process of becoming part of the *tems swiya* Museum’s archive, these photographs had been inscribed with a clear provenance. On each photograph, in now-fading ink, was a hand-written acknowledgement, “donated by Sarah Baptiste,” and an authoritative stamp “Property of Sechelt Indian Band.” The “donated by” seems to have been added later as it’s in a different ink and written with a different hand, indicating that, at one point, Sarah Baptiste had attached her name to these photographs while they were still in her care, perhaps as a way to prevent their possible theft or loss.
What exactly is represented here in terms of intersecting ideas of ownership and the inherent reproducibility of the photographic object? Generally, photographs, especially in the West, are originally considered to be the property of their maker. They are “taken” things, possessions. It is this inherent violence of photography that so troubled Susan Sontag (1977), and it is the looming legacy of this violence that is problematic in Western photographs of the cultural Other (Faris 1996; Lutz and Collins 1993; Tsinhnahjinnie 2003). When, and if, entered into the archive, they fall under the control of an institution, as indicated by the stamp on the back of the photograph under discussion. At this point, they become either public domain or institutional property. This is the standard trajectory and biographical career of the archival photograph.

When copies are produced for individuals, as in the case of the Sarah Baptiste photos, they take on a dual identity. The “original” remains the property of the source institution. While the copy becomes the property of the individual (or another institution) who requested it, the
circulation of the image is often controlled by, or sutured to, a source institution through copyright law. In shíshálh territory, individual ownership is always negotiated through the power of family. This raises some important questions. What, in fact, was donated by Sarah Baptiste (and the Baptiste family), that is now the property of the Sechelt Indian Band? The actual 8 x10 piece of photographic paper, or something else altogether?

An intersection becomes apparent here. Upon donating a selection of her photograph collection to the tems swiya Museum, Sarah Baptiste was, in a sense, making them community property, while simultaneously maintaining her symbolic ownership of the objects as donor and steward. The photographs were re-institutionalized under the larger auspices of the shíshálh Nation (here Sechelt Indian Band, its former official name). Thus, these particular photographs were simultaneously enfolded in multiple regimes of ownership—at once institutional, personal, family, and community (and National) property.

This act of donation was at the centre of the larger digitization project Steven and I conducted. Participants were digitally gifting and sharing their collections with the larger community in the interest of their preservation and continued use. The digital copies produced during this project were communal, the originals remained with their stewards. Again, multiple regimes of ownership emerge. This is not necessarily an uncommon feature on the Indigenous Northwest Coast of North America, and elsewhere, where numerous forms of tangible and intangible property oscillate between, or exist simultaneously, within multiple regimes of ownership (Christen 2009; Hennessy 2010; Kramer 2006, 2013). It is this unique simultaneity, born of multiplicity, of the photographic object, and how that plays out in the shíshálh world, that intrigues me here.
In her discussion of cultural property and digital heritage-making with the Doig River First Nation, Kate Hennessy (2010) invokes Walter Benjamin’s (1968) discussion of the “aura” of the original in relation to the existence, or power, of the copy. Hennessy uses Benjamin and his critics to re-conceptualize this relationship as it emerged in the production of digital heritage for the Virtual Museum of Canada exhibition “Dane-Wajich – Dane-zaa Stories and Songs: Dreamers and the Land” (Doig River First Nation 2007). Hennessy’s analysis questions Benjamin’s conception of the aura of the original and indicates that the reproduction or copy can itself become equally, if not more, powerful in certain circumstances. I concur that a similar situation is occurring with the digital copies of photographs in shíshálh territory. Copies take on lives of their own, sometimes lives far removed from that of the original. Their biographies are thus equally important. This transfer or multiplicity of aura is not solely reserved for photographs, but other objects of cultural significance as well.

In a non-photographic example, a copy of the ancient stone carving “Our Grieving Mother” (see Chapter Four) was produced for the shíshálh community by the Museum of Vancouver (MOV) in the 1980s. The copy was intended to stand in for the original in the tems swiya Museum’s collection, while the MOV maintained control of the original. Community members, I was told, revered the copy, an almost perfect replica, as if it was the original. While knowing full well that it was a reproduction, the cultural significance of the object was apparently seamlessly transferred onto its surrogate. In an act of Taussigian (1993) mimesis, much like that described in Chapter Four, the duplication became “Our Grieving Mother” (then known as the “Sechelt Image”). This all changed in 2010 with the return of the actual carving. The once-sacred reproduction was summarily removed to the back room tems swiya Museum.
After a few weeks, it was loaded into an archaeologist’s SUV and driven over to Vancouver and returned to the MOV, where it now stands in for the reclaimed original.

Returning to Sarah Baptiste’s donated photographs and what, exactly, is “property” here, there is certainly an argument to be made that the object does not solely constitute “property.” The particular knowledges that animate the object, the advice it bears, are also property. As I have argued here, photographs are both memorial and material assemblages. This is, in many cases, a matter of private or personal knowledge, and more collective cultural memories that are shaped by a history of shared experience—living on a tiny rock island, hunting mountain goats, travels on land and water, the impacts of missionization and colonialism, the celebration of deceased loved ones and ancestors. While individuals might remember these particular events in different ways or for different reasons, they form elements of a community’s oral history and historical consciousness, and provide a shared background for individual recollections. Both were being represented in the dual claims to ownership of the Baptiste photos.

Preserving these entangled kinds of property, or advice—the personal and communal, the tangible and intangible—in the understanding that without them, the photograph collections that were being digitized were essentially incomplete, became a second goal of the project. Steven’s poignant observation that “often photographs are passed down, but the stories that go with them are not” became an impetus for our research. This was continually reiterated by project participants who saw the necessity of preserving both the photographs and the stories for future use within the community. Photographs and stories in shíshálh territory always work in tandem as co-animators, and there are many stories to be told with and by any one photograph. The digital recording of these connected elements, photographs as .TIFF images and stories as .mp3
files, allows for new, emergent contexts of engagement and activation through both process and practice. It is with one of these moments that I end this chapter.

Performing Digital Objects, Slideshows, and Preserving Pictures’ Stories—Reflections on a Community “Photo Night”

There were many occasions where, even with the absence of actual photographic objects, digital surrogates became equally social things. As mentioned earlier, the majority of photo-elicitation sessions we conducted were done with groups of people, usually family members. While most of these sessions were dominated by the circulation of physical photographs, there were many times when photographs were shown on my computer, usually plugged into a participant’s television. On several occasions, we presented our research to even larger groups. These community sessions provided an incredible social atmosphere where community members of all ages could come together and discuss photographs, share stories, and contribute knowledge to the project (and projection), all under the glow of a digital image on a wall or screen.

One such session was held in the Elders boardroom at the shishálh Nation’s Health and Wellness building. About 30 community members came to the event. They ranged in age from about mid-30s to some of the oldest community Elders. I remember feeling nervous when the event began. This was the first large community event we had put together as part of the project. The main purpose of the evening was to introduce the research to community members and to show a selection of the material already collected and digitized. We also hoped that this event would encourage other community members to share their collections.
Steven and I began by introducing the project, and I followed with an explanation of who I was, why I was in the community, and why I was interested in working on this research. It certainly helped that there were already many familiar faces in the audience who already knew all about what we were doing or were familiar with the photographs we were showing. There were many people, however, that had not seen many of the photographs before, which was very exciting. As soon as the introductions were over and the first image hit the screen, the stories started flowing.

Figure 6-3. “Sechelt men in logging ground,” c. 1940. Photographer unknown. Courtesy: *tems swiya* Museum (#10.024).
It is difficult to find an appropriate adjective to describe the boisterous atmosphere in the room as photograph after photograph moved across the screen. Community members talked among themselves, sharing memories, arguing over specific details, working together to try to identify the photographs. Here, even though they were digital, photographs were active in a unique, spontaneous, social event. While they could not be passed from hand to hand, the digital images were nonetheless agentive objects, active participants in numerous conversations. There was laughter and frustration, argument and agreement. The following is an example of the conversation generated by a photograph of men in a logging ground up Jervis Inlet:

- A: So, who is Joe Paul then? Who is he related to?
- B: Doesn’t look like Joe Paul.
- C: I don’t know which family.
- C: Is that Daphne’s father? Is he that Joe Paul?
- B: The one that went to Sliammon
- D: Yeah, these names were done by someone, whoever was in the museum at the time. Had Carrie, Madeline, and Gilbert and maybe one more person all sitting there looking at them. So, like I said, some of the pictures might not be fully correct. So, you guys are saying you’re not sure [on] whether that’s Joe Paul.
- C: It probably is, just wondering what family of Paul’s it is. Everybody knows the others (men in photo). Just ‘cause there are different Joe Paul families aren’t there.
- B: Arthur’s really young there.
- D: That’s what I always hear, how young some of these guys were when they went logging. I’ve heard some of them went logging when they were 14. I’ve heard there were whistle punks.
- C: They were just punks (laughter). No, they were good workers.

- C: Nice lookin’ young men.

- D: I don’t know who told me the story, but someone told the story of how they went whistle punking for the first time and they didn’t know the hand signals and their dad was giving them hand signals up above, and he thought he was just wavin’ so he waved at him!

- E: I worked with Lloyd, Herbie and Flash, they were all out on the riggin, and what they did was grab a piece of wood and throw it up in the air and I’d be way across on the other side of the creek, you know as a whistle punk, and I said, ‘What the hell is that!’ It was three threes to go ahead but I didn’t count ‘em cause all I could see was pieces of wood going up in the air ‘cause they were hiding behind a stump.

- C: You know where they are?

- D: The only information we have on that one is that they’re up in Jervis Inlet but it doesn’t say where.

- C: Big rock.

- B: You can see a house way back there. Some kind of house.

What emerges from this, and other larger events, is a new kind of photographic sociality. In cases such as these, digitized photographs are actually more actively social than their material counterparts. The digitized image, projected in large format onto a screen, allows for multiple viewers to engage with the photograph simultaneously. In this milieu, digitized photographs share much with their slide counterparts and with the cinema.
Anthropologists who discuss the materiality of photography (Edwards and Hart 2004; Wright 2004, 2013; Geismar 2009; Pinney 1997) in many ways reify the agentive power of the singular image-object. There is little to no discussion about the contexts of mass image projection and the ways these encounters can be considered in terms of the material world. The slideshow has escaped anthropological scrutiny, despite it being a key element of fieldwork practice and knowledge dissemination. An anthropological approach to the cultural basis of cinema is perhaps a more appropriate avenue.

I am reminded of formative anthropological discussions of cinema (Hahn 1994; Kulick and Wilson 1994; Larkin 2002). Elizabeth Hahn (1994), Don Kulick and Margaret Wilson (1994), and Brian Larkin (2002) all address important issues of the relationship between audiences and media. For Larkin in Northern Nigeria, cinematic materiality constructs a world of fantasy that allows viewers to transport themselves beyond the space of the screen and theatre, as well as engage in extra-cinematic politics involving the colonial appropriation of urban landscapes. In a Papua New Guinea, Kulick and Wilson observe that audience participation in the cinematic experience, through various performative roles, allows for a re-imagining and re-contextualizing of the image-narrative. In Tonga, Hahn observes that cinema is made meaningful through cultural understandings of participation and performance that long pre-date its arrival as a medium. In these cases, it is the sociality of the context of viewing that provides an initial framework for audience participation. The engagements with media in these contexts is then importantly sociocentric.

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13 Pinney (2003) has made a similar argument for photographic backdrops in India.
Archiving for the Future—From a Photography Complex to a Heritage Complex

As mentioned above, there has been a significant move on the part of the *shíshálh* Nation, over the past two decades, to engage in various archival and preservation projects in the interest of protecting their cultural heritage. These endeavours are widely supported throughout the community. During my fieldwork in *shíshálh* territory, I got the sense that these efforts were all intended to, in some way, exert local control over the circulation and management of various aspects of cultural heritage—from archaeological sites and substance, to photographs and stories—and that these efforts were all part of the larger, ongoing project of *shíshálh* self-determination, cultural sovereignty, and Indigenous rights and title. In this sense, what I have been referring to here as a *shíshálh* photography complex (Hevia 2009) is, in this context, part of a much larger heritage complex currently in progress. This heritage complex, similarly, requires the incorporation and integration of local technologies and knowledge, with those from farther afield.

In other words, while the content and organization of archives, and the material of heritage, reflect local experiences and culturally relevant categories, the overarching structure of the archival model is one that has been, to some degree, imported, much like photography itself, and that apparently works just fine. Its indigenization lies in its local application and purpose. *shíshálh* want their heritage controlled and protected so as to ensure its existence for future generations. To this end, the technologies and strategies implemented in this interest were, and are, widely supported, both within the administration and in the wider community. The *shíshálh* Nation Historical Photograph Digitization and Research Project was, simultaneously, a new digital heritage endeavour, drawing on the incorporation of technologies and knowledge from the world of archival sciences and heritage management, and the continuation of work that has been
going on within families for generations. The transition from family work to a National project requires further exploration.

I have come to think of the photographs digitized and collected during this research as extensions of their material, physical counterparts—not merely copies but “prosthetics” (Baronian 2010). Through digitization, they certainly enter into a different regime of value (Myers 2001) as National heritage, but they are never disconnected from their importance as family belongings. They are, in fact, both at once. For the stewards of family photograph collections and others concerned with their well-being, digitization only increases the good work that photographs can do as bearers of “advice” (Suttles 1987) within the community. This is the ultimate goal: photographs should be used to pass on cultural knowledge to future generations. Digitization allows this to occur while simultaneously allowing family collections to stay intact and secure.

This aspect of digitization must also be understood as a part of a larger perspective on cultural heritage and its management within the community. Returning to my discussion of *shíshálh* identity in Chapter Three, a combined identity between the family and the Nation is always at work. The protection of National heritage is, therefore, simultaneously the protection of family heritage. This does not mean that issues do not arise regarding how to appropriately combine the different levels of value, as indicated by concerns over the incorporation of family collections into the *tems swiya* archives discussed above. By and large, however, the protection of cultural heritage is something that is well-supported by community members of all ages, as it directly reflects their self-governed National identity as a group (see Chapter Two). This has, for several decades, shaped *shíshálh* collaboration with anthropologists, archaeologists, and
historians (see Merchant 2012) and is now shaping their perspectives on the production of digital heritage, both internally and in collaboration with outsiders.

Conclusion

Ethnographers have long observed that the perceived “media imperialism” of the West, a condition continuously predicted by communications scholars, is simply a fallacy. Much attention in anthropology, and beyond, has recently been paid to how various communities are embracing, or even emerging from, the spread of digital technologies (Boellstorff 2008; Miller 2011). Patrick Eisenlohr (2004) contends that digital technologies are always connected to strategic forms of self-representation. Therefore, they not only provide increased “access” (a still-too-common digital myth), but also increased restriction of access. This rendering of the digital incorporates levels of appropriateness around which cultural material should be made available. It also addresses the concern that there are always multiple audiences. Hence, digital domains produce new performative and interactional contexts for culture.

The development and use of digital technologies by Indigenous communities must take into account disparate kinds of audiences and, subsequently, different levels of accessibility. In this example, there was controlled access for outsiders based on the culturally defined appropriateness of the material. Parallel to these concerns is that of the inherent indexical nature of any form of mediated representation (see Prins 2002). shíshálh public digital practices adopt a form of strategic self-objectification in the interests of community self-representation. This indicates that the digital platform does not necessarily overcome issues of control and representation of analogue media. However, it does offer new avenues for exercising potential control situations as Indigenous communities employ digital strategies in the interest of
managing access to and control over community-held cultural patrimony, knowledge, and property, drawing on local protocols to do so (see Christen 2009, 2011; Hennessy 2010; Hennessy et al. 2014; Moore and Hennessy 2006; Ngata, Ngata-Gibson, and Salmond 2012; Rowley 2013).

With regard to photographs, archivist Joanna Sassoon (2004) argues that digitization is a form of “translation” of the original that is a cultural, as well as technological, process (2004, 188-189). In this process, the original materiality, a key element in a photograph’s “social usage” (see Edwards and Hart 2004), is lost, privileging aesthetic image content over object biography (2004, 190-191). Sassoon feels that this has serious implications for how photographs are experienced and the meanings that are constructed for and with them.

It is certainly true that with digitization there is a change in state of the photographic object. However, the Benjamin-like pessimistic rendering of the digital copy as indicating the loss of photographic aura, as expressed by Sassoon, is perhaps an incorrect approach. Evident here is a clear misunderstanding of the digital as somehow immaterial. Certainly, while a photograph can no longer be held in one’s hand, or passed among individuals, new interactive sensory regimes emerge with digital objects. New surfaces (and depths) come into play.

Sassoon seems to position the digitized photograph, the virtual image, at the very end of a continuum from material to immaterial. This conceptual approach leaves little room for the potential of a digital object to actually be, or at least re-emerge, as a material thing, or enter into new assemblages that are only afforded by digitization. For example, a digitized photograph can be reproduced on paper, or a host of other typically non-photographic physical objects—coffee mugs, t-shirts, throw pillows, computer screens, community hall walls, all of which I have seen during my fieldwork. If this seems a little too simplistic, it is only to raise the point that there is
often a finality associated with the digital that does not give full recognition to the myriad relationships between people and (sometimes digital) things in particular contexts of convergent being.

Scholars (see Pink 2012) have pointed out that the interactive terrain between digital technologies and their human counterparts share more with human/object relations than one might think. Haptic engagement is not the sole possession of the physical world alone. It has been noted that the performative gestures involved in scrolling through media, using touch screens, and so on, are not that dissimilar to other kinds of “hands on,” or “real world” interactions (Boellstorf 2008).

The digital artifacts of this project, from moments such as the public photo night, are assemblages of images and recorded stories. In one sense, the two combine to form the controlled archival material desired by the project’s designers at the shíshálh Nation. They are data, information to be preserved for potential future use, with their circulation determined by internal protocols. In another sense, thinking about these digital objects as either photographs or stories forces a separation between them that does not do justice to the very entangled, intra-active (Barad 2007) nature of their existence. This is something altogether different and, ultimately, difficult to pin down in an archive, but it is certainly archival (Taylor 2003).

When large intergenerational groups gather together in shíshálh territory to look at photographs stored on a laptop computer and projected onto a screen, they are enacting transportations and re-imaginings through participatory engagement. These moments and movements are made possible by a shared baseline of cultural memory, oral history, and historical consciousness. Here, forgetting plays as significant a role as remembering. One Elder
expressed frustration during the community photograph night at her lack of ability to recognize the faces in older images: “These are our close relations and I don’t even recognize them!”

There is a productive ambiguity that emerges from this kind of social encounter. Consensus about the details is not really the goal. Rather, it is the lack of consensus that produces some of the most important discussions. The back and forth between people creates a space of negotiation that is tantamount in many ways to the open-endedness of photographic meaning so stressed by contemporary theorists. Furthermore, this form of knowledge production itself extends Coast Salish orality and public performance into new areas. The future of photographs as advice-bearing entities is now dependent upon a whole new context of engagement, and the re-making of older ones, within a distinctly shíshálh sociocultural matrix—a now-digital component of the photography complex.
Chapter Seven: Conclusions

Summary

In this dissertation, I have illustrated the intricate connections and intersections that an attention to an indigenized photography, as not merely an imported and imposed colonial technology, makes evident. In shíshálh territory, photography is a vibrant cultural entity that has its own vernacular existence, albeit influenced and shaped by broader forces. As I reflect on this research project, the products—the digitized photographs and recorded stories—and the process of collecting and recollecting, yielded invaluable insights into the important role played by photography in shíshálh territory.

Through a focus on the photography complex (Hevia 2009), I learned an enormous amount about the consequences of photography for shíshálh cultural memory-work, oral history transmission, and the formation of historical consciousness—for knowing one’s history and giving advice (Suttles 1987). Photography extends the archival power of family as the core unit of knowledge transmission. Even through digitization and community preservation, photographs are first and foremost family things. It is hoped that they will always continue to do the work of presencing families and communicating family knowledge to future generations, expanding the telling and performing of cultural memory in important ways that only photographs can do.

In order to best understand a local “photography complex” (Hevia 2009), I have engaged with the past, present, and possible future of photography among shíshálh people. I have approached photography not simply as images, or as objects, but rather as an intricate knot of technology, history, practice, knowledge, and form. Photographs and photography cannot be separated from the larger material, historical, social, and cultural forces that inform their being. I
do not claim that I have completely untangled the loops of this knot, I offer only a tugging at limited threads.

A central theoretical framework is provided by Webb Keane’s (1994; 2003; 2005) semiotic approach to materiality that seeks to render the interrelationship of words and things (and actions) as a process of signification that marks out domains of meaning. In this way, photographs move beyond their individual visual and physical presence into more affective assemblages (Edwards 2012). Approaching shíshálh photography from this perspective, I argue, allows for repositioning of photography as the ethnographic focus.

There are also historical and material concerns to be addressed. The different “genres” (Strassler 2010) of photographs that exist in shíshálh territory, and the implications each has within a broader history of representation and preservation, contribute to an understanding of the photography complex at work. The types and tropes of photographs—and the relationships involved in their production, circulation, and reception—map out a larger photographic spectrum that has framed shíshálh peoples and places for nearly a century and a half. As well, they begin to trace out the particularities of a local photographic history within the broader contexts of image-making on the Northwest Coast and beyond. This project, however, is not solely historical. Direct attention needs to be paid to a living culture of photography, or the ways through which photography is made alive and active.

I have focused on the presence and power of family in shíshálh territory to uncover the connections between photography and people, as well as to position the family squarely at the interface of material and meaning as brokers of archival power (Carter 2006). As with most things shíshálh, and most things Coast Salish (Miller 1989), family is everything. While it would be a stretch to say that photographs are family, they are certainly familial and familiar. The
archival power of the family presents a way to consider how photographs are managed in much the same way as Coast Salish families have always managed their other resources. The intimate link between photography and “knowing one’s history” (Suttles 1987) firmly anchors photography in *shíshálh* territory to the power of the family as the locus of various kinds of “advice” (Suttles 1987). While advice can take on many forms, I have explored the many ways photography is central to the formation, transmission, and performance of cultural memory.

In examining the complex relationship between photography and narrative cultural memory, I have focused on the relationship between photography and the telling of oral history. In particular, I have examined the ways photographs assist *shíshálh* people in the storying of places on the landscape and waterscapes of their territory, the articulation of integral cultural practices, and the critical re-imagining of the legacies of missionization and Residential Schools.

In examining the relationship between photography and oral history, I do not situate photographs as simply “goads to memory” (Lowenthal 1985, 257), but as active participants in the cultural memory-making practice and performance of oral history (Edwards 2005).

The relationship between photography and the performance of cultural memory also needs to account for the materiality of photographic objects, their “thing power” (Bennett 2010). As things, I have examined the ways through which particular photographs enter into larger material and expressive assemblages, manifesting forms of mimesis and affect in carrying out their work (Stewart 2007; Taussig 1993). In these moments, the performance of photographs embeds them within processes of active knowledge transmission as repertoire (Taylor 2003), and illustrates the transformative agency of their thing power. As things, photographs also occupy spaces that invite interactions of various kinds. *shíshálh* photographic contact zones (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991) extend the affective capabilities of photographs into sometimes-unfamiliar
domains that, even briefly, re-assert a shíshálh presence, and present, in their interactions with others.

Finally, in doing an ethnography of shíshálh photography, it is important to avoid denying the external factors that shape it. While several associated historical contexts are discussed throughout, there are also contemporary issues to navigate. Of particular interest is the movement of photographs through different “regimes of value” (Myers 2001), and the forces that propel these movements. While there are numerous avenues into such a discussion, I have examined the ways in which photographs are transformed from family belongings into community heritage materials through a discussion of the goals and outcomes of the shíshálh Nation Historical Photograph Digitization and Research Project.

Family photograph collections and their stories were collected and recorded in the interest of ensuring their preservation for community use. This signals a shift in value. As community heritage, new frameworks of ownership, access, and control emerge alongside pre-existing familial archival practices. These transformations, particularly afforded by the circulatory potential of the digital format, signal new domains for both an expanded shíshálh cultural sovereignty and new forms of photographic sociality that has important implications for an anthropological consideration of what photographs and, by extension, other forms of visual and material culture, are and do.

**Reflection**

In the summer of 2013, the *tems swiya* Museum re-opened its doors to the public. Along with a newly renovated exhibition space, including a massive monitor on which to play curated slideshows from their now-digital photograph collection, the museum boasted a brand new
digital archival management system on which was stored all the material generated during this project. It was all there. Safe, secure, preserved in pixels and .mp3 files, with access controlled by the museum Director, curator, and staff.

My community advisors and I accomplished just what we set out to do. We digitized family photographs and other community photograph collections—a total of 3625 were digitized. We collected oral historical information. We produced an archive. We tried, where possible, to incorporate local family stewardship models into the organization of the collections. For example, digitized family photograph collections were named by the larger family group rather than by the name of the individual or individuals who cared for them. They were kept separate from the other existing *tems swiya* Museum photographic archives rather than incorporated within them, a decision made to reflect their multivalent ownership. New series numbers were produced and new fonds were created on new digital databases.

The recorded stories—a total of 30 hours of material—the memories photographs give life to, are there too, but separated from their photographs. This is perhaps an inevitable consequence of this style of archival preservation. The information collected is invaluable, and it is hoped by everyone involved in the project that it will be an important repository for community members to use for generations to come. But, when separated from the performative interactions that give these photographs and stories life, something seems to have been missed—a topic powerfully addressed, for example, in Nuxalk filmmaker Banchi Hanuse’s *Cry Rock* (2010). The safeguarding potential of the digital format must, therefore, continue to enhance the possibilities for, and work in tandem with, a living archive, one based more on lived repertoire than formal documentation (see Taylor 2003), one based on the family. For *shíshálh*, there will
always be a need to know one’s history and to share advice. This is what families, and their photographs, have always done, and this is what they will continue to do.
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