Walking the wild coast: territory, belonging and tourism on the West Coast Trail

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation describes the results of ethnographic research on the wilderness tourist attraction known as the West Coast Trail on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. It investigates settler-colonial views of and experiences in a space that is claimed by the Canadian state and is also part of the traditional territories of indigenous peoples. The entanglement of wilderness tourism and settler-colonialism is analyzed in the contemporary Canadian context where, it is argued, Canadian nationalism and indigenous reconciliation are in conflict. Particular attention is paid to the complex ways a space is constructed as wilderness (and therefore a-cultural and a-historical) through both material and representational actions of the settler-colonial state.

The trail is a 75 kilometre backcountry hiking trail managed as the West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. It is co-managed by Parks Canada and the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht First Nations. Fieldwork was conducted from 2013-2014, where the investigator based herself in the settler community of Bamfield and repeatedly hiked the length of the trail interacting with both visitors and locals. Qualitative data was collected through interviews and participant observation with both locals living on and near the trail and hikers recreating in the national park.

This thesis posits that Canadian settler-colonialism venerates not only idealized images of a national landscape but also the active engagement with nature through recreation. It is contended that within this active, corporeal, and material engagement there is potential for challenges to static colonial narratives of wilderness that mask Indigenous territory.
LAY SUMMARY

This dissertation explores how settler-Canadian domestic tourists relate to the territory claimed by the Canadian state and popularly described as wilderness. The researcher lived, hiked, camped, interviewed, shared meals and generally hung out with both visitors and locals on the West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific National Park Reserve on Vancouver Island from 2013-2014, over two hiking seasons. This wilderness tourist attraction crosses the traditional territories of the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht First Nations. The research investigates how and why territory occupied continuously by indigenous peoples for millennia came to be celebrated by Canadians as remote and pristine wilderness. The author contends that wilderness is a problematic label for an area that has a complex human history and remains a distinctly cultural space. It explores the meanings held in Canadian domestic tourism and how contemporary experiences of hikers both complicate and uphold the idea of the trail as wilderness.
PREFACE

Research for this project was conducted from February of 2013 until August of 2014. The primary research method was participant observation, with archival research in the Royal British Columbia Archives, the Port Alberni Museum archives, and the Bamfield Historical Society archives used as a supplementary source. Permissions for this research were granted by the Parks Canada agency, the Huu-ay-aht First Nation, and the Ditidaht First Nation. All research was conducted and analyzed by the author. This research was approved by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board, Certificate H12-03664.

Please note that portions of research and data described in the introduction and chapter 3 were published in "Agency and agendas: Revisiting the roles of the researcher and the researched in ethnographic fieldwork." Anthropologica 59, no. 1 (2017): 145-156, co-authored by Rhiannon Mosher, Jennifer Long and Elisabeth Le. Research and data from Chapters 2 and 3 were published as "‘This isn't Canada, it’s Home’: Re-claiming Colonized Space through the Host-Guest Relationship." Ethnocrats 21, no. 1 (2019).
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Finally, thanks to my friends and family who have put up with me all these years. To my beloved girls, Kaia and Lily, thank you for letting mommy work sometimes. To my husband Mike Lynch, I couldn’t have made it without you.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Janet and Greg Harding. Thanks for all your support emotionally and financially over the years, and thanks for taking me hiking and camping.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I remember as a child flipping through one of my parents’ magazines which featured an article on the West Coast Trail. My prairie-reared eyes were attracted to photographs of lush temperate rainforests and rugged coastlines. One photograph in particular stands out in my memory, that of a woman balancing on a precarious log bridge with a massive backpack on her back. I don't recall exactly how old I was, or which magazine contained the article, but that image of the woman's balancing act in the wilderness stayed with me for years. Go forward about two decades in time, and I am myself a young woman balancing a backpack among the roots and logs of the West Coast Trail on Vancouver Island. As a young adult I developed a passion for hiking and backpacking, with most of my travel fantasies based around some sort of nature-based escape, either abroad or in my own backyard of the Canadian west. I spent the summer breaks of my undergraduate days working in Banff and Yoho National Parks and trekking every trail I could. At the same time as I honed my passion for hiking during the summer, my winters were filled with studying cultural anthropology and post-colonial studies. Although I still loved putting on a pack and hitting the trail, I began to situate my outdoor activities within larger structures of colonial settlement, the profit-driven tourism industry, and the displacement of Indigenous peoples. I began to see that woman balancing the backpack, who was now myself, as neither independent nor alone, but rather as situated in a complex network of history, politics, economics, ecology, of absences and presences that made her trek possible.

The West Coast Trail is a 75-kilometre wilderness route on the southwest coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Located along the Graveyard of the Pacific, the trail was
originally constructed as a lifesaving trail for shipwreck victims and was transformed into a recreation trail in the 1970s as part of the Pierre Trudeau Liberal era expansion of Canadian national parks. The trail attracts approximately eight thousand hikers each season and is considered the holy grail of Canadian backpacking trails. It occupies a sweet spot in wilderness tourism: it is just long enough and remote enough to constitute an adventure, but still accessible enough that thousands can venture out on it each season. It is located within the boundaries of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, the Reserve appellation indicating that the space is First Nations territory and is co-managed with local Indigenous peoples. From 2013-2014 I conducted ethnographic fieldwork both on the trail and in the adjacent villages of Bamfield and Anacla. I lived on and off in Bamfield, using it as my base of operations, but while the trail was open for hiking from May 1 to September 30 I walked its length repeatedly. I also made several prolonged visits at key points along the trail, including Pachena Lightstation, the Tscowis Trail Guardian cabin, and the Knighton family homestead at Qua-ba-diwa. The West Coast Trail traverses the coast between two extant communities on the West Coast of Vancouver Island: Port Renfrew and Bamfield/Anacla. I chose the latter as the base for my fieldwork, primarily because the Huu-ay-aht First Nation were the first to grant me permission to conduct research on their territory. The West Coast Trail begins and ends on Indigenous territory. The southern trailhead adjacent to the community of Port Renfrew is located on the territory of the Pacheedaht First Nation. The northern trailhead is located on Huu-ay-aht hahuuli and territory in Pachena Bay. The story of why some hikers during my

1 I use the qualifier extant as the coast between Bamfield and Port Renfrew is haunted by the lingering presence of past communities, both settler and Indigenous.

2 Hahuuli is the Nuu-chah-nulth term used by the Huu-ay-aht First Nation to refer to their territory. I wish to make note of the term hahuuli early in this dissertation because it is far more encompassing than the colonially imagined boundaries that confined Huu-ay-aht ownership of land to the small spaces of reserves. This topic will be discussed further in Chapter 3.
fieldwork period never experienced the northern trailhead as Indigenous territory is an interesting one, which I will save for Chapter 3.

The West Coast Trail is, for many who hike it, a symbolic journey into a specifically Canadian wilderness. Motivations for hiking the trail are a complex intermingling of patriotic colonialist imaginaries with ecotourist philosophies of finding oneself in nature. Throughout this dissertation I draw on Nelson Graeburn’s classic framing of tourism as a secular pilgrimage. A pioneer in the anthropology of tourism, Graeburn defines tourism as “those structurally-necessary ritualized breaks in routine that define and relieve the ordinary” (1989:23). Graeburn argues that the ritual of going on holiday is a symbolically loaded calendrical marker that separates the profane work state of modern capitalism with the extra-ordinary sacred experience of being on holiday. Inspired by Graeburn, I ask, what can we understand about the production of British Columbia as ‘super-natural’ (to use the catch-phrase of the British Columbia’s provincial tourism board) from analyzing the ways in which domestic tourists ritually engage with the terrain and territory which they also claim, as Canadians, as ‘theirs’? How does a practice like walking over territory, performed at the level of the individual body and yet replicated by thousands, both reproduce and challenge settler-colonial representations of space?

On the west coast of Vancouver Island, the term wilderness ignores a long and complex history of Indigenous environmental interaction, and representations of it as wild space often rest on problematic dualisms between nature/culture, wild/civilized and modern/primitive. This is particularly pertinent in a settler-colonial context where, as Werry discusses regarding the adoption of outdoor recreation in New Zealand, activities like hiking, camping, and boating are “a right and rite of citizenship” (Werry 2011: xxi). Werry argues that tourism is “a component of sovereignty, enabling the young state to consolidate and symbolize its territory, as well as to open it to
intervention, circulation, and inhabitation” by globalizing forces of capitalism (Werry 2011: 5). The construction of certain spaces as wilderness is inescapably rooted in practices, attitudes, and patterns inherited from colonialism and perpetuated through narratives of wilderness exploration (Cronon 1996, Loo 2006, Thorpe 2012). Who is designating a place as wilderness, and thus pre-modern, and why, become important questions. After all, “wilderness does not locate itself, does not name itself…. nor could wilderness venerate itself” (Schama 1995:7).

As several scholars have pointed out, it has been the interests of local Indigenous peoples that are most likely to be ignored, silenced, or collapsed into an ideation of wilderness, where they become part of the local scenery themselves (Bella 1987, Binnema & Niemi 2006). Geographer Bruce Braun argues that notions of pristine or primeval wilderness “posit nature as something that lies outside history, and thereby denies other histories of nature’s occupation and use, specifically those of indigenous peoples” (2002: 12). I drew on the critical work of these scholars as a foundation to begin my fieldwork. At the same time, I suggest that anthropologists, as specialists in understanding the complex micro-interactions between people and places, can add more layers of complexity to the critiques begun largely by geographers and historians. Through prolonged and repeat engagements with both visitors and locals to Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, I found that the representations of the space as wilderness were often in friction (to use Anna Tsing’s term [2011]) with other experiences and narratives. Despite the hegemony of the settler-colonial imagination in shaping how ‘wild’ places are viewed, the intercession of complex indigenous histories and narratives, as well as the interventions of temperamental environmental forces, continuously created dissonance in the simplistic, static narratives imposed from the outside.

This is not an ethnography of Nuu-chah-nulth or Ditidaht peoples. I feel the need to state this explicitly due to the long engagement that anthropology has had in this region. When I first
met with a representative of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation to discuss my request for research permission, the legacies of past anthropologists in the area were immediately clear. The first thing they said to me was, “So you're an anthropologist, eh? I've read Sapir. He got a lot of stuff wrong.” According to representatives that I spoke with, Nuu-chah-nulth and Ditidaht First Nations routinely found themselves approached for permission to conduct ethnographic research several times a year. My research on tourism was an acceptable topic and a welcome relief by people who were accustomed to being regularly interrogated, often in legal settings, about their language, ritual, and what was seen as traditional culture. The need to specify that I was there to study tourism reflected local legacies of past research, as well as larger discussions around the politics of representation. Readers looking for descriptions of the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview can turn to the important, detailed, and insightful works of Nuu-chah-nulth scholars Richard Atleo/Umeek (2007, 2011) and Charlotte Cote (2010). I feel strongly that it is not my place to speak for Nuu-chah-nulth peoples and articulate a particular worldview on their behalf. I take seriously the call from Okanagan scholar Jeannette Armstrong:

Imagine how you as writers from the dominant society might turn over some of the rocks in your own garden for examination. Imagine … courageously questioning and examining the values that allow the de-humanizing of peoples through domination…. Imagine writing in honesty, free from the romantic bias about the courageous “pioneering spirit” of colonialist practice and imperialist process. Imagine interpreting for us your own people’s thinking towards us, instead of interpreting for us, our thinking, our lives, our stories (quoted in Regan 2010: 234–235).

My study of visitor-local relationships to territory does of course incorporate indigenous practices of place-making which include cultural phenomena such as oral storytelling that are associated
with the anthropological canon. However, this research clearly diverges from classic ‘salvage ethnography’ still often associated with anthropology of the Northwest Coast in that I engage with local indigenous peoples through their active relationship with visitors to their territory and adjust my ethnographic gaze to largely focus on settler-Canadian domestic tourists.

I approach the trail as a cultural contact zone (Pratt 2008), with boundaries that may appear clear on maps and other institutional representations yet are far more complicated and porous on the ground. Unlike ‘colonial frontier,’ a contact zone is not:

- grounded within a European expansionist perspective (the frontier is the frontier only with respect to Europe), ‘contact zone’ shifts the center of gravity and the point of view. It invokes the space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect. The term ‘contact’ foregrounds the interactive, improvisational dimensions of imperial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by accounts of conquest and domination told from the invader’s perspective. A “contact” perspective emphasizes how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and ‘travellees’ not in terms of separateness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices, and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt 2008:8).

In directing attention to settler-Canadian culture, I am building on the work of Julia Harrison on Ontario cottage country (2013), Elizabeth Furniss on William's Lake (1999), Richard Handler on Quebec nationalism (1988), and Leslie Robertson on Fernie (2004). In examining the experiences of settler-Canadians like myself, I conceive my study of studying across a contact zone.
I have made some choices in this dissertation to reflect the politics of its contents and the experiences of my research. First, I have intentionally reversed a trope I encountered continuously in written narratives of the trail, where settlers would be either named or referred to by their position, and indigenous peoples would be referred to simply as an ‘Indian’ or ‘native.’ Instead, I admit to strategically homogenizing the hikers I encountered as ‘hikers’ (linking them through a shared cultural practice rather than an ethnic, class or racial identity — more on that in a moment).

As many anthropologists have encountered before, creating anonymity for research participants is difficult in a small place where individuals are easily identifiable by a few details. When referring to particular locals, both settler and Indigenous, I have used their job titles or locations, and in a few cases, their English names. My choice with the hikers was made because, unlike many of the locals I encountered, many if not most of them made their participation in my study contingent on their anonymity (to my surprise, I found middle-class settler-Canadians in particular to be wary of signing a consent form while ‘on vacation’). As well, my interactions with hikers were notably different from those with locals in the range and form they took. During my fieldwork, I got to know the people who lived and worked on the trail over the course of several repeat interactions. In contrast, the hikers I spoke with I typically only encountered once in person (although some of us maintained contact via social media), and these encounters varied greatly in their intimacy. With a few hikers, I hiked the entire length of the trail with them, sharing many deeply personal conversations with them over our hours on the trail. With others, my encounters were brief, a few shared stories around a campfire or talk of trail conditions during a snack break. Overall, I probably

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3 I do not use any of my Huu-ay-aht or Ditidaht participants’ names in Nuu-chah-nulth or Ditidaht, as these were not typically shared or used with settlers such as myself. I know that more and more Indigenous peoples in the territory known as British Columbia are using Indigenous language personal names, but during my fieldwork, none of the Indigenous peoples I worked with used those names in self-referential ways in a tourism context.
interacted with several hundred hikers over the course of my fieldwork, and while acknowledging the diversity of their subjectivities, what connected us and what I focus on in this work is our shared participation in the ironically laborious leisure pursuit of hiking. Therefore, throughout, they are collectively known as the hikers.

In this dissertation, I use the term settler expansively to refer to all non-indigenous Canadian residents who take part in the rituals of domestic tourism I describe. This is a bit of a controversial take on the term, as often the term settler is used to refer to those who trace their ancestry to the original colonizing European nations of the United Kingdom and France. My issue with this limited definition is that it restricts the process of colonialism to the past, and, more importantly, to actions of European imperialism. It is this restrictive definition that former Prime Minister Stephen Harper likely had in mind when he infamously stated in 2009 that “Canada has no history of colonialism” (Llunggren 2009). Instead, I draw on recent scholarship in settler-colonial studies, where the term settler is used to describe “a set of behaviours, as well as a structural location” (Tuck and Yang 2012). According to Patrick Wolfe, “invasion is a structure,” not an event (Wolfe 1999: 163). The Canadian state was not only founded through a process of European imperialism and colonialism, but is fundamentally structured upon the appropriation of land, extraction of resources, and displacement of Indigenous peoples. Verancini notes the following particular characteristics of settler-colonialism:

The successful settler colonies ‘tame’ a variety of wildernesses, end up establishing independent nations, effectively repress, co-opt, and extinguish indigenous alterities, and productively manage ethnic diversity. By the end of this trajectory, they claim to be no longer settler colonial (they are putatively ‘settled’ and ‘postcolonial’ – except that unsettling anxieties remain, and references to a postcolonial condition appear hollow as
soon as indigenous disadvantage is taken into account). Settler colonialism thus covers its tracks and operates towards its self-supersession. In other words, whereas colonialism reinforces the distinction between colony and metropole, settler colonialism erases it…Colonialism reproduces itself, and the freedom and equality of the colonized is forever postponed; settler colonialism, by contrast, extinguishes itself. Settler colonialism justifies its operation on the basis of the expectation of its future demise (Verancini 2011:3).

Settler-colonialism in Canada and in British Columbia is an ongoing process, and is foundational to the Canadian nation-state, and therefore Canadian citizenship is predicated upon participation in the continuing process of settlement.

Therefore, I continuously refer to the domestic tourists in this dissertation as settler-Canadian, with little reference to ethnic identities outside of citizenship. I make this choice to combat the erasure of settler-colonialism from contemporary conceptions of Canadian identity. It is a simplification of the complex subjectivities evoked by the label Canadian for many Canadians of colour, for new immigrants, and those Canadians whose family’s experiences are markedly different from the dominant mythology of historical settlement. Many Canadian citizens are racialized and are marked by their ethnic origins in ways that make assimilating their diverse experiences into the label of ‘newcomer’ or ‘settler’ is very problematic. I have no intention of ignoring or erasing the fact that the Canadian state has also oppressed (and continues to oppress) Canadians of colour or the fraught journeys of forced migrants, refugees, and undocumented workers and that their experiences in outdoor spaces may be different from my own as a white woman. However, in my research, the rites of citizenship (Chapter 2), the rituals of domestic tourism (Chapter 6), and the use of settlement as a means of creating a sense ‘belonging’ to a place (Chapter 2 and 6) are linked to their self-identification as ‘Canadian’ than any other ascribed
identity. Furthermore, I tend to, in keeping with standard ethnographic practice, use the labels which people apply to themselves, and most of the people I spoke with identified, within the particular context of hiking the West Coast Trail, as Canadian. To qualify the testimony of certain participants by noting an estimated identity based on phenotypical characteristics and not the one they attested to (Canadian) would be very problematic. At the same time, it is important to highlight the fact that many Canadian citizens and residents, no matter how proficient they are at paddling canoes or pitching tents, will be continuously beset by the question “where are you from?” and the label ‘Canadian’ evokes an assumed whiteness. I see this tension between the performance of Canadian identity and the dominant ascription of Canadian-ness to white bodies in the context of outdoor recreation as an important subject of future research. 4 Overall, my study is one of contemporary Canadian culture, and as a settler-colonial state, Canadian culture is dominated by attitudes, values, and practices that stem from the process of settlement and colonization. I expand on why I take this stance in Chapter 2 with further evidence on how certain attitudes towards the Canadian environment are cultivated as part of the process of ‘becoming Canadian.’ I recognize the complex, socially constructed, contested, and easily fragmented process of defining race, identity, and even indigeneity. What I hope to do here, rather than reify certain labels, is to depict the way these labels are ever-shifting, and ever-in-process, and how certain labels, like settler-Canadian, are more linked to particular structures and practices, certain forms of engagement with territory marked as wilderness, than individual histories and subjectivities.

At the core of the approaches I use is a wish to blend an exploration of lived experiences

4 I presented a paper addressing the intersection of race, Canadian nationalism and outdoor recreation at the American Anthropological Association and Canadian Anthropological Association joint conference in Vancouver 2019. See also Mackey 2000, Davis 2019.
of place with a study of narratives (both local ‘stories’ and grand narratives) and representations of place. Influenced by Lefebvre’s (1992) approach to the production of space, I see the material realities of place as constantly interacting with both the representations and the lived experiences of place. As much as the West Coast trail is shaped by historical processes of colonialism, the representations of space promoted by the tourism industry, and grand national narratives of wilderness, these are in constant dialogue with affective, immanent, experience of place. The tourism paradigm is one foundationally shaped by modernity, with all its cumbersome dualisms between work and leisure, nature and culture, and self and Other. Tourist ontologies are also produced by the machinations of the capitalist market. The tourist industry’s impetus towards the commodification of experience tends to create simplified narratives rife with binary thinking, easily definable boundaries, and clearly labelled packaging. This does not mean, however, that there is not dissonance within the tourist experience, particularly in the experiences of the domestic tourists I focus on, who often encounter complex negotiations of home, belonging, and community that blur and frustrate attempts at categorization. Anthropologists of tourism such as Bruner (2005), Edensor (2008), Ness (2016), and Picard (2012, 2018) note that although social institutions and representations play an important role in tourist narratives, these are always negotiated through the vector of personal experience. Thus, even though the experiences I discuss and the cultural phenomena I explore are often structured by problematic dualisms of nature/culture and labour/leisure, these experiences, particularly as they take place in the form of a journey, are constantly in process. Picard contends that

collective institutions like sign-worlds, conventionalized gazes, or the liturgical order of tourism rituals certainly supply tourists with a meta-narrative frame leading to and through the journey and providing means to articulate and communicate the journey’s experiences.
Yet…. they are not equivalent, not even in a metaphorical way, to the emotions, transformations and deceptions that define the actual experience of the journey (2018: 46).

As noted previously, prior research on the relationship between colonialism and wilderness has largely focused on how wilderness is represented, rather than experienced. Although I focus on critiques of grand narratives of what I call ‘nature-nationalism,’ settler-colonialism, and wilderness as guiding how hikers interpret their journey along the trail, I also recognize that moments of affect, of uncertainty, of bodily awareness, and of an environment that does not necessarily align with the whims or desires of humans also shape the journey. Furthermore, there are constant imaginative negotiations that must be made when tourists encounter peoples, places, things, environments, and experiences that do not fit preconceived expectations. The cognitive dissonance created by such ‘matter out of place’ is not, I argue, one that’s easily resolved, and the resulting space of uncertainty may also, as I propose in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, create the potential for change.

I found that months of participant observation research hiking the trail forced me to question some of the critiques of wilderness recreation and ecotourism that were at the forefront of my analysis coming into the field. One of the first pieces I read in graduate school was environmental historian William Cronon’s now-classic essay on “The Trouble with Wilderness; or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” (1996). In his analysis of the history of American wilderness idealism, Cronon discusses how a sacralization of the sublime and a nostalgia for the frontier worked to reify wilderness as a place for national renewal. Cronon observed that wilderness is a “profoundly human creation” (1996:69), at the core of which is a “flight from history” (1996:80) that ignores the influence of capitalism and colonialism in forming so-called “wild” places. Cronon’s critique of wilderness was one which I found very “troubling” myself. My best memories from childhood were formed around a campfire, and before returning to graduate school I spent
my summers working in Canadian national parks. In a sense, I took Cronon's critiques to heart, on
a personal level, where I questioned not only the role of wilderness as a central concept in Canadian
settler-colonialism, but my own complicity in the process of bounding nature through my love and
advocacy for national parks. Many of the critiques I studied before going into the field were
inherited from political ecology and environmental history and put forward by historians and
geographers, whose methods tend to confine their analysis to the realm of representation rather
than experience. I went into my fieldsite prepared not only to critique the idealization of wilderness
as an antidote to modernity, but to criticize and even go so far as to condemn the associated cultural
practices of outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism. I am not saying that in retrospect that
these critiques were ill-founded. The concept of wilderness is very much one founded on
problematic colonialist ideas of terra nullius and the frontier. Rather I found that in moving beyond
an analysis of how wilderness was represented into an analysis of how wilderness was experienced
and re-centering myself within my own field of study, the story became more complicated. I do
not seek to disentangle my analysis from critiques that ‘trouble’ wilderness, but rather to add
another layer to them through an analysis of the actual experience of the field, in my case, of
‘escaping’ into wilderness.

As well as studying across a contact zone, I am also “studying sideways” (Hannerz 2006:
24) In this dissertation my voice is central, and the pronoun “I” is perhaps, to some, overused. In
the realm of the social sciences, anthropologists are somewhat of an oddity. Our focus on
participant observation as core method, and the entanglement of self and subject that arises from
this, can be downright unsettling for most academics trained in the analysis of representations of
social phenomena, rather than a personal experience of them. However, I'm sure that I'm not the
first graduate student to return from fieldwork and slowly realize the value in a personal, embodied,
participatory, field experience, one which places the embodied self of the researcher at the centre, grounded within a project, despite all the frustrations and tensions that that may entail. Yet in the writing of the dissertation, it is an unspoken practice within anthropology to downplay the personal outside of the insertion of the occasional anecdote, lest one be critiqued for “navel-gazing.” Throughout my research I encountered the challenge of negotiating between scholarly critique and autoethnographic analysis. As a settler-Canadian hiking enthusiast, I knew when I began my research I would be negotiating between the positions of researcher and researched. However, I found the role strain to be far more complicated than I anticipated. Paradoxically, I was critiquing tourist notions of escape into wilderness, while my own research journey was allowing me to escape the symptoms of mental illness that I faced in everyday life. In understanding myself as part of the ethnographic group under study, I began to recognize my body-self (Sparkes 1996) as a locus for analyzing political and societal phenomena that were integral to my research context. A key methodological question I ask throughout is how does autoethnography complicate the process of Othering the research subject that is often intrinsic to academic study? Does ignoring my own position as someone whose reasons for “being there” are also somewhat escapist render my scholarly critique of the romantic fantasies of tourists disingenuous? I suggest that taking an autoethnographic approach and analyzing the affects of my own break from the everyday realities of living with a mental illness allowed me unique insights into tourist motivations and experiences. It also highlighted the strengths of participant observation as the keystone method of anthropological research, as re-centring myself as embedded in my fieldsite forced me to confront the difference between studying the representation of social practices, and the experience of engaging in those social practices oneself.

Numerous scholars in the social sciences have contributed to the ongoing discussion of the
meaning of place and space as terms for the geographies in which humans live, work, play, move through, and claim (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Casey 1993, 2013, Massey 2005). Here, I draw on the ethnographically grounded perspectives on the multi-locality (Rodman 1992) of places espoused by anthropologists (Kahn 2011, Gordillo 2014, Ness 2016), who emphasize how the layered histories, practices, and materialities that make both space and place are constantly in process and in dialogue with structures of power. In doing so, I use the concepts “landscape,” “terrain,” and “territory” as key terms to designate divergent (yet sometimes overlapping) spatial ontologies that I describe in this dissertation in order to make sense of the West Coast Trail and surrounding geographies.

Although I recognize the multiplicity of conceptions of landscape, for heuristic purposes in this dissertation I use the term landscape to highlight anthropocentric conceptions of space, usually rooted in discourse and visual representation, and connected, as Mitchell has argued to “pseudohistorical myths” intrinsically tied to imperialism (2002:13) and the modern history of tourism. This definition is in keeping with the roots of the term in landscape painting, as well as to the idea of “-scape” as referring to something which emerges from cultural flows (Appadurai 1996). Landscapes develop out of the attempts to represent and frame environments for particular cultural purposes, in this case, for the consumption of tourists. As Mitchell contends, “Landscape is a marketable commodity to be presented and re-presented in ‘packaged tours,’ an object to be purchased, consumed and even brought home in the form of souvenirs such as postcards and photo albums. In its double role as commodity and potent cultural symbol, landscape is the object of fetishistic practices involving the limitless repetition of identical photographs taken on identical spots by tourists with interchangeable emotions” (Mitchell 2002:15).

Terrain is a term I borrow from Gordillo to capture the “processual, shifting materiality
that is inseparable from the flux of the atmosphere” (2018: 53). Terrain is not static or bounded, but rather is made up of muddy pools which dry and fill as they are shaped by both weather and human footprints; it is a term that reflects the way the winds and waves sculpt cliffs and rotting logs blown down from storms create sudden barriers to human paths of transport. It is an evocative term that is intended to convey the immanent, contingent experience of moving through an ever-changing space where the human and non-human become entangled (Ingold 2010). Occasionally I use the term environment as an expansive term for the broad constellations of ecology, geography, climate, human, and non-human relationships that are in keeping with lay understandings of and uses of the term. Environment tends to, at least in the North American context, invoke environmentalism and connotes an implicit nature/culture binary, which limits its usefulness. Terrain, on the other hand, evokes an engagement with non-human forces and materialities that, as I show in Chapter 5, gives a sense of how human movement is conditioned not only by human desires but the multiple trajectories (the ins and outs of tides, the growth of trees, and the tectonic shifts of the earth's plates) of non-human processes.

I use the term “territory” to signify a political relationship of belonging to a place. Geographer Stuart Elden has described territory as a political technology; as a means for “measuring land and controlling terrain” (2010:799). In my case I pay attention to how people belong in a territory they claim as their own. In particular I am drawing on the Nuu-chah-nulth term *hahuuli* that is roughly equivalent to territory, and that emphasizes relationships with both humans and non-humans in a space and over time. Sovereignty is still integral to conception of territory, but as was pointed out to me during the course of my fieldwork by several Huu-ay-aht and Ditidaht people, one does not only own territory, but also belongs to it, and with that belonging come obligations and responsibilities. I could have, perhaps, used the term *hahuuli*, but I am not
certain of my ability as a settler, to do justice to the complex cosmologies intertwined with that term (see Atleo/Umeek 2013 for a discussion of what he terms hahuulism). Rather, I am using the term territory as an intercultural term, one that indicates, in addition to legal sovereignty, the complex, affect-laden and relational aspects of belonging to a place. This version of territory as a place where one belongs is one that I saw not only prominent in Ditidaht and Huu-ay-aht perspectives, but also latent in settler discussions of place. Indeed, as I discuss in Chapters 2 and 6, for some settler-Canadians, hiking in national parks is a means of expressing one’s personal relationship to the national territory imagined as Canada.

These definitions and descriptions of the differential spatial dimensions of the West Coast Trail for space do not fully represent the multiplicity of ways scholars can and have deployed the ideas of landscape, terrain and territory. My goal is to mould them as descriptors to fit the ethnographic context of this research. I use each in turn to indicate specific forms of engagement with space, and with a recognition of the layered meanings encoded in each term. I also use them to play with spatial, temporal, and theoretical orientations. An early (non-anthropologist) reviewer of one chapter commented that I ‘jump around a lot’ both in time and in geo-political scale (nation, province, hahuuli, village, home, body). This shifting of scales is intentional, as I intend to show throughout the connections between each. This is again one of the strengths of anthropology, as the fieldwork process is rife with both an intimacy and a displacement that allows one to oscillate between different lens of macro and micro relations. Furthermore, I intend to show how each of these scales interacts to create layers of place, with some histories hidden and others brought to the forefront. For, as Schama puts it “scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock” (1995:7) and “the memories are not all pastoral picnics” (1995:18). The West Coast Trail and the terrain it crosses has multiple histories, some of which are obscured by settler-
Canadian narratives of wilderness, while others, if one learns how to look, can be revealed through various meanderings through salal, sand and story.

In the first three chapters I focus on ethnographic and historical context, and attempt to tell, at least in part, the complex tale of how the section of the Vancouver Island coast has shifted from the Shipwreck Coast to the West Coast Trail, from trade to tourism, and how this shift is punctuated by frictions between First Nations and settler claims to territory. In the latter Chapters 4 and 5, I grapple with the affective experiences of hiking the trail, in a hope to complicate the relationship between tourist and destination. In the final chapter, I synthesize themes from the previous chapters and bring colonialism together with communitas. I end with an examination of wilderness gardens, with the goal of highlighting the ambiguities of belonging to territory in settler-colonial culture, and also as a means to perhaps open up possibilities for change.

The chapters are loosely associated with the geography of the West Coast Trail from the northern trailhead on Huu-ay-aht hahuuli, through coastal Ditidaht First Nation territory, and then ending on Pacheedaht First Nation territory in the south. Chapter 1 begins with a look at the fragmented and yet overlapping communities of Bamfield and Anacla located at the northern trailhead, with a particular view towards the politics of settlement. Chapter 2 is loosely associated with the section of the West Coast Trail from Pachena Bay to Tscowis, including Pachena Lighthouse and Michigan campground. The third chapter is associated with the large swath of contested territory between Tscowis and Carmanah/Qua-ba-diwa. It is this section of the trail which in many ways best embodies what Pratt (2008) means by the contact zone, as it is filled with the most attractive and scenic places for tourists and also holds the most places marked by, to borrow Fishers famous title (2011) “contact and conflict” between Indigenous peoples and settlers on the trail. The fourth chapter I rather cheekily associate with Walbran Creek, as this is the
southernmost ‘social’ campground on the trail, a popular skinny-dipping spot, and where many of the conversations about hikers’ bodies and gender took place. The fifth chapter on the affects of weather and terrain I associate with the southernmost section of the trail, from Walbran to the southern trailhead on the Pacheedaht First Nation reserve near Port Renfrew. This is the section of the trail, which is most physically difficult to traverse, where most injuries and rescues are needed, and where unpredictable storms have left hikers stranded for days. Finally, for the last chapter I eschew linearity and jump back to the middle of the trail, to Qua-ba-diwa/Carmah and Clo-oose. This is the place on the trail where most hikers and territorial hosts cross paths, where those who come in by boat or helicopter⁵ meet those who hike in, and where I often found myself, after days of hiking through the bush, feasting on fresh tomatoes, snap peas, and freshly caught crab with both those who had been in the area a few days, and those whose families had been in the region for decades, if not centuries. It is the best place to end, not either at the officially designated and tightly controlled trail entries and exits sanctioned by the state, but rather in the middle, where life tends to be rather muddy.

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⁵ Lighthouse keepers are flown in to the lightstations by helicopter by the Canadian Coast Guard. Parks Canada trail crew are also sometimes helicoptered in and helicopters are sometimes used for emergency medical evacuations.
CHAPTER 2: AT THE END OF THE ROAD

I begin my analysis of a wilderness journey with a description of a community. Trails are not, as one hiker put it, “plonked down in the middle of nowhere for no reason.” Rather, they connect places, communities, and destinations. In Ingold’s words, “paths have their stories just as people do” (2016: xvi). In this chapter I will delve into the recent history of the communities at both the ‘end of the road’ and the beginning of the West Coast Trail in order to show the impact of colonial power and the processes of settlement on a place that was conceived as on the edge of empire and continues to be on the wild periphery of the settler-Canadian imagination. Divisions of race and class, and the resultant spatial segregation, creates fragmentation in a small community that mimics larger divisions in Canadian society.

Although most of the journeys I discuss in this dissertation are made on foot or even by boat, I want to begin with not a trail, but a road. An essential thing to know about the area I will call Ban/acla is that it is, quite literally, the end of the road. Perched on the edge of the Pacific, with no other landmasses between the tip of Cape Beale and Japan, it is defined by its geographic location. Its remoteness defines it, and yet so does its connection to national and international routes of travel and communication. It is the last (or the first) stop for many of those who hike the WCT, but it is also the end (or beginning) of other networks of movement of people, things and ideas that connect it to larger social structures and institutions of power. Most travelers enroute to either the beginning or the end of the WCT (depending on the direction of travel) must traverse the infamous “Bamfield Road” named for the very sensible reason that the small community of Bamfield is at the end of it. Driving into the small industrial city of Port Alberni, most visitors seeking Vancouver Island’s west coast will come to a major intersection in the highway and turn right onto Highway 4. This leads to Ucluelet, Tofino and the frontcountry Long Beach Unit of
Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. I remember when I first went to the west coast of Vancouver Island, Highway 4 seemed a treacherous route to my prairie eyes. It had twists, turns, steep curves, the odd hairpin, and was regularly travelled by the dreaded behemoth of British Columbia roads, the logging truck. Getting to Tofino seemed an adventure in itself. Now that I've travelled on the west coast of the Island more extensively, the paved, patrolled, and regularly maintained Highway 4 has revealed itself to be the most easily accessible and tourist friendly route to the coast. If one comes to the same intersection in Port Alberni, and turns left following the sign to Bamfield, a road more characteristic of the west side of the Island becomes your route. The pavement soon ends, and before long you're on a true BC “backroad,” a logging road built and maintained by logging companies rather than the government and therefore repaired (and allowed to fall into disrepair) according to the needs of the forestry industry. When I first headed out to Bamfield, I was warned about the road. I was told that it was easy to get turned around on the poorly signed and haphazardly maintained road, “but don't worry, if you get lost, just follow the power-lines.” The symbolism is fitting, as to get to Bamfield, Anacla, and Pachena Bay you must follow the lines of connection to so-called ‘civilization’ and ‘modernity’ by travelling down forestry roads and following power-lines.

The following chapter is about the production of colonial space in a remote region, where ties to empire and nation may seem tenuous but, like those power-lines, are integral to the communities at the end of them. In many ways, it is infrastructure, or rather the lack of it, that defines common conceptions of wilderness. Remoteness from ‘civilization’ is created by inaccessibility, by the time and difficulty of moving people and goods to and from a space. The

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6 It must be noted that in Bamfield and Anacla, the power often goes out. A strong Pacific storm, like the ones I discuss in Chapter 5 cause regular power outages. I like to think the symbolism is fitting.
oddities and ironies of remoteness in a world that is popularly conceived as getting ‘smaller’ were made apparent to me while conducting my fieldwork on Canada’s ‘edge’. While I was conducting my research for this project, a dear friend’s wedding took place in a suburb of Vancouver, British Columbia. I attended, as did another friend who at the time was based out of Kauai, Hawaii. Even though ‘as the crow flies’ I was geographically closer to Vancouver, in terms of travel time my friend’s journey to the wedding was shorter than my journey from Bamfield. She flew across a vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean, while I took a boat, a bus, a ferry, and then another bus, all within the same Canadian province. Her journey from Kauai traversed vastly more space than mine, but mine still took more time (and bodily effort!). Transport, according to Ingold, is a product of modernity and colonialism. It involves the dissolution of the connection between movement and perception, where instead of experiencing the journey, the traveler “barely skims the surface of the world, if not skipping it entirely, leaving no trace of having passed by or even any recollection of the journey” (Ingold 2016: 81). Air travel, highways, freeways, and railroads all smooth the surface of the earth, reducing the experience of getting there to the use of transport infrastructure, rather than a journey through varied topography. Despite the fact that most people who plan a visit to the Bamfield area, whether to begin a hike of the WCT, study at the Bamfield Marine Science Centre (BMSC) or simply enjoy a day at the beach at beautiful Pachena Bay, plan their visit from the perspective of “transport” (Which road do we take? How many kilometres is it?), the topography of the terrain means that the journey itself becomes part of the experience. I will go into more detail on how the striated nature of the environment creates a ‘moving’ experience of movement in Chapter 5. In this chapter I will describe some of the boundary

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7 Along the lines of David Harvey’s (1992) idea of the time-space compression as characteristic of post-modernity and late capitalism
maintenance and the enclosure that emerges from a Canadian settler-colonial perspective on small communities at the end of the road.

Figure 1 West Coast Trail and Bamfield

2.1 Outposts in the Wilderness

In thinking about the impact of geography on shaping the culture of places imbricated by colonial settlement, I turn to, oddly enough, literary theory, as it was one of the first realms of scholarship to analyze settler-Canadian culture. In the 1960s, literary theorists began to think about how and why Canadian literature was unique. According to famed literary theorist and godfather of Canadian studies Northrop Frye, “Canada began as an obstacle” (2004: 10). It entered the European imagination as a vast landmass blocking the dream of the Northwest Passage and access to Eastern wealth. For Frye, Canadian geography is fundamentally intimidating, full of environmental barriers to be overcome in order to traverse, settle, and gather resources. “Civilization in Canada……has advanced geometrically across the country, throwing down the long parallel lines of the railways, dividing up the farmlands into chessboards of square-mile
sections and concession-line roads” (Frye 2004: 13). The conception of the Canadian state in British Columbia is like that of a loose net, with communities linked by transportation corridors that create a web of civilization across the provincial wilderness. Canada developed as “small and isolated communities [such as the foundational ‘forts’ of the fur trade] surrounded with a physical or psychological ‘frontier,’ separated from one another [and from the centres of colonial power] (Frye 2004: 14).” In Frye's conception of the “garrison mentality”, the unsettled in-between space of wilderness was a source of constant fear. Margaret Atwood also invokes this idea of Canadians as living in constant fear of their environment in Survival (2012 [1972]). A slightly later analysis of Canadian literature by Gaile McGregor suggests that, unlike their American counterparts, for nineteenth and early twentieth century settler-Canadian authors and artists, nature was often viewed as negative, hostile, or as an intimidating void (1985). Like Frye, she invokes the fur trade with the settler “view from the fort” (1985: 3-25) as one of “isolation, vulnerability and entrapment” (1985:5).

Northrop Frye’s, Atwood’s, and McGregor’s writings were part of a larger movement associated with Liberal federalism and the impetus to define Canadian identity; the search for uniquely Canadian arts and literature became part of a nation-building project. In the world of art, the Group of Seven (and on the West Coast, to some extent Emily Carr) became the model for art that could be called both uniquely (and therefore typically) Canadian. Geographer Bruce Braun (2002) and anthropologist Julia Harrison (2013) have discussed how Canadian geography was imagined through Canadian art and artistic representation of nature as a pristine, but also sometimes hostile landscape. I will discuss wilderness iconography and the representation of Canadian nature further in Chapter 2, but first I want to point out how Canada has been shaped and framed by settler journeys (both imagined and real) across the territory claimed by the state.
The material realities of the Canadian environment, *particularly for settlers unfamiliar with and foreign to it*, interacted with the impetus for colonization, and framed Canadian territory in particular ways for settlers.

This perception of settler Canada as built of small communities tenuously linked by an imperial infrastructure that acts as a lifeline to larger ‘civilization’ is an intriguing one. It is also an explicitly colonial one, and in using it, I do so only to describe the relationship between geography and national imagination in the settler-Canadian context. In fact, that is why Frye's conception is so apt: it describes the settler relationship to the national (and imperial) centre of power, and the way settler communities form around and cling to these connections. The analogy of the fur trade fort or “garrison,” a bastion of empire tenuously connected to centres of the power, but for whom this connection is foundational and therefore primary, is one which I found describes, to some degree, the sense of place elucidated by settler-Canadians. It is important to make clear that when I discuss the impact of geography on the way the Canadian nation-state has been imagined, I am doing so from a settler and newcomer perspective. Indigenous geographies have different orientations, political centres, and place-making practices. I will discuss these further on in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 3. Therefore, when I refer to Canada, it is to the nation-state that imposed its political boundaries and structures on Indigenous territory. In conceiving of Canada as a settler-state, it is also important to note that settlement was and is an ongoing process, not a historically bounded period or all-encompassing phenomena. Alongside the formation--both imaginatively and in the geopolitical sense--of Canada as a nation-state, there were and are also Indigenous place-making practices that resist the state-making process of colonial settlement. Some of these will be discussed further in Chapter 3.
Travel across Canada was for settlers foundationally linked to overcoming the obstacles nature had set forth, and, if not necessarily taming it, at least achieving conquest by finding a way through. The latter is particularly relevant in British Columbia where topographic features such as mountains, glaciers, and fjords prevented the all-out transformation of the environment into a tamed pastoral ideal. Rather, finding a way through, whether it be through the ‘discovery’ of mountain passes through the Rockies or tunneling the Coquihalla highway directly into the mountain’s belly, became linked to territorial occupation. At first, the transportation lines were the curved and temperamental lines of rivers, coastlines, and currents. These changed with the rhythm of the seasons and topographic features such as waterfalls, rapids, sandbanks, and reefs, as well as weather conditions all played a part in the complex negotiation between technology, physical ability, and environmental conditions that allowed for safe passage across continuously varying terrain. However, in the twentieth century asphalt roads, railways and airport runways allowed for both the state and capitalist enterprise to direct flows of people and goods reliably and consistently without the same degree of consideration paid towards environmental conditions. Thus, lines of connection between places began to be drawn more according to state decisions to accommodate modern transport infrastructure. Paths between places were no longer made because of the multiple footsteps of people and animals over generations but were now surveyed and paved based on the calculated decisions and desires of state actors. The politics of settler-colonial state planning decided which communities were welcomed into modernity and which remained on the frontier or immersed in the wilderness.

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8 Canadian transport infrastructure can never really be used consistently without some negotiation with environmental forces. Most residents in this country have experienced being ‘fogged in’ or ‘snowed in’ and felt the discomfort of being ‘stuck’ in place when environmental conditions prevent the normative use of transportation infrastructure.
The dominant perception of space on Vancouver Island, as with many places in mountainous British Columbia, is one of beads on a string, or as Ingold would put it, a dotted line joined up rather than woven into a tight meshwork (Ingold 2016). Communities and other places of significance are connected by lines of access and mobility such as roads, rivers, powerlines, and trails, but in between are ‘wild’ spaces, imagined as filled with nature but empty of human significance, other than through the process of resource extraction (most commonly on Vancouver Island, logging). This is a perception that is fostered by the masking of the impact of the logging industry on the terrain. For example, on the one paved road to the coast via Ucluelet and Tofino, which is the major tourist route to the frontcountry section of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, one encounters logging trucks, but very little scenic evidence of logging. Along the highway a buffer of forest is preserved, so that the scarred and deforested landscape is hidden from tourist view and the impression of a vast primeval forest is maintained. These are known in the industry as beauty strips. Earlier on the route to the west coast via Port Alberni (the route splits and one takes either the logging road to Bamfield or the more popular paved highway to Tofino) there lies a very well-used roadside attraction. Cathedral Grove is a stand of old-growth forest, whose preservation was sponsored by the forestry industry. It is an obvious case of the preservation of the few to mask the mass destruction of forested space by the logging industry. Tourists marvel at the massive trees and take that image of primeval grandeur with them as they continue to their destination, ignorant of the fields of stumps that lie beyond the buffer of green surrounding the tourist route.

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9Cathedral Grove is located in MacMillan Provincial Park and refers to a particularly impressive stand of old-growth trees that is also well-positioned along the main east-west highway on Vancouver Island. It was donated by J.R. Macmillan, the well-known titan of the logging industry and the namesake of the provincial park encompassing the grove.
Hikers who travel the Bamfield road to Pachena Bay do not get the same pristine view. The Bamfield Road is an active logging road, and cuts through the space of resource extraction without glossing over the destruction. However, this is, again, space to be ‘passed through.’ Most visitors see this space as a necessary sacrifice, but at least they are going to ‘the park’: the place that has been saved for generations, safe from industry, and a celebration of ‘real’ Canadian space. Yet the park itself is spatially set up as beads upon a string, with campgrounds and lighthouses as garrisons of refuge loosely connected by a ‘lifesaving’ trail that passes through a vast yet undefined wilderness. Hikers are warned not to go off trail, just as they are warned in their approach to the trailhead to follow the power-lines, less they become lost in the tangle of logging roads. but rather, follow the power-lines. They are urged to hold-on to the tenuous line of transport linking them to civilization, for their own safety and survival, in what is imagined to be unmarked, and therefore unnavigable, wild space. Infrastructure acts as a substitute for environmental knowledge and familiarity with terrain (as will be discussed further in Chapter 5), although it is an imperfect lifeline.

2.2 A Maritime Environment

Although this is a dissertation about hiking, I need to take a moment to talk about boats. In Bamfield’s early days as a settler community, “it was all boats you know, all boats and water” (Thompson 1984), and in many ways, this hasn’t changed. The first time I went to Bamfield to scope it out as a potential base for my fieldsite, my journey was a maritime one. Lady Rose Marine Services (named after the previous boat that ran the route) provides passenger ferry service between Port Alberni and Bamfield three times a week on the M/V Frances Barkley. For those like myself without a vehicle, this is the only way to get to Bamfield or the WCT trailhead at Pachena Bay by public transit. It is also the mail boat, the grocery boat, and the general means of shipping
a multitude of sundry goods in and out of the community. It is used with particular frequency by
the residents of West Bamfield who are unconnected by road to the rest of Bamfield and, therefore, to the rest of Vancouver Island. A boat is often a more prized mode of transport than a car. Some of the people I knew in the community lacked a car but possessed multiple modes of maritime transport. In Anacla, ownership of a boat was less common, but that community still, like Bamfield, was one which looked to the sea.

The first time I booked the ferry to Bamfield, I arrived at the Port Alberni harbour to find that the M/V Francis Barkley was in need of repairs. A small open deck cargo boat was running the route instead and regular passenger service was suspended. When I arrived at the office, I told them I was a student going to the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre (true), rather than a tourist taking the ferry as a day trip. Giving me a once-over and deciding that my backpack-toting, hiking boot wearing self could probably hack it, they allowed me to go along on the cargo boat. My first journey to Bamfield was a three-hour cruise up the Alberni inlet perched on boxes of bananas, lettuce, and other foodstuffs, with my backpack precariously crammed between a box containing a lawnmower and one containing some sort of plumbing equipment. The captain warned me we weren’t going to take the usual ‘tourist’ route and stop by the sea lion colony, as the cargo boat was much slower than the Frances Barkley. Instead, our stops were necessary ones: delivering the mail to the even more remote community of Kildonan, dropping off supplies at an unidentified logging camp, and delivering groceries to an island resort that catered to tourists kayaking in the nearby Broken Islands Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. I admit I delighted in my perch amongst the cargo. It was a sunny day, and I felt like I was experiencing a romantic journey from another era, where steamships sailed the coast delivering the mail and various goods to isolated communities, and served as the main, if not the only, connection to the rest of the country. My
naive and romantic nostalgia aside, there is a kernel of hard reality in my experience. When the Bamfield road is closed down due to floods, landslides, or downed trees, Lady Rose Marine Services is quite literally a lifeline for Ban/acla. For example, I know several people who used it to deliver their medical prescriptions from pharmacies in Port Alberni.

Throughout my time in Bamfield, the thrice-weekly horn of the Frances Barkley became a familiar sound. Its arrival was somewhat of a local event, particularly in West Bamfield where residents gathered on the pier to help unload everything from lawnmowers to kitchen tables. Furthermore, in the winter when the pub was closed the ship’s kitchen provided a rare opportunity for Bamfielders to eat out, and I was surprised to see several people line up to order a burger (likely for the sheer novelty of it, as most of people I know in the community are, by necessity, excellent cooks. The potlucks are legendary). In the summer the Frances Barkley also brought visitors, some to stay a few nights at one of the fishing lodges and some to hike the West Coast Trail. The majority were day visitors, often retirees from elsewhere in Canada who had settled on the island (part of the infamous ‘grey wave’ of retirees affecting Island demographics and real estate prices). While the Frances Barkley docked first at West Bamfield, then at East Bamfield, and unloaded its cargo they had an hour to gawk at the quaint attractions of West Bamfield (its boardwalk, public art, and cat village) and maybe buy an ice cream at the West Bamfield general store before departing again for the return journey up the inlet.

One of those most important things I learned from living in Bamfield is how backwards my perspective on the environment, as a visiting hiker, was for locals. Both my movements and my focus on tourism were land-based. But in Bamfield I lived at a Marine Sciences Centre, I was studying a former shipwreck rescue trail, and I lived in a community that had dubbed itself the
“Venice of the West Coast.”10 West Bamfield, the older section of the village that contained the post office, was only accessible by boat. Many older members of the settler community did most of their local travelling by boat. Potlucks, parties, community meetings, and everyday errands were often accomplished by marine transport. To navigate the community, divided as it was by both Bamfield and Grappler inlets, I was faced with a clear conundrum. I was here to study hiking, a form of movement I was very experienced with. But this was a maritime environment and I knew next to nothing about boats. I felt very out of place. I neither owned a boat nor knew much about them. The everyday practice of tying a boat to a dock, more common perhaps than parking a car in this community, was entirely new to me. Despite being shown multiple times by patient instructors, I don’t think I ever got the hang of how to tie a boat properly to a dock, even though the main watercraft I regularly used were old wooden rowboats or relatively straightforward sea kayaks. Part of the etiquette for getting a ride via boat with someone in the village was for the passenger to hop out and tie up the boat to dock. To my embarrassment, I was not very adept at completing this ritual of common courtesy.

A common trope of films or television series that involve some sort of escape from a ship is a shot of a character deftly paddling away in the waves in a stolen rowboat. Once they’ve reached for the oars, their safety is assured, right? This is a myth and a lie. Rowing a rowboat is far from instinctual, and instead needs to be carefully learned. For one thing, a rowboat must be steered in the opposite direction from the one where you look. All my practice learning to canoe at Girl Guide camp was for naught when I first tried to steer a rowboat. Each summer, the BMSC gets a fresh crop of undergraduate university students to take a variety of summer field classes. These students

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10 Due to the local propensity to use boats over other kinds of transport to get around.
are given an orientation in how to steer and tie up two old rowboats which are available for their use. These rowboats are the only free and reliable way to cross Bamfield inlet and explore West Bamfield. West Bamfield being the side of the inlet with a store that stocks fresh-scooped ice cream and craft beer, this was a popular destination. Each May when the students arrived, locals also gathered on the docks to observe the students’ performance of their newly acquired maritime skills. Lined up outside the West Bamfield store in the late afternoon and early evening, when classes had ended and the workday was over, usually with beer in hand (public drinking laws are never enforced in West Bamfield and the boardwalk outside the store serves as the local pub on most days), they gathered to watch the show. The main issue was not getting across the inlet, but rather navigating to the appropriate spot on the dock on the opposite shore. The old rowboats were specifically chosen for student use as it would be quite a difficult task to capsize one, but they also were quite unwieldy. This combined with the new experience of steering backwards meant that more often than not what would be for a local a 5-minute row across the inlet, took new students up to 45 minutes and involved several awkward turns and circling motions. In the summer, with the inlet relatively calm and the weather fine, the spectacle gave a chance for the locals to have a good laugh at the expense of the outsiders, a time-honoured practice in tourist communities. Graduate students, a category which I was lumped into along with the actual marine biology students, had access to canoes and sea kayaks, a fact which saved my dignity on several occasions as it is much easier to dock a kayak than a rowboat.

11 I don’t know the statistics, but I’ve gathered that drinking and boating, particularly as the community is separated by an inlet which must be crossed to return home from parties held on the opposite side from one’s home, has taken several lives in the community over the past few decades.
Furthermore, sport fishing was of far more interest to locals invested in expanding tourism than the hikers I was there to study. At one of the first community meetings I attended I introduced myself as an anthropologist studying tourism. The local Chamber of Commerce expressed interest and invited me to one of their meetings. My first tip-off should have been that my ‘ride’ to the meeting was in a motorboat (the second was that every meeting attendee sported heavy-duty rainboots). I soon caught on that in Bamfield, tourists were people who came to fish, not the hikers I came to interview. Sports fishermen paid to stay at the various lodges in the community during the summer months and were guided by locals in their pursuit of salmon, halibut and tuna. The hikers of the West Coast Trail rarely stayed in the community for more than a day and they often stayed at the cheaper, but, not locally owned at the time, motel rather than the boutique bed & breakfasts and all-inclusive fishing lodges. If they spent any money it was at the East Bamfield store (newly acquired in 2014 by the Huu-ay-aht First Nation). Middle-aged men(primarily) from Alberta, Ontario, or the United States who wanted a fishing holiday were the primary tourist market that the locals wanted to capture. Any hikers who used their facilities were a relatively small by-catch for the local tourism industry.

One of the ways I accessed the West Coast Trail during my research was by boat. This was not commonly available to hikers (although a boat shuttle between the trailheads has been sporadically operated). The experience in travelling closely along the shoreline with locals with intimate knowledge of the coastline was eye-opening and perception changing. It must be noted that landings by maritime craft, as well as the fishing of several species, is banned for many shoreline places in the West Coast Trail Unit. Therefore, most watercraft travelling along this section of the west coast of Vancouver Island do so at a distance. Hikers often spot the distant lights of cruise ships at night and the whites of sailboats during the day, but these craft are far from
shore. This is in stark contrast to the historic importance of the coastline as part of a long north-south Indigenous trade route (McMillan 1999), and during the summer the waters used to be relatively busy with commercial fishing craft catching salmon. Now there are very few boats that come close to shore. The occasional pleasure craft will pull in close to catch some of the famous scenery such as Tsusiaht Falls, but generally between Cape Beale and Port Renfrew the only boats that approach the shoreline are those of the Coast Guard, Trail Guardians, and Indigenous peoples who call Clo-oose and Qua-ba-diwa home (discussed further in Chapter 3). When I traveled the coast not by trail but by the water, I was given a very different perspective of the shoreline. First, the effects of changing tides and seasonal storms made the coast a constantly changing one. To local eyes, this was not a transport corridor but rather a land-water threshold that was constantly being marked by non-human forces of change, and it was important to pay attention to these markers in order to safely pass through. The ocean decided human mobility, not built infrastructure. Secondly, for the locals, both settler and Indigenous, that guided me by boat down the coast, the route was a storied one, full of landmarks that prompted narratives, some that were part of larger Indigenous myth-worlds, others historical, some that held tragedies more personal and recent than the tales of historic shipwrecks that wooed tourists. This view from the sea was a very different one from that of the trail, and from the infrastructure-based settler perspective that dominated the terrestrial experience both of traveling to and along the coast for hikers.

The West Coast Trail, unlike other trails like the nearby Juan De Fuca trail, has only three access points (only two while I was doing my fieldwork, as the Nitinat Narrows access point was not a valid entry point at the time). Hikers can begin their trek at either Gordon River in Port Renfrew on Pacheedaht territory, which is only accessible by a small boat ferry run for this purpose, or at Pachena Bay on Huu-ay-aht territory. When I was conducting my fieldwork one
could only exit, not enter the trail, via Nitinat Narrows and the boat operations of the Edgar family. Now, it is possible to start the trail at Nitinat as well, but only through an officially designated ferry boat run by the Ditidaht First Nation that travels up Nitinat Lake from the village. This means that along the trail’s 75-kilometre length there is only one way in or out of the area open to the general public, via Pachena Bay (which one has to navigate a treacherous logging road to get to). Private boats, including kayaks are not allowed to land on any of its beaches (I have known of kayakers fined for accessing the West Coast Trail). Although hikers will often see helicopters flying up and down the length of the trail and may even see one land and drop off Parks Canada trail maintenance staff or perform a hiker evacuation, private helicopter access is also prohibited on the West Coast Trail Unit. There’s a story in trail mythology that some rich folks once asked if they could take a helicopter to Tsusiaht Falls for a daytrip. Parks Canada denied them permission, to the gratitude of many hikers who do not want to share their experience with wealthy day-trippers. What this means is that the trail is an exclusive space for those who are willing to ‘work for it.’ In Bamfield I met a few locals who when they found out that I was hiking the West Coast Trail said, in a joking manner, that “they had done the West Coast Trail many times.” “By boat”, they would add with a smirk. Boats regularly traveled offshore along this coast but were not permitted to land. Walking the land, for many locals, was something that tourists did.

2.3 Place-names and Porous Boundaries

At the northern trailhead of the West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific Rim National Park are two communities. The term I’m inclined to use to encompass the overlapping settler and Huu-ay-aht villages is not a place-name, but rather a descriptor that attempts to convey the complex relationship between the two communities. I first heard “Ban/acla” used in a digital storytelling workshop presentation in February 2013 at the Bamfield public library. A local woman
passionately described how the two communities of Bamfield and Anacla were intertwined, and how, in the post Maa-nulth treaty era, a “new relationship” between Bamfielders and the Huu-ay-aht First Nation was emerging. Newly arrived in Bamfield myself, I was intrigued by the promise of positive post-treaty settler-indigenous relationships that the term ‘Ban/acla’ seemed to embrace. I heard the term used several times since by community members, but never in an official capacity. I’ve decided to use it in this dissertation to refer to the larger geographic area including Pachena Bay, West and East Bamfield, and Port Desire as a catch-all term for the region. I choose to use it as it captures the reality of a region that is made up of several small communities, which overlap in complex ways and where clear boundaries between communities can be difficult to draw.

Ban/acla is not one community, but several, which overlap and yet retain a degree of autonomy in significant ways. These include: West Bamfield, East Bamfield, South Bamfield (oriented around the Bamfield harbour), Port Desire (located adjacent to East Bamfield on Grappler inlet), and Anacla (on Pachena Bay, and also divided by the Pachena River with the administrative centre and House of Huu-ay-aht separated from the main residential area). I will discuss the twentieth century re-settlement of Anacla by the Huu-ay-aht at the end of this chapter, which resulted in many Huu-ay-aht people moving out of Bamfield proper, thus creating a spatial division between indigenous and settler residences. The cluster of residences known as Bamfield is an unincorporated community named for the area’s first Indian Agent. It has no formal local administration but rather falls under the jurisdiction of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District which includes the city of Port Alberni and the towns of Ucluelet and Tofino. It also includes the

12 The Maa-nulth treaty is a contemporary treaty between the Huu-ay-aht First Nation (as well as several other Nuu-chah-nulth speaking First Nations) and the Canadian federal government and the British Columbia provincial government. It was signed in 2011 and is one of the few “modern” (post-1973) treaties between the Canadian nation-state and Indigenous peoples. It addresses land title, resource use, and other issues of First Nations territorial claim. I will discuss the Maa-nulth treaty in more detail in Chapter 3.
Huu-ay-aht, Yuułuʔiłʔa, Uchucklesaht Tribe Government and Toquaht Nation, all of which are signatories of the 2011 Maa-nulth territory, although the boundaries of the regional district include the traditional territories of ten different First Nations (I will discuss further the difference between colonial and indigenous conceptions of territory in Chapter 3). These incorporated municipalities and First Nations each have their own elected locally governing body. Communities such as Bamfield that are unincorporated are organized by electoral district; Bamfield is designated electoral District A within the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. With no local municipal governance, the administration of bylaws and the upkeep of local infrastructure such as waste and water management are controlled by the Regional District. The system of regional districts is unique to British Columbia in that they allow the provision of local government services to unincorporated municipalities that lie outside the jurisdiction of any municipality. The Bamfield electoral area has an elected Area Director who represents the interests of the electoral area on the Regional District Board of Directors. Each municipality and First Nation also have a representative director on the Regional District Board of Directors. The Huu-ay-aht First Nation are self-administered at Anacla by their elected Council.

The most important community resource shared by Bamfield and Anacla is the school. Prior to the building of the Bamfield Road and the re-settlement of Anacla in the 1970s, the school was located in West Bamfield. Today, it is in East Bamfield, and students who reside in Anacla take the school bus five kilometres down the road to Bamfield each day. The school also houses the regional public library and the Bamfield Historical Society archives. It is the only public place in the community with wi-fi access, and hosts community lunches, meetings, and other events. Many Bamfielders consider the school to be the heart of the community. One of the first things noticeable about the school is that it was built to house a larger student body than is currently in
attendance. Posted on the walls are photos of past classes, and their size dwindles over the years. When I was in Bamfield for the 2013/2014 school year, only 13 children attended the school. The school only teaches children up to Grade 6. After that, children must go two hours away to Port Alberni for schooling. Usually the entire family moves, but if not, children are billeted. Many of the young adults I spoke with who had gone through the move from the small community where no one locked their doors to an urban setting found the transition jarring. A pervasive anxiety that the school would be shut down due to low registration shadowed most conversations about the school, with community members continuously citing its importance in keeping the community together.

Bamfield, as an unincorporated community, has no elected mayor or village council. Instead, there exists a volunteer-based administrative body titled the Bamfield Community Affairs Society (BCAS) that deals with many community concerns and meets monthly. I attended and observed meetings throughout the course of my fieldwork whenever I was not away on the WCT. At the meetings were representatives of the BMSC, the Huu-ay-aht First Nation, the Regional District, and various (often self-appointed) community voluntary leaders. There was clear tension between the representative of the regional district and the de-facto leader of the local council. The latter was a retired academic, while the former was the owner of a new small business and had a young family. This tension represented larger community-wide divisions. Meetings of the BCAS were attended primarily by the older generation, most often retired people who owned property and possessed the funds to retire. Community residents under fifty rarely attended, and none of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation except their designated Bamfield community representative ever attended. Anacala was governed by the elected Huu-ay-aht First Nations council. During one Bamfield Community Affairs meeting in 2013, an incident occurred which highlights another prominent but
under-discussed community tension. The subject of a proposed Community Agreement between Bamfield and Anacla was discussed, loosely based on the 2012 community accord between the Namgis First Nation and the Village of Alert Bay, located on the northeast coast of Vancouver Island. An elderly settler-Canadian attendee protested the creation of a bond with the Huu-ay-aht First Nation: “we don’t know how they run things down there.” The rather amused representative from the Huu-ay-aht replied by noting that their First Nation used democratic elections, unlike the BSAC. The idea that the Indigenous peoples down the road could “run things” more efficiently and democratically than the white folks had never occurred to many Bamfielders, who seemed to rarely reflect on the issue of representation in their ad-hoc volunteer-based system. Bamfield became, for reasons I will discuss further on, a rather racially homogenous community in the late twentieth century with European descended settler-Canadians making up an overwhelming majority of residents. Since the signing of the Maa-nulth Final Agreement in 2011, the Huu-ay-aht have taken a larger role in the economic development of the community. Members of the settler-Canadian community are sometimes taken aback by the role of the Huu-ay-aht in driving community development.13

Class tensions in Bamfield were, particularly in the settler community, often generational tensions. Full-time residents of Bamfield with economic means (i.e. owned a house, boat, and a vehicle) were often over the age of sixty and retired. This tension was heightened by the lack of year-round employment opportunities. An economic reliance on the tourism industry meant that most jobs in Bamfield are seasonal. The largest employer in the community is the BMSC, which

13 The Huu-ay-aht First Nation purchased the east Bamfield community store in 2014. They have also since purchased the east Bamfield dock, the Bamfield motel, and are in the process of developing affordable housing open to non-Huu-ay-aht people in Anacla to counter the high housing costs in Bamfield.
is also seasonal in its operations. A reliance on seasonal employment, which lacks benefits and security, is nothing new in a part of the world where primary resource extraction (logging and fishing) are the main industries. Bamfield is an aging community, with nearly two-thirds of permanent full-time residents over the age of fifty and a median age of 55.9 (Statistics Canada 2012). This is not unusual for either small communities on Vancouver Island or small communities in Canada. However, between the 2006 and 2011 the Statistics Canada census notes that Bamfield lost thirty-eight percent of its total population, dropping from 251 to 155. The dwindling population was a subject often brought up in community gatherings and was a subject of concern for locals.

Bamfield is further divided by a local geography based on the formation of settlements around harbours and landings prior to the construction of the Bamfield Road. One early resident stated, "it was always the store at first that made the centre, then the wharf, then the government dock, then the post office” (Thompson 1984). The oldest settler community is West Bamfield, centred around the government dock at the entrance to the Bamfield inlet. Next to the dock are two community essentials: the Bamfield general store and the post office. The school also was located on this side of the inlet until the 1990s. Yet West Bamfield is only accessible by boat. In fact, the mail is still delivered by boat, three times a week. Therefore, anyone wishing to use the services of Canada Post must have the means to cross the inlet. In the calm waters of summer this is easily done, and students at the BMSC are able to do this with the wooden rowboats mentioned earlier. But in the swells of winter it is no easy feat, as I myself can attest since I, newly arrived in Bamfield, once tried to cross after a February storm. The ability to afford both a car and a boat, and therefore to have unlimited access to both the resources of West Bamfield and the community lifeline of the Bamfield logging road, was a status that not all community members could attain.
Mobility, or rather a lack of it, divided the community along class lines. In 2014 the Huu-ay-aht First Nation purchased the dock and the community store in East Bamfield. Members of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation had ‘their’ store, and ‘their’ beach at Pachena, and rarely went to West Bamfield. The peninsular community is now primarily a settler space, and one that only those with boats can access. There are other reasons for this, primarily the return to Anacla by the Huu-ay-aht in the 1970s, which I will discuss shortly.

2.4 Colonial Beacons

One of the first things most visitors discover when they arrive in Ban/acla is that cell phones don’t work there. The closest cell phone tower is in Ucluelet, across the mouth of Barkley Sound. The power-lines which guide the way along the Bamfield Road are also often taken out by fallen trees and errant branches during the frequent storms that hit this section of the coast. Power outages are a normal occurrence and can sometimes last days. There is a public internet connection at the school library (open during school hours). Smartphones are basically useless in this context. There is a delicious historical irony in Ban/acla’s twenty-first century isolation from the digital communication networks that are purported to hasten globalization and other tropes of global culture change. Bamfield is the home of the former Canadian Pacific Cable Station, part of the cable line that connected the British empire around the world, the so-called Red Line. The Cable Station at Bamfield connected via marine cable to Tuvalu in the south Pacific. The Cable Station was located on a high point at the end of a peninsula between Bamfield and Grappler Inlets. Due to its remote location, cable operators were usually imported from the educated British middle class. As males, they were not expected to have to do laundry, cooking, and other household chores. Servants from the local population were hired to cook and clean. Built in the same style as
the Canadian Pacific Railway hotels, the station possessed grand Victorian architecture reminiscent of other turn-of-the-twentieth century monuments to a growing Canadian nationalism, which, although Canadian, was very focused on Canada’s role as a dominion within the British empire.

In going through oral histories from community elders who lived and worked in Bamfield while the Cable Station was operating, patterns emerged in local attitudes towards the station. Former employees of the cable station nostalgically reminisce about the station as an outpost of civilization and modernity in what was otherwise wild and rugged country. In contrast, local people of working-class backgrounds tended to discuss the marine station with some disdain. They were seen as “uppity,” and there was resentment towards the relatively posh lifestyle, with dances and movies, enjoyed by cable station employees, as compared to the rest of the community. Local community members, even those who worked on the cable station as janitors or cooks, needed an invitation by a cable station operator to attend any of the events. Race was also a dividing factor. All the upper level employees were either British or Anglo-Canadian, while many of the cooks and servants at the cable station were from a First Nations or Chinese background.

Historically, the main sources of employment in the region have been centred on logging and fishing. As these industries have declined in economic importance tourism has been touted as the economic saviour for Bamfield and other small communities on Canada’s west coast. Currently, the largest local employer is the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre. Parks Canada and the Department of Fisheries both possess offices and storage facilities at the marine centre. The Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre (BMSC) is a non-profit research facility jointly operated by five major Canadian public universities: the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, the University of Calgary, and the University of Alberta. It hosts
a variety of university programs centred around the field school experience and offers a marine biology public education program. It has been operating out of Bamfield for the past forty years and has in multiple ways replaced the Cable Station as a site of both expert knowledge production and settler-colonial power.

During the fieldwork portion of my research I based myself at the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre (BMSC). Locals tended to call it the ‘Station,’ in reference to its previous name before ‘Centre’ replaced ‘Station’ with the former seen as more inclusive of public education programs which the BMSC is increasingly reliant on for income rather than the pure research implied by the term ‘station.’ Station also connotes the BMSC’s previous incarnation as the Marine Telegraph Station. I chose this location due to the affordable accommodation the Marine Centre offered me as a student of a member university, as well as its proximity to the West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. As a side effect of my residing at there, I was able to witness and often participate in various field schools and public education programs offered by the BMSC. I also socialized and lived with public education staff, student researchers, undergraduate field school participants, and others involved with the operating of the Marine Station.

The BMSC prides itself as one of the last bastions for ‘pure’ science. Any framing of scientific research as having social application beyond public education is viewed as veering into the less prestigious realm of applied science. This attitude can be summed up by the following rhetorical statement of one administrator: “why do scientists need to understand the social context?” Along these lines, although there were Indigenous staff members who were asked to act as cultural guides for visiting students and researchers, their work and expertise were not attributed the same value as scientific knowledge. There was one member of the janitorial staff who was an
important Indigenous knowledge keeper who regularly shared their knowledge with BMSC students. Their contributions were viewed as secondary and extraneous and were treated more as an ability to provide ‘local colour’ than expertise in any way equivalent to those of the multiple degree holding scientists. Indigenous territorial ownership was more often presented as an obstacle to research, and the need for seeking permissions to conduct fieldwork on Huu-ay-aht territory being an annoying cause of paperwork. Indigenous placenames were not included on the frequently used station maps. Rather, if a common fieldsite did not possess an anglicized name, the researchers often took it upon themselves to name a geographic feature after a scientific species name (ergo ‘Nudibranch’ point was a popular spot for students to collect research samples). Informal communication and socialization between station employees, residents, and scientists tended to follow class lines. Station space was unofficially divided, with researchers taking their breaks in the cafeteria at the official coffee hour and the kitchen and janitorial staff congregating on the picnic tables behind the cafeteria for a smoke. The wealth of experience and local ecological knowledge held by the locals often went unrecognized due to the overwhelming emphasis on academic credentials among the station researchers.

There has been more discussion in recent years of collaborative research projects with the local Indigenous community emerging from the BMSC. Academic institutions follow a profit-oriented self-interested corporate model, and the rebranding of a research process as collaborative or the use of key phrases of recognition (Coulthard 2014) “sells” in the current Canadian political climate. Some scholars have recognized that many collaborative research projects are more about “making people feel comfortable so ‘we’ can do ‘our’ research” (La Salle 2010) than creating mutually beneficial educational and scientific resources. Furthermore, at the BMSC field schools and public education follow a corporate model where students are ‘cycled through’ a short-term
process. Overall, I admit that I am cynical that contemporary calls for collaboration and reconciliation can overcome the institutionalized power relations and economic inequality that defines the relationship between the “station people” and the locals, particularly as there is such a marked spatial segregation between the two groups.

Bamfield and Grappler inlets are entered from Barkeley Sound to the north, and do not open directly onto the open Pacific. This means that they are somewhat sheltered from winter storms unlike the ‘shipwreck coast’ to the south followed by the WCT. The headland overlooking the entrance to both inlets is occupied by the BMSC, the former Pacific Cable Station. If one is entering the area by boat, the entrance is dominated first by the Victorian architecture of the BMSC on the headland, and then, across the inlet in West Bamfield, by the bright red buildings of the Canadian Coast Guard station. The latter also played a key role in the formation of settler-colonial Bamfield. The Coast Guard station’s predecessor was the Bamfield Lifeboat station. It was moved to the sheltered waters of West Bamfield from Pachena Point in 1908 as part of increased government ‘lifesaving’ efforts on the coast in response to the Valencia tragedy (discussed in Chapter 2). In the early twentieth century where the primary long-distance technology was still the telegraph line, the Banfield lifeboat could be called into action to aid vessels in distress through a wired connection through the forest to another colonial outpost that was actually on the edge of the Pacific, the Cape Beale lighthouse.

There are three fully staffed and operational lighthouses in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The oldest and least visited is on Cape Beale, and I will use it to discuss the role of lighthouses as colonial outposts in this chapter. I will discuss Pachena and Carmanah lighthouses further in Chapters 2, 3 and 6. The lighthouses are both symbolic outposts of the Canadian state and lived and worked in places that have been the homes of diverse families. Although Bamfield
inlet provides the first safe harbour for many kilometres on the west coast, it is ‘around the corner’ on Barkeley Sound. The lighthouse needed to be placed on the outer coast to mark the entrance of Barkeley Sound, and thus the way into Alberni Inlet. Unlike the other two lighthouses on the WCT, Cape Beale was not founded purely for ‘lifesaving’ purposes, but rather to mark the entrance to the Sound. It was a ‘harbour’ light, and thus one of the first lighthouses built along the coast (the second was Carmanah Light, also on the West Coast Trail). In the nineteenth century, Victoria was the busiest British Columbian port. There was a time when, rather than Burrard inlet in Vancouver, this was viewed as a potential major shipping route by colonial officials (Graham 1985: 46). However, due to the “foul ground” (Graham 1985: 46) of the Sound and the difficulties this presented for navigation, this route to Port Alberni fell out of favour as a potential major port.

A surveyor chose the site for the Cape Beale lighthouse in 1872. It took its name from the colonial moniker for the headland it occupied, so named by Captain Barkley in 1781 for a member of his crew (Graham 1985:48). The labour of constructing the lighthouse was done by Huu-ay-aht people, unnamed by the settler-colonial historical record. To quote Graham’s history, “all equipment, including seven tons of lantern and machinery, made their way to the cleared station on the backs of local Indians” (Graham 1985: 48). Subsequent lighthouse keepers were supplied for the next fifty years by bi-annual visits of a coastal steamer (which even then could not always land to re-supply) and, less remarked on but probably more important in terms of survival, through relationships with the Huu-ay-aht, who had a nearby whaling village at what the settlers called Dodgers Cove (Cha’pis in the Nuu-chah-nulth language). I will discuss further the important role that the traditional territorial owners played in supplying settlers on the coast and in much of the actual ‘lifesaving’ work in Chapter 4.
I hiked out to Cape Beale lighthouse on a rainy June day in 2013. The trailhead is located at the end of the south Bamfield road and marked by a Parks Canada sign noting that Cape Beale is part of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The trail diverges after about one kilometre, with one branch continuing on for two relatively flat (but often swampy) kilometres to Keeha beach and the other continuing on first to Tapaltos (a popular beach for local surfers) and then to Cape Beale for a total of six kilometres. From Tapaltos to Cape Beale the trail is very rough, with many mud pits and fallen logs. I hiked it with two students from the BMSC and one of their dogs, and each of us slipped and fell that day, including the typically sure-footed canine. The trail beyond Tapaltos is rarely hiked and therefore rarely maintained. Most visitors to the contemporary lightkeepers travel to Cape Beale by boat, as it’s a relatively short trip from Bamfield harbour and, unlike the other WCT lighthouses, as a small and relatively sheltered bay at the neck of the cape peninsula easily accessed by boat. Still, even by boat, visitors were relatively uncommon for the lightkeepers, and when we arrived wet and bedraggled, we were greeted with a very hospitable welcome of tea and cookies.

The daughter of the second lighthouse keeper at Cape Beale, Frances Morrison, described her childhood at the light in the early twentieth century thus: “It was an ideal life, really. No chance of getting into any mischief or trouble...just lived our life apart from everybody....to live absolutely alone except for the Indians” (Morrison, 1962). This perspective that local Indigenous peoples did not count as civilized companionship was a common one at the time. Life at Cape Beale is still a life apart, but now, with the non-urban Huu-ay-aht living at Anacla, Indigenous peoples are largely absent from the lives of this colonial outpost. Due to the interruption in the park design by the reserve at Anacla, the trail to Cape Beale is little known and rarely hiked. Now at least the
lightkeepers have a reliable wi-fi connection to the outside world (unlike many of the residents of Anacla).

2.5 The Return to Anacla

The term Ban/acla does not emerge from a twenty-first century politics of recognition of Indigenous claims to territory, but rather reflects an older historical reality of more blended settler and Indigenous communities. Going through oral histories of early settler in Bamfield, one of the common threads is that of cultural integration, rather than segregation. Prior to the 1970s, members of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation often lived along Bamfield and Grappler inlets, sharing space with settlers. One settler remarked that in the early twentieth century “we had not children to play with other than the Indian children you know-didn't speak each other’s language, we just made each other understand each other” (Thompson 1984). Again, note the perspective that “Indian children” didn’t fully ‘count’ as companions. At the same time, in some ways the community was less segregated in the early twentieth century than it was when I conducted my fieldwork in 2013. Although many Huu-ay-aht were forced to go to the Port Alberni residential school, others who lived directly in the Bamfield area attended the same community school as settlers. Ironically, in its beginning, Bamfield was a far more multicultural place than it is today, with Huu-ay-aht people, Chinese labourers, and Japanese fishermen,¹⁴ making their homes along its shores.

The Huu-ay-aht also had historic villages on islands on Barkley Sound, on the Cape Beale Peninsula, and at several inlets further up the southern shore of Barkley Sound. Particularly of note is the village of Kiixin on treaty settlement lands between Cape Beale and the Bamfield Peninsula.

¹⁴ Japanese Bamfielders had their property seized and were forcibly relocated to internment camps in the BC interior during World War II. They and their descendants never returned.
Accessible by a short hiking trail, this site is currently being developed by the Huu-ay-aht for cultural tourism. Another important village site, that was remembered but not lived in during the early contact period, was the community of Anacla on Pachena Bay adjacent to the Pachena river and about three kilometres south of the settler community of Bamfield. In the 1970s, the Huu-ay-aht First Nation gathered its members in the Bamfield area and moved en masse to their old village site at Anacla. Today Anacla is also the location of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation government, and where nearly all non-urban Huu-ay-aht reside.

Anacla is not a safe place to live. The Huu-ay-aht know this well. On January 26, 1700 the original village of Anacla was hit by a tsunami caused by a massive earthquake in the Pacific subduction zone. Pachena Bay, unlike Bamfield inlet, opens directly onto the Pacific. With no landmass blocking the wave the village was destroyed, with horrendous loss of life. Family members who were residing at other, sheltered, Huu-ay-aht villages, passed down the oral history of this tragic event. It is important to recognize that indigenous peoples on the Pacific Coast not only had their population decimated by disease brought through Indigenous trade routes prior to settlers, but also by this cataclysmic event. Anacla was one among many coastal villages devastated by the tsunami. Archeological and oral history evidence shows numerous villages along this supposedly wild coast were also devastated by the tsunami (McMillan 1999, Thrush & Ludwin 2007).

Today, the current residents of Anacla are trying to raise funds for a pedestrian bridge linking the village with the headland across the Pachena River, which is high enough to be safe ground in a tsunami. The area directly behind the village is flat and provides no escape. In

15 Captain Cook didn’t arrive on Vancouver Island’s west coast until 1778.
Bamfield, tsunami drills are routine, but aside from the exposed peninsula of West Bamfield, most of the community around the inlet is somewhat sheltered and has simple pedestrian access to higher ground. When I lived there, my residence on the high ground of the BMSC assured me of my safety whenever I heard the weekly drill sirens. Three kilometres away, if another tsunami hits, the village of Anacla is doomed.

So why did the Huu-ay-aht move back to exposed Pachena Bay in the 1970s? The answer can be found on examining a map of the West Coast Trail Unit in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The beginning of the southern section of the National Park is not at the trailhead for the West Coast Trail, but rather encompasses Cape Beale and includes two trails, one to Keeha beach and the other to Tapaltos beach and beyond that to the lighthouse. Cape Beale and these two beaches were included in the initial boundaries of the park because of their historical significance as part of ‘lifesaving’ efforts and their natural beauty (park formation will be discussed further in Chapter 2). The West Coast Trail Unit was, in park planning, to extend to Cape Beale unbroken, and include Pachena Bay and the old village site of Anacla. The Huu-ay-aht did not want their old village site to become part of the park, as they feared being cut off from their ancestral territory. Given the history of the exclusion of aboriginal peoples from national parks throughout the early and mid-twentieth century, their fears were not unfounded (Bella 1988). The best way to assert their claim to Anacla, given the political context of the time, was to re-occupy it. Thus, the remaining Huu-ay-aht moved back to Anacla, creating a spatial segregation from the settler-Canadians of Bamfield. They still shared community resources like the school, but Ban/acla was now two distinct communities, and indigenous and settler space, through the creation of the National Park, was reaffirmed as separate.
This separation remains today even in the use of the beach at Pachena Bay. Settler residents of Bamfield and students of the BMSC tend to use the far southern end of the beach, the tiny patch that encompasses the trailhead for the WCT and is incorporated into the national park. The Huu-ay-aht tend to use ‘their’ beach, based near the village. The Park has its own entrance and parking area separated from the village, while one must go through the reserve (and encounter directly lived-in indigenous space) to enter the Bay from the north end. There is a small patch of trees and grass separating the trailhead area and the campground run by the Huu-ay-aht First Nation. Most hikers park at the National Park Reserve trailhead and never encounter Anacla or have much awareness of its existence. Most students at the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre never go to Anacla, even though they may hold weekly bonfires on the ‘park’ end of the beach.

The local geography of the Bamfield/Anacla area reflects both historical empire-building and ongoing forces of colonialism. Although tourism and science have replaced the primary resource industries of fishing and logging, these industries, like their predecessors, are inherently oriented towards national and international interests, rather than local ones. Bamfield/Anacla continues to be a peripheral space in the settler imagination of British Columbian geography. Both tourism and science largely rely on non-local and non-indigenous interests for their success, and both, in every sense except the material one, are extractive industries that rely on the isolation of resources from the local environment for the consumption of outsiders. This, in turn, produces a space that has been continuously fractured by race and class.

As Gupta and Ferguson argue, and I will discuss further in coming chapters, colonialism does not bring autonomous primeval communities into a larger global network of interconnection, colonialism rather “represents the displacement of one form of interconnection by another” (1997: 36). Huu-ay-aht peoples were, prior to colonization, part of vast Indigenous networks of exchange.
and kinship, facilitated by the maritime and overland routes that created vast long-distance connections. Indeed, during early colonial times, settlers often relied on the mobility of Indigenous peoples to connect communities in areas where colonial infrastructure was still nascent (discussed further in Chapter 3). Colonialism “proceeds first by converting the paths along which life is lived into boundaries in which it is contained, and then by joining up these now enclosed communities, each confined to one spot, into vertically integrated assemblies” (Ingold 2016:3) that make up the nation-state. Transportation and communication infrastructure “reveal forms of political rationality that underlie technological projects, and which give rise to an apparatus of governmentality (Larkin 2013: 328). The creation of parks and reserves in places like the west coast of Vancouver Island, which have a long history of aboriginal occupation, spatially separate and segregate territory into bounded entities of wilderness and settlement, with borders, boundaries, and routes between places being drawn and designated by the Canadian government, not the people who inhabit that territory.

Canadian colonialism was and continues to be a powerful force in shaping the way the space of Ban/Anacla is produced, occupied, and imagined, although there are strong efforts to challenge this. Bamfield continues to be an outpost of the Canadian-state, yet it is also Huu-ay-aht territory. There are material effects, both for the settlers of Bamfield and the Huu-ay-aht of Anacla, of being a community at the ‘end of the road’. But there are also, particularly for settlers (and significantly for tourism, which traffics in imagination and desire), affective components to being spatially placed on the edge of a nation-state and its infrastructure.

Roads and railways [and trails] are not just technical objects then but also operate on the level of fantasy and desire. They encode the dreams of individuals and societies and are the vehicles whereby those fantasies are transmitted and made emotionally
They form us as subjects not just on a technopolitical level but also through this mobilization of affect and the senses of desire, pride, and frustration, feelings which can be deeply political. (Larkin 2013:333)

In the next chapter, I will explore how this paradoxical atmosphere of isolation and connection is integral to a settler-Canadian subjectivity. Nation-building enterprises such as national parks build on this paradox, creating a sense of the Canadian national homeland through an attachment to that, which is by definition, the anti-home: wilderness.
CHAPTER 3 NATURE-NATIONALISM AND THE PILGRIMAGE INTO WILDERNESS

Pachena Bay is probably one of the least wild looking places on the West Coast. The sand is soft, the surf is mild, and the long bay makes it one of the most sheltered places on southwestern Vancouver Island’s typically rugged coastline. The northeastern end of the beach is bounded by the Pachena River as it empties into the ocean. The northern trailhead for the WCT begins at the southwestern end of the beach and is adjacent to the village of Anacla. The mouth of the river provides docking and beach access for the Huu-ay-aht community and is also the location of a park and picnic ground. Continuing south along the beach is the Huu-ay-aht owned and operated Pachena Bay campground. The soft sand and mild, shallow surf of the bay tends to attract local campers from Vancouver Island, despite the rough road access. At the far southern end of the beach, just as the campground ends, an invisible line divides the southern quarter of the beach into Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. This boundary is unmarked, but significant (as discussed in Chapter 1). From here on, Parks Canada rules and regulations apply. Here also lies the northern trailhead of the WCT, which can be accessed by an overland route using a ladder during high tide, or via an easy walk along the beach during low tide. A small parking lot, a map and information board, a picnic table, an outhouse, and a grassy lawn surround the A-frame hut where hikers check-in with Parks staff and listen to the mandatory one-hour orientation on trail safety given thrice daily.

Hikers have the choice, depending on the tide, to start the trail with a series of ladders up and over a headland, or to walk at low tide along the beach for an easier route. If taking the beach route, one can see the ruins of an old linesman’s cabin from the era when the trail hosted a telegraph line. If one looks up into the trees (which one rarely does during a hike) there is evidence of the
old line throughout most of the length of this forested section. From this end of the beach a relatively flat, well-maintained trail with several well-built (one by the Canadian military as part of a training exercise!) bridges winds about ten kilometres to Pachena Lighthouse. This part of the trail is, quite literally, a walk in the park compared to the rest of the Trail and is often done as a day hike to the Coast Guard maintained light station as well as being the beginning or the end of a multi-day wilderness hike.

This chapter is about the official aspects of the territory marked by the Canadian government as the West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve and how one particular story, that of wilderness, has come to dominate the tourist imagination of that space. In this chapter I will explore how the creation of a paradoxical atmosphere of isolation (from the urban, the mundane, and the modern) and connection (to the nation-state, to the wilderness ideal, and to other park visitors who share in the experience) is integral to a settler-Canadian sense of place and foundational to state-sanctioned sites of wilderness tourism. Nation-building enterprises such as national parks build on this paradox, creating a sense of the Canadian ‘homeland’ through an attachment to that, which is by definition, the anti-home: wilderness. The term wilderness refers to land that is an ‘un’ place: uninhabited, uncultivated, unmapped, undiscovered, unclaimed, untouched, and most significantly, unpeopled. In keeping with this the idea of a “national” wilderness is an oxymoron. In Chapter 1 I discussed how the garrison mentality in Canada imagines Canada as a nation of civilized outposts surrounded by wild nature. Thus, wilderness is necessary to the settler-Canadian imagination of a national territory. There must exist a big ‘out there’ to explore, conquer (and pillage), and survive (through recreational tests of endurance like the WCT) for the garrison mentality to proliferate. Settler-Canadian subjectivities are foundationally based in a conception of our national space as wilderness.
Many scholars from Will Cronon (1996) to Jocelyn Thorpe (2012) have critiqued the concept of wilderness and its conceptual foundation in Euro-American/Canadian colonial epistemologies. Although the word itself is older (which I will discuss further in Chapter 5), I contend that the wilderness that figures in the tourist imagination is fundamentally a colonial vision. As Ian Puppe contends, “the Enlightenment opposition of nature and culture, wildness and civility, has left a legacy that shapes the way Canadians imagine themselves” (Puppe 2015: 38). Meta-narratives of pristine wilderness play an important role in the formation of settler-Canadian constructions of territory (Braun 2002, Loo 2007, Mackey 2000). Hugh Raffles suggests that it is wilderness’s very indistinguishability and placelessness that signify its backwardness and pre-modernity (2000:26). Who is designating a place as wilderness, and thus pre-modern, and why, become important questions. As Linda Smith points out, through representations of the wild frontier, “the indigenous world view, the land and the people have been radically transformed in the spatial image of the West. In other words, indigenous space has been colonized” (1999:51). With the conception of wilderness as an ‘un-place,’ there is a necessary erasure of Indigenous peoples, as this is inherently a colonial perspective.

The colonial representation of certain spaces as wilderness is further complicated in settler societies, where along with a mythology of certain spaces as ‘wilderness’, there is an encoded proprietary sentiment. Outdoor recreation in what is conceived of as a ‘national backyard’ is often represented in state and popular discourses as integral to the Canadian experience (Sandilands 2012, Harrison 2013). In the settler-colonial states, national parks are envisioned as places for citizens to connect to a natural environment that is designated as being of national significance. Often these are places that are perceived both as pristine and as representative of a particular ecological type significant within the national imaginary. I argue that in Canada, wilderness is not
so much a place, but is discursively represented as an idealized landscape disconnected from the complex histories and materialities that, as Casey as described, make spaces into places (Casey 1993). Wilderness is not only conceived as people-less, but place-less, a conception of amorphous nature where mountains, beaches, and forests are beautiful, and yet indistinguishable from one another as they are decontextualized from routes and roots that render them significant markers of place. Stock photos of iconic wilderness destinations are used as icons for Canadian ‘nature,’ but are effectively disconnected from their territories of origin. Wilderness areas of parks are particularly valued as ‘untouched.’ As Sandilands points out in her study of Cape Breton Highlands National Park:

> the good part of the park is that which escapes history…. the careful visitor can re-experience the timeless national essence, the sensation of encountering a pristine, white and original national landscape, so long as she or he leaves behind the domestic park (Sandilands 20012: 151).

In many ways, wilderness is the ‘anti-homeland,’ and yet, in Canada, it is the symbolism of wilderness has become a rallying point for nationalist sentiments. In a nation-state dominated by settler-Canadian culture, which elevates to mythic status narratives of settlement of wild spaces, to be in the wilderness is still considered to be in the ‘real’ Canada. The contemporary Canadian identity narrative is largely a nature-based one. Forged during the same political era as official

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16 Here I must cite my husband’s perpetual annoyance with how stock photos of the mountains he grew up surrounded by are continuously used to represent Canada as a whole. My husband grew up in, and I conducted my masters thesis research in Banff National Park in the province of Alberta (Harding 2010). It drives him up the wall that stock photos of Maligne Lake, Mount Rundle, and Peyto Lake, places of personal significance rife with both memories and particularities of terrain like vegetation, climate, and topography, are used as icons of Canada as a whole. Cell phone companies, banks, and other corporate entities that have no connection to his home are the worst offenders in his mind. Unlike say, photos of the Grand Canyon in America, most of the stock photos of the Canadian Rockies or the west coast that are circulated in marketing campaigns are not recognizable to the average Canadian as particular places, but rather are used to represent a generalized Canadian wilderness that settlers celebrate as their patrimony.
multiculturalism, nature and the Canadian relationship to the environment has become the
dominant unifying narrative of nationality. This makes sense in a country with a vast geography,
a dual colonial heritage, a pluralistic vision of national ‘ethnicity,’ and precariously perched next
to the cultural behemoth of the United States. Canadian cultural practices around ‘nature’, whether
in the form of outdoor recreation, adaptations to weather conditions, or the celebration (while still
extracting) of a seemingly vast and variable supply of natural resources have become the common
ground necessary for the forging of the a Canadian “imagined community” (Anderson 1983).
Therefore, although the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve attracts many international visitors
each year, most visitors are Canadian citizens.

The West Coast trail is perceived by Canadian outdoor enthusiasts to be a sort of ‘Holy
Grail’ or “bucket list” type expedition, or as Nelson Graeburn (1989) would term it, a secular
pilgrimage that draws heavily on mythic symbolism of Canadian wilderness and colonial ideals of
terra nullius. While sitting around a campfire at the end of a seven-day trek down the WCT, one
hiker made the unprompted remark to me, in a half joking but somewhat sincere way "I feel so
Canadian right now, is there anything more Canadian than this? Camping in a Canadian National
Park?" Citizens embark on treks through what is ‘their’ national backyard, creating an affective
sense of belonging to territory that intertwines with ideations of nationhood and what it means to
be Canadian. Building off the previously mentioned paradoxical association of wilderness and
nationalism in Canada, the West Coast Trail is viewed as one of the most ‘authentic’ because of
both its location and its difficulty. Dean MacCannell (1973) has famously contended that a search
for authenticity is foundational to tourism as a social phenomenon. The West Coast Trail is remote
enough to be conceived of as a real wilderness but the trailheads are still relatively easy to travel
to by private vehicle (compared to for example, Nahanni national park reserve) and although
hiking it is laborious it is an activity that is viewed as accessible to “ordinary Canadians.” In other words, it is both just wild enough to be considered as an authentic wilderness, but not so wild that it is viewed as beyond the reach of the average citizen.

What is particularly interesting in the case of Canadian national parks is the emphasis on actively participating in the environment, rather than merely on its scenic significance. The idea of national parks as intrinsic to the nation-building process is nothing new (e.g. Nash 1973). National parks are advertised through their scenic potential, and it is the visual representation of mountains, waterfalls, and beaches that draw domestic tourists to these places. However, the emphasis on ‘being’ in this environment through physical movement through it rather than simply visually regarding scenery brings a measure of unpredictability into visitor experience that potentially challenges or disrupts the static “spectical-isation,” to use John Urry’s (1990) term, of place that tourism often enacts. While national parks are advertised through their scenic potential, and it is the visual representation of mountains, waterfalls, and beaches that draw domestic tourists to these places, they are also called on to directly and actively experience this idealized environment. The following is a quote from the Parks Canada’s Experience Camping program, promoted to teach new Canadians how to get in touch with Canada’s “natural heritage” by learning how to the “best way” to experience the environment of national parks:

One of the best ways to discover some of Canada’s most beautiful natural heritage areas is by spending the night in one of Parks Canada’s many campgrounds across the country. Starry nights, breathtaking views, tons of activities and a chance to bond with your family around an open campfire…Let these experiences inspire you at Parks Canada-operated campgrounds (Parks Canada: Experience Camping 2015)
In Werry’s analysis of tourism and the state in New Zealand, she argues that tourism acts as a form of governmentality; “a political technology that works in classically liberal fashion at arm’s length, organizing populations, assigning value, and producing values, not through the top-down application of power but through the promulgation of desire, habit, and commitment on the part of its subjects” (Werry 2011: xxv). Canadians are not only asked to worship national nature, but commune with it. They are ‘trained’ to adopt bodily practices that engage the senses in ways that emphasize a visceral relationship with the homeland.

One young man described his desire to hike the West Coast Trail as directly related to his upbringing, his identity, and his idea of outdoor recreation as a way to test his mettle (i.e. his status as a hardy Canadian):

My family is pretty outdoorsy, we've done lots of hiking and stuff. I was on a canoe trip on the Churchill River, not this summer but the summer before that. And some of the people who were on the trip with us, they suggested hiking the West Coast Trail. And they were pretty experienced and me and my buddy decided it would be a pretty good idea to do it. And it sounded pretty intense, like the knee-deep in mud and everything. And it's one of the most like renowned trails in Canada and in North America. We thought it'd be pretty sweet. We really wanted to do something that would, I don't know, test us a bit.

Not only is the West Coast Trail and outdoor recreation a ritual pilgrimage in the sense that it venerates nature/nation, but it also acts as a ritual test of one’s ability to bodily participate in wilderness-based rituals of citizenship. “The direct, tactile experience of sites of national ‘heritage’.... thus becomes, from the nineteenth century on-wards [as the nation-state became the primary political entity], an essential support for the new rhetorics of inheritance that emplace belonging within landscape” (Minca 2007: 439). References to their ability to “rough it,” to “cope
with the weather”, to “grin and bear it” filled the discourse of the hikers I spoke with, and the ability to “hack it” was a matter of pride, and often directly linked to one’s “Canadian-ness.” Common topics of conversation around the campfire included which trails one had hiked, how many times, what wildlife one had seen, and what weather one had encountered, all of which were narrated with a sense of accomplishing a genuine, tangible relationship with Canadian nature (and therefore with nation). Tourists’ consumption of hegemonic representations of nationhood serve as what Werry terms “public pedagogy” (2011: xiv).

Iconic tourist landscapes – the White Mountains of New England or the British Lake District- participate in the invention of tradition, becoming the coin of international recognition or the loci for experiences of national belonging. Where national hegemony is forged across deep (racial or ethnic) disparities in power or entitlement, however, its touristic representation manifests as a form of symbolic violence (Werry 2011: xiv).

Werry also argues that tourism, like the state itself is both material and ideational, and one cannot simply critique representations of nation without also looking at the way nationhood is performed (Werry 2011: xiv) (through bodily practices, the making of collective representations, the mobilization of material resources, and ritualized actions). Through the promotion of domestic tourism practices like camping, the Canadian state mobilizes its citizens to perform rituals of nature worship as participatory acts of nation-building. Outdoor recreation in Canada, like its sister settler-colonial state of New Zealand, is a “right and rite of citizenship” (Werry 2011: xxi). In western Canada, particularly in British Columbia, outdoor recreation is not only a past-time, but a secular ritual signifying belonging.

Furthermore, enculturating new immigrants on how to properly appreciate Canadian nature is part of the process of ‘settling’ newcomers. There is an implied double-meaning, as while new
immigrants are ‘settled’ in that they are helped to find housing and employment they are also encouraged to embrace settler-Canadian cultural practices and norms. Starting in 2014, Parks Canada offers equipped campsites in select national park campgrounds designed to cater to those who are new to camping and lack the necessary equipment. Parks Canada also offers learn-to-camp programs that teach people how to pitch a tent and build a fire. In 2015 Parks Canada also designed a free downloadable app with guidelines on how to camp, including everything from wildlife safety to campfire recipes. The Experience Camping website is available in Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Punjabi, Tagalog and Spanish, as well as the two official languages of English and French. Photos on the website depict more ethnic diversity than usually found in outdoor recreation promotional material (Braun 2003) and images of campers of Asian, African, and Latino ancestry are shown smiling in tents and around campfires. Back in Vancouver after my fieldwork, I joined a hiking meet-up group that explored trails in the Lower Mainland. I found that most of the hikers were newcomers to Canada, and they often attested they had started hiking both as a means to explore their new home and to feel like part of the community.

For domestic tourists, national park visitation is intertwined with nation-building. Scholars of scenic tourism have noted that “landscape becomes the poetic veneer that the nation-state adopts to colour its calculated translation of places into (national) space” (Minca 2007:438). In his discussion of the cultural dimensions of ecotourism, Robert Fletcher draws on Bourdieu to contend that the “habitus” of ecotourism is cultivated through a “specific regimen of cultural conditioning. In other words, engagement in ecotourism is one important means by which members of this group construct and perform their identity” (Fletcher 2014:4). Drawing on classic Durkheimian

17 It is important to note that social attitudes towards immigration in Canada are generally positive (see Wilkes & Corrigal-Brown 2010)
perspective of ritual as means of social cohesion, many tourism scholars argue that “sightseeing is a form of ritual respect for society” (MacCannell 1973: 590). In her analysis of Yosemite National Park, Sally Ann Ness observes that the rules, rituals, narratives, and promoted experiences all serve as a means of “persuading visitors to bond with the park and to feel and act and think and live [sic] as though the park belongs individually and personally to them and they to it” (2016:13).

Settler-Canadian domestic tourists viewed national parks as part of the Canadian homeland and therefore took on the role of host, as well as that of guests/tourists. International visitors typically positioned themselves as guests, as tourist. Although some Canadian tourists recognized, to differing extents, their own status as visitors to First Nations territory, many also viewed the trekking of the trail as a means to explore and 'get to know' their home. For domestic tourists, the trail is a part of “their” domain (the possessive pronoun was used frequently by the hikers I met). Many British Columbians, and Canadians generally, bristle at the use of the term 'tourist' to describe their travels within “their own country.” However, if we are to recognize First Nations as nations, and the Indigenous traditional territory as such, then the label ‘tourist’ becomes more significant. It is a recognition that the settlers and the newcomers are ultimately guests, not hosts. However, the geographically closer the visitor’s place of residence to the West Coast Trail, the more contentious the identification of the hiker as tourist becomes. Hikers from Victoria, Nanaimo, and even the closer and smaller settlements of Sooke, Cowichan Lake, and Port Alberni, who also hike the WCT as means of exploration, often term this space as “their backyard.” Entangled within the label ‘domestic tourist’ are layered forms of belonging to and interacting with territory, the conceptualization of citizenship and identity through borders and geographic distance, as well as the complexity of what ‘home’ itself signifies. Many Canadian hikers, particularly those from British Columbia, saw themselves more as hosts (particularly when interacting with international
tourists) than guests. As an article in a local newspaper expounded “Mention the West Coast Trail to any Port Alberni resident, and they can tell you exactly where it is and what’s on it. But ask them if they’ve ever actually hiked the trail, and most will say no” (Wilton 07/07/1987). I witnessed many domestic visitors to the West Coast Trail enthusiastically embrace the role of host and guide, doling out travel advice and recommendations as ‘locals.’ Nearly all of those who performed this role had never set foot on Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht or Pacheedaht territory before. Rather, they saw the entirety of Western Canada as ‘home’ and ‘theirs’ to host. Furthermore, because they “knew how to camp” or “had been camping for years” they felt competent in performing a ritual veneration of territory and would give non-Canadians advice on how to “handle” camping in a Canadian environment. Where to buy the best gear/clothing/fuel/camping food and how to use it a frequent theme of advice doled out to “foreigners” who often were poked fun at for over or under preparing for the conditions of the trail. For domestic tourists, national park visitation is intertwined with nation-building, and an embodied competence in participating in the ritual of camping marked them as real Canadians who belonged in this territory.

Pacific Rim National Park was established in the second major round of national park creation under the Liberal government of the 1970s. The model of nature-based tourism in Canadian national parks had changed drastically from the time of early park creation at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century when the first national parks were created in the Canadian Rockies. The first Canadian national parks like Banff, Yoho, and Waterton were created as tourism outposts centred around luxurious Canadian Pacific Railway hotels with a definitive profit motive and very little pretense of ecological preservation (Bella 1988). The vast geography and dispersed population have always been a barrier to nation-building across the territory claimed by the Canadian state. Transportation infrastructure then, has been both necessary
and expensive. Tourism, particularly domestic tourism and American tourism has been touted by the Canadian government as a way to recoup the cost. First with the Canadian Pacific Railway and its linking of the first Canadian National Parks (Bella 1988) and then later in the 1930s with the construction of new high-quality national highways domestic tourism was again seen as a way to pay for the costs of massive transportation infrastructure projects in a nation with vast space and relatively low population (Mahood 2018:28). It is important to note that the Canadian Parks system at its inception had profit (Bella 1988), not conservation, as a primary motivation and lacked a charismatic figure like that of John Muir in the United States to ideologically ground and mythologize their founding.

When Pacific Rim National Park was founded, very little had changed in the management of Canada's national parks from the time of the National Park Act of 1930 until the late 1960s. However, much had changed in Canadian society, and an affluent middle class, as well as a growing environmental movement, shaped attitudes towards nature-based tourism. In a Parks Canada policy paper drafted in the 1960s, the preservation “for all time” of areas that were geographically, biologically or historically significant was emphasized (Kopas 2007: 39). In 1970 the Parks Canada System Plan was drafted, with the aim of creating a unifying principle for park creation and management. The plan divided the country into thirty-nine terrestrial regions, with the purpose of identifying spaces that possessed features of biological and historical interest that were both unique to that region, yet also representative of the region as a whole. As well, the kind of development envisioned for national parks changed. No longer were golf courses and five-star hotels necessary: “only the wholesome outdoor types of recreation which are compatible with that natural atmosphere will be permitted (Canada 1964:4). Later parks, with the rise of domestic tourism and a mobile middle-class, touted a more rustic view of engagement with the nation's
natural environments. In the mid-twentieth century visions of Canadian nature were created not only to sell Canada as a destination to international tourists, but also toilians themselves. This was the Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chrétien era of park building, when a prime minister would paddle a canoe through wilderness to get in touch with the wild Canadian spirit, rather than golf at a luxurious resort. This was also the era of the national park as a nature-based arm of Pierre Trudeau's federalism, where Canadians could be brought together across a vast country by a shared appreciation for our national wilderness. At this time, images of open spaces, wild places and pristine mountains and forests play a significant role in the way many Canadians envisioned their nation. Excursions into nature were not only aimed at renewing the tourist for the workaday world (Graeburn 1989) but also to re-create ideas of national identity. At a time where federalism and national unification was an integral part of the Canadian governments’ policy action, the maintenance of the natural integrity of Canada's significant places was linked to the maintenance of the nation's integrity.

Pacific Rim Park was selected to represent the Pacific Coast mountain region, characterized by high mountains, deep fjords, and dense coastal rainforest (Kopas 2007: 53). At the time Pacific Rim was formed, urban developments were considered anathema to the nature-based image of the national park, and so when selecting coastal sites, towns were not included in park boundaries. Pacific Rim was divided into three units that were not directly geographically connected: the Long Beach unit along the coast between the communities of Ucluelet and Tofino, the Broken Island Unit in Barkley Sound, and the West Coast Trail Unit, following the Lifesaving trail from Bamfield to Port Renfrew. The Long Beach Unit, was superimposed on an extant provincial park and set to be the 'frontcountry unit', designed for car camping and day trippers, and accessible by the only
paved road that cut across the island linking the west coast with the more populated east.\footnote{A second east-west connection, from Duncan to Port Renfrew, was not paved until 2013.} The Broken Island Group and West Coast Trail Units were designated as backcountry units, the former for kayak trips and the latter for hikers.

Altogether, the traditional territories of seven First-Nations groups were included in the park. This fact was more of an issue than proponents of the park first anticipated. At the time, it was the provincial government’s responsibility to acquire legal title to all the lands to be included in the proposed park and then transfer them to the federal government (Kopas 2007: 81). However, a bevy of issues, from the interests of the logging industry to legal disputes over the presence of Aboriginal title, meant that negotiations between the provincial and federal governments took nearly three decades, and Pacific Rim only officially became a National Park Reserve in 2000, although it had been operated as a national park for decades. The National Park Act of 1972 included, for the first-time, some framework for co-management of parks with Indigenous peoples in Canada, with the introduction of the concept of the national park reserve. For the first time, the establishment of a national park reserve hinged on the settlement of comprehensive land claims which had assumed priority for the government after the landmark Supreme Court of Canada case of \textit{Calder v. A.G.B.C.} in 1973.\footnote{The \textit{Calder} ruling raised the possibility that unextinguished Aboriginal title existed throughout British Columbia.} The beginnings of aboriginal co-management in Parks Canada were aimed more at the new northern parks such as Kluane and Nahanni, rather than Pacific Rim in British Columbia, where the complexities of land claims were heightened by tensions between the federal and provincial governments over resource management, particularly in regards to the
forestry industry and logging claims.\textsuperscript{20} As Blackburn (2005) has noted, modern First Nations treaty negotiations in British Columbia were inherently linked to a quest for certainty over resource rights, with the impetus for the federal and provincial governments being that once treaties were negotiated, the management of resources for economic growth could be solidified. Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, unlike Gwaii Hanaas National Park Reserve on Haida Gwaii, British Columbia, was conceived of prior to several significant events regarding aboriginal rights and title including the Calder case (1972), the Constitution Act (1982) and the Sparrow decision (1993). Dearden and Berg (1993) point out that this meant that First Nations people were far less incorporated into the management structure of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve at its conception than later national parks reserves such as Gwaii Hanaas. Therefore, in the early days of Parks Canada’s management of the West Coast Trail, the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht First Nations whose traditional territory the trail crossed were largely unconsulted and uninvolved. Ironically, this was at a time where the federal minister of aboriginal affairs, future Liberal prime minister Jean Chretien, was also the one in charge of national parks. Tellingly, at that time the Department of Indian Affairs was also the Department for Natural Resources.

Benedict Anderson famously defined a nation as “an imagined political community –and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign….It is \textit{imagined} because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 2016:6). Anderson attributes the growth of the national imagination to the advent of print capitalism, as changes in communication technology allowed for the proliferation of national mythologies. National parks

\textsuperscript{20} On the history of federal and provincial tension over aboriginal land claims in British Columbia, see Cole Harris, \textit{Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).
are important public relations endeavours, and the travel stories around them published in newspapers and magazines built narratives that furnished fantasies of Canadian territory and laid the foundation for domestic tourism. In settler colonialism, an integral part of the colonial project is creating a sense of ‘home’ for the colonizer. Mary Louise Pratt has detailed the influence of travel writing in the creation of empire for the domestic European subject at home in *Imperial Eyes* (2008). She identified three narrative devices used to create meaning and value in the explorer’s achievement:

First, the landscape is *estheticized*, where…. the aesthetic pleasure of the sight single-handedly constitutes the value and significance of the journey…. Second, *density of meaning* in the passage is sought. The landscape is represented as extremely rich in material and semantic substance. …..Third...the *relation of mastery* predicated between the seer and the seen…..the landscape was intended to be viewed from where he emerged upon it….the scene is deictically ordered with reference to his [the explorer’s] vantage point, and is static (Pratt 2008: 200).

This process described by Pratt clearly describes the creation of the wilderness myth in Canada, where a vast geography must be first wiped blank through colonial myths of wilderness, and then re-inscribed with fantastic stories that link settler subjectivity to the space. Thus, the creation of a storied landscape for settlers was an important part of the machine of colonialism. Therefore, it’s important to take a moment to examine the type of stories that were told that allowed for the creation and popularization of the West Coast Trail as a destination for domestic tourists. Over the course of my research I’ve read hundreds of publications from the 1960s onwards (when the trail as a recreation site first came to attention), from newspaper and magazine articles to blogs and guidebooks describing the trail. I’ve found a similar narrative in most, with the shipwreck history
of the trail and the difficulty of the wilderness route as key themes. Little mention is made of any non-shipwreck related history of the area, and local Indigenous peoples are homogenized and often anonymous.  

The southwestern coast of Vancouver Island, unlike the northern and inner coasts, appears as an unusually smooth outline on a map. The area between Port Renfrew and the Pachena headland lacks the wide inlets and deep bays that make the rest of the island’s coastline zig and zag while drawing the line between land and ocean. This section of the coastline is unusually exposed, with few anchoring places and those small and difficult to navigate. Furthermore, under the waves guarding the intertidal zone and preventing easy beach landings are the rugged rocks of the Juan de Fuca shelf. To safely reach the land from the sea an intimate knowledge of the marinescape and of exactly where the rocks are is needed. Although a stranger to the coast may be able to land or launch a smaller watercraft like a canoe or kayak, even a zodiac or a small motorboat will have trouble making a landing on this section of the coast under most conditions, let alone larger ships. I witnessed several Parks Canada and Coast Guard rescues of hikers by zodiac. It was incredibly difficult to find an appropriate spot to land along beaches which, to an untrained eye, appeared smooth and welcoming. It was necessary to know exactly where to place your watercraft, and often there was only a narrow, submerged channel of a few feet between the ridges of rock that would allow passage, and that at only certain moments in the tide cycle. I will discuss the knowledge needed to “make a landing” further in the following chapter.

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21 The exception being the detailed descriptions of the Trail and its environs by longtime Clo-oose resident Jim Hamilton who always notes the long and complex First Nations history of the area. For example, in 1977 an article for the *Times Colonist* about the Ditidaht settlement at Whyac began by noting that the area has been “inhabited for millennia” and goes on to describe the impressive fisheries and large territory of the Ditidaht peoples (Hamilton 1977)
During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this section of coast became known to colonists as the “Graveyard of the Pacific.” The rocky shores, stormy weather, frequent fog, and lack of safe harbour made it treacherous to the larger sea-going vessels. Frequent maritime traffic between the growing ports of Victoria, Vancouver, and Seattle with further destinations from San Francisco to Alaska, meant that from a shipping perspective, this coastline was far from remote. I spent many nights during my fieldwork watching the lights of cruise ships pass by our beach campsites. Enroute to Alaska from Seattle, they would pass this section of coast during the night. The twinkling lights of the floating palaces made for an interesting contrast with our driftwood campfires. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, ships sailing this way at night were sometimes those who had made a dangerous miscalculation, rather than those hauling tourists to the inside passage. The ports of Seattle, Victoria, and Vancouver are proximate and important ports. In order to get to these three centres of commerce on the Salish Sea, ships going up or down the coast have to pass through the gap between the Olympic Peninsula and Vancouver Island. In the days when dead reckoning was the primary means of navigating unfamiliar territory, ships would sometimes miss the gap, and instead hit upon the southwest coast of Vancouver Island. This is what happened to the Valencia, which was wrecked on the bluffs just south of Tscowis and north of Tsusiaht Falls in January of 1906\textsuperscript{22}. The scope of this shipwreck, where at least eighty people lost their lives, and the fact that there were supposedly missed opportunities for rescue by nearby vessels, shocked the Canadian public. Prior to the Valencia disaster, at least 56 vessels were wrecked along this section of the coast during the early colonial period, with as many as 700 lives lost (Nietzal 1995:9). None had the same scale as the Valencia, and therefore this disaster was written about profusely in

\textsuperscript{22} The English name for this area is now Valencia Bluffs, but the actual site of the shipwreck in the long stretch of bluffs is disputed by some locals I spoke with who argued that it was mis-marked on the Parks Canada map of the West Coast Trail.
Canadian and American newspapers, stirring calls for a rescue infrastructure to be put in place along the Shipwreck Coast. Public outcry resulted in the construction of a shipwrecked mariners lifesaving trail in 1908. Construction of the trail between the lighthouse at Carmanah Point and the village of Bamfield was estimated to cost $30,000 or roughly $1,000 per mile (*The Daily Colonist* 1967). A branch line was also built to the Cape Beale lighthouse. Initially it was proposed to be built wide enough for a horse and carriage to be transported to aid in the rescue of any wreck. However, the multiple river crossings, undulating terrain, and dense vegetation resulted in only the section of the trail between Pachena Bay and Pachena lightstation ever being navigable by vehicle. In 1929 the provincial department of marine and fisheries funded the renewal of the bridges along the lifesaving trail. Over one hundred bridges were built between Carmanah and Bamfield, and bosun’s chairs were installed over the major river crossings (a pulley and chair system for river crossings, the antecedent to the infamous cable cars (Scott 1978). Keeping the trail passable was difficult given the rapid growth of the local vegetation, seasonal flooding of the rivers, frequent storms, and the trail’s infrequent use, with most people (both settler and Indigenous) who lived in the area continuing to use canoes and other small watercraft as the primary means of local transportation. Maintaining the telegraph line was a particularly frustrating endeavor, as fallen trees and storms consistently damaged the line. Although wrecks continued to happen along the coast, usually smaller fishing vessels, through all my research I found little

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23 One of the most famous shipwreck rescue stories is that of Minnie Patterson and the wreck of the Coloma in 1907, not long after the wreck of the Valencia. The tale is an evocative one, with the dutiful lightkeeper’s wife, Mrs. Patterson, dashing through five miles of dense forest to alert the coast guard in Bamfield of the wreck. The story usually includes few details about the Coloma but notes that Mrs. Patterson was near collapse from her ordeal when she arrived in Bamfield and it is speculated that her travails had a role in her death a few years later (Jamison 1989).

24 In the mid-twentieth century there were even rumours of turning this section into a road (*Twin Cities Times* 1966), but by the 1960s the government became interested in turning the region into a park and talks of a road dissolved.
evidence that the trail ever fulfilled its purpose as a means of ‘lifesaving.’ Local people, most often the Indigenous people, seemed to have been more essential to most rescues than any government-built infrastructure, as I will discuss in the following chapter.

Figure 2 Shipwreck debris mingles with driftwood at Tscowis

A sampling of a few key publications discussing and promoting the trail from across the past few decades shows how the Valencia tragedy anchors the romantic narrative of the West Coast Trail as a lifesaving link to civilization on a hostile and wild coast. A Bamfield resident, amateur historian, and park proponent wrote:

The main attraction of the trail, apart from a feeling of accomplishment after having conquered the difficulties, is the sense of being in close contact with nature in an unspoiled wilderness. It is as if one were transported into the dim and distant past when man ranged the forests, hunting for his subsistence. Deep down in his subconscious mind, man harbours
fond memories of this period of life. There is no commercialism, no exploitation in this
world, although it can be a cruel one where only the fit can survive (Scott 1970).

This mode of description is employed by most authors writing of the West Coast Trail in the late
twentieth century, with a wilderness mystique and a shipwreck mythology intertwined and
complementary. For example, a 1989 article promoting the trail in Islander Magazine titled “Trail
strewn with past disasters” begins by describing “a boneyard of twisted pipes, anchors, rotting
timbers and rusted capstans” where “the restless souls of men and ships mingle with weed and
barnacle-crusted shadows” (Jamieson 1989:3). This macabre and fanciful language continues
throughout the author’s description of the trail as “on the edge of our world” and as “hell on earth”
(Jamieson 1989:3).

The primary text on the Valencia tragedy, sold in BC Ferries bookstores and touted to
interested tourists, was written in 1995 by former Parks Canada employee Michael E Neitzal. This
language Neitzal uses to describe the “Shipwreck Coast” is typical of most narratives of the trail,
primarily marketed to a domestic audience of settler-Canadians. The area is described primarily
through its physical aesthetic qualities. It is “a remote and lonely coast, so wild and yet immensely
beautiful” (Nietzal: 1995). He goes on to describe it as “rocky, desolate, and uninhabited” (Nietzal
1995: 10).

These authors use the narrative devices denoted by Pratt (2008). The land is portrayed as
beautiful, symbolically rich, and the perspective of the intrepid explorer dominates (especially in
earlier works like those of Scott). It is important to note that the descriptions of the trail with their
romantic language and engaging in tropes of wilderness imagery are intended for a domestic
audience. It is unlikely that in 1970 international visitors were reading Con Jackson’s report in the
Alberni Valley Times of the West Coast Trail as “a hiker’s paradise” (Jackson 1970). Although
similar language can be found in materials aimed at international visitors, this is primarily a story sown by settler-Canadians for a settler-Canadian audience.

Finally, this narrative of a wild and desolate coast requires that the region was imagined as untouched by resource extraction. This is also key to the narrative of wilderness on which Pacific Rim Park was founded. Promoting the trail in 1970, Mika wrote for the Victoria Daily Times that “the trail penetrates wild, virgin splendors, but the chain saw is not far behind” (Mika 1970). The West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve may be 75 kilometres long, but in many places along its length it is only a kilometre or two wide. Key to the idea of wilderness is a sense of its potential loss. In a 1971 interview with the Vancouver Sun, John Clark, the president of the Lake Cowichan Society for Pollution and Environmental Control argued for the inclusion of the land around Nitinat Triangle in the new national park to provide a “buffer zone to protect the wilderness quality of the trail” stating that if “it doesn’t get this protection it [the WCT] will end up like Long Beach – a long latrine” (Vancouver Sun 1971). 25 Local logging interests firmly opposed the plan of adding to the park, and as usual in British Columbia, it is they who held the ear of politicians. Although Clark did not get his wish, and the Nitinat Triangle was not included in the boundaries of the park,26 the idea of a “buffer” to protect the “wilderness quality” of the trail was taken on board by park planners. Along the West Coast Trail there is very little evidence of the logging industry. A few relics of old machinery are tolerated as trailside

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25 The article is accompanied by a photo of Pierre Eliot Trudeau walking down an old wooden pier at Nitinat Lake, kerchief around his neck and trailed by photographers.

26 The area around the nearby Carmanah valley was turned into the Carmanah-Walbran Provincial Park after anti-logging protests in the 1990s.
curiosities on the southern portion, but these are seen as part of a mythical past, unlinked to present
industry. The West Coast Trail is not virgin forest, and evidence abounds of logging, if one knows
where and how to look at the forest. Most visitors do not. They may drive past the clear-cuts in
the interior of the Island on their way to the trail (for example, along the Bamfield road which is a
working forestry road), but along the trail itself the fantasy of a pristine environment can be
maintained. Yet the reality is the West Coast Trail is a long, thin strip of so-called wilderness in a
region where resource extraction (mostly logging, but also fishing and mining) has major effects
on both the local environment and the local economy. It is wilderness by design, truly fitting Pratt’s
(2008) idea of the anti-conquest: a thin strip of “preserve” to maintain an illusion of Canadian
wilderness in the midst of a space of rampant resource extraction.

For example, large stumps retain notches from planks used to cut them down by hand-loggers. Also, the density
of trees
of the same age and high levels of undergrowth found along many sections of the trail are characteristic of second-
growth, rather than old-growth forest.
3.1 Backcountry/Frontcountry and Backstage/Frontstage

Ten kilometres south of Pachena Bay on the WCT, the chaotic greenery of cedar, fir, salal and fern of the temperate rainforest suddenly give way to a glimpse of neat green lawn. Emerging from the shaded forest, on a sunny day the light from the suddenly treeless sky is blinding as one makes one's way up the evenly graded gravel path (a contrast, especially for hikers coming from the south, to the roots, sand, mud, and rocks of the previous days travel), to neatly painted white and red buildings. Often the lightkeepers themselves are out and about, mowing the lawn, working in the garden, and generally maintaining the grounds to meet the very particular standards of the Canadian Coast Guard. This abrupt boundary between forest and lawn marks both a literal and figurative border between civilization and domesticity on one side, and chaotic wilderness on the other.

Most national parks in Canada are divided into two different areas. The frontcountry area, which is motor-vehicle accessible, includes established towns and villages, park administrative headquarters, and paved roadways. The backcountry areas are those that are typically only accessible on foot, by boat or by helicopter. The number of visitors to backcountry areas is usually regulated by some sort of quota and registration system. Pacific Rim National Park Reserve is divided into three administrative units. The Long Beach Unit is the frontcountry unit and includes vehicle accessible campgrounds, a visitor centre, interpretive programs, and exhibits. The two other units of the park are designated as backcountry units, with the Broken Group Islands unit aimed at visitors on multi-day kayak camping trips and the West Coast Trail aimed at those on multi-day hiking and camping trips. Both of these units are described as wilderness areas and visitors are cautioned that they are best accessed by those “experienced in backcountry travel” (Parks Canada West Coast Trail brochure 2014). The federal government’s bureaucratic division
of territory into backcountry and frontcountry reflects divisions of wild and civilized, developed and undeveloped spaces and reflects larger problematic divisions of nature and culture (Latour 1991). The main quality of division between the two areas is one of infrastructure. Frontcountry areas are accessible by private motor vehicle on paved roads, are close to the hospitality amenities commonly found in tourist towns (hotels, restaurants, gift shops) and the visitor to these areas requires no specialized knowledge or equipment to navigate their attractions. Backcountry areas lack infrastructure. Access is human-powered (by canoe, kayak, bicycle or on foot) via trails and waterways. Facilities and amenities are what is known as ‘primitive:’ outhouses, food storage lockers or hangers, and maybe tent pads or picnic tables at campgrounds. Backcountry areas require specialized equipment and knowledge to navigate (I will explore what this means further in Chapters 4 and 5).

What is particularly significant in the case of Pacific Rim National Park is the geographic distance between backcountry and frontcountry areas. Although as the crow flies Pacific Rim occupies a relatively continuous stretch of coastline, in terms of access the units are quite far apart. Due to the location of Barkley Sound in the centre of the region, and the fact that most visitors to any of the parks units usually make at least some part of their journey by motor vehicle, the park is effectively split in two by Barkley Sound and the Alberni Inlet. The northern head of the West Coast Trail at Pachena Bay is roughly a four to five-hour drive from the frontcountry Long Beach Unit between the communities of Ucluelet and Tofino. By boat, Ucluelet is only an hour from the community of Bamfield near Pachena Bay. However, there is no regular ferry service between Ucluelet and Bamfield. As well, most of the road between Port Alberni and the northern trailhead at Pachena Bay is an unpaved, privately owned logging road which is often difficult to navigate for visitors. The southern trailhead of the West Coast Trail, 75 kilometres south of Pachena Bay at
Port Renfrew, is even more distantly located from the frontcountry Long Beach Unit, at approximately a six to seven hour driving distance.

The majority of the visitors to the Long Beach Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve are day-use visitors. Even those on multi-day trips to explore the region spend their nights in hotel accommodation in nearby Tofino or Ucluelet or in ‘full-service’ vehicle-accessible campgrounds. The primary attraction to the area are the long sandy beaches, which are popular for picnicking and for those brave enough to face the cold temperatures and strong currents, surfing and swimming. There are also self-guided interpretive walks and a newly renovated visitors centre with very informative exhibits on both the ecology of the local area and the culture and traditions of the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples who have occupied the territory since time immemorial. Exhibits are in French, English, and Nuu-chah-nulth. Furthermore, an explanation of why it is a park reserve and thus also First Nation lands, and an emphasis of the continuous occupation of the territory by Nuu-chah-nulth peoples, is a central narrative in the exhibits. Although initially instigated by Nuu-chah-nulth dissatisfaction with the National Park service expressed in the 1990s, the newly renovated visitor information centre is a testament to the willingness of Parks Canada to officially integrate the knowledge of the traditional territorial owners into their interpretative practices, at least in the frontcountry.

In most Canadian national parks, backcountry overnight hikes begin as extensions of day hiking trails. The trailhead and the first few kilometres of the trail itself are easily and commonly accessed by day-users. Thus, a day-hike is not necessarily easy, and the transition from a well-maintained frontcountry trail to a rougher backcountry one is gradual. However, Pacific Rim was conceived and designed differently from some of the older parks (such as Banff and Jasper), where backcountry areas extend out from the frontcountry ones. It was conceived from the get-go as
three different units. The West Coast Trail Unit and the Broken Group Islands Unit were set aside as terrestrial and marine backcountry areas, respectively. Long Beach Unit, making up the coastal area between the towns of Ucluelet and Tofino was designed as and continues to be a frontcountry unit. What this means is that there is a separation from those who travel to the west coast to partake in backcountry activities and frontcountry activities. While this may be good for park management, whose job it often is to manage tourists more than any other wildlife, it means that the visitor experience is very different in each park unit.

When I visited the K'wistas Visitor Centre at Wickaninnish Beach, the main information centre for both the Long Beach Unit and Pacific Rim Park Reserve as a whole, I was struck with the irony of this backcountry/frontcountry separation. The newly redone information centre was filled with excellent displays about the terrain, history, and First Nations Traditional Ecological Knowledge (often referred to as TEK) of the Pacific Rim National Park. Displays were informative, were often tri-lingual (written in Nuu-chah-nulth as well as English and French), and acknowledged the complex relationship First Nations people had and continue to have with the ecosystems within their territory. From the displays at K'wistas, one would think that Pacific Rim was a flagship example of the co-management of a park between traditional owners and government. There was a plethora of information about the ecology and history and traditional ownership of the West Coast Trail at the information centre at Long Beach. However, because of the geographic separation of these units, it is unlikely that anyone hiking the West Coast Trail will visit Long Beach on the same visit. Unfortunately, I would argue it is often West Coast Trail hikers, who spend a full week traversing and interacting with the places of Pacific Rim, who have the keenest interest in the type of knowledge displayed at K'wistas. WCT hikers, who have a physical,
phenomenological experience of the places of Pacific Rim, have less access to information about the places they travel across than the day visitors at Long Beach.

Interpretative materials in the backcountry units of the park are few and far between, in keeping with dominant colonialist perspectives on wilderness as a culture-less space. Before hiking the West Coast Trail, hikers are required to attend an hour-long orientation session, which tends to focus on visitor safety and is designed to make hikers aware of the potentially hazardous conditions of the trail. Accidents are frequent each season (rescues average around approximately 100 per five-month hiking season) as hikers often underestimate the terrain and the changeable weather, and overestimate their own physical capabilities. Therefore, these orientation sessions necessarily focus on safety, rather than historical, ecological or cultural information about the territory. The orientation sessions are carried out by Parks Canada staff, a few of whom are from local First Nations. It is worth noting that the federal government requirement of having at least one French-speaking staff member available during all shifts is a significant barrier against the employment of locals. At the trail head offices where the orientations are held there are some minimal displays about the natural and cultural history of the area; and most visual displays focus on visitor safety and tools for navigating the trail such as maps and tide charts. Part of this is because Parks Canada information on the trail is focused on getting hikers through it safely, perhaps at the expense of more esoteric knowledge of the terrain. However, it is ironic that those who most fully invest in learning about a place by physically traversing it have less access to information (at least, officially sanctioned knowledge) about the ecology, history, and traditional owners of the park than the day-use visitors of the frontcountry.

Less information and less facilities symbolically mark backcountry areas as ‘more wild’. The backcountry is where visitors can seek an encounter with authentic wilderness. Dean
MacCannell has made clear that tourism is often oriented around a search for authenticity, “motivated by a desire to see life as it is really lived” (1973: 589) and that this authenticity is most often ‘staged’ in some way by tourist facility operators. Drawing on Goffman’s performance theory, MacCannell posits that in tourism the ‘front stage’ are those regions thought to be ‘for show’ (sanitized spaces such as hotel lobbies, restaurant dining rooms, and the public areas of tourist attractions). ‘Backstage’ areas are areas of concealment and often of mystification (restaurant kitchens, museum storerooms) and the imagined site of authentic reality. Tourists acknowledge that front regions are staged to allow for their comfort, but they often long for a more intimate encounter with the more authentic, and therefore less accessible, back regions. As evidence of the latter, MacCannell notes the existence of ‘reality’ tourism where tourists sit at chef’s tables in the kitchen or eat street food, tour the archaeology or paleontology labs of museums, or visit the factories where locally significant products are made. Ironically, as MacCannell makes clear, these tours of back regions are also often ‘staged’ in some way, cleaned up to fit the tourist fantasy of the authentic (the celebrity chef berates the staff in order to perform, the factory showroom is neater and cleaner than usual during visiting hours, the museum laboratory staff are trained in heritage interpretation and customer service). The tourist knows this too, and it becomes turtles all the way down as tourists hunt for deeper levels of authenticity (and thus also the ability to shed the belittled moniker of mere ‘tourist’).

The separation between backstage and front stage in social performance conceived by Goffman and expanded on by MacCannell fits somewhat easily onto the divide between backcountry and frontcountry in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The Long Beach Unit is oriented to providing a ‘taste’ of west coast wilderness for the masses, while backcountry areas are set apart for the truly committed outdoor enthusiast and the “experienced wilderness traveler”
(Parks Canada brochure). Yet just as frontcountry areas are sites of ‘stage management’ where tourists are directed on where to go, what to see, and how to see it, so are backcountry areas. On the West Coast Trail, despite a lack of signage compared to frontcountry areas, there are still signs with stern warnings and directions on where to camp, where to store food, how to store food, where to go, and most importantly where not to go (off trail). One tale I was told by a local guide particularly revealed how Parks Canada ‘staged’ the West Coast Trail. Shipwreck debris can be seen from the trail throughout its length. Boilers, anchors, and other bits of rusted metal can be found along the beaches and the more ‘significant’ (i.e. large and easy to see) pieces are marked on the official Parks Canada West Coast Trail map with their associated ship and wreck date. According to a local guide I spoke with, in the early decades of the Park a large ship’s anchor from a significant wreck was found. However, it was located too far off the trail for hikers to easily stumble upon it. Therefore Parks Canada went to the effort (which involved a helicopter, a significant and expensive resource, according to the tale) to move the anchor to a spot directly beside the hiking route, where hikers could easily see it and it could become part of the official canon of recorded wreck debris on the Parks Canada map. I found this story corroborated by a newspaper article written by R.E. Wells (1974), which suggested the anchor was from the Vesta which wrecked in 1897 and discussed its finding. The first time I hiked the trail myself, I, like most hikers, was delighted to spot the anchor on the rocks by my feet. I pointed it out to others and was quite pleased with my personal encounter with the trail’s history.

In her work on Cape Breton Highlands National Park, Sandilands notes that with changes in the mandate of national parks involving a distinct ecologization of parks away from their original functions as repositories of scenery and as a site that ‘preserves’ a nature that lies outside human history (Sandilands 2012: 73). According to Sandilands, although the ruins of Acadian
villages are now marked by interpretive signs describing their presence (with an emphasis on poverty and a precarious existence) “we are never told directly that the people had their land taken away in order to make the park” (2012: 79). Sandilands concludes that this process of expropriation, erasure, and the masking of the violent process of forced removal with an emphasis on ‘progress’ clearly depicts the intrinsic ‘whiteness’ (often hidden within claims of universal nature, science, and progress) of national parks (2012: 80). Similarly, in Pacific Rim National Park twentieth-century Parks Canada interpretive materials did focus on some extent on the human history of the region but tended to give primacy to the history of shipwrecks and lifesaving along the coast. The image of shipwrecked sailors fits with the vision of a wild coast, ruled by a hostile nature and complemented the theme of adventure within backcountry travel.

In 1974, R. Bruce Scott, a Bamfield resident and former Cable Station employee, wrote a book entitled *People of the Southwest Coast of Vancouver Island*. In it, he describes the area traversed by the West Coast Trail as follows:

Clo-oose was the only inhabited place on the whole of the southwest coast of Vancouver Island between Port San Juan and Barkley Sound, with the exception of the lighthouses at Carmanah Point, Pachena Point, and Cape Beale. There were Indian villages at Carmanah, Clo-oose, Tsuquadra, and Pachena Bay; the rest of the rugged coastline was just too forbidding for settlement even by the Indians” (Scott 1974: 45).

The first sentence outlines settler outposts as the only inhabited places. In what is an obvious contradiction to a twenty-first century reader, Scott immediately goes on to note significant indigenous villages. To Scott, who was a huge proponent for the founding of the Park and wrote multiple newspaper articles agitating for its creation, Indigenous places and peoples do not count as habitation. Furthermore, his portrayal of the coast as “too forbidding for settlement” was key to
a colonial framing of the region as wilderness and bereft of civilization except for a few scattered outposts like the lighthouses.

Most hikers purchase the official Parks Canada West Coast Trail map. It is on this map that they encounter the primary message about the cultural heritage of the Trail: its official government maintenance starting in 1908 as a shipwreck rescue trail. Until 2014, the official Parks Canada map emphasized famous shipwrecks along what has been called the “Graveyard of the Pacific”, and location of campgrounds and lighthouses. On the trail itself, the main signage is focused on the demarcation of kilometres and warnings against trespassing on First Nations territory by going off the main trail in certain areas. Facts like the location of current campgrounds on former village sites, and that this section of the coast was once part of a major north-south trading route, were glossed over or went unmentioned (McMillan 1999). The primary message conveyed to visitors through official parks material is one of colonial adventure, of following the trail as a government-built and maintained lifeline through treacherous, yet beautiful, wilderness. An emphasis on risk management by Parks Canada staff reinforces a colonial imaginary of the backcountry as space for wild and untamed nature. In 2014, a new map was introduced that included Indigenous place-names for the park. I will discuss the new map and the complicated task of producing interpretative materials that recognize and respect both Indigenous territory and Indigenous knowledge-sharing practices in the next chapter.

3.2 Clo-oose: The Vanished Village of the West Coast Trail

Clo-oose is located almost directly in the middle of the West Coast Trail in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The name Clo-oose is an anglicized version of the Indigenous Ditidaht
name for the place, *Tlo:?$o:ws*, which means camping place. However, the official Parks Canada map of the trail shows at kilometre 35 a place marked Clo-oose with several small squares that indicate buildings. When asked about Clo-oose, most hikers who passed through and noticed the one decrepit wooden shack visible from the trail, responded with, “Oh, you mean the abandoned Indian village?” At kilometre 35 there is a pleasant resting spot on a small beach, a rough-hewn bench, and chainsaw carved wooden sign stating, “Welcome to Clo-oose.” Some hikers will stop, take photos and rest their weary legs. Some may ponder the origins of a clearly visible but decrepit cabin beside the main trail. Some hikers I spoke with assumed it to be a former park warden shelter. Those who take note of the ‘IR’ indicating Indian Reserve guessed that the site was a former village. Most hikers do not stop long enough to notice the wooden eaves that peek out of the woods, or how the trees are closely packed spindles which indicate second-growth forest. Discerning hikers may also notice English ivy and foxglove growing amongst the sword ferns and salal. The majority trudge on by, eyes down on the trail and eager to complete their long day of walking.

One day on the trail I was chatting with a former resident of Clo-oose and he asked me if I had found anything about the hotel. “The hotel?” I asked with some incredulity. “Yeah, they were going to build it and you can see where they were going to lay the foundations.” Intrigued, I decided to do some bushwhacking and search for old foundations around Clo-oose. Wary of straying too far from the Trail by myself and getting lost in the dense rainforest, my tentative efforts yielded no results. I forgot about “the hotel” until one day in the Royal British Columbia Archives I stumbled across a strange document:

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28 Most people who visit the district today are on a camping trip. However, the beaches of Clo-oose and Cheewat are ironically some of the few areas of the park reserve where camping is not permitted.
Nothing in Canada, on either ocean, compares with this splendid property. Nature has lavished charms on this portion of Vancouver Island’s West Coast in rich profusion. Almost all of the elements that have made famous such centres as Atlantic City, Los Angeles, Palm Beach, Florida, and other great resorts are here represented at their highest perfection, but there are other features which no other Resort in the world possesses (West Coast Development Company 1913).

The preceding quote is from a pamphlet published and distributed in 1913 by the West Coast Development Company of Victoria. Illustrated with stunning photographs of white sand beaches and peaceful fishing holes, it describes in glowing terms the spectacular scenery and wondrous tourism potential of the southwest coast of Vancouver Island. This piece of Edwardian booster literature marks the beginning of tourist promoters’ interest in what was then a very remote section of British Columbia. A tourist trade had only begun to develop in Victoria at the beginning of the twentieth century, let alone on Vancouver Island’s isolated west coast (Dawson 2005). Interest in nature-based tourism was well established by this period, seen as an antidote to the ills of civilization facing North America's growing urban population (Bella 1988: 5-20). Cruises along the Pacific coast from San Francisco as far north as Alaska were already part of an established tourism repertoire due to the enthusiastic travel writings of John Muir and others (Little 2007). The Canadian Pacific Railway operated the Princess steamship line to various coastal destinations, including a route along western Vancouver Island. The CPR had by this point established its grand Empress Hotel in Victoria. Yet unlike the tourist resorts of Banff and Lake Louise which sprang up along the railway’s mainline, the coastal steamship routes lacked any comparable accommodation for tourists.
The pre-war years of the early twentieth century in British Columbia were a time of economic growth and optimism, when new communication and transportation networks connected this once remote British colony to the hustle and bustle of the larger empire. Furthermore, with a growing urban elite, tourists in this period often sought relief from the perceived rat-race of modernity through fishing, hunting, and other nature-based holidays. The pursuit of such activities was laced with a nostalgia for a nature that was supposedly untouched by development and colonization. The resource-rich province of British Columbia was seen as ripe for development, and somewhat ironically, tourism was seen as a gateway through which prospective investors could be drawn to the region. Early tourism promoters in British Columbia saw tourism not only as a way to draw wealthy Americans to fish and hunt in the region, but also as a strategy for luring settlers for agricultural and industrial development (Dawson 2005: 16). Promoters in British Columbia sought to capitalize on American nostalgia for the frontier; the American west may have been ‘won,’ but British Columbia was presented as still untamed and its resources as underexploited (Dawson 2005:17). In his review of early twentieth century travel literature on British Columbia, Michael Dawson notes that there was “often an interest in conquering or controlling nature [through activities such as hunting and fishing] combined with a fascination with scientific achievements to produce, in many travelers’ accounts, a list of entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture and industry for their readers to contemplate” (Dawson 2005:22). Vancouver Island was to be promoted as an accessible frontier, at least as the crow flies, within an “easy distance” to Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle’s urban amenities. Potential visitors were told “if you want to see what is being done in the world, come to Vancouver Island (West Coast Development Company 1913).
Vancouver Island is making ready for her tomorrow. Just think of it. Here is a Resort being developed within easy access of cities like Vancouver, Victoria, Seattle, Portland and Tacoma. Cities that already represent an aggregate population of one and one-quarter millions of people, and with no resort in this section of the country to attract people from these growing centres. What a boon to the people of the Middle West! Nine miles, with few interruptions, of the finest hard sand beaches in the world; medicinal springs; rolling surf from the open Pacific; magnificent scenery; primeval woods almost to the beach line; pure, healthful salt air; salmon and trout fishing beyond compare; shooting equal to any on earth; a temperature that is never hot and never cold; absolutely no flies and no mosquitoes (West Coast Development Company 1913).

The grand endeavour proposed by the West Coast Development Company would capitalize on both the region’s scenic tourist potential and the interest of speculators looking to invest in British Columbia. The pamphlet described a resort that would be developed at the mouth of the Cheewat River, close to the small village of Clooose. The resort was to begin with a large hotel, and would ultimately include recreational amenities like golf links, tennis courts, croquet and bowling greens, a seaside boardwalk, and a large pier. Photographs of “glittering white sand beaches” and the “rolling surf” adorn every page of the pamphlet, along with photos of streams and ponds offering “salmon and trout fishing beyond compare.” Of course, the resort was not yet built, so readers were urged to invest in it by purchasing a waterfront lot as soon as possible: “put in your application right away – first come first served” (ibid). The pamphlet demonstrates how tourism and settlement were intertwined in British Columbia prior to World War I. Investors were needed not only to finance construction of the resort, but also to settle the land and develop a community around it. Photographic representations of the coastal landscape were meant to attract investors by
their scenic beauty, by demonstrating the richness of the area’s natural resources, and by subtly
drawing on an emerging nostalgia for the pioneering spirit of early North American settlers.

The West Coast Development Company claimed that a small sanitorium would be built as
part of its resort order to take advantage of “several fine natural sulphur springs on the Company's
property” (ibid). Although the appeal of mineral springs and the success of the resorts who had
them characterize the time period (Banff’s mineral springs were becoming the highlight of the CPR
tourist pilgrimage by this point). There was one unfortunate fact that the developers failed to
mention. The springs of Clooose were purely imaginary. In addition, the Cheewat River is a tidal
river, and cold, salty sea water regularly rendered it unpleasant for both bathing and drinking. The
presence of hot springs and absence of mosquitoes were not the only false claims in the West Coast
Development Company’s promotional materials. One of the death knells of the resort scheme was
the fact that, as the pamphlet boasted, the beaches faced onto the open Pacific. Most communities
on Vancouver Island were still only accessible by boat, and although steamships and telegraph
lines did provide connections to global networks of trade and communication, the actual arrival of
people, supplies, and information was often sporadic due to inclement weather and rough seas. For
example, the Carmanah lighthouse keeper’s diary from that era notes the arrival of his Christmas
turkey two months after Christmas (Carmanah Lighthouse records 1891-1965). Rough swells and
strong currents combined with the rocks and reefs of the Juan de Fuca coastal shelf meant that
building any sort of pier at Clooose, let alone one on the scale of a grand seaside resort, was out
of the question. Locals knew this well. The supply ship that the West Coast Development Company
claimed would give tourists and settlers easy access to its resort complex at Clooose had to stop
off-shore and signal to the village, following which residents would paddle out to it in canoes.
Supplies, passengers, mail, and anything else that one wanted to reach the shore would then be
dropped off the side of the ship into a waiting canoe. A successful transfer was highly dependent on the temperamental sea conditions, and often both passengers and supplies were drenched by the time they landed at Clo-oose (Wells 1988).

In the early twentieth century the Ditidaht-speaking peoples were the primary occupants of the area around Clo-oose. The people of Qua-ba-diwa had been devastated by smallpox sometime in the late nineteenth century and were ‘encouraged’ by the Canadian authorities to move to Clo-oose. Although this section of the coast had been visited by the Europeans since the maritime fur trade in the eighteenth century, settlement by Europeans did not begin until the late nineteenth century. In 1892 G.F. Groves purchased lots on the Cheewhat River and raised cattle for two years, after which he left the area for Australia and persuaded David Logan, a Victoria resident, to manage the operation (Scott 1974: 45). Shortly afterwards a Methodist mission was founded by Reverend W. J. Stone. By 1913, there were a few other Euro-Canadian families around Clo-oose. The area also gained some attention when, in 1906 the Valencia sank off the coast of Vancouver seventeen kilometres north of Clo-oose. The lifesaving trail connected the newly built Pachena lighthouse and the Carmanah lighthouse and passed through Clo-oose. The lifesaving trail also connected a telegraph line between Bamfield and Port Renfrew, and a linesman was stationed in Clo-oose. Of course, the fact that this infrastructure was in place because the region was prone to shipwrecks was not a fact advertised by the West Coast Development Company. Early twentieth-century tourism narratives were just as apt as twenty-first century ones in leaving out parts of the story that don’t fit the imagined ideal.

29 The lack of pasture in the temperate rainforest meant that Logan’s cows grazed on the beaches (White 1974: 59). The image of a heifer emerging out of the mists of Cheewhat beach would likely strike twenty-first century hikers as rather strange.
Despite the impossibility of the proposed scheme due to the lack of road access to the coast and the lack of a safe harbour where a supply ship could dock, the West Coast Development Company's pamphlet did attract settlers to the region. Thirty-three by sixty by sixty-foot lots were divided up and sold for one hundred-fifty to two hundred dollars a lot, with the lots intended to be part of the resort, being too small for any kind of agricultural endeavour (Scott 1974: 46-47). Local narratives from former residents of Clo-oose who moved to Bamfield speak of a group of British settlers, drawn by the promises of the West Coast Development Company, who came over from England with the prospect of settling on Vancouver Island’s remote coast. Tales of their dismay upon being unloaded from the steamship directly into a dugout canoe, and the shock of the cold water and the remote location, still garner a chuckle from some of the older residents in the region. A ‘tent city’ was set up for the newcomers, as they worked several months to build log cabins on the property. Despite the roughness of the terrain and basic style of living, many of the settlers were optimistic and began endeavours to provide the not-yet-built hotel with goods and services (Scott 1974: 46-50). When World War I began in 1914, most of the white males in the community enlisted, and after the war few returned. The few who stayed had their prospects temporarily bolstered when the Lummi Packing Company of Washington State built a cannery on nearby Nitinat Lake in 1917 (White 1974: 82). Even though some settlers in the Clo-oose area were negatively affected by the Returning Soldiers Homestead Act of 1919, which returned to the Crown all pre-emptions which had not been cleared and maintained, the Euro-Canadian settler population of Clo-oose was, for a short time, high enough to put the community ‘on the map.’ A school was open at Clo-oose from 1913 until 1936, as well as a post office and general store. Nevertheless, the settler population slowly declined, and most of the families who had been lured to the district by the West Coast Development Company left before 1939. Eventually the cannery, like many of the small canneries along the coast, was put out of business by the growing
availability of ice. As the ice boats became bigger fish processing centralized in Ucluelet (where the fish packing plant is still maintained to this day), as it was the first west coast community connected by a paved road (McDermid 1995).

On May 17, 1958 a general strike by the Seamen's International Union stopped service on all Canadian Pacific steamships. The province of British Columbia issued a back-to-work order, but to no effect because ocean-going vessels were under federal jurisdiction. As the crisis continued, the provincial government announced that it intended to establish its own ferry service, which would eventually become BC Ferries. The CPR decided to cut its losses in maritime transport, and sold its fleet of coastal steamers, including the Princess Norah which had served Clo-oose (Turner 2001). The communities of Ucluelet and Bamfield to the north of Clo-oose continued to be served by a supply boat out of Port Alberni, and residents of Port Renfrew to the south would soon have their dream of road access realized, but Clo-oose was cut off. Members of the Ditidaht First Nation were again encouraged to consolidate their communities and move to the head of Nitinat Lake, over twenty kilometres inland from traditional coastal territories. Ninitat Village was only accessible by logging road from Port Alberni or Lake Cowichan, or by boat through the Nitinat Narrows at the coastal end of Nitinat Lake. There is still local resentment towards Canadian authorities about the move. Former residents of Clo-oose say that they were promised jobs, schools, and a road for relocating to Nitinat. Some claim that promised opportunities never materialized, and that the government had other motivations in moving them away from the coast. Some suggest it was no coincidence that talks about turning their home into a national park started shortly after the coastal supply ships stopped running and people moved inland to Nitinat Lake (see also Chipps-Sawyer 2007). A few people – both settler and Indigenous – continued to spend part of the year at isolated Clo-oose even after the supply ship stopped
coming. It was around this time that Clo-oose again began to gain popularity as a tourist destination, but this time both local settlers and Indigenous people saw little benefit from this development, because most had already left. For the wilderness mythology to take root, and the symbolic value of this stretch of coastline to be recognized as wilderness, the landscape had to be unpeopled.

But what about a road? Returning to the subject of infrastructure and how remoteness is constructed (discussed in Chapter 1), the history of Clo-oose is haunted by faded hopes of incorporation into the settler-Canadian land-based transportation network. The prospect of a road has beguiled west coast communities for most of the twentieth century, and continues to be a source of hope and speculation around future development in some of the more remote parts of the coast. However, although a road to Ucluelet and Tofino was eventually built and paved in the 1970s, as was the road to Port Renfrew, the section of the coast in between these ports remains just as inaccessible in 2014 as when Premier McBride promised a road through it in a 1913 address (White 1974: 74). The lack of transportation, heightened by the roughness of the terrain and the unpredictability of the open Pacific, prevented the West Coast Development Company's dream of resort from ever being built. The inattention to the realities of living, building, settling, and touring the storm-battered coastline soon belied the static vision of the scenic photographs in the pamphlet. In the end, the West Coast Development Company was correct in one of its predictions of the region’s future: “This park will outstrip anything in America in point of variety of scenery and will be the Mecca of many thousands of tourists every year” (West Coast Development Company

30 In 1913 Premier McBride promised a road to the west coast of Vancouver Island. See White, Human History Study, 1974. The communities of Bamfield and Anacla still hold out hope for the prospect of a paved road to their communities. Currently these communities are only accessible by boat or logging road.
However, late twentieth-century visitors envisioned a very different type of tourist landscape from that of the seaside resort.

The West Coast Development Company’s promotional materials paid little attention to the people who already lived in and around Clo-oose. That section of the coast is the traditional territory of what the Canadian government has designated as the Ditidaht First Nation, and was highly populated prior to European settlement, with several villages with occupants numbering in the thousands (Arima et. al. 1991). The main villages were at Whyac, three kilometres north of Clo-oose and at Qua-ba-diwa, seven kilometres to the south. There was much travel and trade between these and other villages up and down the coast of Vancouver Island, as well as across the Juan de Fuca Strait with the related Makah peoples in what is now Washington State. In the Ditidaht language, Clo-oose means camping beach or landing place, as it was used as a stopping point when going up the coast before rounding Cape Beale and entering Barkley Sound (Arima et. al. 1991).

Although the settler population came and went, First Nations people remained. Their skill with canoes had been invaluable in helping deliver passengers and supplies to and from Clo-oose, as well as helping rescue sailors stranded on the rocks and reefs. In the case of the Valencia and other shipwrecks, the help of Ditidaht-speaking peoples was invaluable, as their canoes were the most capable of handling the strong surf (White 1974: 74-75). However, most media reports of the efforts of local peoples were biased against the “Indians” and often focused on their supposed propensity to rob the bodies of shipwreck victims, instead of their history of aid.31 Furthermore, just as in the tourist development vision of the West Coast Development Company, indigenous

31 This was emphasized to me in interviews with Ditidaht First Nation members
peoples often did not count in the eyes of government officials or of local historians, one of whom identified Clo-oose as “the only inhabited place on the whole of the southwest coast of Vancouver Island between Port San Juan and Barkley Sound” before listing a series of “Indian villages” along the same coastline (Scott 1974: 45).

Clo-oose, unlike the towns of Bamfield and Ucluelet that it had rivaled in size only a few decades earlier, was not deemed significant enough to be left out of the Park. Granted, by the late 1960s only three families resided for a large part of the year at Clo-oose, but this does not mean that it was not still a culturally significant place. Many people of the Ditidaht First Nation, as well as some descendants of European settlers in the region, regularly “went home.” The unsettled nature of Parks Canada land tenure over the park, as well as the remoteness of the area (wardens were rarely seen) meant that in the first 'official' decade of the West Coast Trail people with ties to Clo-oose were able to continue to live, fish, and generally go about their business. For example, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, prior to the park formation, Dorothy Ordway and her son Jim Hamilton, a former linesman on the trail’s telegraph line, briefly converted their home to a tourist guesthouse during the summers (Hamilton 1969). Other families, both settler and Ditidhat, periodically returned, particularly in the summers. Yet as the park came increasingly under the surveillance of the federal parks agency, this seasonal occupation conflicted with the goals and policies of Parks Canada. One major issue, according to former Clo-oose residents, was that Parks Canada required people to live full-time with Clo-oose as their permanent residence in order to keep their homes within the park. This was an impossibility for many people in the region who were economically reliant on seasonal logging and fishing employment. Very few families had the financial means to live permanently in this remote section of the west coast and thus for a while, it looked like local people would lose access to Clo-oose as it became more integrated into the
Parks system: Negotiations between the federal, provincial, and First Nations governments over Pacific Rim park took place behind closed doors throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Although the relationship between Parks Canada and the Ditidaht peoples has improved through the co-management policies and Pacific Rim's current park reserve status, the Ditidaht are at this time still negotiating for title to their land under a Final Agreement with the provincial and federal governments, and the details of these ongoing dialogues are not publicly available. I will further explore the relationship between Parks Canada and Indigenous peoples on the West Coast Trail in the next chapter.

Parks Canada's vision of a backcountry wilderness route not only shaped later conflict over park management with First Nations, but also created a vision of the Cloo-oose landscape which was inconsistent with its history of human occupation. Just as the imagined dream of luxurious seaside resort did not pan out into the actual experience of settling in Cloo-oose, ironically the traces of settlement in Cloo-oose did not fit into the imagined portrait of a wild west coast. Hikers of the West Coast Trail, then as well as now, do not expect to find people living along a wilderness route. One woman who spent many of her childhood summers at Cloo-oose laughingly told me of bursting out of the bushes on a pair of hiker who, after three days hiking through the bush, were quite startled at being approached by a small child. However, not all interactions between hikers and locals were so benign. Hikers would sometimes walk into the “abandoned” houses and cabins and steal household items and vandalize furniture. In the words of one local resident:

Well, they're not abandoned.... these houses all belonged to people. So, you didn't go in them, you didn't take from them. And you'd have terrible arguments... once the trail opened up all sorts of people would walk in and out as if it was abandoned. And abandoned is not the word. This is private property. I know it looks a ruin, but this is not sort of ‘help yourself.'’
Other stories told of the desecration of graves which were seen as 'historic' by visitors but held the remains of local peoples’ relatives. To get an idea of how persistent some of the visitors were in their belief that this region was empty of people, one only has to look at the fact that after decades of intrusion two local residents have now gone so far as to place electric fences around their homes at Clo-oose. Stories of vandalism and graffiti of Indigenous sacred sites and theft from homes pervaded many local narratives of the early days of the national park.

In the late 1990s the campground at Cheewat was closed. The official reason was that there were issues with improperly stored food and waste, which had caused problems with wildlife. As well, a rare type of flower, pink verbana, grew on the dunes at Cheewat, and signs were put up to keep hikers from trampling over the dunes. However, some of the locals I spoke with expressed doubt that this was the reason Cheewat was closed. They spoke of the vandalism and the looting, as well as Parks Canada “not wanting people to know” about the former village. Furthermore, in an odd twist, the growing assertion of the First Nations rights to the territory within the Park in the late twentieth century actually served to further obscure Clo-oose from visitors to the West Coast Trail. The desecration of petroglyphs and graves has forced the Ditidaht First Nation to place signs forbidding hikers to leave the trail and camp or explore the area around Clo-oose and Cheewat. Therefore, most hikers do not know about the existence of Clo-oose, even when they pass through its heart.

Nothing about the West Coast Development Company, the proposed hotel, or the settler community at Clo-oose is included in official heritage narratives of Parks Canada regarding the West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The timeline, according to official heritage discourse, follows a pattern common to heritage interpretation in settler-states, and one that is dominant in Western Canada across sectors of public education. The history begins with an
acknowledgement of the presence of Indigenous people since time immemorial. This is where references to archaeological digs is often inserted into the narrative. Then, an abrupt jump is made to the period of ‘wilderness’. Indigenous people are either collapsed into wilderness (i.e. made part of the wild territory that is discovered/conquered/settled) or have suddenly and mysteriously disappeared (there may be some reference to smallpox epidemics, if any). Then, suddenly there is a jump to the current era of reserves and recognition, where Indigenous people suddenly re-enter the picture, as protectors of wilderness and territorial guardians. The following excerpt under the heading of “history” from the 2019 Parks Canada website on the West Coast Trail Unit demonstrates this clearly. It is laid out in three paragraphs as follows:

The 75-kilometre (47-mile) West Coast Trail is part of the ancient paths and paddling routes used for trade and travel by First Nations. Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht villages and camps were well established before the foreign sailing ships started to arrive off this coast over 200 years ago. As the years passed and the number of ships sailing the Juan de Fuca Strait increased, so too did the number of shipwrecks and drownings along the coast. In time, the coastline became known as “the Graveyard of the Pacific.”

In 1906, when the steamship Valencia went down with the horrific loss of more than 125 lives, the public outcry prompted the Canadian government into further action: Pachena Lighthouse was constructed in 1907; lifesaving stations were established at Clo-oose and Bamfield; the telegraph route was upgraded to become the Dominion Life Saving Trail, complete with six
shelters stocked with provisions for both shipwreck victims and their rescuers. As navigation technology improved, many of these measures became obsolete and were abandoned.

In 1970, Pacific Rim National Park Reserve was established and in 1973, the lifesaving trail was included in the national park reserve as a recreational hiking trail, beginning a new chapter in its history. Today, over 7,500 backpackers hike the West Coast Trail every year. They come to see the beauty, experience the challenges, and walk the path of those that came before them.

(Parks Canada 2019)

In the case of the West Coast Trail, the details of the three historical eras are focused on by interpretive materials. They can be described as follows: 1) The Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht peoples occupy the territory since time immemorial, but this time is shadowed in mystery and the end of this period is unclear 2) The era of settlement and shipwrecks (the coast is a wild and dangerous place) 3) the era of parks, recreation and territorial acknowledgement (the park is made into both a place of conservation and reservation, and this is done through a much-trumpeted process of co-management). The whole process of colonialism and settlement, of Indigenous depopulation due to disease, disaster and colonial aggression, and of the incarceration of the First Nations peoples onto reserves is glossed over.

Parks Canada commissioned a human history study on Pacific Rim National Park in 1974 to be used as a source for the park’s interpretative materials. In it, the author and geographer, Brian White, cautions that “the designation of settlement phases itself tends to imply stasis, although intended only as an organizational and interpretive convenience. On this final coastal frontier
landscape, the various themes of human resource usage and settlement tend to overlap considerably, with strong new currents developing as others begin to lose their impetus” (White 1974:8). White concludes that “interpretive programming should cover the full spectrum of occupation rather than concentrating on one aspect such as Nootkan ethnology” (White 1974: 101). Yet White’s advice seems to have fallen on deaf ears. The current historical narrative lacks continuity, for to provide connections between these eras would be to acknowledge the smallpox epidemics, the depopulation of coastal villages and the resettlement on reserves. It would have to discuss how land speculation, settler pre-emptions, and pioneer homesteading intertwined the lives of both settlers and Indigenous people in ways which belie the notion of pristine wilderness. It would have to recognize the fact that (as I will explore in the next chapter) Indigenous people were key players in the era of shipwrecks and lighthouses. It would have to mention the lack of historical treaties and the negotiation of modern ones like the Ma-nuulth Final Agreement. It would have to recognize that in many ways First Nations peoples are still battling against the management of Indigenous territory by a foreign power and imposed settler government. Glen Coulthard argues that:

In settler-colonial contexts such as Canada—where there is no formal period marking an explicit transition from an authoritarian past to a democratic present—state-sanctioned approaches to reconciliation tend to ideologically fabricate such a transition by narrowly situating the abuses of settler-colonization firmly in the past [sic]. In these situations, reconciliation itself becomes temporally framed as the process of individually and collectively overcoming [sic] “legacy” left in the wake of this past abuse, while leaving the present structure of colonial rule largely unscathed.
Furthermore, as Blackburn has attested “reconciliation talk links political legitimacy with the state’s ability to recognize and overcome its colonial history but leaves the exclusionary tendency at the heart of modernity’s universalizing pretensions unrecognized” (2007: 622). Although land acknowledgements and Indigenous place-names have increasingly become par for the course in Parks Canada literature, the story of the transition from populous, thriving, and interconnected Indigenous communities to ‘empty’ wilderness is largely left to the imagination (and most hikers I spoke took it for granted that indigenous people were no longer there, something I will explore in the next chapter). No connection is made between past events and contemporary inequalities, leaving little space for critique of the monolithic vision of national parks as spaces for the preservation of nature and the recreation of citizens. In this chapter I have discussed the formation of the settler-Canadian wilderness narrative, in the next, I will explore some of the complex lived realities of Indigenous peoples that interrupt and interrogate
CHAPTER 4 WHY ARE WE STILL IN THE WAY?

The middle section of the trail between Tscowis and Qua-ba-diwa is probably the section where the past and ongoing presence of Indigenous peoples is most visible to hikers. That is not to say that the rest of the trail is not also Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht territory, but rather that it is on this section of the trail where visitors become more aware of the role of Indigenous peoples as the owners of this territory. The nature-nationalism of the Canadian state (described in the previous chapter) often presents Indigenous peoples’ presence in the so-called wilderness as an obstacle, anomaly or anachronism. Yet access to the trail relies on the labour of Pacheedaht, Huu-ay-aht, and Ditidaht peoples. In this chapter I will move between places important to both the Indigenous and tourist geographies of the West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. This non-linear narrative does not replicate the direct route followed by the hikers in search of a pilgrimage into wilderness as described in the previous chapter, but rather reflects the movements of peoples whose movements over the territory are directed by diverse purposes. One does not follow a linear route in one’s home, but rather moves according to what one needs or wishes to do in the moment. In some ways, it is Indigenous people’s movements off-trail that most clearly mark the West Coast Trail as their home-space, and their role as territorial hosts. It is important to emphasize that the Huu-ay-aht and Ditidaht people I met, from the very start, emphasized their role as the givers of hospitality in the settler-indigenous relationship. This is particularly important as there are sometimes very obvious differences in the material wealth, education level, and overall socio-economic status (by settler standards) between the Indigenous hosts and their visitors. In this chapter I will discuss the importance of claiming the host role as a means of reclaiming Indigenous power in the context of settler-colonialism.

The Huu-ay-aht word for their ancestral territory is hahuuli (pronounced ha-hoolth-ee).
Nuu-chah-nulth scholar Umeek defines *hahuuli* first simply as “land (and its resources) owned by a chief” (Atleo 2011:x). This simple definition belies complex layers of meaning related to the Nuu-chah-nulth philosophy of *tswalk*, which Umeek (Atleo) explores in detail in his larger work (2011: 139-170). *Hahuuli* refers to indigenous land, but it also intrinsically refers to a relationship *with* the land. During my fieldwork I enjoyed the hospitality of the Huu-ay-aht Trail Guardians. With their permission, I spent a rainy night in their cabin at Tscowis while they were not using it. Tacked up on the wall of the cabin was a detailed cartographic map of the region from Pachena Bay to Tsusiaht Falls. Written in bold black sharpie across the top was the title “Huu-ay-aht Hathoulee [sic]”. This superimposition of an indigenous ideas of territory over settler-colonial cartography was a good reminder that this land is a palimpsest, where different ways of relating to the land overlap and at times obscure each other.

As a settler, what I can write about Indigenous territory is admittedly and necessarily (given the fact that I have no hereditary right to some knowledge) incomplete. But I hope to reveal some of the nuances and complexities at work in the development of this ongoing relationship between the colonizer and the colonized on Huu-ay-aht and Ditidaht *hahuuli*. One view of the relationship that I have found useful has been drawn from canonical works in the anthropology of tourism, that of “hosts and guests” (Smith 1989). To frame settlers as “guests” may seem a little misleading, as contemporary interpretations of that term tend to have positive connotations. Yet guests are often unwanted, and sometimes flat out unwelcome. Tourism studies literature (Boissevain 1996; Crick 1989; Salazar 2012) provides a plethora of examples of the original occupants of a place negotiating an uneasy relationship with travellers on their land. While the resources and trade opportunities that visitors bring may be welcome, sometimes they themselves are not. As voluntary mobility is often itself a sign of affluence, sometimes there is not only a cultural, but also a class
divide between hosts and guests. Yet there is also power in knowledge of a place, and this may, at times, give the hosts the upper hand. I like using “hosts and guests” as a descriptor for the relationship between settler-Canadians and Indigenous peoples in the context of the WCT because it turns the nature-nationalism paradigm of settler-Canadians that I described in the previous chapter upside down. The ideals of a wilderness-homeland are put to question when you are treated as guests on land that you claim is yours via the nation-state.

There are three main points of contact between visitors who hike the West Coast Trail and the Indigenous peoples whose territory the WCT crosses. The first which I will describe is Chez Monique’s, a hiker restaurant and refuge run by the Knighton family at Qua-ba-diwa (also known by its settler-Canadian name of Carmanah). The second is at the Nitinat narrows, which must be crossed by ferry, and that ferry is operated by the Edgar family who are members of the Ditidaht First Nation. The third most common point of contact is with the Trail Guardians, typically at their cabins. As I consider each of these, I also want to emphasize a feature they all have in common. Each of these points of contact also creates a space for socializing, with each offering a sense of hospitality, and the traditional owners of the territory acting as hosts. The sharing of advice, stories, and food and drink characterizes these spaces of Indigenous hospitality. Indigenous people’s emphasis on their role as host serves as a reminder to settlers that it is not “our home and native land” as the Canadian national anthem trumpets, but rather that we are relative newcomers to this territory.

When I first approached the Knighton family at the Qua-ba-diwa (listed on maps as Indian Reserve Number 6) to discuss my project, their reaction was both skeptical and mildly hostile. With one eyebrow raised, Monique Knighton addressed me in what I would learn was her usual confrontational style: “So you're writing about us huh? You know the problem with writing things
down? It becomes truth. And then your truth becomes the truth. Each of us has various truths.” She gestured around to the other hikers sitting in her restaurant. “But when you write it down, it becomes the truth. And what if you get it wrong? Lots of people have gotten it wrong.” She went on to describe with humour an encounter with an ethnohistorian who she claimed had “got their family history wrong.” She proudly told of how, in a rage, she had chased him out of the Royal British Columbia Archives in Victoria all the way to his car, where he made a hasty escape.32 After a long discussion where I tried to defend my project “as not like that,” Peter, her soft-spoken husband quietly interjected “You should call it [your dissertation] Why are we still in the way.” Both Monique’s exclamations about the nature of truth and Peter’s quiet statement encapsulate the way in which the people of Qua-ba-diwa and other First Nations people caught in the works of the tourism production line feel: as if they are either artifacts or obstacles. With the former their culture is objectified, made into something to be catalogued, examined, and consumed, while, with the latter, indigenous people are seen as recalcitrant anachronisms, threatening the illusion of wilderness cherished by the tourist imagination. When Indigenous peoples follow their own paths on trajectories that diverge from those of the settler state they are made to feel “in the way.” And yet, particularly in the middle of the trail, evidence of Indigenous people making their own way and asserting their role as territorial hosts abounds.

It is important to point out that tourism in the West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve would not have been possible without Indigenous peoples. The Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht

32 As archaeologist Alan McMillan warns, “although ethnographic studies have provided a fairly detailed picture of traditional Nuu-chah-nulth culture, they have to be used with caution. Numerous differences existed between the various Nuu-chah-nulth, Ditidaht, and Makah communities, and even between families in the same village. Differing beliefs and behaviours attributable to rank and gender distinctions are also minimalized in these normative descriptions. Furthermore, they present an idealized account of cultural practices, largely ignoring exceptions or variations in behaviour. The late date at which this information was collected means that it refers primarily to the mid-nineteenth century and cannot be extended uncritically to earlier periods” (MacMillan 1999: 24).
and Pacheedaht peoples are, and have always been, the territorial hosts in the region, and they are, and have always been, indispensable to visitors, whether they be welcome tourists or unwanted interlopers. Yet their continuing presence has often been overlooked, if not all out ignored or erased, in order to perpetuate a wilderness mythology that fits into the nationalist nature narrative of the Canadian state.

There are many ways in which the contemporary human geography of the space known as the West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve and as the hahuuli of Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht peoples both converges and diverges. The Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht are separate First Nations, with specific allocated lands (treaty lands in the case of the Huu-ay-aht, reserves and unceded territory in the case of the Ditidaht and Pacheedaht). When I sought permission to conduct my research in 2013, Parks Canada saw the division of the West Coast Trail Unit into the territory of the three First Nations along the following physical geographic boundaries. The northern end of the park until Tsusiaht Falls was viewed by Parks Canada to be Huu-ay-aht First Nation territory. The former reserves north of Pachena point that had been allocated to the Huu-ay-aht were now designated as treaty settlement lands under the Maa-nulth Final Agreement. The central section of the trail from Tsusiaht Falls to Walbran Creek is designated as Ditidaht territory, with reserves technically under control of the Ditidaht First Nation. Reserve lands south of Walbran creek until the trail’s terminus at the Gordon River Crossing near Port Renfrew are designated as Pacheedaht territory. These are the administrative boundaries according to the government of Canada, and Parks Canada uses them to allocate the patrol zones of the three nations’ different Trail Guardians as well as things like research permits.

However, the geography of hahuuli is more complex and contested. There are several reasons for this. First, the division of these three First Nations into separate groups is somewhat of
a colonial invention. The Huu-ay-aht had consolidated from several villages of closely related people prior to colonial administration, but the consolidation of the Ditidaht First Nation is, for some Ditidaht, a legacy of colonial intervention. As Nasdady (2012) has pointed out, the ethnogenesis of First Nations in Canada has created boundaries between kin in spaces where, prior to colonialism, there was more flexibility and fluidity to reflect the complex process of reciprocal relationships between families. In the words of one former Ditidaht chief “Ditidaht is a language, not a people.” Several kin groups were not amalgamated into the Ditidaht First Nation until they were moved to the Nitinat Lake reserve in the 1950s, and some families, like the Knightons of Qua-ba-diwa, contest the legality of their amalgamation into the Ditidaht First Nation. Kinship ties between the three groups are also complex, and several Ditidaht and Huu-ay-aht First Nation members have claims to membership in both First Nations and have switched membership at different times in their lives. The ethnonyms paired with the legal entities of the Ditidaht, Pacheedaht, and Huu-ay-aht First Nations are the ones that I use in this dissertation because they are the ones that most indigenous peoples I encountered used to group themselves, as tribal membership has been a lived political reality for decades. However, it is important to recognize that these ethnonyms, and terms like “nation” and “tribe” and “band” are “recent terms originating from European need for simplistic categorization and ignore the true political realities with their long histories” (Arima & Hoover 2011: 16, see also Thom 2009 and Nasdady 2012). These terms are also legal and political administrative units, and work as tools of governmentality. Second, territorial claims are hereditary, and colonialism interrupted traditional kin-based hereditary practices (through depopulation via disease, the isolation of reserves, the cultural genocide of the

33 Peter Knighton, personal communication August 2013. This does not mean that people who are now recognized as Ditidaht did not or do not have clear ideas of group affiliation and territorial ownership, but rather that the designation of “Ditidaht” is not one that originated from indigenous people’s self-definition.
residential schools, and the banning of feasting practices). This means that some of the territorial boundaries are contested. For example, some Ditidaht claim that the area north of Tsusiaht Falls to Pachena Point ought to be Ditidaht, not Huu-ay-aht territory. Some Ditidaht also claim that the area south of Walbran until Owen Point is Ditidaht, not Pacheedaht territory. As an outsider, I neither support nor contest any of these claims. But I do think it’s important to be aware that the grouping of First Nations and the creation of territorial boundaries has been influenced and shaped by colonialism. The extent of these contestations and their resolution is not a subject I am able to comment on, both because it is not my place as an outsider and as it is beyond the scope of this dissertation. As Ditidaht First Nation member Charles Edgar told me, “we have our own way of settling things” regarding territorial boundaries. It is important to note that although some of the territorial boundaries may be contested, this does not mean they were not solid social facts. Ditidaht and Huu-ay-aht peoples, like many northwest coast peoples, had very precise and exclusive concepts of rights to territory and resources. The point I want to make is that the boundaries between First Nations recognized by the state of Canada are not necessarily reflective of Indigenous perceptions of their hahuuli.

It’s also important to acknowledge the historical processes that influenced the formation of this contact zone. Key to the development of tourism of the West Coast Trail is the story of its depopulation, which opened up space for the characterization of the place as pristine wilderness ripe for nature-based tourism. Several factors contributed to the depopulation of this area of the

34 See Nasdady 2012 for similar case studies from the Yukon and Thom 2009 for examples from Coast Salish territory on the eastern side of Vancouver Island.

35 His remark references hereditary display privileges, often shown in contests and feats of strength, known in Nuu-chah-nulth as tupaati. See also Macmillan 1999: 16 and Sapir & Swadesh 1955: 3 for a discussion of tupaati. It is important to note that some of the Huu-ay-aht and Ditidaht people I spoke with contested aspects of anthropological definitions of tupaati as laid out by Sapir & Swadesh.
coast. First, the 1700 tsunami which devastated the coastline prior to European contact (Thrush & Ludwin 2007, Hutchinson & McMillan 1997). Second were the multiple waves of disease that swept through the region, starting with several smallpox epidemics in the eighteenth century and continuing with tuberculosis outbreaks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (McMillan 1999: 191-93). For example, Peter Knighton spoke of his grandfather being only one of a handful of survivors of a smallpox epidemic at Qua-ba-diwa in the late nineteenth century. The village at Tquadra was also decimated by smallpox, and older hiking guides note the burial caves where epidemic victims were interred.

In Chapter 1 I discussed the Huu-ay-aht return to Anacla at Pachena Bay. Also significant was the consolidation of the Ditidaht First Nation onto the Nitinat Lake reserve inland from their ancestral coastal village sites. When Pacific Rim National Park was formed there were twelve Indian Reserves included. Most of these were only a few hundred feet long and wide. These reserves were designated by Peter O’Reilly in the 1880s who tried to limit them as much as he could (Fisher 1977: 199-206). Some of these were further reduced in 1913 because the Canadiagovernment saw the reserves as being “in excess of the reasonable requirements of the Indians” (Canada 1916 4: 851 quoted in Hoover & Arima 2011: 181) given the dominate colonial

36 Arima and Hoover estimate that between European arrival in the late eighteenth century and the 1930s Nuu-chah-nulth and Ditidaht population fell from about 30,000 to about 2,000 (Arima & Hoover 2011: 16). This estimate only considers post-contact depopulation due to disease and does not consider that due to both the deadly 1700 tsunami and European diseases carried via trade routes with other indigenous people significant depopulation likely occurred prior to the arrival of European explorers on the west coast in the late eighteenth century. McMillan notes evidence in historical accounts of late eighteenth century explorers encountering Ditidaht people with smallpox scars despite having no prior direct contact with Europeans (MacMillan 1999: 191-192). Arima and Hoover also claim that the Huu-ay-aht consolidated into a single political group just prior to contact due to warfare (Arima & Hoover 2011: 21). Although warfare may have influenced this, Huu-ay-aht oral history attributes some of this consolidation to the banding together of tsunami survivors.

37 These are omitted from current trail guides to keep tourists from desecrating the graves. I was told by Huu-ay-aht people how tourists had been known to take photos of skeletons, and even arrange them in morbid positions, when they found burial caves.
perception at the time that Indigenous peoples were doomed to fade away. Nearly every Parks Canada designated campground on the West Coast Trail was once the site of an Indigenous village. That now there are none (at least occupied on a year-round basis) is a historically recent development.38

4.1 “This isn't Canada, it's Home”: Selling Burgers at Qua-ba-diwa

As discussed in the previous chapter, the settler-colonial state envisions national parks as places for citizens to recreate ideals of wilderness and the colonial frontier. Yet as Indigenous peoples increasingly assert their claims to territory, state spatial designations and concepts of citizenship are challenged and complicated. I will examine colonial and post-colonial processes of place-making at the micro-level of one particular family who enact unique strategies of resistance to state forces. In 1992, Peter and Monique Knighton made the decision to leave the main reserve where the Ditidaht people had been consolidated by the state in the 1960s, and return to Qua-ba-diwa, their ancestral home. However, Qua-ba-diwa, which the state calls Indian Reserve Number 6, lies within the boundaries of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The Knightons’ home, which their family occupied for 300 years until they were displaced by state initiatives in the twentieth century, lies directly in the middle of the trail. Since their move to Qua-ba-diwa, the Knighton family have built cabins, sold food, and provided shelter to thousands of hikers, often to the consternation of parks officials. I will now discuss the Knightons’ unique strategies of resistance to state efforts to confine their home to tourist-oriented visions of a bounded wilderness, as well as the wider implications of their experiences for understanding the frictions between Indigenous

See McMillan 1999: 213 for a discussion of Huu-ay-aht and Ditidaht villages likely hosting a core permanent year-round population despite seasonal fluctuations.
and settler-Canadian conceptions of a homeland.

On a sunny summer day in August of 2013, I was hanging out (as anthropologists do) at the Knighton family’s hamburger stand at Qua-ba-diwa. A visitor asked if he could smoke a cigarette. In Canada, smoking is highly regulated and is banned by law from restaurants and in some regions from parks and beaches. Monique Knighton said that he could, and when he asked if it was legal, her response was “this isn't Canada, it's home.” Her bold statement encapsulates the attitude of stubborn opposition to the colonization of her family’s ancestral territory that defined many of Monique’s interactions with hikers, and it also subtly references one of her key strategies in doing so. For what better way to display one’s claim to territory, to home, than to claim the role of host? Furthermore, in refuting the jurisdiction of Canadian law, she was making an overt claim of Indigenous sovereignty. I suggest that through an assertion of the role as hosts, the Knighton family subverts deterritorializing settler visions of their home as wilderness and as Canada and throw a wrench in the gears of the nature-nationalism myth-making machine of state-sanctioned tourism. In a state where First Nations people have been continuously removed from their homes, the offering of hospitality becomes an assertion of ownership. With more than a little intentional irony, selling burgers at Qua-ba-diwa has, for these Ditidaht peoples, become a political act.

According to the Knighton family oral history, Qua-ba-diwa was settled by people from Neah Bay in what is now Washington State approximately 300 years ago, a timeline that coincides with the occurrence of the disastrous 1700 tsunami. The village of Qua-ba-diwa was an important waypoint for Nuu-chah-nulth peoples traveling by canoe on what is a notably treacherous section of the coast. The village numbered in the hundreds prior to a major smallpox epidemic in the late 19th century which decimated the local population, causing colonial authorities to declare the Ditidaht peoples “nearly extinct” (Walbran 1991). Peter Knighton’s great-grandfather was one of
only three survivors of the epidemic. Although the Knighton family continued to maintain a residence at Qua-ba-diwa, the Canadian government encouraged them to relocate their main residence to the settlement of Clo-oose, a few kilometres down the coast, in the early twentieth century. At this time Clo-oose had a school, and a mission-run church, and was a regular stop on a coastal ferry route as it had a small settler community. However, by the 1960s most of the settler population had left, the school had closed, and the coastal ferry had been cancelled. The government then imposed a relocation of the remaining Ditidaht peoples on the coast, including the Knighton family, to an inland reserve at Nitinat. Improved access to jobs, educational opportunities, and transportation infrastructure were promised. However, the result was an alienation from traditional territory, language loss through residential schooling, and the continuing isolation from employment and other opportunities due to the remote location of the inland reserve.\(^\text{39}\) The Knighton family and other outer-coast Ditidaht families, point out that their relocation coincided quite neatly with the formation of a national park on their former homes.

In 1992, Peter and Monique Knighton made the decision to leave the main reserve at Nitinat and return to Qua-ba-diwa, their ancestral home. However, Qua-ba-diwa, which the state calls Indian Reserve Number 6, now lies within the boundaries of the West Coast Trail Unit in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The name of their home has been anglicized to Carmanah (Nicholson 1965:162), and the main sign of human habitation visible to non-local eyes is the Canadian Coast Guard lighthouse whose brightly painted red and white walls tower over the cliff area that was formerly the Qua-ba-diwa burial site. The lighthouse itself symbolizes both remoteness and

\(^{39}\) Ironically it could be argued that moving inland further isolated the Knightons and other Ditidaht families from the rest of Canadian society and infrastructure, as access to other coastal communities via boat became more arduous with the need to pass through the dangerous Nitinat Narrows. Overland access to the village of Nitinat is completely reliant on privately built and maintained, unpaved, logging roads.
imperial control over territory. When the Knightons returned home, they did so to a place both fetishized as wilderness and managed as such by the Canadian federal government. A place for visiting, but not for living.

Yet return home and live the Knightons did. They built a cabin for themselves and shelters for their extended family who often visit. Monique grew a magnificent garden, transforming the supposedly rough wild beach into a cultivated space (which in itself is a fascinating inversion of colonial tropes of settlement and which I will discuss further in Chapter 6). The hamburger stand came later. Monique tells the story of several bewildered and bedraggled hikers knocking on her door after seeing smoke from their wood stove. The hikers asked if they had any food for purchase, which at the time they didn’t, but they shared what they had (which for Monique was often her ever-present cans of Coca-Cola). What first the Knightons offered freely (and still do sometimes to those in need) soon became a growing enterprise, as the sheer number of hikers, several thousand a summer, made it impossible to host them all without some sort of compensation. “Chez Monique's,” the West Coast Trail hamburger stand, was founded and Qua-ba-diwa became known amongst hikers as a place for hospitality. Importantly, the name was originally intended to be “Chez Nitcom,” in reference to the name of Peter’s grandfather, which Canadian state records had Anglicized to Knighton. But the authors of a much-read guidebook had referred to it in their text as Chez Monique’s, and the name stuck (which furthered the aforementioned wariness of the Knightons regarding people who write things down).

The Knightons like to say that they attract “strays.” Several hikers over the years who have stumbled upon Chez Monique’s have ended up staying for weeks or even months, helping the elderly couple by chopping wood and labouring in the garden in return for food and shelter. Notably, the cafe doesn’t follow the normative rules of the hospitality industry in the capitalist
settler-Canadian world. Anyone, no matter if they purchase something or not, is welcome to stop and have a chat, share their shelters, and even stay for a night or two with the family's permission. Whether one has money or not, no one at Qua-ba-diwa is allowed to go hungry or left out in the rain. One time I was there during a particularly violent storm and the space in her cafe became quite overcrowded. Several hikers offered their thanks for the hot beverages and warm fire provided and apologized for not being able to pay. Monique Knighton scoffed in response and stated gruffly, “It's a storm! What would the ancestors say if I threw you out?”

It is important to note the material difficulties faced by the Knighton’s in returning home and creating a place for hospitality at Qua-ba-diwa. There is no power and no running water, although some hikers who were engineers have helped out the family by rigging up a system of hoses running to the kitchen from a nearby creek. Water is untreated and garbage must be either composted or burnt. All food is stored in coolers with ice from the closest town, over an hour’s boat voyage away. The only ways to access the Qua-ba-diwa area are approximately a forty-kilometre hike on foot or by boat, with the latter only truly accessible by those who have the local knowledge of how to navigate the narrow passage through rock shelves created by Peter's ancestors. In order to keep the operation flowing during the busy season, Peter must travel by boat down the rugged coast to Port Renfrew for supplies every few days, a trip that is not always easy or safe. He also sometimes transports sick or injured hikers off the trail, a duty that Parks Canada reserves for itself but is sometimes unable to carry out when they have multiple evacuations to perform. So, against the ‘rules,’ Peter offers rides to those in need. 40

40 I am using the ethnographic present of 2013-2014 for this discussion. Tragically, in the summer of 2018 Peter drowned during one such boat trip.
As exemplified in my earlier anecdote around the title quote, Qua-ba-diwa is operated outside of and even against the regulations of the Canadian state. The cafe has no licenses to sell cigarettes or alcohol, nor does it pay taxes. Parks Canada officials have tried over the years to obstruct the Knighton family’s occupation of their land and operation of their cafe by fining the Knightons for breaches of federal park regulations. In the past, wardens have attempted to penalize the Knightons for everything from burying their compost to having their dogs running around without leashes. Most of the fines and charges have been dismissed when brought to court. This opposition by the government to the Knightons’ return home reveals the political nature of their seemingly innocuous enterprise of selling burgers on a beach to tourists. It is important to stress that Knightons engage strategically with the settler and capitalist structuring of hospitality, doing so in a way that also asserts Indigenous conceptions of territorial ownership and the host role.

Yet it is also important to stress the material inequality of the Knightons as compared to not only powerful state actors like Parks Canada, but the hikers they host. To put it simply, from a settler-Canadian perspective, the Knightons are poor. They had to crowd fund to purchase a new boat in 2013 when their previous vessel was destroyed by a storm. During the winter season they resided as guests of friends and family, as the only home they owned themselves was at Qua-ba-diwa (the elderly couple stopped living at Qua-ba-diwa year-round in the late 2000s on the recommendation of their family doctor). The funds raised through their hamburger stand allow them to continue to return to Qua-ba-diwa and pay for their medications and other necessities over the winter, but make them no profit (at least, in the capitalist sense). Yet, in their own eyes, the Knightons are rich as they have a beautiful home in a beloved place where they have deep ancestral connections. Nearly every morning, Peter goes out to the rocks at the beach and listens to the waves. Sometimes he composes poems about his home. Other times, he just sits deep in thought.
I can say, with absolute certainty, that when they are home, the Knightons do not feel poor. Instead, they are the rightful hosts to a beautiful place, which they had the power and generosity to share with visitors.

“Who Do They Think Was Doing the Rescuing?”

The above quote emerged from a conversation with Charles Edgar Junior of the Ditidaht First Nation while sitting on his dock at Nitinat Narrows. We had been talking about shipwrecks and the dangers of the Nitinat bar, partially prompted by the evacuation of a hiker with a concussion by Parks Canada earlier that afternoon that Edgar had helped facilitate. The Edgar family has been ferrying hikers across the dangerous waters of Nitinat Narrows since before the West Coast Trail was declared part of the national park. They also run a crab shack on the south dock, selling pop, chips, baked potatoes and fresh crab⁴¹ and fish. In recent years, they have also built cabins that hikers who are tired of staying in soggy tents can stay in for a night or two. Nitinat narrows is the only spot on the trail where, short of being officially rescued by Parks Canada staff, hikers can (legally) make the choice to exit the trail and end their trek. Starting in 2016, hikers could also officially start and end their hike at Nitinat Narrows, meaning that the Ditidaht at Nitinat Lake now have a Parks Canada sanctioned trail access point on their territory. There are extra fees for the hour-long boat ride down to the head of Nitinat village, about an hour’s journey from the Narrows down the Lake, which is one reason the Edgars have been pushing for a third entrance for years. During my fieldwork from 2013-2014 this route was only used as an exit point.

⁴¹ These are incredibly fresh, as the crabs are sometimes caught to order. The customer orders a crab and a trap is hauled up and its inmate executed for the hungry hiker’s dining pleasure.
The West Coast Trail is infamous in western Canada, and in Parks Canada lore, for the disproportionate amount of hiker evacuations or rescues Parks Canada safety officers perform each year. Each summer, approximately 5,000 to 8,000 hikers trek its length, of those, about 100 to 200 are evacuated. At the Parks Canada hiker registration huts, a tally of how many hikers have been evacuated each year is posted and pointed out to hikers at orientation. Many of the evacuations take place early in the season, when the terrain and the weather is usually at its wettest and muddiest and temperatures are cool enough to make slips and falls, as well as hypothermia, real dangers. Most injuries that prompt an evacuation are minor, with sprained ankles and knees being the most common cause. But some are more serious. While I was hiking the trail in 2013 a woman was evacuated after going into anaphylactic shock from a bee sting and two young men were evacuated due to hypothermia. Frightening tales of fractured spines, hemorrhaging miscarriages, and even drownings were recounted to me by the lightkeepers, Parks Canada staff, and others who interact with hikers along the trail.

There are also many off-the-books rescues and self-evacuations at Nitinat and sometimes at Qua-ba-diwa. Parks Canada staff, including the Trail Guardians, as well as the lightkeepers, are required to make incident reports on all official evacuations that they participate in, of which there are many. But from its inception, many of the rescues and other lifesaving activities along the trail have gone unreported and unacknowledged because they have been carried out by those whose homes lie on or near the trail. Before the trail became part of an official Park but was beginning to be hiked recreationally, residents at the not yet deserted Clo-oose often had to feed and shelter

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42 A favourite evacuation story among all my interviewees was a recent one. In 2011 a woman was evacuated with severe stomach pain from Walbran Creek. It was discovered she had hiked two days while in labour. Shortly after her evacuation she gave birth to a little baby girl whom she christened “Fern” in honour of the WCT (Pynn 2011)
hikers who underestimated the difficulty of the trail. One former resident of Clo-oose told me the following:

There were groups of kids on probation with a minder or two. It was like Outward Bound and they’d be given their food at the beginning and told it would last the whole of the trail and by the time they’d got to Clo-oose some had eaten everything. And then they’d get kids with hypothermia which is really serious.

As mentioned before, the Knightons have a long history of feeding and sheltering hikers, and probably have saved some lives (or at the very least prevented some injuries) by doing so. The Edgars at Nitinat have done the same, with the added burden of rescuing hapless boaters who misjudge the treacherous Nitinat bar at the entrance to Nitinat narrows:

There were boats that went out end to end and you’d see people flying out, windows smashed. Carl Edgar Senior went out in a dugout canoe, which was the only thing you could take out in the bad weather, right out into the bar to get a couple guys who were drowning from a fish boat that was upside down.

Although since the decline of commercial fishing on the coast since the 1990s there have been fewer accidents on the bar, both the Knightons and the Edgars still tell tales of aiding boaters unfamiliar with the difficulties of navigating this section of the coast. One day when I was staying at Qua-ba-diwa, Monique came running out of the cabin to proudly show me a medal given to Peter’s grandfather, Frank Nytom, by the US Coast Guard for rescuing some American mariners who had capsized just off Carmanah Point. There are accounts of Ditidaht people rescuing shipwrecked mariners from the nineteenth century. Local historian Jim Hamilton wrote:

The passengers and the crew of the little wooden steamer Woodside were rescued by
Nitinats and taken to Victoria in 1888. In 1891 the crew and the passengers of the bark Sarah were rescued after a terrible ordeal. One man, Dan Daniels, was awarded a gold lifesaving medal by the US government for saving 10 crewmen from the schooner Puritan wrecked on Bonilla Point in 1896. It has been claimed that had the Nitinats been notified they would have gone to try and rescue many of the 117 who perished in the wreck of the steamer Valencia in 1906 (Hamilton 1977).

From mariners to hikers, local indigenous families have been facilitating rescues and generally aiding travellers on the west coast since it became a contact zone.

Yet there are other stories too, which, although not spoken out loud as much around hiker campfires, lurk beneath the surface of the wilderness mystique of pristine and primeval nature. Settler histories contain rumours of “Indians robbing the bodies” of Valencia victims (Nietzal 1995: 90). Another local amateur historian propounds the ludicrous theory that the Ditidaht would kill shipwrecked white men in order to enslave captive white women (Johnson 1999). Another local settler historian wrote that “too many white men had left their heads on top of poles in Nootkan villages for traders to think of establishing permanent posts [during the early to mid nineteenth century fur trade era]” (White 1974: 31). This characterization belies every historical and oral history account I have read, and yet resounds (without evidence) throughout nearly all popular narratives of the coast written in the twentieth century (Nicholson 1965, Scott 1974).

In his classic work, *Contact & Conflict* (1977), historian Robin Fisher details the extensive prejudice of settlers in the nineteenth century, who characterized Indigenous peoples as bloodthirsty, treacherous, and cunning (Fisher 1977:89). As Fisher makes clear, this perception of “Indians” was “self-perpetuating. Settlers repeated each other’s published remarks about the Indians with or without acknowledgement” (Fisher 1977: 91). One notable incident was the
mysterious death of Indian agent William Banfield (for whom Bamfield, while misspelled, is named) in 1862. It was assumed that he was killed by the “unruly Indians” (Fisher 1977: 149) and this has become the accepted mythology recounted in pioneer histories of the Alberni inlet (Scott 1974). The assumption of hostility arose from a caricature of savagery that originated in the racist beliefs of the time, rather than any concrete history of consistently violent conflict against settlers. The Ditidaht and Huu-ay-aht peoples did have a long and complex history of extensive warfare with other Indigenous groups, particularly during the eighteenth century (McMillan 1999: 145-152) but every oral history account from this section of the coast, from both settlers and Indigenous peoples, has pointed more toward a contact zone history of coexistence (not without conflict, but usually without violence), trade, and aid in times of crisis. While there is no concrete evidence of Banfield being killed by Huu-ay-aht peoples, there is evidence of Huu-ay-aht and Ditidaht peoples helping build the lighthouses, ferrying settlers to their new homes with their canoes, carrying messages between settlers and Victoria, teaching the settlers how to paddle canoes and navigate the coastline, and rescuing shipwrecked mariners all along the coast (Morrison 1962, Wells 1988, Hamilton 1977, Lyon n.d.).

The first-hand accounts of settlers contrast with the tall tales of hostile ‘Indians’ in popular media of the time. A good example is the following is an account of the Griffiths family’s first landing at Clo-oose in 1920:

But what a sight met our eyes!! Canoes rowed by Indians swarmed the water and we were told to jump into the arms of an Indian –we who had never seen a native Indian of the West Coast. The children didn’t like it at all and neither did we ladies, but the thought was worse than the fact. As I viewed the scene, I was reminded of a picture in our school history “The Landing of the Romans in England.” The little ones were really alarmed when the Indian
women wanted to hold them and rock them with a crooning song….Coming along I had thought I had no need to be afraid of the Indian, no court gentleman could have been more polite to me or more patient in showing me the trick of stepping out of a canoe (Lyon, n.d.)

The initial fears of “Indians” as strange, exotic, and potentially antagonistic are recollected with a tone that clearly acknowledges both the origins of these fears (the positioning of settler as conqueror and the “Indian” as the conquered, alluded to via the reference to the Romans) and their poor reflection of actual experience of intercultural contact. Settlers on the west coast of Vancouver Island were extremely reliant on the labour, hospitality, and general aid of the Indigenous families in the area. The following is an account of the first lightkeepers family arriving at Cape Beale:

The landing of the Cox family at Cape Beale was quite an experience, especially for a mother with five young children. The Alexander had landed them at an Indian village at Dodger’s Cove on Diana Island a few miles inside the entrance to Barkley Sound. From there the Indians were to transfer them to the lighthouse by canoe. Bad weather kept them at Dodger’s Cove for nearly a week and they were finally landed on the beach in front of the lighthouse. The six-mile trip was made in five canoes, each manned by two Indians and a klootchman [sic]. The girls relate being somewhat terrified by a school of blackfish which came close to the canoes; but this was compensated for by the thrill they received afterwards when carried ashore on the Indians’ backs. “Whisky Charlie” was the name of the Indian who carried Pattie. She recalls that he was a very good looking Indian. Only five at the time, she remembers him shouting to her “hang on, hang on” which she could hardly do for laughing. It took two Indians to carry her father who weighed more than two hundred pounds. In spite of heavy surf breaking on the pebble beach, all were landed without getting
wet. The Indians then carried all their belongings up the steep cliff to the lighthouse” (Nicholson 1965:139).

Both written and oral settler accounts with local origins (rather than from the urban newspapers), continuously allude to indigenous peoples helping build homes, ferry freight in their canoes, trade food and other goods, and teach settlers about the local environment, from tides to which plants were edible. Of course, some of these things were done for a fee as indigenous peoples of the west coast have from their first contact with Europeans participated (and long before, given the extensive pre-contact trade routes) participated in the exchange of goods and services (Lutz 2009). This does not take away from the fact that indigenous hospitality is a recurring phenomenon on this stretch of coastline, but rather shows how economic relationships and material needs are culturally situated. Indigenous peoples participate in wage work because of material concerns, but they also discuss their participation in terms of symbolic power and status, and again, the role of the host is one of symbolic power.

There are a few ironies at work here (in my experience colonialism is full of irony). First, that there are still so many “rescues” on a hiking trail mythologized for its historic role as a Shipwreck Lifesaving Trail. Second, that some of the rescuing, and many of the seemingly minor actions that likely prevent the need for rescues, such as the offering of food and shelter, are not done through “official” channels related to government built infrastructure but rather emerge from the generous hospitality of those who call the area home. Third, that it is precisely because the coast is not wilderness, but rather is peopled, if sparsely, by hospitable folk that lives are saved.
4.2 Trail Guardians and an Oral Heritage

In 2014, shortly after I completed my fieldwork and after years of consultation with the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht First Nations, a new map of the West Coast Trail was released by Parks Canada. I mentioned this map in the previous chapter in my discussion of “frontcountry” and “backcountry” divisions of tourist space. It includes all the necessary information for traversing the trail, marking campgrounds, guardian cabins, lighthouses, tidal sections, and outhouses. Like the older maps, major shipwrecks are marked. Yet unlike older maps, Indigenous toponyms are included throughout, sometimes, when appropriate, with their meanings attached. The introductory blurb on the front panel of the brochure-style map now begins with an acknowledgment of the three First Nations whose territory the trail traverses, rather than its shipwreck history. What were formally marked as numbered reserves on Huu-ay-aht territory are now named “traditional territory,” in accordance with the 2011 Maa-nulth treaty. Less subtly, the hikers climbing the ladders on the front cover appear, phenotypically, to be Indigenous. Along with the textual insert about the history of the trail there is a photo of an Indigenous person in a Parks Canada uniform crouched down with a couple of hikers beside a tide pool, seemingly discussing its contents. It is a small map, intended to be carried in a hiker’s pack or pocket, and doesn’t contain much non-vital information. But it does contain, for the first-time, indigenous place names, many of which are intimately connected to how the place itself is experienced. For example, one beach just north of Carmanah Lighthouse was called waawaax?adis, translated from the Ditidaht language to “sounding” or “farting beach” (Parks Canada 2014). From my research I had known many of the indigenous place names along the trail already, but on learning this one I

\[^{43}\text{Some sections of the trail are only accessible at certain times in the tidal cycle. I will discuss this further in Chapter 5.}\]
laughed out loud. I could confirm that one’s feet made an odd squeaky squishing sound on impact with this sand that was unlike any other beach on the trail. It did indeed mimic flatulence and I had noticed it when I tread on its sands. That this had been noted by others and named for it, perhaps hundreds (if not thousands) of years before, gave me an uncanny but not unwelcome sense of connection to those who had walked that way before. *Waawaax?adis* became an intimately known place, and any settler fantasies of a pristine wilderness that my settler enculturated mind could concoct were immediately shown false.

When I discussed the new map with a Parks Canada employee who had worked on it, she acknowledged that the map was a long time in the making. There had been long discussions about what to include, and what not to include, how to spell names, and more importantly (and contentiously) whose *hahuuli* each marked place was on. But there are things that have been left out. For example, just about every campground along the West Coast Trail is the site of a former village. As Arima and Hoover note, on a coastline buffeted by the Pacific on one side and rocky shelves and headlands on the other, “for ages, certain places have been the best spots to live” (2011: 97). As a seasoned backcountry camper, I know what makes a good campsite: flat spots to shelter and a clean water source. When I learned of the villages that predated the camping places on the West Coast Trail, it made perfect sense. Some of these were old village sites that were summer sea hunting/whaling villages. Others, such as Klanawa, may have been used for the fall salmon harvest. Every contemporary camping place was in a spot that had been very much used and lived in by indigenous peoples for centuries. 44

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44At the same time, it is worth noting that contemporary Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and other Nuu-chah-nulth west coast peoples I spoke with during my fieldwork often did not make this distinction between seasonal villages and more permanent settlements that is often emphasized by settler ethnohistorians and archeologists (White 1974:16, Sapir & Swadesh 1955, Arima & Hoover 2011). Instead, Indigenous accounts emphasized more changing patterns of settlement due to warfare, natural disaster (the 1700 tsunami particularly) and disease. I suspect that the emphasis on
Also left out were some side or ‘secret’ trails and sites that I had been shown by locals but are not part of official Parks Canada trail infrastructure. Some of these lead to petroglyphs, hidden coves, giant old-growth trees, and sacred sites. Although important to Huu-ay-aht and Ditidaht people themselves, these were not included to keep those who might disrespect such places away. There had been cases in the past where burial caves and burial grounds were disrespected by hikers. One settler-Canadian hiker I interviewed listed as one of the changes he had witnessed over decades of hiking the trail, “all the no-trespassing signs.” The Ditidaht First Nation has placed signs at each point the WCT crosses their territory, asking visitors to remain on the trail. An unfortunate history of hikers and other visitors to their territory vandalizing or stealing Ditidaht property has made these signs necessary. However, they create a rather forbidding image of the Ditidaht nation in the minds of hikers, many of whom never make the connection between the official signs and their friendly hosts at the Nitinat crossing. One of the problems with a co-managed National Park Reserve is that it can make it seem, at least in the mind of the public, that Indian Act reserves are public space. Sacred sites and special Indigenous places, both on and off reserves but within the boundaries of the park, may be seen by tourists as part of a Canadian national heritage, available for anyone to access. Therefore, some Indigenous places and their names are better left off the map, as allowing such sites to fade into the backdrop of amorphous wilderness protects them from unwelcome and irreverent intruders.

The map also does not show where you can land a boat because, obviously, this is a map for hikers. Less obvious is the fact that boats, unless they are operated by a member of the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, or Pacheedaht First Nations, are not permitted to land within the West Coast Trail

the seasonality of villages in settler narratives is somewhat rooted in the widespread colonial perception of First Nations peoples as mobile and nomadic hunter-gatherers.
Unit of Pacific Rim Park Reserve. From the perspective of Parks Canada, this preserves the ‘integrity’ of the unit as a backcountry wilderness area and prevents day-trippers from sightseeing along its length without the administrative supervision of the federal parks service. It also keeps inexperienced boaters who lack a knowledge of the coastline from making a landing on beaches with rocky shelves. In order to ‘make a landing’ one has to really know the tides and which section of the intertidal zone is free of large rocks. Many of the beaches have only one, narrow, landing spot that can be only accessed at high tide. I witnessed this at several beaches, both from the boat and from the shore. To inexperienced eyes, some beaches on the West Coast Trail look mild and welcoming. But many, like Carmanah, have rocky shelves, and there are only a few spots where a small craft, historically a canoe and contemporarily a zodiac or rowboat, can pass. When I was at Qua-ba-diwa in May of 2014 I saw Parks Canada safety officers training new recruits on how to land at the Knighton home. The name Qua-ba-diwa means “canoe landing in front of a village” and on the kilometre-long stretch of sandy beach between the Knighton home and the outlet for Carmanah Creek, there is only one possible place to land, and it is only a few metres wide. The landing place is a gap in the rocky shelves in front of their village created by Peter’s ancestors. As a defensive structure for the village it is brilliant.45 No watercraft, from zodiac to canoe, can land within a kilometre of the village site without an awareness of exactly where to go. For Parks Canada, it required the forbearance of Peter deftly showing them in his old rowboat exactly where to cut through rocks, and at what tides. No map or diagram can show as clearly how to safely land a boat at Qua-ba-diwa; safely, rather one has to not just be told, but also shown exactly where to

45 There are many ways the ancestors of the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht peoples altered the coastline. Besides creating canoe runs, there are also Culturally Modified Trees (known as CMTs, these are old-growth trees that have been harvested for wood and bark for centuries without killing the tree) and clam gardens.
The idea that knowledge transfer is sometimes contingent on context, or, in other words, is something best done in person, is a good segue to the role of the Trail Guardians. The new map of the West Coast Trail is an important step, as is the new K’wistas visitor centre, in decolonizing national park visitor interpretation. Yet it is an imperfect solution to the complex problem involving the protocols and politics of knowledge transfer in different cultural epistemologies. Beyond the map, there are few interpretative materials available to visitors of the backcountry units of the parks. Furthermore, exhibits, displays, dioramas, maps, and plaques are all examples of ‘canned’ knowledge. In representing Nuu-chah-nulth knowledge in these mediums, there is unavoidably a decontextualization of knowledge. This knowledge is also depersonalized, and this is particularly important in cultural contexts where the oral transfer of knowledge from person to person is especially salient. Who possesses knowledge, and who they relate that knowledge to, is an integral part of the knowledge-sharing process. The experience of knowledge-sharing shapes the knowledge itself and is integral to both the information shared and the act of communication. This distinction is highlighted by the differences between the “frontcountry” approach of official heritage discourse and the “backcountry” approach of selective knowledge-sharing by indigenous Trail Guardians.

In 1995 the Trail Guardian program, initially called the Quu’as West Coast Trail Society, was founded. It emerged after activism on the part of Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht First Nations, who until then had been largely left out of both Parks Canada management of the space and employment opportunities within the federal government organization related to the maintenance of the trail. The Trail Guardian program aims to both provide employment to First Nations people in the area and formally acknowledge the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht as
territorial hosts. It is important to note that Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, unlike other co-managed parks such as Haida Gwaii, was not founded as co-managed space where Indigenous peoples had an active role in park administration. It only became a Park Reserve officially in 2011, after several decades of protest and dialogue between the traditional territorial owners and Parks Canada. The Trail Guardian program did not resolve all tensions between Parks Canada and the three First Nations on the West Coast Trail. One action of particular note was the ‘visa’ system the Huu-ay-aht set up on the northern trailhead in the summer of 1998. During that time the Huu-ay-aht First Nation asked hikers to pay a voluntary fee of $20 for crossing their territory on what was then known then as IR 13 (and now known as Malsit). According to the elected Huu-ay-aht chief at the time, Robert Dennis, the fee was a “gentle way” to let hikers know “they are trespassing because Parks Canada has no agreement with the Huu-ay-aht permitting hikers to access our land” (Dennis in O’Keefe 1998). Although short-lived, this action spurred movement on settlement actions over logging rights and land claims and was one of the many actions that gave momentum to modern treaty negotiations. It should be noted that during the Maa-nulth Agreement negotiations, the Quu-us West Coast Trail Society, which had been jointly operated by the three First Nations with territory along the WCT, dissolved. The Ditidaht and the Pacheedaht chose to negotiate their land claims agreements separately from the Maa-nulth First Nations, and from what I understand, this separation created a segregation of trail guardian contracts into three units to be administered by each of the three First Nations with territory intersecting with the West Coast Trail, but ultimately controlled and paid by Parks Canada. Most of my contact on the WCT was with the Huu-ay-aht Trail Guardians, who hosted me several times at Tscowis. I also met and spoke with some of the Ditidaht Trail Guardians. I did not encounter the Pacheedaht Trail Guardians, but I know they are active on the WCT throughout the hiking season as well.
The Guardians have two main roles roughly equivalent to established Parks Canada positions of trail crew and interpreters. Trail Guardians perform basic trail maintenance, maintain a presence at three different cabins along the trail, act as intermediaries in parks safety procedures including hiker evacuations (carried out by a separate designated Parks Canada Visitor safety team), give regular updates on the highly variable weather and trail conditions to both hikers and Parks Canada staff, maintain backcountry campgrounds, and provide information on the trail, including interpretive information regarding local ecology, First Nations culture, and park heritage. The latter, however, is done at their discretion. I emphasize this last part because this caveat, “at their discretion” is where there is the possibility for counternarratives to official Parks Canada heritage to be expressed and, more significantly, a challenge to the dominant practices of national park heritage interpretation.

According to the Trail Guardians, before they conveyed any information whether cultural, historical, or ecological, they would “suss” out a person, assessing whether they would be open to Indigenous knowledge-sharing practices and indeed whether they were worthy of the knowledge and respect it. Trail Guardians noted that “some people don't want to chat, just want to get on with their hike.” From my own interviews, I can state that many hikers who did stay and chat, particularly those who stayed at campgrounds adjacent to the Guardian cabins, noted that such stays were the highlights of their trip. They often took the time to comment on how much they learned and how grateful they were for not only the knowledge but the experience of communication that the personalized and performative aspect of oral knowledge-sharing emphasizes.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{46} I use the term “oral knowledge” rather than oral history because the latter phrase is typically used in the ethnographic record in this region to refer to the formal sharing of particular histories, myths, and territorial claims which are also
Oral knowledge traditions are context-dependent, with a performative aspect that changes according to the relationship between the teller and listener, and the message the teller wishes to convey. They resist the uniformity and the appearance of neutrality that characterizes modern academic and heritage discourses reliant on an aura of authority and expertise. Cruikshank (2006) warns against the crystallization of knowledge which is inherently relational into the easily packaged and transferred forms that are often produced by purveyors of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and what Smith calls Authorised Heritage Discourse (Smith 2012). As Regna Darnell notes, “in an oral tradition, people value the hearing and rehearing of the ‘same’ stories over a lifetime. But these stories are both the same and not the same – their audience, contexts, expressive features and moral implications vary with the occasion of telling” (Darnell 2014: 178). Through the Trail Guardian program, the relational and performative aspects of interpretative practices become emphasized. These include who the interpreter is, who the listener/hiker is, and where they are located (on the beach, at a campground), and what they are doing (waiting out the rain under a tarp, sitting around a campfire, chatting on the trail); these all become integral to what sort of information is communicated and how. Place and social position become particularly salient, with position including the respective race, economic status, age, and attitude of both the Trail Guardian and the visitor.

Also notable is that Guardians often use humour to dispel tensions regarding differences in race and class. A couple of Guardians I knew would, before starting a fireside drumming and storytelling session, ask campers to turn around as they used what they called “Indian Magic” to start the fire... and then poured on gasoline. Another guardian I knew, who was both a skilled proprietary. The Trail Guardians were careful not to share oral histories that were property in any way, and they did not make use of the particular speech protocols that mark the oral history tradition.
drummer and movie buff, would intersperse his dialogue with hikers with quotes from the film *Dances with Wolves*. Finally, during inclement weather Trail Guardians would make hot drinks for visitors to their cabin sites and help set up tarp shelters so hikers could get out of the rain and dry their gear. One day they even cooked up some frozen pizza in their cabin oven and went around to the soggy tents of hikers calling “pizza delivery!” Humorous as this was, it was still, importantly, in keeping with their roles as territorial hosts. As I discussed earlier in the chapter, acts of hosting and the giving of hospitality in the form of food, shelter, and information is an act of ownership. It is, in the context of settler-colonialism and disputes over territory, a political act. The Trail Guardians, as seasonal rather than full-time employees within the Parks Canada system, and furthermore as contract labour rather than direct employees of the federal government were paid significantly less than their counterparts in other units of the Park. Most Trail Guardians, even with supplemental work in the off-season, have incomes significantly under the Canadian or British Columbian average. This difference in socio-economic class was evident in that they sometimes struggled to afford the hiking gear (boots, packs, Gore-Tex jackets) which more affluent hikers often deemed essential (I will discuss this further in Chapter 5). Yet, like the Knightons, the Trail Guardians made it clear that they “felt sorry” for the hikers, because they, unlike the hikers, did not have to pay, but rather were paid “to be out on their land.” They “had the best jobs in the world” because not only could they be out on their beautiful territory, they could do so with the knowledge that it was “theirs.” Despite differences in class and race, the Trail Guardians claimed a position where they, as hosts of the haahuli, were far “luckier” than any of their settler visitors.

Some of the oral history knowledge on the coast has become fragmentary due to the history of disaster and depopulation. Briefly, in 1700, prior to European contact, this section of the coast was struck by a devastating tsunami. This was followed by smallpox epidemics that began before
direct contact and settlement on the coast and arose from trading networks. European contact in the mid-eighteenth century led to more epidemics and is thought to have escalated extant inter-tribal tensions into warfare. Finally, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century settlement, displacement, more disease, and residential schools all took their toll. This series of catastrophes pervades most informal oral heritage retellings, with phrases such as “I don't know for sure but my uncle told me,” or “my Auntie once said,” or simply I don't know that part of the story,” often interrupting the narrative and preventing it from presenting the uniform narrative of the expert characteristic of dominant heritage discourse, and of histories told in more formal settings (such as feasting ceremonies). Although the loss of knowledge clearly ought to be mourned, I suggest that the fragmentary nature of oral history narratives could, instead of being viewed wholly as a loss, be seen as a means to challenge overarching dominant narratives. Competing and contrasting narratives serve to challenge uniform visions of both history and place, allowing for both multivocality and multilocality to shape discourse. Furthermore, it reveals the communal, immanent character of knowledge, knowledge as a line of connection rather than attributed to one individual author. This again challenges the regime of the expert which reigns over authorised heritage discourse.

In the Social Life of Stories, Julie Cruikshank notes how for her main informant and teacher, Angela Sidney, importance was placed not only on remembering and knowing stories, “but from knowing how to use them appropriately in different situations to produce the effect she knew good stories can create” (Cruikshank 2000: 26). Cruikshank goes on to point out that:

anyone who has been engaged in ethnographic fieldwork knows that the content of oral sources depends largely on what goes into the questions, the dialogue, the personal relationship through which it is communicated. Oral testimony is never the same twice,
even when the same words are used, because the relationship—the dialogue—is always shifting. Oral traditions are not natural products. They have social histories, and they acquire meaning in the situations in which they are used, in interactions between narrators and listeners (Cruikshank 2000: 40).

When I initially began my fieldwork, I was excited at the prospect of potentially helping produce further interpretive materials for the West Coast Trail, perhaps a brochure or a pamphlet that incorporated Indigenous histories and stories. I was slowly but surely disillusioned, and rightly so, of the need for such materials. It was gently suggested to me by a Huu-ay-aht woman who also worked for Parks Canada that the Trail Guardians liked it the way it was, where they could decide who to talk to and who to tell what. She pointed out the proprietary nature of many of the place-based stories on the coast, and the difficulty of navigating disputed ownership of stories when such stories became codified in text and open for access to cultural outsiders. Trail Guardians, as they were less supervised and more independent than most Parks Canada employees in the backcountry, could subtly avoid the codifying of traditional knowledge and heritage discourses, and continue their practices, which in keeping with Nuu-chah-nulth culture, allowed knowledge-sharing practices to be relational and contextual. “The authorised heritage discourse (AHD) is a Eurocentric discourse of expertise that stresses the co-called common sense aspect of heritage as monumental, material, and innately of value to national narratives, and it works to close down or hinder critical reflection.” (Smith 2012:537). I would add that official heritage discourses also must, due to their mandate, strive for uniformity. The personal, contextual, and proprietary knowledge of First Nations oral traditions, due to their fragmented and context-dependent nature, clearly challenge the AHD model.

With the 2011 signing of the Maa-nulth Final Agreement, a modern treaty between the
Canada and the Maa-nulth signatory nations, including the Huu-ay-aht, and ongoing negotiations between Canada and the Ditidaht and Pacheedaht Nations, the relationship between settler-Canadians and Indigenous peoples is going through (at least in the legal sense) a transformation on western Vancouver Island. One of the important facets of the 2011 Maa-nulth Agreement was the outlining of objectives for the co-management of Pacific Rim as not just a national Park, but Park-Reserve. When I began my fieldwork on Huu-ay-aht territory 2013 the Maa-nulth Agreement had been finalized two years previously and there was a sense among the Huu-ay-aht I spoke with that a change was coming. One of the first anecdotes I was told (and it was told with a suitable smirk) was how when the Maa-nulth Agreement was signed some of the Huu-ay-aht went up to their Big House and burned the Indian Act in a bonfire in front of the doors. The Huu-ay-aht are ready for change, and one of the changes they want to make is to open their doors further to tourists. The Huu-ay-aht currently own and operate a campground adjacent to the northern trailhead of the West Coast Trail and next to “their” end of the beach at Pachena Bay. When I had started my fieldwork the Huu-ay-aht had also started taking visitors out to their cultural heritage site of Kiixin and in 2019 they have expanded the operation of these guided tours and opened them to the general public. The Ditidaht First Nation are not signatories of the Maa-nulth Agreement, but they are working on their own negotiations over territory claimed by the Canadian state. They also have invested in expanding tourism on their territory. In addition to the cabins at Nitinat crossing and Tsquadra, the Ditidaht also own a campground at Nitinat Lake which they have linked to their newly opened third entryway to the WCT via boat at Nitinat Narrows. In an attempt to grant access to the WCT to less experienced hikers who may wish to skip the difficult southern section, in 2014 the Ditidaht started ferrying hikers in and out of the WCT via Nitinat Lake. Although the Pacheedaht First Nation declined to participate in my research, they run a campground for visitors
on their reserve at Port Renfrew, where they also run the Gordon River ferry for West Coast Trail hikers. I expect to see each of these three First Nations officially expanding their tourism operations substantially in the coming years as a much-needed source of employment in the region.

The future challenge for Indigenous peoples and tourism on Vancouver Island coast seems to be finding the balance between asserting their presence and rights over territory, while also retaining control over what territorial and cultural knowledge is shared, and how it is shared, with others. Finding this difficult balance may prove elusive, but it certainly marks a shift from the wilderness narrative that characterizes twentieth century tourism in the region. Yet a century of tourism representations that largely ignored Indigenous people’s presence is difficult to redress. The power of colonial wilderness mythology, where wilderness is a space where people do not live, is highly potent. It still tends to obscure the presence of Indigenous people, as well as the traces of colonial development in the region. Furthermore, the pressures of global capitalism to over-exploit resources, including cultural resources for the tourism industry, is very strong, particularly given the situation of social inequality faced by contemporary Indigenous peoples in Canada. Glen Coulthard warns that “instead of ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence grounded on the ideal of reciprocity or mutual recognition, the politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend” (Coulthard 2014:3). When information on the role of First Nations in the territory now bounded as national parks by the Canadian state is shared with visitors, it is typically in the form of again, what Smith calls, Authorised Heritage Discourse. Territorial acknowledgements may be made, but the overall effect is an association with Indigenous people and the pre-contact past. Authorised Heritage Discourse allows for the recognition of Indigenous traditional territory but tends to
overlook both the historical processes that transformed Indigenous space into wilderness and the resilience of Indigenous peoples who have continuously challenged the colonization of their homes by the Canadian State. As one of my First Nations Trail Guardian friends put it “they [tourists] don't believe we’re still here!” The story of how Indigenous peoples are still here, why they are still here, and why some may feel they’re still “in the way” does not fit neatly or tidily into a tourist brochure or hiking map.

One of the most powerful aspects of each of the Indigenous hosting activities within the contact zone described, from the official Trail Guardian program to the unofficial enterprises of the Knightons and the Edgars, is that they go beyond a simple recognition or acknowledgement of Indigenous hospitality. In each of these places’ hospitality is actively performed, experienced, and engaged with by both Indigenous hosts and the hiking guests. This mutual participation in the ritual of tourism, which as I described in the past chapter has been used to sanctify settler visions of the Canadian landscape, has the potential to transform it. I argue that the physical presence of First Nations people within the national park and the personalized interactions they have with visitors do more to challenge colonial visions of empty wilderness than any plaque, map or brochure could. One Trail Guardian told me of a visitor who was unconvinced that he was a 'real' Indian, as she “knew that all the ones around here had died.” His conversation with her, where he with kindness and good humour contradicted her misapprehension and laughingly invited her to take a photo with him as proof, may have been an individual moment, but it was a powerful one. If we are to credit tourists as not simply as passive recipients of pre-packaged sights but as knowledge and experience seekers who actively wish to connect with both places and people then such moments can perhaps be effective conduits for social change. I will discuss the hikers’ search for a connection further in chapters 6, and the possibilities within such moments for refuting a
wilderness mythology and challenging settler-colonial imaginaries.
CHAPTER 5: YOU GOT BALLS, GIRL! DIRTY FEMALE BODIES AND MATTER OUT OF PLACE

The campground at Walbran river is one of the most popular and social spots on the West Coast Trail. For those hiking from the south it represents respite from the muddy inland trails, and for those coming from the north it marks the beginning of the dreaded southern section. The character of the trail changes here. South of Walbran, the trail is mostly inland, save for an optional, very difficult, scramble around Owen Point. Hikers coming from the south emerge for the first time onto one of the long sandy beaches hedged with piles of driftwood. Going north from Walbran hikers would have the option, if the tide was low enough, to hike along the beach rather than on the inland trail. Even though at times trudging through the sand with feet sinking from a heavy pack is onerous, it is usually easier than navigating the mud pits of the inland trail (an experience which will be discussed in the next chapter). Whenever I emerged from the woods northbound, as was my preferred hiking direction of the trail (as opposed to the direction this thesis takes) Walbran was a welcome site. It was where I was permitted to start collecting data according to Parks Canada, as it marked the beginning of what was officially recognized as Ditidaht territory. It also represented the opportunity to wash off the mud of the previous two days’ slog through the rainforest. The Walbran river is typically slow during the hottest months and most hikers who pass through in July and August take the opportunity to wash themselves clean here (although a few always grumble about the pollution of the water source with our dirty bodies). Some swim in their underwear, but many swam nude (and this is sometimes how you could supposedly tell the Europeans from the North Americans, or the West Coasters from the Easterners). This is done

47 Fair point. Sunscreen and bugspray are not good to drink.
more out of practicality than rebellious naturism, as the time it takes to dry wet clothing in a temperate rainforest climate is not to be underestimated. This is a place to swim, do laundry, dry clothes, warm up around the fire, and rest aching limbs. It’s a good place to begin talking about bodies, and to incorporate autoethnography in order to investigate the embodied experience of hiking the trail.

In this chapter I suggest that, even though in Canada female hikers participate in significant numbers in outdoor recreation, female bodies are rendered exceptional by an ongoing colonialist discourses that frames “wilderness” as a space for settler-Canadian male recreation. I draw upon Mary Douglas’ classic analysis to suggest that in the “wilderness” female bodies, as well as queer bodies and bodies of colour, are seen as what Douglas calls “matter out of place” (2003:35). Furthermore, dominant cultural discourses around wilderness, travel, and recreation render female bodies exceptional and become entangled with women’s own perceptions of their bodies as “dirty.” My research suggests that Euro-Canadian women who participate in outdoor recreation activities also take pleasure in the seemingly rebellious act of ‘getting dirty’ which ambivalently both troubles and reifies dominant discourses of both gender and wilderness. As much as their presence destabilizes the gendering of wilderness as space for men, settler-Canadian women are complicit in the social construction of wilderness as a space to ‘test their mettle,’ which also potentially reifies problematic colonialist tropes of wilderness as a space for exploration, conquest, and recreation.

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As a cis-gendered heterosexual white woman I cannot speak auto-ethnographically about the wilderness tourism experiences of queer people or people of colour. I do see this area as having a large amount of potential for future anthropological research and would suggest readers see the work of Jennifer McClatchy 2015 (whom I actually met at Chez Monique’s in 2013), Scott 2020, and Davis 2019.
As I mentioned in the introduction, I found autoethnography to be a necessary method in unpacking my research data. An analysis of the affects of my own 'break' from the everyday experiences of living with a mental illness, forced me to re-examine critiques of the tourist practices I study. Although the ritualized practice of wilderness trekking is still very problematically entangled in colonialist ideations, as one of my mentors Margaret Rodman, once said in regard to my research on wilderness and Cronon-like critiques, “there is something else there.” What she meant by this phrase is that although we can and should critique the social structures that create hegemonic narratives like wilderness, anthropologists also have a responsibility to engage with participants as complex actors whose agency and motivations cannot be simplistically proscribed by such structures. This echoes the work of tourism scholars like Picard (2016, 2018), Harrison (2003, 2013), and Ness (2016) that emphasize the complex affective power of immersive leisure pursuits. In short, if wilderness tourism retains its allure for someone like me who actively problematizes it, why is that? The hikers I spoke with were not wholly ignorant of the contradictions within their own practices and it would be an injustice to them to reduce their complex subjectivities solely to their engagement with the larger structures of colonialism and nationalism which I have critiqued in the preceding chapters.

As a settler-Canadian myself, I knew when I began my research I would be negotiating between the positions of researcher and researched. However, I found the role strain to be far more complicated than I anticipated, as the emotional process of coping with a mental illness while conducting research forced me to reconcile my academic critique with my own emotionally fraught relationship with my physical body. Autoethnography is sometimes used as a tool to write about events and emotions outside the realm of scholarly analysis. In her essay “An Anthropologist Undone” (2005), Camilla Gibbs has written of the difficulty of writing reflexively in academia,
where despite all the discussions of writing and voice of the 1980s and 1990s, it remains difficult, particularly for a junior scholar, to be taken seriously while writing autoethnographically. Gibbs writes about the problematic identity-splitting that academic conventions enforce upon researchers with mental illness. Despite the stigma associated with both autoethnography and mental illness within the academy, I found that in my own research context that a reflexive examination of my own experiences with mental illness lent me insights that helped deepen my understanding of the cultural practices I was trying to study. I have, since adolescence, struggled with an eating disorder, a symptom of a larger struggle with my diagnosed generalized anxiety disorder and major depressive disorder. My emotional struggles with body size and shape have always been situated within the context of gender and sexuality; the categorization of desirable and undesirable bodily traits have been shaped by the assumed preferences of the heterosexual male gaze. To be candid, one of the reasons I was and still am attracted to hiking as a recreational activity is that it is a context where it is impossible for me to engage in disordered eating behaviours and it can, at times, feel like an escape from the oppressive and seemingly constant gendering of my body. Sometimes the wilderness, for me, sometimes is a place where my body can simply be a human body among other bodies, both human and non-human. Until it is not. Which is why I felt compelled to write this chapter.

In his autoethnography recounting his struggle with chronic spinal problems, Andrew Sparkes, discusses how his changing recreation practices when dealing with chronic pain reflected on his own self-image and lent insight into a particular culture of masculinity in the working-class of the United Kingdom (1996). Sparkes uses the term “body-self” to denote his particularly embodied subjectivity as a social being coping with a chronic illness. For Sparkes, illness was a disruption in the lifelong narrative of self that interrupted his ‘taken for granted’ relationship
between body and self. His ‘taken for granted’ self very much rested on a Cartesian separation of mind and body, and he found his own embodied experience of chronic pain could not be defined by the bounds of this hegemonic model. Through autoethnography and an examination of his own embodied experiences, Sparkes was able to unpack larger cultural processes at work that frame both his body and how it moves through space in particular ways that are constantly modified by both his social positioning and his illness. In my own research context, as I understood myself as part of the ethnographic group under study, I began to recognize my ‘body-self’ as a locus for analyzing the politics and practices of wilderness escapism which are integral to my research project. In this chapter, I engage particularly with my experience of inhabiting a female gendered body. I argue that an ongoing cultural discourse that frames wilderness as a space for primal masculinity and male bonding (in other words, a male homosocial space) renders female bodies exceptional.

I remember one day in August of 2013 particularly well. It was a sunny, warm day and the trail was dry. These conditions made for increased sociability among the dozens of hikers I encountered along the trail. With most I exchanged greetings, asked and answered questions about the trail conditions, and made typical trail small talk. Yet I grew increasingly irritated after repeated interactions with men. One comment which was not atypical, but seemed to be particularly frequent that day, drove away the positive mood that the friendly conditions had initially incited: “You’re hiking alone? You’ve got balls girl!” After the fourth comment within an hour on my possession of metaphorical testicles, I was fed up. Encountering another of the many female hikers on the trail, I grumbled my complaint. She commiserated and repeated a quote attributed to actor and comedian Betty White: “Why say you’ve got balls? Balls are soft and weak. But a vagina can
take a pounding!” Throughout my fieldwork I often met many other women hiking alone, and we often laughed together about the reactions of men to their supposed “balls”.

Doreen Massey (2013 [1994]) argues that spaces and places, and our senses of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through. “Moreover, they are gendered in a myriad different ways, which vary between cultures and over time. And this gendering of space and place both reflects and has effects back on the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies we live” (Massey 2013: 186). The feelings and experiences I describe are by no means the sole purview of those who identify as female. Yet I think it important to associate these particular entanglements of the physical body and the social self with gender, as for most of the women I spoke with and for myself they are directly related to female subjectivity. Following Linda McDowell, I take gender to have two inseparable aspects: “gender as a set of material social relations and as symbolic meaning” (1999: 7). Therefore, I discuss both how gender is experienced and embodied, as well as how gender is related to narratives of wilderness.

One of the first things I asked all participants in my study is why they backpacked. Why choose to participate in an activity that requires great physical exertion, in often uncomfortable conditions, with little material or even symbolic rewards (as compared to say, competitive sports)? Most people I spoke with referenced some ideal of escape, of getting away from the city, their jobs, their familial responsibilities. For most hikers, this escape was not only an escape from ‘civilization,’ but also an escape from the domestic, a sphere associated with femininity. Both women and men I chatted with included family responsibilities in their descriptions of the everyday life they saw themselves escaping. Men, more than women, often described outdoor recreation as an escape from spouses and children. In contrast, many of the women I spoke to
frame their escape into the wilderness as an escape from the bodily impositions of a gendered society (which resonated with my own experiences). Women expected to find the wilderness a place where they could “get dirty” (which I will discuss further in a moment) and sometimes expressed surprise that so many other women were hiking the trail and could be inferred to feel similarly. Men, on the other hand, were surprised to find female bodies among their hiking peers, as these types of bodies were viewed as signifiers of the domestic space they sought to escape on their journey into the wilderness.

Why, if women and men are hiking in the Canadian backcountry in equal numbers, does this fact defy the expectations of the hikers, both male and female, themselves? If men and women are using the backcountry, at least for the activities of hiking and camping, in equal frequency, why does the discourse of wilderness as a dominantly male space remain so pronounced, both in wider popular culture and in the attitudes of hikers themselves? I propose that one way to answer this question is to review the representation of wilderness as a male homo-social space, and the resultant rendering of women who enter this space as exceptional. I posit that female bodies (particularly white, Euro-Canadian settler bodies) are viewed as ‘matter out of place’ in the Canadian wilderness and disrupt nationalist imaginings of wilderness as a place for the rejuvenation of the ideal (and therefore male) Canadian citizen. Furthermore, women who do participate in outdoor recreation activities also take pleasure in the seemingly rebellious act of dirtying and rewilding their domesticated selves, which ambivalently both troubles and reifies dominant discourses of gender and wilderness.

5.1 Whence “All the Women”?

When I interviewed two authors of a guidebook of the West Coast Trail, I asked them what had changed the most in the over thirty years they had been doing the hike. Their answer was
prompt and surprising (to me): “All the women.” Without missing a beat, they launched into tales of the “old days” of the WCT, when groups of rugged young men would head out into the bush with seventy-pound packs filled with canvas tents and sacks of potatoes. Reading newspaper stories from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s about the trail, it seems that in its early days the trail was often, as it is, now, hiked by heterosexual couples, sometimes married, sometimes not. Yet in one of those same articles that talks about a “venturesome couple,” it is noted that “the trail is too rugged for the average housewife” (Curtin 1970). While both the man and the women are regarded as adventurous, it is the woman who is an exception. Throughout my time hiking the trail, I kept running into (literally!) the assumption the women who hike the trail are not your ‘average’ women. They are exceptional in some way that allows them to participate in this masculine-gendered activity. Men on the other hand, are gendered as fulfilling their gender role, as ‘real’ men through their participation in the same activity.

In Canadian National Parks a permit is required for all overnight backcountry travel, and on the West Coast Trail hikers must register with Parks staff before being permitted to access the trail. Therefore, Parks Canada has a reliable record of how many people recreate in the national park-controlled backcountry each hiking season. They do not keep records of the gender or sex of these hikers, so I do not have access to any quantitative statistics on how many female, male, or non-binary-identifying persons participate in backcountry hiking. However, in my interviews and discussions with Parks Canada staff members at the information centres where permits were issued (in national parks permits must be picked up in person as a safety measure), every Parks employee I questioned on the subject suggested gender parity in the numbers of hikers entering the backcountry. Throughout my fieldwork I observed a similar gender parity. I did not note its significance during my research design, as gender was not a subject which I thought would be as
salient a topic as I found it to be once in the field. Other research on outdoor recreation such as mountaineering (Frohlick 2002, 2006) and whitewater paddling (Fletcher 2014) point towards a notable disparity in male and female participation. However, this was not what I found during my research in western Canadian national parks (see also Harding 2010). Gender parity in backcountry users was evident to myself, and my observation was reiterated by all Parks Canada staff and Trail Guardians I spoke with.

Sexual orientation and non-heteronormative subjectivities were not often used as identifiers during my discussions with research participants. I do not wish to make any assumptions about the gender or sexuality of study participants. I identify participants as men or women based on their own pronouns of choice, yet I want to note that this does not necessarily capture the complex ways many of the hikers I spoke with may conceive of either their gender, sex, or sexuality. I wish to highlight that heterosexist tropes about femininity and masculinity often permeate the discourse around gendered bodies in the outdoors, and that I am cautious to assume the heterosexual or cis-gendered identities of people whose bodily performances were very much shaped by larger cultural representations and assumptions about wilderness spaces.

At the same time, during my research many of the men I encountered remarked on how unusual they found my presence on the trail. They particularly commented on the fact that I was often hiking alone, and remarks ranged from congratulatory (“It’s so cool to see a girl on her own”) to patronizing (“you’re so brave! Aren’t you scared?”) to subtly hostile (“where’s your boyfriend?”). Many of those I spoke to at length, on discovering that I was a researcher, quickly assumed that I worked for Parks Canada and were able to reconcile my presence in the backcountry through their assumptions of my being employed to be there. Many seemed more comfortable with the idea that a woman could be a Parks Canada professional, or a student researcher, than a
recreational hiker who chose to backpack alone. It appeared they were more comfortable with women’s empowerment through career choice than through recreation. In Frohlick’s (2006) research she found that many female mountaineer-mothers often reframe their travels as ‘work, as the working mother is more socially acceptable than the mother who leaves her children for leisure. Twenty-first century male adventurers are quite comfortable with women having a career and that career taking them to remote or “wild” spaces. The aberration appears to be the female who enters wilderness for recreation.

When they are found in the wilderness, women are often relegated to the domestic sphere, as keepers of safe havens. It is notable that the places along the trail for rest, respite and safety are often those occupied by women. Beyond the operation of the Chez Monique’s at Qua-ba-diwa, other, older, tales of feminine domestic hospitality haunt a few places on the WCT. I heard tales of one female lighthouse keeper (always qualified as the “lighthouse keeper’s wife” even though they were also trained to operate the lightstation) at Pachena who was famous for the homemade fudge she sold. Another woman who used to live at Clo-oose, often without her husband who was “off working in civilization” recounted dosing out her homemade beer to hikers who had refilled her woodpile in exchange for a roof over their heads during a storm. On the West Coast Trail one such legendary figure was Dorothy Ordway, who along with her son ran a teahouse near Clo-oose that sheltered hikers during the 1960s prior to the area becoming a national park. Huts and backcountry lodges throughout western Canada have often been owned and maintained by women, sometimes without male help. That these backcountry domestics often occupy the discursive space of wilderness legend points towards the narrative trope of women as exceptional and extraordinary, despite the fact that the sheer number of such tales decries the opposite.
If I gauged the frequency of women entering the backcountry by the reaction of men to my presence, the impression that I was an exceptional female presence in a largely male domain would be fairly strong. Of the women I interviewed, all had encountered comments from other hikers, typically men, on their bravery, concerns for their safety and insinuations that they were “crazy.” We laughed together about it, but it made it clear to me that my experiences were not unique. Experienced outdoorswomen pointed to a troubling conundrum, as even though, in the words of one hiker, “I would say it’s one of the least likely places for a woman to be harassed,” women were viewed as being more susceptible to the dangers of “the wild” than men. Myths such as that concerning the increased likelihood of a bear attack for menstruating women were prevalent and reflected tensions around the presence of women in non-domestic spaces. The spectre of rape does haunt the wilderness, but less in the Canadian national parks than in the long-distance trails in the United States. Many of the famous trails in America, such as the Pacific Crest Trail or the Appalachian Trail, are accessible by backroads and traverse areas not exclusively accessible by foot (as opposed to national parks that limit vehicle access to designated backcountry spaces). I will suggest that in the Canadian national parks backcountry trail system, where hikers must be registered with the Parks Office, fees must be paid, and access is only on foot, the potential for violence between hikers, male or female, is relatively low. And women in the backcountry are anything but exceptional. Rather, as stated previously, I’ve found there are many women out in the woods. So why are we treated like we are something unexpected?

There is a longstanding trope in Western romantic imagery of nature as feminine. In the western tradition of pastoralism nature was depicted as mother or bride who would “soothe the anxieties of men distraught by the demands of the urban world” (Alaimo 2000:2). In Survival, her seminal analysis of Canadian literature, Margaret Atwood argues that Canadian authors tended
to follow European and American traditions and characterize nature as a woman. However, Atwood argues that in the Canadian context nature may be a woman but most often, rather than virginal Diana or domestic Hecate, Canadian nature is “an old, cold, and possibly forbidding” woman (Atwood 2012: 224), more of a Grendel or a Hagar than a Venus. Atwood describes how Canadian literary representations of nature are permeated with an intrinsic tension as “pretending that Nature is the all-good Divine Mother when you're being eaten by mosquitoes and falling into a bog” (Atwood 2012: 60) can be difficult. At the same time, despite being linked to nature through the mind/body dichotomy, being in wilderness has not been readily associated with femininity. Nature herself may be classically feminine, but the explorer/hiker/outdoorsperson who penetrates her depths is typically male. In her feminist research on women and men’s relationship to nature, Raglon found that “women were firmly assigned to the home, while men were allowed the freedom of the outdoors. Wilderness thus quickly became a gendered concept that tended to magnify and exaggerate the differences between men and women” (2005:9). Nature may be female, but it is a space for men. Furthermore, women who are found in nature are also made for men, particularly women of colour. Indigenous women, in line with wilderness mythology discussed in Chapter 2, are collapsed into Nature, and become one of its resources subject to the will of the white, male, hero-explorer.

A recent Canadian popular culture work that used this trope in a glaring fashion is the film One Week (2008) starring Joshua Jackson. The white male protagonist, upon receiving a cancer diagnosis, quits his job and leaves his long-term girlfriend to set off on a week-long odyssey across Canada. In the Canadian Rockies he becomes lost in a snowstorm (how someone could be lost on foot wandering off from the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel is beyond this former Banff resident). He is saved by a young and beautiful indigenous woman who shelters him in her teepee from the
storm (what she is doing camping on the side of Rundle Mountain in a snowstorm in sight of the town of Banff is again, beyond me). They proceed to have sexual intercourse. In the morning he departs, with the implication being they shared a transcendent wilderness moment but will not continue their relationship in any way. In this scenario, standard in wilderness mythology, women may be of Nature, but they are not expected to explore or act on Nature.

Wilderness is a space designated for what Sedgwick (1985) calls a homosociality. It is a space where male social bonding, with the purpose of reifying hegemonic masculinity, is assumed to dominate the human spatial relations. As noted by several researchers on the topic, the trope of wilderness as a place for the revitalization of a primal masculinity prevails in outdoor recreation discourse. Susan Frohlick has written about how mountaineering space is “masculinized and narrated as a place in opposition to home” (2006: 478). “Detachment from intimate relationships and domestic responsibilities is constitutive of the masculine tropes of exploration, conquest and adventure from which mountaineering developed” (Frohlick 2006: 480). In his research on whitewater rafting expeditions Robert Fletcher (2014) found the ideal of wilderness as a space for masculine renewal to predominate. He contends that in contrast to earlier formations of hegemonic masculinity in which white men could perform their manhood through “disciplining themselves to productive labour within the confines of mainstream society that seemed to privilege them, this new white man must rebel against a system that had allegedly diminished and displaced him [through the feminists, civil rights, and LGBTQ rights movements] in order to reassert his dominance” (Fletcher 2014:83). In the Canadian context, Elizabeth Furniss's research in northern British Columbia has found the mythology of the wild frontier as a space for men to reassert their true masculine identity (as opposed to erroneously tamed, domestic or civilized selves) to permeate western Canadian attitudes. She describes the mythology as one where “The alienated self of the
hero appropriates the periphery as the enduring frontier and uses it to project his purified self onto the metropolis. The frontier emerges as the space in which the young man proves his manhood and the older man reclaims his youth” (Furniss 2005: 62). Hessing, Raglon and Sandilands note that:

Women have been less associated with the rigours of the Canadian landscape than their male peers .... they too have settled this land –building homes, cooking, teaching children, farming and provisioning, fishing, and conducting a wide range of other outdoor activities. The land, in turn, has been portrayed as a gendered construct –its wild and rugged character depicted as male, its civilized and urban counterpart feminized (2005: 78).

Despite its vast geography, the majority of Canada’s relatively small population resides in urban settings. Yet, as I explored in Chapter 2, non-urban nature is critical to Canadian identity. This creates a dissonance between ideals of the Canadian outdoorsman (the lumberjack archetype comes to mind) and the reality that most Canadians do not make their living outside. “The economic perception of the Canadian environment as a resource reflects not only a biophysical place identified by forests, fish and farms, but also a society marked by divisions of gender as well as class, race, ethnicity, and age” (Hessing, Raglon & Sandilands 2005: 78). Primary resource industries, reliant on the products of Canadian nature itself, are viewed as masculine. Yet with their dwindling economic importance, Canadian masculinity is constructed as at risk. Service industries such as tourism are seen as less masculine, and their increase is seen as part of a declining masculinity within Canadian subjectivities. As I discussed in Chapter 2, imaginings of nature and wilderness are intertwined with ideals of citizenship and nationhood in Canada. Thus, the problem of the seeming increasing isolation of Canadian men, particularly white settler-Canadian heterosexual men, from nature through forces of urbanization, technological change, and
a declining primary resource industry is discursively characterized as a social problem needing to be solved, often through outdoor recreation.

In Susan Frohlick’s (2002, 2006) ethnographic account of Everest Base camp, she notes that she disrupted ideals of mountaineering space by bringing her two young children, one of them an infant, along with her to conduct her research. “Base camp is a place to hang out with other men and to get away from domesticity, or rather, to replace it with a more ‘masculine’ domesticity – roughing it in tents and outhouses” (Frohlick 2006:480). Frohlick notes how, in public discourse, there is a supposed “incommensurability of motherhood and mountaineering” (2006: 478). She describes how it “is generally acceptable for men to travel freely on mountaineering expeditions to distant ranges in Pakistan, Nepal and elsewhere largely without culpability as fathers, while women are expected to remain at home with their children” (2006: 478). Frohlick notes how travel is often discursively framed as “about men's escape from home” while discourses around motherhood contend that ‘good mothers' stay nearby their children (2006: 478). Frohlick reviews mountaineering literature to clearly point out “the linkage of women with production and thus as gendered, materialized ‘Other’ in contrast to the fraternal geographies and normative white sporting bodies of the mountaineering hero is made repeatedly” (Frohlick 2006: 481). Mothers are not supposed to want to “get away” from their children, or to be comfortable leaving them behind while they go off on adventures. One hiker and new mother I spoke with on the West Coast Trail felt this tension. When discussing the impetus for her trip she adamantly stated that “I wanted to do this for me.” However, she also expressed anxiety about having left her one-year old child with her husband because “I normally do everything, and he's the one who goes away.” She tried to ameliorate this tension with humorous anecdotes about her husband’s ineptitude at basic domestic
tasks but was clearly relieved and grateful when Monique Knighton at Qua-ba-diwa offered to let her borrow her cellular phone to call and check on her young family.

The assumed male homosociality of the backcountry was, to some extent, reinforced by the division of roles among Parks Canada employees. In the frontcountry unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve the gender parity was somewhat equal. Yet for the West Coast Trail Unit, the backcountry, a gendered division of labour was quite clear. Parks Canada staff who ran the trail registration and information centres at both the Port Renfrew and Pachena trail heads were all female. Trail guardians, trail crew, and Visitor Safety Officers (formerly known as wardens) were nearly all male. Thus the ‘hard,’ physical labour related to the West Coast Trail was gendered male, while the ‘soft’ labour of visitor information and registration was a female domain. In a sense, the female Parks Canada workers acted as the gatekeepers to the wilder backcountry, controlling who and how people entered the wilderness, as well as ensuring their reentry into the civilized world. If the hiking the trail was a transformative journey of renewal and rebirth (as discussed in Chapter 2), then these women were the midwives. Yet their expertise was sometimes viewed as secondary and less reliable source by male hikers. Several of the groups of men I encountered at the trailhead skipped the mandatory orientation by these female Parks Canada staffers, choosing instead to trust the knowledge of “their buddy who’s hiked it before.” Despite the fact that the physical conditions of the trail change each year, informal knowledge was given greater significance because it fell within ritualized male-bonding practices.

In my research I found clear evidence that for many men, wilderness was integrally defined as both a restorative space for men and as a space without women. “It’s not so bad maybe next time we could take the girls....” This statement was made by a Euro-Canadian man in his late forties in September 2014 at the crowded refreshment stop of Chez Monique’s. Much to his
bewilderment, it earned him the glare of several of the female hikers seated nearby. After their rather irate rebukes he apologetically stated he “wasn't trying to be sexist.” This male hiker was part of a group of four male friends hiking the West Coast Trail together on a trip which they themselves characterized as “male-bonding time.” This was on the day of a significant storm, after which one of the groups complained of stomach issues, resulting in the evacuation of all four by Parks Canada safety officers. Interested in witnessing Parks Canada evacuation procedures, particularly in the choppy aftermath of the storm, I went with them to the beach to await the government zodiac. The Parks Canada point of contact was one of the lighthouse keepers at Carmanah Light. J— was a young woman in her late twenties who had been raised at Carmanah by her lighthouse keeper parents and whose familiarity with the environment far exceeded most of the other people I met on the West Coast. Yet this group of men were visibly uncomfortable with their “rescue” being facilitated by a young woman. This discomfort was heightened as J—and I, who were by this point on familiar terms, sat down on a log and proceeded to comfortably discuss feminism and science fiction, topics we shared an interest in. In her words they were “totally weirded out” by the fact that their male-bonding wilderness adventure was ending with their being seen off back into civilization by two young women comfortably discussing feminism on a wild beach.

In her bestselling 2012 autobiographical travel narrative *Wild*, Cheryl Strayed describes her journey along the Pacific Crest Trail in the United States. Her book was incredibly successful, topping bestsellers lists, approved by Oprah's book club, and in 2014 was made into a feature film starring Reese Witherspoon. Many of the women I spoke with referred to *Wild* in describing their own wilderness journeys, some with admiration, and others, often more strongly, with derision. Those who derided Strayed critiqued her for being unprepared, inexperienced and naive.
Fundamental to their critique was the sentiment that “she makes the rest of us [female hikers] look bad.” The popularity of Strayed’s narrative as a representation of women in the woods as not only lacking in knowledge, but also as unusual and exceptional, frustrated many of those with whom I spoke. Strayed herself, as well as literary academics such as Kam (2016), claim Strayed’s narrative as a feminist one. Kam compares Strayed's autobiography to John Krakauer’s biography of Christopher McCandless, *Into the Wild* (1996). Kam argues that while Krakauer clearly depicts McCandless as participating in a cult of wilderness-based masculinity (evidenced by his fetishization of Jack London, Thoreau, and others) where women embody the threat of domestication, Strayed’s narrative re-centres the wilderness as restorative in a way that refutes gender binaries. I argue that rather than de-gendering the wilderness experience, Strayed’s narrative relies upon it, as she positions herself as heroic for not only penetrating the wilderness, but also for doing *so despite* her gender. One of the issues with Strayed's narrative is that it positions her protagonist as exceptional. This may be strategically done as a storytelling device; the narrative of the triumphant individual is common in writing about the outdoors. However, this positioning of Strayed as exceptional, and the men she meets as prototypical, reinscribes the notion that women's bodies are matter out of place in the so-called wilderness. Sex, sexuality, and gender play an important role in Strayed’s narrative. Unlike the strained celibacy or raging primal masculinity that characterizes male wilderness protagonists, Strayed’s gender identity and her sexuality are not separated from her experience of going ‘wild’ and Strayed’s tumultuous relationships with men are a significant arc within her overall story. Strayed's journey ultimately leads to a restoration of self which allows her to achieve the heteronormative goals of marriage and children. Whether she continued to hike, camp, or journey through the outdoors is unknown and unimportant to her narrative. The journey itself was an exceptional event in her life trajectory,
unlike many of the women I spoke with who had been hiking and camping for decades and plan on continuing to do so.

5.2 “It’s okay to be stinky. That’s one of the first things you learn”

The above quote is from one of the many discussions I had with experienced female hikers on the trail. Some of the women I spoke with expounded on the minimalist grooming required while camping with unhidden delight. It felt good to be messy, to be muddy, and to not see a mirror for days. One topic that women brought up frequently when discussing their embodied experiences in the outdoors was urination. With a smile or a laugh, many women spoke of the “freedom to pop a squat wherever and whenever.” “I hate outhouses, I love peeing in the bush” was a frequent refrain. How to best urinate in the woods was also gleefully discussed, with debates on various techniques, positions and the importance of choosing appropriate terrain noted (downhill orientation, mossy ground, and tree-aided squats being most preferable). More than once when this topic was discussed while relaxing at camp, a physical demonstration was thought to be required, and, often to uproarious laughter of the women (and sometimes the shock of accompanying men) various poses were presented to outdoor urination neophytes. The most frequent word accompanying such discussions was “freedom,” often with an addendum on how wonderful it was “pee like men do and not always be looking for a bathroom.” Bathing, or often, the lack of bathing was another frequent topic of discussion. Many women mischievously spoke of how “we’re all stinky out here” and delighted in their transgressive dirty bodies. Although in July and August bathing in creeks, ponds and the ocean were a possibility along the West Coast Trail, during cooler and rainier periods in the shoulder season many hikers chose to forego contact with the frigid water. Often hikers would, sometimes within the same breath, speak longingly about
a hot shower at the same time as they counted their days without bathing with a note of pride. I noticed female hikers often almost bragging to their male counterparts on how dirty their bodies had become, as if to demonstrate how well they could tolerate their own bodily dirtiness.

Wilderness was also viewed as a space where both women and men could transgress their habitual attitudes towards nudity. Again, this is a topic where I was given more insight into the perspective of cis-gendered women than men. Not every, or even most, hikers bathed nude when they had the opportunity, many choosing to bathe in their underwear. However, as I discussed in the beginning of the chapter, a significant number of people chose to bathe nude, due to the obvious impracticality of attempting to dry wet clothing in a coastal rainforest environment. Among Canadian hikers, who represented the majority of hikers I encountered, this was seen as somewhat deviant, although only mildly so. One woman noted it was very “European” to bathe nude. Another expressed concern that people were bathing in a drinking water source. Many of those who did not bathe nude, spoke of those women who did with some admiration, with again, the word “freedom” frequently invoked. Some spoke of how they had, through the course of their multi-day trek, “worked up to it,” as if the dirtier their bodies came and the further they got from the perceived constraints of a ‘civilized’ environment, the less taboo nude bathing seemed. The dirtiness of bodies and the frigidity of the water certainly contributed to the creation of a relatively desexualized bathing environment, but again, this was the perception of the women I spoke with, and not something men discussed with me.

Many anthropologists have noted and questioned the connection between nudity, dirt, and social transgression (see for example Masquilier 2005), most famously Mary Douglas in her classic work *Purity and Danger*. If as, Mary Douglas stated, “dirt is essentially disorder” (2003: 2), and what dirt is culturally determined, then the way that the women I spoke with alternately
endured and even delighted in “getting dirty” speaks to a transgression of order. “Reflection on dirt involves reflection on the relations of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death” (Douglas 2003: 5). It may be argued that in cultures descended from European colonialism, such as Canada, women, particularly upper- and middle-class women, are supposed to be mistresses of cleanliness, keeping both our bodies and our homes free from dirt (McClintock 2013 [1995]). To revel in dirt is to reject this role. According to Douglas, “ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgression have their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that semblance of order is created” (2003: 4). Douglas was not suggesting these categories were “rigid, hide-bound and stagnant” (ibid) but rather that in understanding attitudes towards dirt there also lay possibilities towards understanding cultural perceptions of people, places, and beings that were untidy, that did not fit. Active women in what was discursively constructed as a male homosocial space were dirty bodies, both literally and figuratively. As Douglas explains:

If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity (Douglas 2003: 35).

Disorder has potentiality; in it there is “both danger and power” (Douglas 2003: 94). Importantly, “it is not always an unpleasant experience to confront ambiguity.... There is a whole gradient on
which laughter, revulsion and shock belong at different points and intensities. The experience can be stimulating” (Douglas 2003: 37). Many of the women I spoke with reveled in “getting dirty.” In the gendered cultural discourse of settler-colonial culture, women, as the keepers of civilization through the maintenance of domestic spaces, are also the keepers of hygiene. Men, on the other hand, are discursively constructed as more primal and adventurous, able to enter the tabooed realms of the dirty and dangerous. I do not know if men discussed urination, bathing, body odours, and dirt to the same extent as women did in general. I do know that they did not do so as much with me, and certainly not with the same humour and delight.

Attention must be paid to the distinction that is made by outdoor recreationists between wild dirt and urban dirt. Barcan notes that “the fear of contagion is a (seemingly) rational explanation for a deeper anxiety – that of too intimate contact (even by proxy) with the bodies of strangers… modern sensibilities are increasingly distasteful of bodies intermingling, touching and overspilling their boundaries except in circumscribed situations” (Barcan 2005: 12). The ‘natural’ dirt of the forest, due to its perceived lack of contact with human bodies was seen as less contaminating than the “dirt” of the city. Many hikers on the West Coast Trail commented that they got used to having “sand everywhere,” but this sand was not seen, despite likely having contact with everything from the boots of hikers to the defecation of seagulls, as essentially “dirty.” Hikers would even use it to scrub their dishes. Getting dirty in the woods was seen as an integral part of getting closer to nature. The dirt in the woods was viewed differently from the dirt vacuumed out of carpets or swept into the bin in human dwellings. This dirt was ‘real’ dirt, it was ‘healthy,’ and “a little dirt never hurt anybody” was a common saying. Furthermore, this dirt was earned and carried a symbolic moral load. Sweat-soaked and muddy bodies were seen as positive markers of one’s physical prowess in the wilderness environment. For women, their ability to
withstand the dirt was also a sign of how “tough” they were, how their bodies could thrive in an environment that was supposed to be a masculine domain.

Finally, this good dirt was also protective dirt. It was seen as a desexualizing and de-gendering force, a natural equalizer of men and women’s bodies. Women often commented on how they could not imagine having sex while their bodies were this dirty and that they also felt “safe” from the threat of sexual assault. Dirt was viewed as having a de-sexualizing effect on the female body. Many women spoke of the backcountry as one of the last places they’d find conducive to sexual relations. They spoke of the dirt and the smell of their own bodies as having an almost protective aspect, rendering them undesirable in a way that gave them a significant (from their perspective) freedom from the heterosexual male gaze. This is another moment where some women invoked Strayed’s narrative (the film adaptation had just been released, and it was a common pop cultural reference point), wrinkling their noses in distaste at the idea of “hooking up” while on a backcountry trek. “Ew, gross” was the most common comment on the prospect of sexual relations. Interestingly, this comment was directed at women's own bodies, and not those of their prospective partners, and disgust at engaging in sex while they themselves were dirty was emphasized over the likely equally dirty bodies of their partners. A lack of openness on this topic among men I spoke with may simply be due to my own perceived gender identity, and I lack the insight to make any declarations on what the male perspective, heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is on sex in the backcountry.

I suggest that the tension between the material physicality of the female body and the social construction of gender roles is salient in environments where the physicality of sex has little influence, and yet gender still acts as a means of division. For a final example, I consider how the actual act of backcountry hiking, of walking over terrain carrying a heavy load, is a gendered one
despite the fact that the ability to do so has little to do with biological sex. At the Parks Canada office in Port Renfrew there is a large scale where hikers are encouraged to weigh their packs. At the hiker orientation, the self-described “orientation ladies” (they were all women during my fieldwork period) warned that most of the injuries occurred on the trail could be attributed to packs that were too heavy. Hikers starting out from the southern end were notorious for dumping the contents of their packs as they discovered that a weight that had seemed manageable at home was extremely unwieldy on the trail. Even though, according to backcountry ‘leave no trace’ etiquette hikers are supposed to carry out everything that they bring in, including all garbage, the Trail Guardians often ended up carrying out large amounts of hiker discards each season. The Huu-ay-aht Trail Guardians told me that after the August holiday weekend in 2013 they hauled out three bags of trash from Michigan campground. I heard stories of people pouring pounds of trail mix into the ocean and trying to foist unneeded food on other hikers. One of the resources provided by the Knightons at Qua-ba-diwa was a “take it or leave it” box where hikers could leave unwanted food, gear, fuel, and even books (someone left a copy of Cheryl Strayed’s Wild in it). To make a long story short, people had heavy packs, often packed too much, and often regretted it. At the same time, especially at the southern end of the trail where the scale provided a means of measured comparison, both men and women were somewhat competitive about how much they carried. It was “a pissing contest” in the words of one female teacher I spoke with, rolling her eyes. She had hiked the trail many times with groups of students from the high school she taught. Although she poked fun at the (gendered male) competitiveness around pack weight, she herself spoke with pride of being able to start the trail with sixty pounds on her back.49 Many of the women I encountered

49 Pack weight goes down as food is eaten and fuel is used, although for many experienced hikers who pack dehydrated, quick-cooking food this reduction in weight is negligible. Many of the hikers I spoke with strategized about where and when they would carry their heaviest packs. Starting the trail at the north end meant one’s pack was lighter through the most difficult section of the trail (what more experienced hikers, included myself, viewed
on the trail were proud of how much they could carry, and some spoke of how they surprised themselves with their own strength. Women’s hiking backpacks are made slightly differently than men’s, with the bottom belted to the hips rather than the waist, so that more of the weight is distributed to the hips rather than the shoulders. This means that although they are often physically smaller than men, women can often carry very heavy loads using our, as one woman put it “baby-bearing hips.” Of course, not all women and not all men are built the same, but the strength and endurance of their bodies as they hauled heavy loads several days over difficult terrain was a matter of some pride for many of the hikers, both men and women, I spoke with.

For myself, as a smallish woman with very little innate athletic ability, it felt good to be strong. This sentiment was echoed by several of the women I spoke with. They discussed how it felt good to focus on physical aptitude rather than aesthetics, as with ‘fitness’ the latter is often collapsed into the former. Research on sport has shown that feelings of strength are clearly related to feelings of agency and independence (Dworkin 2003, Gilroy 1989). Yet the purpose of hiking, according to nearly all of my research participants, was not exercise and it was not considered to be a sport. The themes of competition and physical fitness, as well as weight-loss, were significantly absent as attested motivations for pursuing the activity. Not a single one of my informants, male or female, included fitness as one of their reasons for hiking. Rather, while many of the women I spoke with relished the strength of their bodies clearly shown by their ability to navigate a backcountry trail, this relishing of strength was distinct from normative aspirations of fitness. Instead, for some of the women I spoke with, and I myself align with this group, backpacking appeared to be an escape from the tyranny of bodily aesthetics. In the backcountry,
hikers do not emphasize links between changes in strength to changes in bodily aesthetics. As one of the veterans of multiple trips on the WCT I spoke with, who self-described himself as the “fat man of the West Coast Trail,” you “can’t tell [what someone’s capable of] by the way they look.” His analysis was echoed by the lighthouse keepers, Trail Guardians and Parks Canada staff I spoke with. The ability to successfully complete the trail, to move across a demarcated wilderness space along a particular path or line, was not something that could be predicted by either gender or body type. I will explore this further with a discussion of the embodied experience of crossing terrain in the next chapter.

As Doreen Massey has pointed out, one of the defining features of dualistic thinking is that “only one of terms (A) is defined positively. The other term (not-A) is conceived only in relation to A, and as lacking in A” (Massey 1994: 256). Massey also makes clear that in often dominant dualistic ways of thinking, it is women who lack. The absurdly frequent exclamations regarding my bodily actions in comparison to my notable lack of male reproductive organs reflects both the gendering of particular behaviours and this emphasis on the female as the “Not A,” the one who lacks. My assumed lack of testicles therefore takes on a deeper significance. It points towards a need to gain specific masculine characteristics, characteristics which it is assumed that I do not naturally possess, in order to express particular social actions endowed with positive (and therefore masculine) attributes. It is not the actual biology or physiology of women that is oppressive, but “the meaning attached to their biologies within a specific social system and organization” (Hargreaves & Vertinsky 2007: 5). These gender-meanings also interact with other socially constructed meanings associated with particular bodies – race, ethnicity, ability, class, and age – each of which is deserves an in-depth discussion in their own right (for example, see Braun 2003 and Davis 2019 for discussions of race and outdoor recreation in the American context). Which is
why I conclude this chapter not with an emphasis on the empowerment these (mostly white) women feel in showing that they possess the “balls” to play outside with the men, but with caution and ambivalence. It is important to note that in dirtying themselves, they (and I) are also taking part in tourism practices which have been critiqued for exploiting and/or erasing indigenous territorial claims and indigenous ontologies of the environment (Braun 2002, Puppe 2015, Thorpe 2012). As much as female bodies are viewed as “matter out of place” (Douglas 2003:35) and thus potentially destabilize hegemonic imaginaries of wilderness as a space for men, their narratives of escape, freedom, exploration, and adventure also potentially replicate the colonialist tropes that their female-gendered bodies disrupt.

Gender is incipient and pervasive, and it was naive of me to think that I could avoid addressing it, as I was participating in an activity that lent itself to an intimate awareness of the physicality of the body-self and thus the social meanings attached to the universal experience of inhabiting a gendered body. One of the reasons women are seen as exceptional in the backcountry is because the association of the female gender with domestic space has restricted the range and scope of mobility of female bodies. The freedom of movement associated with ‘going wild’ is historically associated with maleness. In the next chapter I will discuss themes of mobility and wilderness further. Interestingly, I found that the restrictions on bodily movement on the West Coast Trail did not wholly stem from social constructions such as gender, but also from an engagement with what one hiker called a “recalcitrant” environment. I will discuss how the terrain of the temperate rainforest changed and limited the movements of hikers in unexpected ways, and how non-human forces often created bodily affects that surprised hikers, both those with testicles and those without.
CHAPTER 6: “BLISTERS AND BLISS;” WILD AFFECT AND WEATHER-WORLDS

Here it is, the dreaded southern section. The section between Walbran and Gordon River/Port Renfrew is where, according to Parks Canada, the majority of injuries occur. This is because it is mostly inland. It has none of the beach-walking of the northern section. It involves long trudges through dense temperate rainforest and features descents and ascents of wooden ladders precariously perched on the sides of steep ravines, slippery wooden boardwalks, legendary mud pits and so many roots and rocks that hikers compare hiking the trail to navigating an obstacle course. In many ways, the West Coast Trail has become one of the most famous and beloved treks in Canada paradoxically because of both its relative accessibility and its relative difficulty. As several novices asserted to me before starting the trail “anyone can walk.” While acknowledging the obvious ableism in the statement, it is true that the trail requires no special skills to complete. There is only one trail through the dense forest, so no special route-finding or orienteering skills are required. There are no cliffs to be scaled or abseiled, and the water-crossings are made via the skills of local First Nations boat operators. To make this journey, all you have to do is walk. Yet the evacuation and accident rate seems extraordinarily high for a simple walk. Before coming to the West Coast, I lived and worked in Banff National Park. I was shocked at the high rate of Parks-assisted rescues on the West Coast Trail compared to the Rocky Mountain parks, given its relatively horizontal geography compared to the mountain parks, and wondered at how this trail, which really did involve simply walking, could be so hazardous. In this chapter, I discuss the interaction of the pain and discomfort hikers feel as they interact with “difficult” terrain. Hikers are uncomfortable both physically and existentially as they must cede control over their bodies and movements to non-human forces and “walk with the tide.” I suggest that this discomfort is
potentially productive, as it can unsettle preconceived notions and open up space for alternative narratives of place/space that challenge static visions of wilderness (as discussed in Chapter 2). At the same time, embodied discomfort also may be linked to colonial ideas of conquest and the perspective of nature-as-obstacle, which can in turn reify wilderness as “authentic” nature that can be conquered, and therefore consumed, by tourists.

6.1 Scenic Expectations and Uncomfortable Sensations

The first time I hiked the WCT, until I reached the southern section, I thought it was a walk in the park (literally and figuratively!). The trail from our starting point at Pachena Bay seemed particularly easy compared to the grueling trudges up and down mountains I was accustomed to in the Canadian Rockies, where the difficulty of the trail could be measured in the metres of elevation gain and loss. Then I went south of the Walbran River. What I remember from this section of the trail are pain and tears. On the last day of hiking on that first trip I sprained my knee soon after departing camp in the morning. When you are hiking north to south, you must complete the trail by 5 pm or risk missing the ferry across the Gordon River to the trailhead in Port Renfrew. At sunrise my cousin and I set out across the rock shelves near Owen Point. She was an avid rock climber and had been intrigued by the description of this section of the trail as “bouldering” and the promise of sea caves at the Point. I was game. But then in our first hour of navigating the slippery sandstone punctured by roaring surge channels I slipped, and my knee dislocated (as it was prone to do prior to a 2012 surgery which saved both my knee and my future fieldwork). I scream-cried all the way across those damn boulders and up the hill from Campers Bay. It was imperative we finish the trail that day. Because if we did not, we would miss the bus. And if we missed the bus, our anxiety-prone grandparents who were supposed to pick us up would sound the
red alert. Spurred on by worries about worrying our family, we somehow dragged ourselves off the trail. At the end, I don’t remember much except relief and a desire for ice cream. As traumatic experiences go, it is a pretty privileged one. But the sheer, visceral pain I associate with that section of the trail means that in the dozens of times I’ve hiked the trail since, I’ve never done that section around Owen Point again. One of the most interesting facets of outdoor recreation-based tourism is that unlike typical “sun, sand and sites” tourist vacations that characterizes much international mass tourism, hiking and similar pursuits (white-water rafting, paddling, cycle touring, mountaineering) can be downright physically unpleasant.

Building on my discussion from chapter 2, the trail’s romanticized heritage as the “Shipwreck Coast” creates a perception of pristine wilderness. As I discussed in Chapter 1, this is concomitant with the Canadian “garrison mentality” (Frye 2004) where the majority of Canadian non-urban space, particularly in British Columbia, is constructed through infrastructure as remote, idealized as pristine, and imagined as more of a series of obstacles (mountains, lakes, rivers) to be overcome rather than as a dynamic environment with Indigenous peoples and places. This construction of Canada as obstacle is key to the conquest narrative of adventure tourism, with, as I observed in Chapter 2, the interesting twist that the land conquered is not seen as foreign but as central to Canadian national identity. In this chapter I want to bring down the scale of my discussion from the larger discourse of settler-colonialism and wilderness previously discussed and focus on how the embodied affects of ‘wilderness as obstacle’ interacts with the non-human in ways that both sustain and challenge settler-Canadian wilderness mythology. The recreation activities of camping and hiking necessitate an embodied engagement with terrain, which challenges notions of the passive tourist gaze. This could be described as a contrast between an ocularcentric perspective based on a view of nature as a landscape (Michell 2002, Schama 1995)
to one of terrain (Gordillo 2018). The term landscape has roots in the practice of landscape painting and ‘capturing’ nature by framing sites worthy of the title of picturesque (a practice that is very much mirrored by the tourist practice of photography). Landscapes are, by definition, oculartentric and anthropocentric, as they emerge from the limited human vision of a space. The term terrain, rather than locking the multiplicity of forces that make up the non-human environment into a set form as landscape does, “has a processual, shifting materiality that is inseparable from the flux of the atmosphere” (Gordillo 2018: 53). The ritualized journey of backpacking, trekking, and other adventure-oriented tourism practices demand that a place must not only be traveled to and gazed on and photographed, but also traversed, and even physically ‘conquered.’ Hikers engage not only imaginatively, but corporeally, with the landscape. Furthermore, because wilderness camping provides a more embodied engagement with the environment than scenic tourism, it is constructed as a more ‘authentic’ way of experiencing nature, a claim which has important political connotations in a settler-colonial context. While hiking a trail, tourists are confronted with vagaries and inconsistencies of topography, which may undermine or challenge their expectations of what it means to ‘holiday’ in ‘nature.’ For many who hike the trail, there is a significant difference between their expectations of the West Coast Trail and their experience of traversing it, and hikers’ descriptions of this distinction are often rooted in unexpected and unpleasant bodily experiences.

The West Coast Trail guidebook considered to be the best by those I spoke with is accurately entitled Blisters and Bliss (Foster & Aitken 1989). Positive and negative affects both define the embodied experience of the trek. Slipping, tripping, falling, sliding, into the mud, into the ocean, into a creek, into a tree are near ubiquitous experiences of the trail. Hikers do not start the trail without having some idea of the possibility of a mishap, but the fact that nearly everybody who hikes the trail seems to fall, that every hiker’s body ends up bruised and battered, regardless
of one’s fitness or preparedness level, informs the style and quality of movement, as well as the embodied experience of the trail. As previously discussed, approximately 80 to 100 people are evacuated off the West Coast Trail every year. That does not mean that there are that many serious injuries on the trail, as when a hiker is evacuated often one other member or even all of their hiking party is also evacuated. Most evacuations are for injuries such as sprained ankles and knees, which, while not serious, do prevent a hiker from completing the trail. However, serious injuries have happened on the trail, and there has been at least one recorded death. Most of the time, hikers shuffle off the trail with minor injuries, like I did, that may mark their bodies but go unrecorded. I spoke to one teacher who had been taking high school students on the West Coast Trail for twenty years during the wettest, and therefore the most difficult, time of year to hike, the beginning of May. Each year she told her students that if every one of them didn’t fall down at least once on the trail she’d be surprised. I found this to be true myself. I fell at least once every time I hiked the trail, usually more than once during wet weather. Over the course of fieldwork I sprained my knee, broke my ankle, suffered from a mild concussion, cut myself so badly I needed to go on antibiotics to prevent infection, and found my body marked by blisters, bruises, sunburns and a contusion that left me limping for weeks. Granted, I am perhaps a bit clumsier than your typical hiker, and I have several issues with my knees, hips and spine that make backpacking somewhat of a foolhardy choice of hobby. But bruised and battered bodies are considered to be part of the trail experience by most veteran hikers. To quote one hiker describing his experiences on the trail, “but you know, your reward will be when you arrive in Port Renfrew and are like, we did it, we did that. That's what I felt like when I reached Campers Bay, I was like, ‘whoa, I did that, and I'm not hurt or anything.’” As they move down the trail, some of the hikers’ goals change from consuming scenery, or traversing the trail at a particular speed or within a prescribed time, to simply making
it across the difficult terrain.

When I think of the southern section of the trail, my first recollection is a visceral feeling of physical discomfort. I remember the sensation of putting on wet wool socks in the morning into boots already soaked through (one piece of trail mythology I heard was a rumour of a hiker one year developing trench foot). Every time I saw someone coming off the trail on a rainy day I remembered the sensation of my toes sliding around wet socks in wet boots, creating hot spots which will later form the eponymous blisters (duct tape works better than bandages for covering these, I learned and I encountered several folks with feet swaddled in dull grey). Most injuries, and most discomfort, stems from periods of inclement weather (the importance of meteorological forces on the trail is something I will get into momentarily). If you start your hike in the rain, it is difficult to ever get dry again while trekking through a temperate rainforest. As one hiker attested: “Our stuff was permanently soaked the whole time. My boots are still really smelly, they’re just soaked, and they’ve never dried really.” Moving from the feeling in my feet of wet cold socks and hot spots, I then remember the sensation in my leg muscles when I slipped and fell within my first hour of being on the trail for the first time in the hiking season in early May 2014. The trail had only been open for five days, and it had been raining each of those days. Later that afternoon, as I nursed the burgeoning contusion on my right thigh, I encountered the first two people to complete the trail that year. They had started with a group of 10 on the first day the trail was open. Everyone else save for these two young women had been injured and evacuated. They told me of two young men who had, against all advice, decided to wade through the ocean at Walbran Creek at high tide instead of waiting for low tide to traverse the beach to the campground. They had to be evacuated by helicopter when they showed signs of hypothermia. For some, the sensory experience of trekking goes beyond the simply uncomfortable and moves into dangerous and even life-
threatening. Yet it is often these unpleasant sensations, from discomfort to pain, that hikers came back to again and again in our discussions about their trail experience. In fact, for some, it seemed to be part of the trails’ draw, even though it was unexpected. The feeling of hiking the trail, the sheer physicality of moving one’s body across unpredictable terrain that could (and often did) create unpleasant bodily sensations that became one of the reasons hikers gave for wanting to do it again:

You don't feel like you’re really living that much unless you do something that is a struggle.

Every day when you’re backpacking is kind of a struggle to some extent, but you enjoy it because at the end of the day you can feel like, wow, I mean, relatively speaking, I'm able to like, sit down. Sitting down after a day of hiking is like the best feeling, you know what I mean? But when you’re in the city all day like going to school and sitting down all day you're like I wish I was standing up right now.

As Braun (2003) and others (Fletcher 2014, Davis 2019) have noted, under capitalism, class-based and racialized differences in labour practices effect differences in leisure practices. The view of a wilderness trek as a struggle is rooted in nature-based tourism practices, as I previously discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, which are designed for, despite the diversity of subjectivities of those who actually engage in such practices, an idealized type of Canadian citizen that is white, male, and middle class. As Braun, Fletcher, and Davis (2019) have pointed out, many other urban dwellers do not have to escape to wilderness to experience bodily risk. As described in the previous chapter, just as women may feel less at risk of bodily violation walking in the woods than walking in an urban environment, the experiences of practices rooted in narratives of wilderness will vary as they intersect with individual hikers’ subjectivities. Although the tourism practices are engaged in by diverse bodies from diverse social positions, the practices themselves are structured by colonial
narratives of Canadian nature. Therefore, the novelty of struggle in this hiker’s life, at least in terms of physical struggle, is indicative of a particular social position, and indeed this hiker was a white, middle-class, and cis-gendered male.

The emphasis on pain, injury and discomfort gives a veneer of authenticity to hikers’ journeys; it is clear evidence of their “being there” in a way that is deemed superior to photographic evidence. Most hikers told me that they hiked the West Coast Trail because it was supposed to be beautiful, but what they talked about the most frequently and at the greatest length were the various “feelings” they had while they hiked the trail. Henri Lefebvre in discussing the consumption of space exemplified by people’s holidays, notes that, “people demand a qualitative space [as opposed to an abstract, quantifiable, geometric space]. The qualities they seek have names: sun, snow, sea.... Neither spectacle nor mere signs are acceptable. What is wanted is materiality and naturalness as such, rediscovered in their (apparent or real) immediacy” 1992: 353). He goes on to note that “in the areas set aside for leisure, the body regains a certain right to use” (ibid). Lefebvre goes on to explain how the quantity-quality distinction is not a binary opposition but a spectrum that “decomposes when subject to analysis” (Lefebvre 1992:352). This distinction is produced by the “movement from the space of consumption to the consumption of space via leisure and within the space of leisure; in other words, from the quotidian to the non-quotidian through festival” (Lefebvre: 354). In other words, tourism is not just about the consumption of signs, but about a desire to experience moments that are qualitatively different from the space of labour, of everyday life under capitalism. For the hikers I spoke with who worked in manual labour jobs where embodied labour was very much part of their everyday lives as workers under capitalism, moments of physicality in leisure spaces were still experienced as qualitatively different. For these hikers, the symbolic marking of an embodied practice as leisure changes how the affects of practices like
walking (or trudging), carrying heavy loads (or backpacks), or manual labour (building a campfire) are interpreted. I will discuss this further in the next chapter when I return to Graeburns theory of tourism as a sacred pilgrimage. My argument here, following Lefebvre, is not that the mundane work world is devoid of embodied, sensory engagement, but rather that in spaces of leisure, how the body feels is emphasized over the ability of one’s body to fulfill the requirements of “work” under capitalism. Pleasure and pain are more fully attended to when one has the privileged to choose the experiences that create them, rather than engage in them for survival. My point here is that while tourism is about the consumption of signs (via photos, souvenirs), and is driven by representation and narrative (via a nationalist wilderness mythology), the tourist “consumption of space” is also facilitated by the active movement of diverse, sensate bodies (Ness 2016).

I suggest that in settler-Canadian culture there is a hierarchy of value within nature-based tourism, where scenic tourism is viewed as less authentic than tourism in which the body is physically engaged in traversing territory. As mentioned in Chapter 2, what is particularly interesting in the case of Canadian national parks is the emphasis on being active in an environment, rather than merely on its scenic significance. National parks are advertised through their scenic potential, and it is the visual representation of mountains, waterfalls, and beaches that draw domestic tourists to these places. However, the emphasis on ‘being’ in this environment through physical movement through it, rather than simply visually regarding scenery, brings a measure of unpredictability into the visitor experience that potentially challenges or disrupts the static “spectacle-isation,” to use John Urry’s (1990) term, of place that tourism usually enacts. The trail has many scenic lookouts, and photography is ubiquitous. But most of the time and effort of visitors within this tourist space is spent on motion. In campfire narratives after a day of walking, it was that motion, rather than the scenery, that was the primary subject of the travelers’ tales. The
walker primarily “perceives the ground kinaesthetically in movement” (Ingold 2015: 42) and the focus on visual aesthetics that is often represented as the central motivation in tourist journeys becomes secondary to an embodied engagement with place.

Yet this embodied engagement, although it made for great stories, also disrupted many of the expectations and representations that hikers had carried with them on the trail. It left some of them very frustrated. Unexpected physical experiences through embodied interactions with the terrain can produce unexpected affects. One young woman I hiked with recounted how, on her third day on the trail, she suddenly, after slipping slightly, broke down into tears. Crying hysterically by the trail, she said “I don’t know why I was crying, I just felt overwhelmed all of sudden.” She went on to say that another fellow hiker stopped and stood by her while she cried, offering her chocolate and sympathy. After the tears had passed, she was able to take a few deep breaths and begin walking the trail again. I empathized with her, telling her that I too had cried on the trail at a similar moment, and others I knew had too. With some sheepishness and genuine disbelief, she said “I can’t believe I cried like that, but at least I’m not the only one.”

Hiking the West Coast Trail usually takes a fair degree of planning. Many hikers plan their trip months in advance, researching their route the necessary gear and reserving their spot on the trail months in advance. Therefore every hiker arrives at the trailhead with a pre-existing notion of what their experience will be like. Usually, this notion is characterized by two seemingly competing expectations: 1) it will be beautiful and 2) it will be physically difficult. The first expectation, of scenic beauty, is usually based on photo representations of the trail viewed during

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50 Hikers must register with Parks Canada to hike the West Coast Trail. Only a certain number of hikers are permitted to depart from each trailhead each day. This is done to prevent overcrowding in campgrounds with limited space and facilities and preserve the wilderness aesthetic of the trail. Many hikers reserve their spot months in advance.
the planning process. The second is usually based on the accounts of other hikers. I suggest that this dissonance between “blisters and bliss,” and the contrasting affects of witnessing beauty while undergoing physical discomfort, is vital to, yet also complicates, tourist ideals of wilderness. The term wilderness is rooted, as others have detailed (Cronon 1996, Schama 1995), in European and Euro-American cultural notions of the sublime, where an encounter with wilderness is an encounter with the divine majesty of nature. Although positive associations with wilderness have their origin in the nineteenth century romantic movement and American transcendentalism, the term has older, deeper connotations. Centuries before Wordsworth penned Tintern Abbey or Thoreau mused on Walden, wildnesses were “those rare places on earth where one had more chance than elsewhere to glimpse the face of God” (Cronon 1996:3). For thousands of years, in Christianity and other Abrahamic religions, wildnesses were places not so much for admiring natural beauty, but rather for asceticism, reflection, and physical as well as mental trials in a hostile environment. Leaving Christian theology to the side, the term wilderness was used to describe places where one encountered the supernatural, where the power of the nonhuman could not be ignored. Although (relatively) newer cultural associations of wilderness with scenic beauty tend to shape the use of the word in the early twenty-first century, this older notion of wilderness as being a place where one connects to forces that are more powerful than the human self remains salient in outdoor recreation culture.

The phrase “blisters and bliss” encapsulates a sentiment that nearly every hiker I spoke with articulated in some way. Hikers were struck by the contrast between the picturesque landscape and their own physical discomfort. The setting of the trail is coastal old-growth temperate rainforest, and long sandy beaches. Visually, it is stunning. But to traverse it is another matter. As one hiker commented “I don't know what's worse, the rain or the sand.” Despite the trail’s
reputation of difficulty, what Urry (1990) calls the “tourist gaze” often left hikers unprepared for a visceral, embodied engagement with a new environment. According to Urry, the tourist gaze is:

directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary. The viewing of such tourist sights often involves different forms of social patterning, with a much greater sensitivity to visual elements [at the expense of other aspects of the environment] of landscape or townscape than normally found in everyday life. (Urry 1990:3)

The tourist gaze primes tourists for the consumption of particular visual aspects of the environment: waterfalls, sea stacks, or beaches that are considered to be exceptionally beautiful. An important aspect of the tourist gaze is that it is directed, often through prior exposure to representations that were created in order to draw tourists to a specific place or region. Furthermore, the tourist gaze tends to obscure the local nuances of place that are difficult to capitalize or capture in tools of the tourist trade (akin to my discussion of Authorized Heritage Discourse in Chapter 3). In addition, the tourist gaze positions the visitor viewing the scene as an outsider, an audience member whose actions have no bearing on what is occurring. The tourist fashions herself as an observer, rather than a participant, and therefore as standing outside of the historical processes and cultural practices that produce the landscape being toured. This places the tourist in a position of seeming objectivity, what Pratt (2008) has framed as the anti-conquest, where the visitor places themselves outside of the forces of colonialism and imperialism that produced their mobility in order to avoid feelings of moral culpability. Many tourists, particularly eco-tourist and outdoor recreationists, assume a position of ‘goodness’ where they believe they have transcended “the realities of commodification, consumption and commercialization [and I
would add colonialism] that implicitly infuse their travels” (Harrison 2003: 23, see also Ness 2011:79). The tourist can feel comforted by their ocularcentrism: if they “take only pictures, leave only footprints” the ethics of their visitation remains unquestioned.

The following is a quote from a magazine article promoting the West Coast Trail when it was first included in the then new Pacific Rim National Park: “The ever-changing trail winds along a virtually uninhabited stretch of some of the most picturesque shoreline on the continent. However, most of the trail’s heritage belongs, not to melodic surf under sunny skies, but to man’s never-ending battle with the elements” (Touchie 1973). Guidebooks, blogs, and other resources hikers draw upon to plan their trip forewarned hikers that their trek on the West Coast Trail would be physically demanding and that they would “battle with the elements.” Warnings of such “battles” with nature, while ominous sounding, are quite vague in comparison to the listing of specific visual sites a visitor ought to consume. The limitations of these resources, and their propensity to focus on the visual elements of the trail experience rather than the physical experiences of wetness, injury, and fatigue meant that many hikers still were taken by surprise when their embodied encounter with the environment superseded their visual consumption of scenery. As one hiker said, “we were just like staring at the ground pretty much” while hiking the trail, as watching where one put one’s feet so as not to slip and fall quickly became more important than viewing scenery. They often found themselves at a loss for words when trying to explain what it was to actually hike the trail: “I expected it to be hard, but I didn’t expect all this” stated one hiker I spoke with, as he gestured wildly with open hands to our surrounding environment. Hikers experienced a dissonance between what they had expected the trail to be like, and how they experienced the act of moving themselves across its length. They arrived primed for the visual consumption of scenery (cameras were ubiquitous, and I was a bit shocked at some of the weighty
photography equipment some hikers carried), yet it was not the scenery that made the most lasting impression.

6.2 Weathering a Storm

The following is an account of one of my strongest memories from the trail, that of my first ‘real’ west coast storm. The West Coast Trail is closed from October 1-April 30 every year. As I was accustomed to alpine hiking before I moved to the coast, I considered this season to be fairly long. I am used to trails being closed in the winter, if not officially, at least nominally due to snow (which in alpine areas can mean avalanche danger). So, I did not question a winter closure for the trail. Then a friend asked whether they could hike the West Coast Trail in February and why it was closed, because snow and snow-related difficulties are not present during the typical West Coast winter. The answer was storm season.

What do I mean by storm season? Those familiar with West Coast beaches will know that large driftwood logs, often several feet in diameter, and usually at the back of the beach abutting the forest, are a defining characteristic of the beach. A common question of those new to this environment is “how did those get there?” In the summer, and even on most winter days, they seem far from the tideline and it’s a stretch of the imagination to picture a surf strong enough to lift those giants far up the beach. Before my fieldwork, I knew, theoretically, there were winter storms that were powerful enough to create that storm-line of driftwood giants barricading the beaches, but I’d never personally been in a real west coast storm. That was, until my last trip of the season in September 2013.

September is usually a lovely month for hiking. At the beginning of the month I hiked the
entire trail from Port Renfrew to Bamfield taking a leisurely ten days to do it. Then, on September 17, I began what was to be my final trip of the season, heading into Carmanah from the Bamfield end, spending a few days at Carmanah, then heading out via the same northern trailhead. The weather was gorgeous and sunny, even hot at times (a swim at Tsusiaht falls was a must), and all seemed to be going well. However, on the third day of the trip the wind picked up and was blowing hard, in spite of the sunshine. I crossed paths with the Ditidaht Trail Guardians near Nitinat Narrows and they warned me that a storm was coming. Having encountered what I thought was stormy weather before on the trail, I thought, oh well, I can handle rain, and continued on.

I had convinced the others I was hiking with to stay the night at Dare Beach, instead of going all the way to Cribs, as it is a beautiful spot and slightly shortens the long trek south from Tsusiaht. We set up camp about ten feet past the previous nights high tide line, had a lovely fire, and watched a gorgeous sunset followed by a full moon rising. It was near-perfect. Several hours later, we awoke to what seemed a completely different world. At 4 am I began to hear a strange clicking/buzzing that sounded like an odd sort of rain. However, the sound came from something hitting against the bottom section of my tent fly, not coming down from above. It was tiny little sand flies, jumping about. Usually these creatures stay near the tide line, so I wondered why they were suddenly descending on my tent. As I lay there wondering, I heard a shout from a fellow camper: “Hey, our tent is wet!” I peeked out. They had camped about a metre closer to the ocean than I had, and the ocean had crept up, far past previous high tide lines, until it was lapping at their sleeping bags. A panicked move, and then head-scratching ensued. We had camped about 10 feet above the previous nights high tide at 10.5 feet, and tonight was supposed to be 11 feet, so why

51 Canadians have the tendency to haphazardly use both the metric and imperial systems. Although the length of the trail was calculated in kilometres, the tides were often measured in feet.
was the tide so high? The answer was in the new sounds that surrounded us. Lapping waves had become raging breakers roaring onto shore. A storm had blown in, causing the ocean to surge, which when combined with the full moon high tides, meant that the tide was several feet closer than it was supposed to be according to our handy official Parks Canada tide chart. Looking out at the ocean, even in the dark, you could see the waves were at least twice the size of what I had ever seen before on this section of beach. The wind had also picked up, and rain was starting to pour down. In my sleepy state, I did not fully realize the size or power of the storm that was descending on us. I decided to just huddle up in my sleeping bag and wait and hope that it would get better later in the morning. With waves threatening our tents, a strong wind blowing, and a moon followed by a sun obscured by fog, the onset of the storm was a clear reminder of the unpredictability of our environment as well as the precariousness of our position within it. One sound that I remember clearly from that night was the sudden hysterical laughter of one hiker. The absurdity of the change in our setting was so overwhelming, what could he do but laugh?

The weather did not get better, and by 10 am the rising tide was again a worry. The others had already left, as they were on a stricter schedule than I and had to finish the trail by a certain date. So, when I emerged from my tent, I was alone, wet, and, it felt, in a completely different environment than I had ever been in, even though I had thought I was familiar with this section of the trail. It had rained so much in the past few hours that creeks which were barely dripping the day before were raging torrents, and the tide threatened to sweep over logs and dunes that the ocean probably had not touched since the hiking season began. Intellectually I knew these types of storms could happen, but the difference in knowing what it could be like and being in an actual west coast storm meant that I stumbled about in general disbelief.

Wetter than I have ever been in my life, my goal was to reach Qua-ba-diwa. Unfortunately,
as I had made a late start from camp, I had to battle a high tide, which, strengthened by the storm surge, was constantly lapping at my ankles. What I found myself doing to get to the Knighton homestead was definitely dangerous and decidedly stupid. Descending from the ladder from the lighthouse, I found that the tide has already swamped the beach, and the waves were bashing up against the piles of driftwood logs under the headland. I could see the bright blue tarp roof of Monique's restaurant, but the only way to get there was to crawl on hands and feet along precarious piles of driftwood logs, which were being battered by the waves so the oceanside logs rolled and crashed into each other. But I could smell bacon. So, I recklessly, yet slowly, crawled over the logs, moving during breaks in the waves, and slipping and sliding on my hands and knees.

When I got there, my fellow campers shouted a greeting, and Monique bellowed some sort of combination of a welcome and admonishment for my stupidity. She and her helpful WOOFers cooked up a big pot of soup for bedraggled hikers to sip on while we dried out wet things by her wood stove. The waves came so high they began to threaten her shelter, and a fast little creek of rainwater began to flow in the dip between her kitchen and the ocean. As the storm grew worse, Monique and Peter encouraged everyone who made it to their home that day to take shelter there for the night.

The morning after the storm it was sunny, but the sea was rough. In a few days I needed to be back in Vancouver where my partner was getting surgery. I spoke with the lighthouse keeper at Carmanah, who told me another storm, perhaps even larger than the previous one, was expected that evening. I waited until mid-morning to make my decision, hanging out with the lighthouse keeper and witnessing an evacuation of one of the hiker groups who had sheltered at Qua-ba-diwa the night before. The sea was still so rough the Parks Canada staff had a difficult time making the beach and watching them struggle decided it for me. If I continued hiking south from Qua-ba-diwa
I would be on the section of the trail which was more sheltered, but generally more difficult. And if the storm took out one of the cable cars I’d be trapped (this has happened in the past according to the Trail Guardians) until Parks could get me out. I’d also end up at the southern trailhead of Port Renfrew, the opposite end of the trail from where I was based. On the other hand, if I headed north and the storm flooded Darling River or Michigan Creek, these could become impassable (as had also happened in the past). I was fairly shaken by the power of the storm, so I decided to be smart, be safe and exit at Nitinat Narrows. Besides, I had hiked the trail before, but I had never been to Nitinat village down the lake, so this was a good excuse to head that way. When I reached the ferry, I found out that I was not the only one who decided to head out. The Trail Guardians had warned another solo hiker about the second storm predicted to hit the coast, and he had decided to cut and run too. We boated down Nitinat Lake with the Edgar family, then found a ride from the village to Bamfield. That night I heard the wind send the Douglas firs into a creaking dance around the cabin I was staying in and wondered what it was like out at Qua-ba-diwa. I had played it safe, and made it out, but what if I hadn’t had the option? What happened to the other hikers on the trail, did they make it out safely? Or had they added their numbers to the annual toll of injuries and evacuations? I never found out what had happened with the hikers I had been with, as they did not get back in touch with me after their trip. But I did chat to some of my Trail Guardian friends who told me that there had been quite a few evacuations and a couple injuries. Nothing bad though, they said, only some sprained knees and ankles.

I sometimes wonder, if I had waited out the storm at Qua-ba-diwa or at another campground along the trail, if it would have been worth the discomfort for the stories. I met one middle-aged man who had hiked the trail three times before, and his first experience of the trail, and the one that he claimed solidified his love for it, was of being stranded for several days by a storm. Strong
storm winds had downed the cable cars at Cullite Cove and Campers Bay, and those downed cars along with high waters in the creeks effectively trapped hikers caught between these points until the ocean calmed enough for Parks Canada to evacuate hikers via zodiac. Although this didn’t occur the year I hiked it, in years past during long periods of especially wet weather, the creeks and rivers that cross the trail have flooded. Some of these waterways, like the Cheewhat, have solid wooden bridges that allow for an easy crossing. Others, like the Michigan Creek, are easily navigated through a few rock hops. Some, like Carmanah and Walbran may be easily forded at low tide. If a hiker comes upon these rivers at high tide, there is always the cable car. Cable cars are one of the features of the built environment that the trail is infamous for (along with its rickety wooden ladders). Cable cars involve a cart that fits two hikers at a time, along with their packs, and a pulley system. Hikers can pull themselves across while in the cart but are often aided by other hikers standing on the platforms at either end of the cable, as it is much easier to operate the pulley standing firmly rather than from a dangling seat below the mechanism. Cable car crossings were another opportunity for hiker sociability (which I will discuss further in the next chapter), as it was common for hikers to help each other across. During my entire time on the trail, I was in a position where I had to use a cable car because of river and tide conditions on my own only once. It was also during a storm, and I remember becoming nauseated with the effort as I struggled, already exhausted from hiking twenty-five kilometres that day, to pull myself across the Klanawa river while the cable car rocked unsteadily in the storm-powered winds. Returning to the hiker who had been trapped for several days, he recalled the camaraderie formed when everyone trapped by the storm pooled their dwindling food and fuel supply and built massive bonfires to keep warm. He said he was still in touch with some of his fellow hikers from that incident and had even visited some of them at their homes. Dealing with adverse weather became, in this instance, an impetus
for social bonding, which, as I will argue in the next chapter, is often a significant part of the experience that tourists’ value.

There were other storms too. I remember weathering one under a makeshift tarp shelter with some hikers from Alberta: “You can tell the Albertans because of the tarps,” they laughed. One group was a mother, father, and adult son, and the other was a book club of middle-aged women from the flat prairie town of Medicine Hat. They had trained for the trail by placing ladders on their suburban garages and hiking up and down them with their packs. I remember that night and that group in particular because I lent one woman my thermal shirt, as she had not brought enough layers to counter the cold that came with the wet. Coming from the scorching heat of a semi-arid July in southern Alberta, she had not anticipated the way the coastal cold soaks into your bones. The wind and the rain had made it too difficult to light a fire, and instead we simply huddled together, lending each other body heat and telling jokes in a wild space made intimate by our communal discomfort. After a rainstorm hits the trail, evidence of these temporary moments of community dot the beaches of the trail in the form of driftwood shelters temporarily built for the purpose. These are often re-used by other hikers, or eventually taken apart and burned as the summer goes on and driftwood for campfires becomes scarce. These awkward little shacks rarely survive the winter storms.52

Dealing with inclement weather is a major part of the trail experience for many hikers, both

52 The Knighton family at Qua-ba-diwa built and rebuilt their kitchen, dining, and guest sleeping area every year. Composed of driftwood logs and tarps, these temporary shelters kept the rain off hundreds of hikers each summer, but the Knightons knew from experience that a flimsy tarp roof, no matter how neatly tied down with knots by Peter’s skilled hands, would not survive the winter winds. Their home grew and shrank with seasons. In the 1990s they lived there full time but as both Peter and Monique’s health declined as they aged, they started to only occupy their home in the summers. During the winter they often had a caretaker live there for periods of time, or at least look in on their cabin to make sure everything was in order.
in the planning stage, in the moment when the storm hits, and in the narrative recounting of the adventure after the hike is complete. The experience of hiking the trail can vary vastly depending on the weather. Hikers who make the trek annually told me that was one of the reasons they kept going back, “it changes every year.” Winter storms bring new obstacles, variations in precipitation patterns can make one section of the trail an easy stroll one month and an obstacle course of thigh-deep mud and slippery wood the next. Hikers seemed to have two main strategies for dealing with what one of my hiking companions termed a “recalcitrant” environment. The first strategy was to “get good gear” and the other was to “tough it out” and “go with your gut.” I will discuss the differences between the two and how they may seem to be in opposition, but both are problematically tied to a settler-colonial ontology of nature as obstacle, and of human-nonhuman entanglements as antagonistic. However, the latter strategy, where the “gut,” or paying attention to how one’s body feels in a situation, has some potential for creating narratives of human-nonhuman entanglements that differ from the “man vs. Nature” paradigm that is foundational to the mythology of wilderness.

The pros and cons of different hiking gear for dealing with inclement weather were much discussed among hikers on the WCT. Technology is sometimes seen as the antidote to inhospitable conditions, as middle-class consumers seek to purchase their way out of environmental discomfort with the mantra, “There’s no such thing as bad weather, just bad gear.” There is obvious ableism within this mindset, as well as issues of class and an anthropocentric idealism. ‘Good’ gear can be very expensive, and some novice hikers I spoke with estimated they had shelled out over two thousand Canadian dollars just on gear alone for their trip on the trail, and that was not even buying the top-of-line products. Big ticket items that typically run from $100 to even $1,000 Canadian include hiking boots, tents, stoves, sleeping bags, sleeping mats, and rain jackets. Technological
innovations and special materials such as merino wool, goose down, and Gore-Tex fibre have made high quality hiking gear lightweight, warm, and waterproof but increasingly expensive. The same hikers who said, “anyone can walk” also spoke of how foolish it would be to try to do the trail in a “cheap Canadian Tire tent and running shoes.” I sometimes encountered hikers who were, as they said, “on a budget” and lacked some of the expensive gear of their peers. They admitted that this trip was an expensive “once in a lifetime” type thing, and although they may have bought, say, good quality hiking boots, they ate instant ramen noodles cooked over a campfire rather than freeze dried gourmet meals heated nearly instantly on a lightweight stove, and substituted a plastic rain poncho for Gore-Tex. I was told by one of lighthouse keepers about a woman hiking the trail by herself one year who only brought a tarp, not a tent, and seemed to lack any of the other gear deemed necessary by her fellow hikers. She was, by her own admission, not a particularly fit or experienced hiker and hiked the trail at such a slow pace that, concerned, some of the hikers who encountered her worriedly told the lighthouse keeper about a woman “who didn’t seem to know what she was doing” and would probably get into trouble. The lighthouse keeper told me that she did eventually find this infamous woman and described her as, despite her cheap blue tarp shelter, “having a grand old time.” That is not to say that good gear does not make a difference; one of the Trail Guardians told me that when he first started, he hiked the trail in borrowed work boots. His painfully blistered feet were grateful when his first pay cheque came, and he bought some quality hiking boots. Although hikers saw themselves as “getting back to basics,” they often toted gear worth more than what some of the locals in Bamfield, Nitinat, or Anacla made in a month.

Paradoxically, not relying on too much gear can sometimes be seen as a sign of one’s skill as an outdoorsperson. One hiker I spoke with boasted that he didn’t bring a stove, because he could “light a fire anywhere.” Another young man I spoke with attested:
I kind of like the notion of being able to survive on your own. It’s pretty idealistic but it’s fun. So, I think, you know, pack everything you have in one bag and survive off of it completely, it's really fun. So, like I've read quite a bit of that, about techniques and stuff for doing that, and I'd read about Edward Sturko who is like a crazy ultra-distance hiker. All that kinda combined to make me want to do the West Coast Trail. And think I’m capable enough to do it, I think.

This same young man thought he was capable not because he had the gear to “handle it” but because he had acquired the requisite experience and skills:

I went to summer camp for a lot of my life and trips with that, kind of multi-day stuff. Me and my Dad did a few, like. 3-day trips and I'd done a few canoeing trips before like overnight and stuff. And I'd gone hiking in the UK before a bit, and I did a bit of a backpacking trip when I was in Malawi as well, so I had a decent amount of experience. And I was pretty confident about, like, setting up tents and organizing food and everything.

It’s important to note that neither this young man, nor the hiker who was skilled at lighting fires, had ever hiked or camped on the west coast of Vancouver Island before. They saw their relevant experience related to travel, equipment, and technique as of greater consequence than any direct experience or knowledge of the particularities of the temperate coastal rainforest.

Overall, the focus on better gear or generalized survival skills (Bear Grylls comes to mind) as means to counter or escape the bodily discomfort (and even danger) that nonhuman forces generate is in keeping with both a capitalist society where the consumption of better products is presented as a solution and with the “nature-as-obstacle” perspective discussed earlier. As well as displaying a significant hubris (the Titanic and the iceberg come to mind), these strategies also
have a distancing effect on human relationships with the environment. The hiker/traveler/skilled outdoorsperson in this paradigm can be plonked down any place in the world and with the right gear and/or the right technical skills can survive. The place itself does not matter. Or, rather, it matters in terms of the obstacles or challenges that nonhuman forces set in the path of the obstinate hiker/explorer, who, with the appropriate purchases or training can respond appropriately.53

6.3 Walking with the Tide

When I was discussing with the Parks Canada orientation staff how they could tell whether a hiker could “hack it” on the trail, they continuously referenced two intertwining traits: endurance and flexibility. Although these terms are often used to describe the “fitness” of human bodies, that is not how the Parks Canada staff used them in this context. Instead, they reiterated to me again and again that hiking the trail was “a mental thing”. They often had difficulty putting into words what they meant by this, but one gave the example of someone she knew who was a triathlete and “the fittest guy ever” but who she did not think could hike the trail. He would not be able to “go that long without a hot shower,” she said. In other words, he wouldn’t be able to endure the physical discomfort that is part of the trail experience. She also spoke about how trail runners, who try to run the entire trail in one day as an extreme test of endurance, were “crazy.” She explained that they had to get the timing just right: the right weather and the right tides, for it to work. They could not (or would not) carry gear to overnight on the trail, so they pushed themselves to complete it all in one go. This meant that if they were ever caught, as many hikers have been, by a storm, by bad trail conditions, by a broken ladder or bridge or by their own bodies (twisting an ankle, for

53 This is similar to what Sally Ann Ness has described ethnographically the “translocal” culture of international rock climbing (see Ness 2011: 76-78). She notes that a “competitive interest in conquering nature” (2011: 76) is widespread in the climbing community.
example) their lack of preparedness (which she characterized as a lack of flexibility) meant they could find themselves in a very dangerous situation. She told of hypothermic trail runners arriving in Bamfield at 3 am and knocking at the doors of a local bed and breakfast. Flexibility is what these elite athletes lacked, in that they had a prescribed speed and time that they set out to complete the trail in, and this hampered their ability to “hack it” when nature threw them a curveball.

When I first heard the term “gut-instinct” being thrown around in hikers’ conversation, my initial interpretation was that they were referring to some sort of primordial instinct associated with an idealized image of natural man at one with his environment. However, I found, on further conversation, particularly with local residents, parks staff, and experienced West Coast Trail hikers, that the phrase “listening to your gut” was actually associated more with sensing changes in the environment and paying attention to those changes, rather than problematic primitivist tropes. When speaking with local residents in Port Renfrew and Bamfield, Parks Canada staff, and experienced hikers about what was necessary to hike the West Coast Trail, they often started their sentences with “you need decent gear, of course, but...” After that “but” about gear they often continued on to say things like “you need to know what you're doing” and “you need to have the right attitude.” As I unpacked this further I found that what they often meant by “knowing what you're doing” and the “right attitude” had less to do with skills related to outdoorismanship, or knowledge and familiarity with the climate, but rather the “attitude,” which often resulted from experience in the outdoors, of respect for the nonhuman forces of the environment. This reflected not so much that old boy scout motto of “be prepared” as an adage of pay attention,” sometimes expressed as “watch the ocean” or “listen to the weather” or “listen to your body.” Tim Ingold (2011) contends that the world should be seen as processual in itself, and our environment may be seen as a series of movements. “Going with your gut,” means to adapt to our ever-changing
environment, we have to engage our senses, minds and our bodies, and to respond to the continuous transformation of the world as it moves around us.

On the west coast, locals call August “Fogust.” Thick fog rolls in nearly every morning in that month. It typically dissipates in the afternoon, at least on warm, sunny days, but the dense, damp grey tends to cloak the beaches of the West Coast Trail nearly every morning at that time of year. Hikers consistently grumbled at the fog for “blocking the views” and “ruining photos.” In contrast to these negative reactions to “Fogusts” I heard another perspective from a former resident of Cloo-oose. She said how she liked how in “Fogust,” when your vision was quite literally clouded by the weather, you could, if you listened, tell where you were on the beach by listening to the sound of the waves on the rocks. By listening, if you knew what to listen for that is, you could not only tell where you were, but where the tide was. And the tide was a more important marker of time than the clock in this environment. Her comments on listening to the waves reminded me of Tim Ingold’s suggestion that weather “is not so much an object of perception as what we perceive in, underwriting our very capacities to see, to hear and to touch. As the weather changes, so these capacities vary, leading us not to perceive different things, but to perceive the same things differently” (Ingold 2011: 130). One of the most powerful ways I heard this idea articulated was when a hiker who had been hiking the trail for three decades spoke of walking with the tide. Not against it, not through it, but rather with it, waiting for it to reveal the trail before you and then unmake your path again behind you. Weather conditions shape and change the material surfaces of the environment thereby framing the people’s actions and movements.

This was hard for many hikers to do. They were on holiday, and therefore on a schedule. They had planned to hike the trail in x number of nights before they had to return to home, work and family. This tight timeline in many ways contributed to the number of hiker evacuations on
the trail as people tried to force the speedy movement of their bodies across a landscape that was full of resistant, changeable frictions. Why is it that, while they expect wilderness, at the same time hikers have difficulty contending with the ‘wildness’ of the trail? It is a bit ironic given the ancient roots of the term wilderness in notions of grappling with the nonhuman and encountering a potentially hostile (to humans) environment, hikers continually expressed surprise at their actual experience of moving across the terrain. One reason for this, I suggest, is related to the relationship between time and space, and quality and quantity, as used to measure and value mobility. Hikers found their expectations versus their experiences of the type and quality of movement along the trail to be significantly different. Ideals of physical fitness, and the regulation of bodily techniques into certain forms of movement contrasted greatly with the haphazard way a person moves along the trail. Hikers often judged how “good they were doing” by how fast or slow they moved along the trail according to kilometres. The Parks Canada trail map clearly marked each of the seventy-five kilometres along the trail, and each kilometre in turn was marked by a signpost (kilometre one starting at the northern end in Pachena, kilometre seventy-five at Gordon River in the south). Hikers would mark their progress based on the number of kilometres they would go an hour and judge their aptitude and the aptitude of others accordingly. One hiker told me that “there were some people on the trail that you knew shouldn’t be hiking it. They just looked miserable and they were doing like three kilometres in a day.” At the Parks Canada orientation, staff warned of the difficulty of the southern section by stating that most people traversed it at a pace of one kilometre an hour, a rate that many hikers scoffed at as far too slow. Yet a continual chorus on the southern section was “that couldn’t have been only ONE kilometre”. Hikers calculate the quality of their movement by the quantity of kilometres they can traverse in an allotted amount of time. Benedict Anderson, in discussing the use of cartography to create what Lefebvre would call “abstract”
(1991) space, calls maps nation-building tools of “totalizing classification…. where the entire planet’s curved surface is subjected to a geometrical grid” (2016: 173). Certain terrains resist mapping, and its enforcement of steady boundaries. The West Coast Trail is one of those spaces. Despite appearing as a bold line on a map, both the trail and the coastline it paralleled are in a constant state of flux. Changing tides and changing weather, as well as other environmental processes such as erosion and flooding, challenge the creation of a stable of cartographic representation or a measurement of either time, space, or movement in abstract terms.

When hikers purchase Parks Canada maps while registering for their hike, Parks Canada tapes inside the map an essential (yet seasonally contingent) tool. A small printout of that week’s tide chart is carefully inserted and waterproofed with sticky tape inside each map. Parks Canada staff carefully review during the orientation (a good reason not to skip it!) which sections of the trail cross beaches that are impassable at high tide. Some sections have inland routes, which are generally agreed upon by hikers to be less scenic and more difficult to traverse, and preferably avoided. A few sections of the trail can only be navigated via the beach. With no route through the forest, hikers must pay close attention to the time of day, and where the tide is at, to calculate their ability to pass through one of these sections. These efforts were sometimes, to their frustration, futile. Weather forecasts and tide charts are predictive tools, but they cannot always accurately or correctly estimate what conditions the combination of moving air and flowing water will produce. Most hikers, by the end of their trip, had found it more useful to hear reports of trail conditions from their fellow hikers traveling in the opposite direction than rely on weather forecasts. As one hiker put it, it “everything was like word-of-mouth pretty much” and guidebooks and careful planning often went out the window. Furthermore, the trail crosses back and forth, amphibiously, over beaches, through the intertidal zone, over streams and rivers, and through rainforest. The
continual changes of the terrain meant that, as one long-time visitor who had been hiking the trail each year for over a decade put it, “you never know what the trail will look like this time.” Some hikers found it incredibly frustrating, particularly those on a tight holiday schedule, to have to follow the rhythms of the tide in both when and where they hiked. The tide, literally, made (and destroyed) their path on a daily basis. Furthermore, injuries sustained on the trail, even mild ones, had concrete effects on the hiking body’s ability to move through space.

The interaction between the dynamism of place and the contingencies of body means that, “walking is ideally positioned to disavow objective, romantic notions of the landscape as identifiable and bounded” (Edensor 2010:75). In his discussion of walking in the city, de Certeau emphasizes the spatial dimension of everyday practices, “the networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces” (1984: 93). The traces of these paths of practice form memories that language often fails to adequately express, especially affectively, beyond “I feel good here” (De Certeau 1985:108) or in the case of the West Coast Trail, “it hurts to move,” “this place sets me on edge”, or “it feels so....raw.” In the actual encounter of space, rather than its abstract representation, layers of complex signifiers emerge out of the entanglement of bodies, both human and non-human, and the multiplicity of feelings that these human-non-human entanglements of air, water, mud, plants, sand, algae, and bodies evoke. Tourism geographer Tim Edensor has discussed how walking, although inevitably conditioned by multiple forms of regulation, “possesses peculiar characteristics that always make these orderings of space and body contingent, facilitating immanent, often unexpected experiences” (2010:69). Drawing on Lefebvre, Edensor argues that places possess distinctive ensembles of dynamic rhythms that produce “an ever-changing, dynamic time-space, or, where place appears to be stable, they
disguise its endless maintenance through the serial reproduction of its consistencies” (2010: 69).

Walking not only adds to these rhythms, but instantiates interactions with some and divergences from others, and so participates in the production of certain polyrhythms of place. Individuals become attuned to these rhythms as they latch to space through the bodily experience of different spatial textures (pavement, grass etc.) (2010: 70).

Furthermore, Edensor asserts that “a mobile sense of place can be produced through longer immersion by the walking body across a more extended space” (2010:70). From such extended patterns of movement, a sort of ‘dwelling in motion’ emerges. By “dwelling in motion” I am referring to both the sensory engagement with the non-human environment as well as its cultural effect, what Tim Ingold famously called a “dwelling” (2000) perspective. Ingold argues that “intuitive understanding is not contrary to science or ethics, nor does it appeal to instinct rather than reason, or to supposedly ‘hardwired’ imperatives of human nature. On the contrary, it rests in perceptual skills that emerge, for each and every being, through a process of development in a historically specific environment” (2000:25). Ingold challenges both the objectivity of scientific realism and representational theories of social constructionism, arguing that neither reflects the ways in which people actually engage with, or rather ‘dwell’, within a living world. Furthermore, in dwelling in the world, relationships with the land and with other beings both human and non-human are entangled within this ever-unfolding perceptually based knowledge of one’s environment. This can happen both as one passes through familiar places in different conditions, or from “a mindful passage across unfamiliar terrain through which the body adapts to land underfoot, and the peculiarities of place are apprehended at a slower rhythm than is offered through speedier forms of transport” (Edensor 2010:70). This is akin to what Ness has described as a difference between mobility and motility, with the former referring to simply to the capacity for
movement, while the latter emphasizes the experience of movement as rife with mean-making (Ness 2007).

Hikers bodies are constantly in dialogue with the nonhuman. Ness, in her analysis of bouldering in Yosemite National Park, describes climbers as connected to a “field of activity in which hands, ears, edges, granite, chalk dust, shoe rubber, gravity, breathe, abdominals—all were intensely interrelated” (Ness 2011: 82). The body produces noises (sniffs, breathes), unexpected movements (sneezes, twists) which in turn interact with the sights, sounds, and smells of the environment through which one moves. These all hold the potential to shape and transform hikers’ experiences. Again, hikers arrive, cameras in hand, ready to observe and consume specific natural sights and non-human animals according to the dominant consumption patterns dictated by the tourism marketing industry and nature-nationalism mythology. But it is not usually these non-humans that their bodies and senses, including vision, tend to dwell on the most when both hiking and discussing hiking. Encounters with non-human animals on the West Coast Trail, in contrast to my previous fieldwork in the Canadian Rockies (see Harding 2014), tend to be secondary in importance to encounters with plants (slippery moss, dense salal, twisted roots of Douglas firs and cedars), weather, water and dirt. Large non-human animals were briefly and occasionally seen, but rarely interacted with. I saw bears, deer, and elk during my fieldwork, and the tracks of both wolves and cougars, who, according to the Trail Guardians, mostly use the trail in the winter months and stay away in the summer. But these encounters were sporadic and fleeting and tended not to dominate the hikers’ stories of their trail experiences. Crows, mink, and mice were camp nuisances, as they had learned that hikers’ bags and tents sometimes contained tasty treats. Sightings offshore of whales and sea lions delighted hikers, but these encounters were at a distance for obvious reasons, with the hikers onshore and the marine mammals usually staying in deeper
waters. In contrast, small invertebrates (barnacles, mussels, crabs) textured the rocky beaches and crunched underfoot. Hikers quickly learned to distinguish between different types of algae, and, even if they didn’t know the scientific or common name of the different seaweeds, they soon learned that “the bright green slippery stuff was the worst.” On the beaches, just as in the forest, hikers often had to have their eyes on the ground to keep their footing, rather than taking in the scenery.

In *Being Alive*, Tim Ingold discusses the striding gait, with its “rigidly mechanical, straight-legged oscillation from the hips, with eyes gazing ahead rather than downcast” as the closest form of pedestrian locomotion to pure transport (2011: 17), the type of unaffected movement across space which is idealized in modern, Western conceptions of fitness and travel. The striding gait does not account for the multiplicity of forms that make up terrain (Gordillo 2018), rather it brings a standardized bodily technique that is efficient and smooth and does not reflect the idiosyncrasies of topography or the inherently processual nature of a space that is constantly changed by weather.
and water. In sum, Ingold suggests, the idealized striding gait “enacts a bodily image of colonial occupation” (2011: 17). The striding gait Ingold describes is one which many of the hikers also discussed as ideal. Some hikers complained of “always having to look at the ground,” “not being able to keep a steady pace,” and bemoaned the obstacle-course nature of the trail which precluded a clear prediction of the type and speed of movement required to traverse it. The West Coast Trail cannot be stridden across. It is what Deleuze and Guattari (1989) would call too “striated”; too rough, too unpredictable. It is a terrain that forces one to learn the territory with one’s body, not just one’s eyes. It calls into question the consumptive gaze of the scenic tourist, as hikers are forced by the terrain to look down, to feel through muddy dark pools for footing, to orient oneself through handholds which are decided upon not through their visual proximity but through the slipperiness of their grip. The body is forced to go beyond the oculocentrism of the tourist and imperial gaze (Urry 1990, Mitchell 2002) and rely on other senses. “Wild” spaces like that of the West Coast Trail highlight Edensor’s point, that “the body can never mechanically pass seamlessly through space informed by regulatory strictures and habitual techniques, for the contingencies of the body
and the qualities of space ensure that in all but the smoothest spaces, walking rhythms are continuously adapting to circumstances” (2010: 73). Not only does the hiking body move, but the body becomes sensitive to the movements within the place itself, of flows of tides, changes in weather, the relative dryness of wetness of the terrain etc. In their work on liminal landscapes, Andrews and Roberts (2012) point out that certain spaces, such as that of beaches (which make up nearly half of the West Coast Trail), are particularly of interest because of within their constant transformation there are both negative (danger, tidal surges, storms, floods) and positive (leisure, recreation, scenic) possibilities. I suggest that for some hikers, the need to attune one’s self to environmental change, rather than follow a rigid schedule, made them deeply uncomfortable.

Much has been written about, to use Cronon’s famous statement, the trouble with wilderness (Cronon 1996). However, most of the extant literature discusses representations of wilderness, rather than the experience of being in a ‘wild’ place. Much of the academic literature on wilderness tourism tends to analyze representations of nature, rather than the human experience of so-called wild places. Cronon makes the important point that “nature is a mirror onto which we project our own ideas and values, but it is also a material reality” (1996: 458), our views of it are socially constructed, but just as it is not separate from us, it is also not fully subject to human control. Drawing on the work of Edward Casey (1993), I suggest we ought to think about “wildness,” which I would describe as the unpredictable ways non-human forces shape the bodily experience of a place. Edward Casey describes the immanent potential of place as active and agential beyond the human: “even the most culturally saturated place retains a factor of wildness, that is, of the radically amorphous and unaccounted for, something that is not so much immune to culture as alien to it in its very midst, disparate from it from within it. We sense this wildness in moments of absurdity” (Casey 1993:337). Non-human and human actors have the potential to act
in unexpected ways, to disrupt and even challenge grand narratives or common representations of
place, or what ‘ought’ to happen in a place. Wildness undermines the anthropocentrism latent in
the categories of wilderness and civilization. I suggest that these moments of wildness’ and
unpredictability, which often interact or coincide with unexpected moments of affect, of hysterical
laughter in the face of a storm or tears on falling and slipping in the mud once again, are full of
creative potential that can challenge static representations of timeless, primordial wilderness.’

Importantly, this notion of wilderness only works within an ontological paradigm where
culture and nature, the human and non-human are separate. This binary division and its cultural
roots in western modernity have been fully discussed by Latour (1991) and others (Franklin 2003,
Fortun 2014), and I do not feel the need to rehash the validity of this characterization of hegemonic
Euro-American ontologies of nature here. However, it must be noted that this perception of the
environment where the human and the non-human are separate and even adversarial entities is very
different from many Indigenous ontologies and also from other traditions within European
philosophy. Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht ontologies of nature are better described by the
principle of tswalk often translated as “everything is one,” which has been well described by Nuu-
chah-nulth scholar Atleo (2007, 2011). Furthermore, as Zoe Todd (2016) has argued, there is a
latent colonialism within the recent ontological turn in anthropology, as spurred by Latour and
others, which includes the potential co-option of indigenous worldviews by Euro-American
academics and social theorists. I wish to avoid that here and will not describe tswalk (which Atleo
has done brilliantly in two books) but rather simply note that Nuu-chah-nulth perspectives of
nature are markedly different from dominant settler paradigms. Tourism is very much rooted in
the modern (which, as Latour argues, is a problematic term) capitalist segregation of time and
space into separate spheres of labour and leisure and of nature and culture (Graeburn 1989). Hikers
begin the West Coast Trail primed by settler-Canadian culture with their perception of “wilderness” shaped by particular cultural ontologies of nature. These in turn are sometimes challenged by their bodily experiences on the trail that penetrate the mythic segregation of self and environment of body and mind, and of human and non-human.

At the same time, the dissonance between learning to “walk with the tide” and the segregation of self and environment that is inherent to settler-Canadian wilderness mythology may be resolved in a problematic way. As hiking provides a more embodied engagement with the environment than scenic tourism, it could be constructed as a more authentic way of experiencing nature, a claim that has political connotations in a settler-colonial context. In her study of Ontario cottage country Julia Harrison discusses how the intimacy of the phenomenological experience of place cultivates a deeply felt attachment “far more powerful than any rational understanding of their citizenship within the Canadian nation-state” (Harrison 2010:82). The shedding of blood, sweat and tears as one labours across terrain is potently similar to pioneer narratives of colonial settlement. At the same time, as a striated terrain and wild weather force the body away from proscribed regimes of movement, possibilities for resistance to superficial tropes of timeless wilderness are mitigated by the association of physical exertion with tourist claims of authentic adventure. Although many hikers spoke of their experience hiking the trail as one where they were humbled by the terrain, such feelings of suffering and surviving physical travails in order to cross terrain mirrors colonial tropes of conquest. If hiking is, amongst settler-Canadians, a national past-time, a means of rational recreation and re-inscribing ideals of national nature on both the body and the territory, then what are the consequences of an unpredictable, ‘wild,’ non-human agency, of unpredictable weather, and of recalcitrant bodies on cultural practices shaped by wilderness mythology? If unpredictability causes a destabilization of dominant visions of landscape, can this
destabilization act as a springboard for possible critique of and resistance to capitalism, colonialism, and the hegemonic forces that shape the dominant imaginary? Furthermore, if the experience of hiking the trail is so uncomfortable, why do hikers return again and again to hike it? I explore these questions further in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 7: GARDENING IN THE WILDERNESS AND SEARCHING FOR COMMUNITAS

Clear signs that the space traversed by the West Coast Trail is part of larger networks of mobility and change are littered across its length in complex tangles like flotsam and jetsam. I mean this both in a metaphorical sense and a literal one. The bright hues of debris from commercial fishing operations poke through the green algae and grey rock of the changing tideline in defiant oranges, blues and reds. The old telegraph line rusts in the treetops all along the trail, and the salal at Clo-oose is interwoven with English Ivy. While sitting around driftwood campfires, hikers stargaze as the sparkling lights of cruise ships enroute to Alaska speed by. The trail is criss-crossed by dynamic non-human and human forces that render it a paradoxical space of remoteness and connection. In this final chapter I will look closer at practices which highlight the dynamic and multivalent ways people ‘play’ in a place which, as I discussed in Chapter 1 has been made remote, and yet is also constructed, as I discussed in Chapter 2, as a national “backyard” with connotations of affection, ownership and leisure. I bring together the different scales of analysis I have taken throughout the dissertation and combine a focus on how wilderness is constructed through historical and contemporary processes of colonialism with an analysis of the immanent, affective, embodied and transformative practices of human beings interacting with a dynamic environment. First, I shall draw on classic anthropological models of ritual process to discuss how hikers seek community around campfires and transform industrial debris into beachfront shrines, practices which re-purpose the flotsam and jetsam of the intertidal zone into significantly social spaces. Next, I will discuss how the incongruous presence of gardens in the wilderness complicates and challenges static notions of settler-Canadian nature and nation. Gardens are paradoxical spaces that are discursively used in settler-colonialism to claim territory, but also generate an active
relationship between humans and non-humans that defies the nature-culture binary from which the concept of wilderness originates. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the application in this particular context of an old, but apt, anthropological notion: that within cyclical practices, both mundane, like planting a garden, and sacred, like taking a holiday, there lies creative potential for transformation. This transformation is neither necessarily positive or negative, nor solely creative or destructive. Tourism, despite its tendency to “revive grand narratives” (Robertson 2005: 290) and commodify places for mass consumption, is also made up of dynamic practices that do not necessarily follow, to use hiking imagery, the well-trodden path.

In the spring of 2014, I was sitting on a driftwood log in comfortable companionship with a West Coast Trail ‘regular,’ one of many hikers who undertake the same grueling 75-kilometre journey every year. The discovery of the ‘regulars’ was a surprise to me. Throughout my time on the trail, I often encountered hikers who were completing their fifth, tenth, or even thirtieth trek along its length. This particular hiker was a surgeon from Alberta, who took ten days off every spring to hike the trail and immerse himself in his passion for nature photography. We were talking about why he chose to come to this same place each year, and what drew him back again and again. He asked me if I had ever heard of the term forest-bathing, and I replied in the negative. He went on to explain that forest-bathing was the Japanese practice of Shirin-yoku, of taking in the forest atmosphere with the idea that such an immersion had healing effects (see also Tsunetsugo, Park & Miyazaki 2010 for a discussion of forest-bathing). This discussion crystallized a thought that had been slowly building throughout my fieldwork as I examined my own experience of finding respite through an engagement with a ‘natural’ space. Although I did it myself, ostensibly for research, it was puzzling that some hikers, particularly those who know from prior experience that hiking the trail can be physically taxing, hike the trail over and over again. Furthermore, when speaking with
these trail regulars, I found many are at least partially aware of and troubled by the framing of national park spaces as pristine wilderness. They recognize that humans have and continue to impact even the most remote spaces. However, they still ritually invest in the idea that there is respite and relief to be found in engaging with an environment not wholly dominated by humans. The “troubling” (Cronon 1996) of an idealized image of a space and a practice does not mitigate the visceral effects and affects of that ritual practice of journeying into the wild.

As previously discussed, Nelson Graeburn has famously called tourism a sacred journey (Graeburn 1989). He applied the Van Gennep (2019 [1909]) and Turner (1969, 1979) model of ritual process to the secular tourist journey prior to Turner’s own specific application of it to Christian pilgrimage. Graeburn draws on Van Gennep’s (2019 [1909]) model of ritual process, who, as Graeburn acknowledges, drew on the older work of Durkheim’s students Hubert and Mauss (1981 [1898]) on ritual sacrifice, to divide the tourist journey into three stages (Graeburn 2011: 392). The first stage is the departure, with its rites of preparation as ordinary life is left behind. The transitional or liminal stage describes the act of travel and touring itself, where the ritual participant/tourist occupies a space of what Turner called anti-structure, where mundane rules and regulations may not apply, and the pilgrim may experience transformation. The third stage is the reaggregation, or the “coming home” stage, where the tourist returns home and is reintegrated into everyday life. Importantly and in line with Turner’s model, Graeburn suggests that the transformative activities of the liminal stage may serve to renew and refresh the traveller, but do not necessarily enact change in dominant social structures or hierarchies. Rather, institutionalized rituals renew and reinforce the participants’ adherence to their assigned social roles. In other words, under capitalism, the ‘need’ for a vacation serves to refresh and therefore retain workers within their respective social roles. That does not mean that transformative change
that reaches beyond the space of the tourist ritual is not possible (Picard 2018, Ness 2015, Moore & Myerhoff 1977), but rather that it is not inevitable.

In accordance with Graeburn, and drawing on the Turners’ suggestions that “a pilgrim is half a tourist if a tourist is half a pilgrim” (Turner & Turner 2011 [1978]: 20), Di Giovanie points out that it is problematic to clearly divide secular tourists and religious pilgrims, given that both not only share an engagement with the mundane realities of travel (finding lodging and other necessities, the physical discomfort of the journey) but both experience affective connections to destinations and sites that may be interpreted as transformative (2011: 248-249). Di Giovanie defines pilgrimage, not as necessarily a religious enterprise, but rather as “a ritual journey from the quotidian realm of profane society to a sacred center, a passion-laden, hyper-meaningful voyage both outwardly and inwardly, which is often steeped in symbols and symbolic actions, and ‘accrete rich superstructures’ [Turner & Turner 1978] of mythological representations” (Di Giovanie 2011:249). I suggest that for many hikers, their pilgrimage into Canadian wilderness is sacred not just because it involves the veneration of socially-embedded belief systems (like the wilderness mythology for Canada) and the manipulation of symbols in a ritualized context, but also because it involves an attempt to renew and re-create the self. As I asserted in Chapter 2, camping in a Canadian national park serves to reinvigorate the settlers’ sense of belonging to the nation.

Importantly, Graeburn’s use of the pilgrimage motif addresses not only the symbolism of the tourist’s journey, but also the bodily affects. The visceral engagement with terrain, and the accompanying frustrations, triumphs, bodily aches and pains, and sheer affects intrinsic to a physical removal from a familiar environment, are also very much part of a pilgrimage. At the end of each day of hiking, sitting around the campfire, hikers jovially compared bruises and scrapes.
They discussed moments where they experienced physical obstacles but “kept going” so they could “finish this thing” and “say they did it.” The expression of agency is important in these statements, as unlike physical labour in one’s work life, the quantity and quality of embodied practices in the sacred space of tourism is felt to be guided by one’s own desires, rather than bound by the economic requirements of capitalism. As one hiking companion who “walked for a living” working in the Canadian postal service stated, “that type of work just means I’m strong enough to go further and harder walking where I want to.”

A seeming contradiction that hikers consistently negotiated was their impulse to seek an affirmation of self through tropes of rugged individualism commonly associated with outdoor recreation and their own impulses towards sharing these experiences with others. One hiker I interviewed described the attraction of the trail as follows:

It’s almost too easy to get everything in living day to day. I mean, food is like just a credit card sweep away and you don't like have to try for anything. But when you're living out of your bag you know that...I don’t know, all of your effort to putting stuff in there...I don’t know, it’s kind of like you’re kind of like, living off of...it sound like cliché or something but kind of living off your own self sort of. Like, this is like your work in this bag and if something goes wrong it's only your fault. It makes me feel more independent, and more kind of in touch with stuff.

Yet this hiker went on to state that one of their favourite aspects of their hiking experience emerged out of social relations:

It was cool like seeing people, like seeing how dirty they are and where did they come from, talk to them, “where are you going today?” and everything. So that was pretty fun. It
made it more like a social thing. That was like, really awesome, just to hear like, what their story was if we had any time. And everybody out there, there's always something interesting about them, if they're hiking the trail.

In her ethnography *Being a Tourist*, Julia Harrison’s in-depth interviews with self-defined travellers reveal a desire for intimacy with place and for meaningful connections with people encountered. Drawing on the work of Simmel (1910), Harrison contends that “the sociability impulse, the desire to have some association with others, lay near the root of what many of my tourists suggested gave meaning to their touristic experiences. They desired to either affirm or experience anew some form of human connection across time, space, or cultural difference” (2003:46). She goes on to note, and I would argue the following is especially true of wilderness recreationists like West Coast Trail hikers, that tourists:

> can potentially be reduced to creatures seeking to satisfy universal physical needs. The biological imperatives of finding a place to sleep in, food to eat, water to drink, and place to relieve oneself at times overwhelm the emotional, spiritual, and cerebral, needs that also constitute the travelers. The desire to connect with others on the level of non-biological needs became part of the way travelers reaffirmed their individual humanity” (Harrison 2003: 47).

According to Harrison the destabilization of self that arises out of the difficulty in meeting basic needs opens up a space for the assertion of one’s identity through communication and communion with others, at times across social boundaries of class, race, and culture. I suggest that in contexts like the West Coast Trail where both physical discomfort and unexpected affect can be acute (as described in the previous chapter), these conditions can actually intensify the formation of connections to other people encountered and in turn, these encounters are more likely to create
moments of what Turner (1973) would call communitas (see also Harrison 2003: 44).

According to Turner’s definition, communitas is the “direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities, which, when it happens tends to make those experiencing it think of mankind as a homogenous, unstructured, and free community” (Turner 1973: 193). Sharpe emphasizes that communitas is integrally anti-structural, a “feeling of equality and togetherness when people step out of their structural roles and obligations” (Sharpe 2005: 256), while Sandall has emphasized the ethical and existential dimensions in defining communitas as an “ethically superior human condition where equality, humility, and unselfishness spontaneously prevail” (Sandall 2011: 483). In their study of Christian pilgrimage, Victor and Edith Turner described communitas as the fundamental motivation for a pilgrim’s journey (1978). Knudsen and Savener contend that the draw of tourism is “less an object to gaze upon than the communitas originating within the context of social interaction stemming from the act of touring” (2013: 4). I observed and heard over and over again from hikers that their most transformative or transcendent experiences on the trail were those that were shared with others, often with strangers. Indeed, many of the trail “regulars” also repeatedly cited “the people” as major motivation for their return, referring to local figures like Peter and Monique Knighton, the Trail Guardians, and the lightkeepers, as well as their fellow hikers. As one hiker said, “you meet the best people out here.”

When I hiked the West Coast Trail from 2013-2014 nearly everyone I encountered built a campfire on at least one night of their trip. I suggest that campfires, in their transitory and yet highly social nature, function as conduits for this immanent and ultimately unstable communitas, where hikers commune over their shared, affect-laden, and sensual experience of a “wild” place. I noticed a particular social pattern to fire-building. On the first night or two or three of the trip, separate groups will build separate fires. For example, on their first night at Thrasher Cove one set
of hikers had begun the trail divided into five different groups of two and had built five separate
fires. They were all northbound, following the same route, which is often the case on the WCT.
By their third night, they were all sharing a fire. By the fourth night they were making jokes about
who built the best fire and arranging seating for all the groups around the fire. By the last night the
fire was the social centre of the campground, with everyone cooking, eating, laughing, swapping
stories, and taking photos of each other around one single fire. Sharing fires as the WCT trail
experience progresses was a common experience for many hikers I spoke with. Many hikers also
associated their best nights on the trail with their most social campfires. They reminisced about
“how great it was” to sit around the fire with former strangers, now fellow hikers, bonding over
the common experience of the difficult WCT trek. At the same time as they reiterated the common
refrain of “getting away from it all,” many if not most hikers also mentioned the sense of
community they feel on the trail as integral to their positive impression of their experience.
Campfires themselves are beacons for socialization. Their immanent potential for creating a social
space is locked in the scattered driftwood of the beaches until one group of hikers or another
decides to coalesce around a point in the sand and build, skillfully or otherwise, some sort of hearth
designed for gathering. No preparation to build a fire is needed other than bringing some sort of
tool for making a flame. Even if a hiker forgot to bring matches or a lighter, one is usually available
to borrow from another group of hikers (or from a bemused Trail Guardian on their smoke break
nearby). An axe or a knife is completely unnecessary as the ocean conveniently provides driftwood
in a variety of sizes. People build fires for warmth, and to cook food, but also often for the sheer
enjoyment of watching the flames. But most importantly, a campfire marks a space as social.
Hikers on their own will sometimes build a fire and invite others to join them or be invited
themselves to join other fires. There is a shared, usually unspoken, sentiment, that campfires are
communal. Fires are often built below the high tide line, where twice daily the ocean will scour clean the ashes. But some hearths are built higher on the beach above the high tideline and hikers add to them throughout the season, arranging logs as benches and adding to the rough dwelling structures as the season goes on. Each winter, these are decimated by the winter storms, but each summer they rise anew.

To construct a campfire, one must scavenge among the various flotsam and jetsam that the strong currents from the open Pacific wash up on the beaches of the West Coast Trail. Hiking along the beaches of the West Coast Trail at the beginning of the season and at the end of the season one is confronted with some visible differences in the spaces. The depletion of driftwood as the season goes on, either as fuel for the campfires or for creating various windbreaking structures for hikers to huddle behind during storms is one noticeable difference. Giant stumps and logs that were in one spot one year may have been moved by the winter storms to another place on the beach, or partially buried in the sand. Another constant change that hikers watch for is what has become of this season’s ocean debris. Various man-made debris is scattered among the piles of driftwood, and hikers often playfully search for treasure among the logs.

The romantic image of beachcombing for driftwood or other valued ocean-transported debris is increasingly tarnished by the reality of the marine plastic crisis. The colourful detritus acts as a reminder that ocean resources are also being plundered and transformed by globalized political and economic systems. Stoler (2008, 2013) and Gordillo (2013, 2014) have written respectively about the “debris” and “rubble” of imperialism and capitalism, in an exploration of ruination (with the emphasis on the process of becoming ruins). Gordillo’s conception of “rubble” is the more fitting of the two for the flotsam and jetsam hikers stumble over, for he emphasizes both the positive and negative potentiality latent in both the materiality and symbolism of imperial
Detritus from the fishing industry has washed up on the shores of Vancouver Island for centuries. The most common things washed up are floats and buoys. Plastic bottles and plastic containers of various sizes also frequently litter the sand. But it is the foam buoys which are the most colourful and which hikers ritually transform. The Canadian National Parks Act, as well as wilderness tourism etiquette, commands that a camper leaves no trace: "leave only footprints, take only pictures" as the saying goes. During the Parks Canada orientation hikers are warned that they may not take any plant or animal materials, as well as artifacts. However, it is emphasized that ‘artifact’ is a term applied only to materials of ‘historic’ value. Contemporary garbage does not earn that label and hikers are free to play with the debris they find, as long as it has contemporary
origins. Colourful, carvable, lightweight, and with a rope attached, buoys are used as trail markers to point the way to beach entrances and exits and mark campgrounds, much the way rock cairns are used on alpine trails. In the often grey weather of the west coast, these colourful industrial discards have been transformed into beacons showing the way for travellers. However, the buoys have a symbolic purpose beyond that of wayfinding. The carving and placing of a buoy has become a common ritual practice to commemorate a hiker’s successful completion of the trek.

Figure 6 Buoys decorating the Michigan campground
A few places in particular are heavily decorated with colourful markers. Michigan campground, named for the wreck of the Michigan whose boiler still rests on the rock shelf the campground overlooks, is hung with more buoys than any other site along the West Coast Trail. It is the northernmost campground, so it is often either the first campground for southbound hikers or the last for northbound hikers. Therefore, many hikers commemorate either their last or their first night on the trail by carving and hanging a buoy at Michigan. I am hesitant to call these tourist practices “place-making” (Basso 1996) as many hikers, except for the trail regulars, do not expect to return to the places they mark. Even those who do return do not expect, given the intensity of the winter storms, their markers to still be there in the following hiking season. The ephemeral nature of their creations means that these hiker artefacts are better understood as the tangible
products of ritual process, the material effects of communitas. Rather than mark the space with stories and memories, the abandoned firepits and repurposed fishing buoys mark the West Coast Trail as a secular space of ritual, where hiking and camping as a social practice of settler recreation is clearly signified. Although each season shelters, firepits, and buoy-shrines are washed away by the wind and waves, they are also re-created each year as another influx of hikers makes their trek and see what has washed up during the past storm season.

Furthermore, the fishing buoys, plastic containers, and other debris washed ashore, just like the shipwrecks which brought the trail its fame, serve as reminders of the global entanglements of remote and seemingly a-political spaces in capitalism, imperialism and colonialism. When I hiked the trail in summers of 2011, 2013, and 2014 I came across various debris marked with Japanese lettering. On March 11 of 2011 an earthquake rocked the Tohoku region of Japan. The resulting tsunami destroyed large sections of the coastline and took an estimated 16,000 lives. The flow of Pacific Ocean currents has resulted in a large amount of this making landfall on the west coast of North America, including western Vancouver Island. Among West Coast beachcombers, traditional Japanese floats made of glass have been long prized. In the aftermath of the tsunami, any plastic bottles or debris that could be assigned Japanese origins, even mundane plastic drink bottles, were imbued with significance through their supposed origins in tragedy. The strangeness of hikers ritually venerating artifacts of tragedy may seem rather morbid. Yet it is a fitting parallel with the trail’s shipwreck history, where death and destruction are rendered into romantic tragedy. Borrowing the phrase from Naomi Klein (2007), Buscher and Fletcher have proposed tourism as a form of “disaster capitalism” (Buscher & Fletcher 2017: 655). They argue that it is vital to “acknowledge both the violence in tourism and the ways in which this is embedded within the production of creativity and even joy and fun. Violence and destruction for some, in other words,
become sources of tremendous creativity (and enjoyment) for others” (Buscher & Fletcher 2017: 656). In the case of the West Coast Trail, it could not have become a site ritually venerated by Canadian wilderness seekers without having been constructed as remote (both imaginatively but also materially through a lack of infrastructure as shown in Chapters 1 and 2), the romanticization of its shipwreck heritage (i.e. its role as a natural obstacle to global flows of trade), and the displacement of Indigenous peoples (as discussed in Chapters 1, 2 and 3). The irony is, at the same time as tourism is touted to the tourists themselves as a relief from their mundane participation in the capitalist workforce, and may even take on the veneer of rebellion, their entire experience of wilderness and the ways in which they ritually venerate this sacred space have only been made possible through the spatial transformations of global capital.

![Image of a sign indicating the tsunami evacuation route (the way to higher ground).](image)

**Figure 8 Sign indicating the tsunami evacuation route (the way to higher ground).**

At the same time, in keeping with Turner’s model of ritual, with every performance of a rite, there is the latent and sometimes realized possibility for going off-script. In the *Practice of Everyday Life*, De Certeau (1984) discusses how, although municipal planners may build
sidewalks, pedestrians have a tendency to make their own paths. He argues that the use people make of representations, of built infrastructure, and of commodities are not predetermined, rather that “in the technocratically constructed, written, and functionalized space in which the consumers move about, their trajectories form unforeseeable sentences, partly unreadable paths across space,….trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop” (1984: xvii). He states that it is important to pay attention to the unpredictability latent within everyday practices, as “beneath what one might call the ‘monotheistic’ privilege that panoptic apparatuses have won for themselves, a ‘polythesis’ of scattered practices survives, dominated but not erased by the triumphal success of one of their number” (1984: 48). Although humans have the tendency to follow in the footsteps of others, and follow paths laid out for them by hegemonic forces like the state, they also tend to deviate, maybe due to the material factors of the terrain like a mud puddle, or even simple curiosity.

As Sally Ann Ness has pointed out, inspired by the work of Saba Mahmood on the performativity of ritual, “the practices that tourists engage in can be understood not simply as passive re-enactments of already established social structures. Rather, they can be understood as the creative means by which subjects render themselves who they are [sic] as relatable, identifiable selves with respect to their social and cultural worlds” (Ness 2015: 456). Furthermore, as Ness makes clear, there are “place-specific, nonhuman” (Ness 2015: 456) aspects of ritual (for example, what has the tide brought in today?) that shape the performance and experience of tourist rituals. People, in the infinite possibilities latent within their interactions with the world, create, re-purpose and reclaim (the latter perhaps most evident in my discussion of Indigenous hospitality) in divergent ways. In the Turnerian ritual process there is often a level of playfulness and creative potential, where a recreation can become re-creation. Significantly, this playfulness is, as Fletcher
and Buscher (2017) point out, often made possible through the structural violence of capitalism, where the uneven accumulation of wealth creates spaces for leisure for some even as these are spaces of dispossession, of labour, and even of violence for others. Here, it is important to remember that, in Turner’s conception, the experience of communitas does not actually rid the world of inequality, but rather makes it seem, in the moment at least, that the dominant social structure of hierarchy and inequality is not as hegemonic as it appears.

![Knighton family garden at Qua-ba-diwa](image)

**Figure 9** Knighton family garden at Qua-ba-diwa

### 7.1 Wilderness Gardens

I did not expect to end my thesis on wilderness tourism writing about gardens. Although there is a growing literature on the environmental politics of urban and community gardens (Eizenberg 2012, Flachs 2013, Nettle 2016), in British Columbia domestic gardens often connote images of middle-aged or elderly, middle-class white folks (like my own grandparents) happily puttering away amongst the roses. This imagery may be particularly true of Vancouver Island,
where gardening has an association with the ever-rising tide of retirees settling onto their little plots and planting rosebushes. However, in more remote places cut-off from a regular or reliable supply of fresh produce, gardening may be both a hobby and a necessity. The first day I ever hiked on the West Coast Trail in Pacific Rim National Park I feasted on fresh peas, carrots and strawberries. Ten kilometres into my five-day trek the friendly lighthouse keeper at Pachena light station discovered we shared a hometown and offered me and my companion some of the bounty of their garden. Three years later, at another spot on the trail, I learned to hoe potatoes and weave nets for beans and peas out of old fishing line. Finding gardens in odd places got me thinking about how one gardens, where one gardens, what one plants, and what counts as a garden. These are all lines of questioning that reveal important relationships to territory. From a settler-colonial view gardens are symbolically and discursively constructed as the environmental opposite of wilderness. What was I to make then of gardens found in the wilderness, and gardens, such as those at Clo-oose\textsuperscript{54} that had been ‘returned’ to the wilderness? What about the growing archeology of clam gardens, that, when pointed out, showed clear human transformation of the intertidal zone, that liminal space between land and sea, but were typically invisible to settler eyes? In research on Pakeha gardens in New Zealand, Longhurst asserts that “domestic gardens are paradoxical spaces that challenge binary thinking” (2006: 581). In agreement with Longhurst, I wish to show that a space as innocuous as a garden can still hold ambiguities that both refute and support dominant ontologies of the environment.

In an area which is officially deemed “backcountry” and “wilderness” by Parks Canada

\textsuperscript{54} And now, perhaps Qua-ba-diwa, with Monique and Peter Knighton’s passing.
literature, and certainly regarded as such by the majority of the Canadian public, the gardens I found were certainly unexpected. Wilderness is supposed to be sublime because it represents a sphere beyond the human: it is pristine, untouched, and uncultivated. In the colonial imagination, a garden is the opposite of terra nullius: it is a space that has been cultivated by humans to meet their needs and wants. The garden is a key metaphor in the colonial imagination, with links to Christian mythology of Eden. Substantial historical scholarship (Brockway 1979, Baber 2016, Mukerji 1997) has shown the relationship between gardens and imperial expansion. As Thrush has documented, early explorers “planted not just flags, but produce, leaving peas, parsley, strawberries and more as proof of their passing, as succor to those Europeans that would follow, and as ritualized claiming through cultivation” (2011:4). In the social evolutionary thinking that dominated European social thought at the time of British Columbia’s settlement, gardens were viewed as an antecedent to agriculture and civilization, and a lack of gardens evidence of Indigenous cultures belonging to a lower order of humanity. This racist, imperialist, and ethnocentric thinking is evident in the following quote from one of the early settlers of Vancouver Island, who wrote: “Any right in the soil which these natives had as occupiers was partial and imperfect as, with the exception of hunting animals in the forest, plucking wild fruits, and cutting a few trees... the natives did not in any civilized sense, occupy the land” (Sproat 1868: 32). This characterization was typical of colonial discourses of the period, linking an absence of Western forms of land occupation and use with the presumed absence of any such thing as Aboriginal title (Blackburn 2005, Fisher 1977). The labour theory of property, stemming from the ideas of John Locke, contended that ownership over land was secured by the cultivation of that land, from transforming from wasteful wilderness to productive agricultural space. As Povinelli has asserted since the colonial period nation-states have denied full citizenship to hunter-gatherers
based partly on the belief that they have not fully extracted themselves from or productively engaged their environment....The hunter and collector only owned the ‘Acorns he pickt up under the Oak or the Apples he gathered from the Trees in the Wood’ (Locke 1988(1690): 28 cited in Povinelli 1995:506).

The idea that peoples of the northwest coast simply ‘gathered’ what they needed from an abundant environment, without transforming or making the land more ‘productive’ is one that dominated settler views of Indigenous territory in British Columbia for most of the nineteenth and twentieth century. It must be emphasized that both current archeological research and Indigenous oral history show that Indigenous peoples on Vancouver Island, just like the other peoples throughout the world and throughout history, did indeed transform their environment through an active engagement with it. For example, Deur et. al. have documented the widespread practice among Coastal First Nations in British Columbia of maintaining gardens of edible roots, which were considered to be property and subject to Indigenous rules of inheritance (2013:14). While I was living in Bamfield I had the opportunity to visit a clam garden on Huu-ay-aht territory with Dr. Iain McKechnie, an archaeologist from the University of Victoria who specializes in the study of Indigenous fisheries. In this aquatic ‘garden,’ the intertidal zone was actively transformed by Huu-ay-aht peoples to create an abundance of shellfish for their consumption. These transformations displayed a deep knowledge of and relationships with local ecosystems but were often either invisible or ignored by setters who had a narrow, ethnocentric vision of civilized land use as synonymous with European agricultural forms (Thrush 2011).

In an oral history interview with Gwendolyn Bennett (1966) who was born into a family of missionaries at Clo-oose at 1898, she remarked that the “Indians” taught her mother that “when the tide’s out dinners served when the tide’s in the dishes are washed.” She relishes the memory
of eating shellfish: “Indians taught mother about them, barnacles and things, oh they were lovely” (Bennett 1966) and notes the failed attempts of settlers at farming in the Cheewat valley. Bennett goes on to remark that along with proselytizing and teaching English, her father and mother “taught them [Ditidaht people] how to put in gardens and fruit trees” (1966). Although it was clear to settlers that Indigenous peoples knew how to harvest and thrive through their active relationship with their environment, they were still concerned that “Indians” were not using the land the ‘right’ way. J.R. Miller’s research on residential schools calls attention to the way gardening was emphasized in residential schools as a civilizing influence (Miller 1996). Residential schools, according to their state supporters, encouraged the development of agricultural skills that would allow Indigenous peoples to assimilate into the Canadian workforce. Instead, Miller contends, the schools were often sites of forced child labour (Miller 1996). In an apt turn of phrase, Deur et al. note that the process of the resettling of British Columbia by European settlers was also a process of “horticultural dispossession” (2013: 14) where the territories (such as camas prairies and root gardens) that were cultivated for food by indigenous people were taken over, degraded, and transformed by settler agriculture. Deur et al. (2013) observe that this process was intentional, conscious, and incredibly destructive to both Indigenous food production and local ecosystems.

Deur et al’s (2013) portrait of the settler garden as a tool of destruction is a far different view of horticulture than that I was presented with when I came upon the cheerful marigolds and neat rows of green beans at Pachena lighthouse. Yet there is clearly a strong relationship between colonial settlement and the creation of gardens, one that I could see at work even in Bamfield today. During my time in Bamfield, I found that gardening was a near ubiquitous practice among the villagers. In the spring I watched the Frances Barkley, the community supply boat, unload lawn mowers and bags of soil. In the fall, local potlucks featured the local bounty of everyone's
garden. And I mean everyone. I distinctly remember one young man in the community, who was known for making moonshine, eating 'magic' mushrooms, and growing then illegal herbs, proudly presenting a huge butternut squash for consumption. The way he beamed with pride genuinely tickled me, but it also made me think: this is a place where gardening matters. Why? Beyond all the symbolism and history connecting gardens to the colonial project, gardening was important to Bamfield, to the lighthouse keepers, and to early Canadian settlers on Vancouver Island for a very practical reason: it provided necessary dietary variety (Thrush 2011). As I discussed in Chapter 1, the west coast of Vancouver Island has been rendered remote within the Canadian state by its lack of connection infrastructure. Access to food supply chains is limited and costly as anyone who has tried to live off the shelves of the Bamfield grocery stores can attest. Gardening creates a nutritious, tasty, and economical food source which increases the quality of life in remote places and allows settlers to stay and ‘put down roots.’

One of the things that West Coast Trail hikers crave after a week of living off dehydrated foods is salad. The irony of craving fresh greens while hiking through vast swathes of rainforest highlights another important and practical reason for the connection between settlement and gardening. Many settlers lack the knowledge to recognize edible indigenous plants, and therefore import their own familiar species to harvest. One afternoon in June 2013 I was hanging out at Tscowis with some of the Huu-ay-aht Trail Guardians. Draped over the trail were branches of red and gold salmonberries which had deliciously ripened in the afternoon sun. I gorged myself while I loitered, waiting for the Trail Guardians to return for the day. Two hikers came upon me and remarked “be careful, they could be poisonous.” I laughed, but they were serious. Newcomers to the territory sometimes lack the knowledge to harvest indigenous plants, and their ignorance rendered the lush rainforest inedible. As a settler-Canadian who had lived in the region for a few
years I knew which berries were edible, but little beyond that. Furthermore, in eating the berries in a national park, I was breaking federal law (although the fact that these berries were harvested and consumed on Huu-ay-aht treaty settlement land may complicate the matter). In Canadian national parks the harvesting of plants, hunting of animals, and picking of wildflowers is forbidden. Many hikers cannot eat from the forest because they do not know how, and also because in areas demarcated as parks by the Canadian state such consumption is illegal. Doing so can result in fines. These laws are rarely enforced, and some hikers routinely consume any edibles they stumble upon in the bushes, but others frown upon it. I’ve encountered both views: some who told others not eat berries and “leave it for the animals” and others who said, “a little won’t hurt back here.” Outside of the national park, settlers in Bamfield (and in Vancouver, where I live now) prize wild foods like sea asparagus, mushrooms, and berries but it is worth noting that these foods are viewed as delicacies not staples. Dietary staples must be produced through horticulture or agriculture. In her research on botanical gardens and British colonialism, Lucile Brockway has noted that historically in the face of their ignorance of indigenous plants, settlers often assign greater value to known plants from the colonial garden, a process she terms “botanical imperialism” (Brockway 1979: 168). This is parallel to the emphasis on the consumption of familiar, domestic, animal species over wild species noted by Tina Loo in her history of wildlife management in Canada (Loo 2006). Loo also notes that when elk and deer are culled as part of wildlife management in national parks, these animal bodies are not viewed as sources of meat (2006:155). I recall a conversation with Monique Knighton, where she thought it was a shame that the Parks service had killed what they termed a “problem” bear, and that shame was accentuated by the fact that the meat from the bear was not permitted to be consumed. In her words, “the bear died for nothing.” Cultural differences surrounding the designation of non-human species as food are foundational to the division between
wilderness and gardens. In the wilderness, non-native species that are domesticated, known, and therefore edible must be imported and specifically cultivated for consumption.

I regularly visited three gardens on the West Coast Trail, each of which were cultivated for both subsistence and pleasure: the Carmanah Lightstation garden, the Pachena Lightstation garden, and the Knighton family garden at Qua-ba-diwa. I will discuss the first two together, and then contrast them with the latter. There were other gardens along the trail, some overgrown, some cultivated seasonally, at Clo-oose that I did not visit, and I suspect there were other spots unknown to me that had been cultivated in various ways in what was now Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The lighthouse gardens were the most visible to hikers. Not every hiker stopped at the lighthouses, as they were just adjacent to the trail and it was possible for hikers to pass by without stopping, as they sometimes did if they were in a hurry or the weather was bad. But most stopped and signed the guestbook at the entrance to the property. The boundary between national park and coast guard station was sharply demarcated by a brisk transition from rainforest to a trimmed grassy lawn. This lawn was kept mowed in all sorts of weather, just as the red roofs and white walls of the lightstation were kept brightly painted to stand out against the gray fog of the sea. Nation-wide coast guard regulations meant that the lightstations on the West Coast Trail closely mirrored one another in their design, colour scheme, and immaculate grounds, just as they reflected the dozens of Canadian Coast Guard light stations scattered along the nation’s Pacific and Atlantic coasts. On viewing the grounds after the chaotic mud, wobbly cable cars, and nested ladders of the trail the words ‘naval precision’ came to mind. The gardens were similar: rectangular patches of churned earth with vegetables planted in neat rows. These gardens were a source of pride and pleasure, as well as food, for the lightkeepers, as they displayed the ability to create a varied diet for themselves while cut off from the infrastructure of civilization. When I interviewed lightkeepers, food, cooking, and
gardens were often central to the conversation, particularly when discussing what they loved about life on the lightstations. It must be noted that Carmanah Lightstation, where the same family of lightkeepers had lived for over thirty years, had an additional garden. In an unsheltered spot overlooking the sea the family had crafted a small labyrinth out of rocks, where they placed crystals, meditated, and asked for good fortune for their family and friends. This one piece of personalized space on the lighthouse property was more of an exception than the rule. The lightkeepers seemed to always keep in mind that although the lightstations were their home, they were there as employees of the state. In the words of one:

Well, I feel like with hikers that my role is like an ambassador to Canadians, to North Americans, to the world. Because people come and see a beautiful lighthouse. We spend, put a lot of effort in to keep it looking really nice, not because other people will see it but because it's part of our lifestyle and so if people say you know, I'm sorry for walking on your lawn, I say it belongs to you just as much as it does to me. It just belongs to the world, you know.

According to the lightkeepers themselves they “have a lot in common with the people on the trail”. They saw themselves as passionate lovers of nature, who sought to commune with wilderness in the company of a few, like-minded people. In their description of life at the lightstation they used words like “magic,” “paradise,” and “virgin forest.” They had reverence for the wild places beyond the bounds of the lightstations, but seemed to very much see it as separate, marked by the boundary of those rigorous lawns. Their gardens fortified their ability to do their jobs of maintaining coastal beacons, but the land they lived on was not their own except as citizens. In keeping with the garrison mentality discussed in Chapter 1, they saw themselves as outposts of civilization, part of a larger state network of infrastructure that supported the nation, and very much surrounded by a
segregated wilderness.

In contrast, working in the Knighton garden at Qua-ba-diwa was a negotiation between human desire and environmental forces, and the boundaries between garden, home and wilderness were in constant flux. In May and June of 2014, I lived at Qua-ba-diwa for several weeks at the invitation of Monique and Peter Knighton. They knew me from my previous summer’s research, and, after warming up to me after some initial hostility towards yet another white person coming to “tell our stories,” graciously allowed me to join the odd collection of folks that came and went from their family home throughout the summers. Both Monique and Peter were elderly and suffered from health problems in a place where access to medical services, despite the nearby heli-pad at the lightstation, could be difficult during the winter storm season. Instead, each spring, usually in mid-April, they arrived at Qua-ba-diwa to see what the winter storms had done to their home. Sometimes it would be nearly untouched. Other times, a roof may have caved in. It was something new each year. But they didn’t seem to mind much. The important thing was that they returned home. Years ago, they had signed up for an international program called Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF). As members of this program, WWOOFers, usually international tourists in their twenties, signed up for a minimum of two weeks to work five hours a day, five days a week, on an ‘organic farm’ in return for room and board. Monique and Peter probably pushed the definition of an organic farm a little beyond the meaning originally intended by the organization’s founders, but it produced a mutually beneficial relationship. Young visitors were able to experience life in a remote and beautiful place, with an indigenous family who occasionally chose to share their knowledge and stories. The Knightons obtained the labour their aging bodies needed to help rebuild their home each spring, run their restaurant, and most importantly to Monique, replant their garden. Although they had family who would regularly visit Qua-ba-diwa
to help, their visits were subject to their other responsibilities of work and home. WWOOFERS, however, you could schedule. They always made sure in the spring to request physically robust young people to help repair the storm damage to their home, rebuild the kitchen and restaurant shelters, and organize the pantry and greenhouse (which were made out of tarps, logs, and ropes and had to be raised anew each spring).

That spring of 2014 there was a special occasion looming, and the Knightons needed more help than usual. I was therefore added to the roster of helpers/boarders along with a varied cast of WWOOFERS from Latvia, Norway, France, and Germany. Monique Knighton had graduated with a bachelor’s degree in agriculture, majoring in horticulture, from the University of the Fraser Valley. This was obviously an important achievement, particularly for a woman in her sixties. She wished to attend her convocation, as did her husband Peter. Earlier in May I had hiked the trail and spent time at Qua-ba-diwa as Monique planned and planted her garden for the 2014 season. For her convocation in June her son Danny was coming out to run her restaurant. But she needed someone to look after her garden while she spent three weeks visiting friends and relatives on the mainland, and I agreed to keep an eye on things. As a very novice gardener, I was nervous about the responsibility. In the weeks before her departure, I paid close attention as Monique gave exact instructions on how to properly hoe potatoes and fertilize the nightshades in the greenhouse. I was, admittedly, in a bit over my head. But luckily by the time Peter and Monique departed in June most of the planting was done, and all I had to do was weed and water. That June proved to be one of the driest in decades on the WCT. In a month where sodden hikers usually took shelter under Monique's tarps, they instead watched as I wrestled with various hoses hooked up to the local creek. The low water pressure of the off-the-grid setup meant that I inevitably ended up soaking myself as much as the plants (which amused the Knightons greatly). I was also to help Danny out
in the kitchen while Monique was gone, and she taught me to cook hamburgers for guests on their
propane stoves and tried to teach me how to gut and filet a fish (I was hopeless).

The layout of Monique’s garden was very different from the regimented structure of the
lighthouse gardens. It was planned around multiple factors: cultural, personal, ecological, and
horticultural. She planted certain plants where experience had taught her they grew best, perched
as her garden was right above the beach and interwoven with the forest. The sandy soil was
counteracted with many years’ worth of compost pits. The location of her plots would move each
year as the beach, with its line of driftwood logs, and the forest, with its fast-growing ferns and
salal, shifted too. Sometimes she simply planted certain plants in their location because that is
where she had space at the time she was gifted or purchased seeds, seedlings or bulbs. Annuals,
perennials, flowers and vegetables were mixed up in a way that seemed to my untrained eye rather
chaotic and haphazard. A monkey tree grew beside rows of kale, and a latticework of roses curled
over her onion patch. Rows of foxgloves, grown in memory of Peter’s mother's garden at Clo-
oose, towered over the beginnings of beanstalks anchored with beach-salvaged fishing line.

One of the first things I learned how to do during my stay at the Knighton homestead was
dig a compost pit. Qua-ba-diwa, like the rest of Vancouver Island, is black bear territory. To
discourage ursine scavengers, compost pits had to be buried at least three feet deep. They also had
to be dug fairly frequently, as the only alternative garbage disposal available to the Knightons
(unlike the lightkeepers who had access to waste management infrastructure via the Canadian
Coast Guard) was hauling their waste by boat to Port Renfrew or burning. So, a large portion of
our waste went back into the garden. The first time I dug a compost pit my shovel kept coming
across what I recognized from my minimal archeological training as fire-cracked rocks. I asked
the Knightons, and they told of finding carvings, stone tools, and other things that archeologists
would consider to be artefacts over their years of digging in the dirt of their home. Their home was built on their ancestral village site, so of course their ancestors’ discards would mingle with theirs. If they found something they thought was interesting, the family kept it. Otherwise, their garbage was simply added to the middens of their ancestors. As I irreverently tossed moldy hamburger buns into the layers of an ancient Ditidaht village, I wondered what some of my archeologist colleagues would think. The Knightons had no qualms about burying their compost on top of the old village to fertilize their garden. They saw it as fitting that their cycle of compost, fertilizer, and food garden mingled with their ancestors’ cookfires through the strata of the dirt.

Parks Canada, as well as the lightkeepers, did not like the Knightons compost practices. It didn’t fit in with contemporary waste and wildlife management strategies within the national parks system. Although they were both avid gardeners and each other’s only neighbours, the lightkeepers and the Knightons seemed to often not see eye to eye. A large part of this were clashes in personality between Monique Knighton and one of the lightkeepers, a fact that Monique freely admitted. Although other members of the families got along, these differences were influential in keeping the two neighbouring families relatively separate, at least socially. In trying to explain the differences between the two it is more telling to look at the two gardens than analyze personality flaws. Each garden points towards a different understanding of home, place-making, and human-environmental interactions. The lightkeepers had lived at Carmanah lighthouse for about a decade before Monique and Peter returned to Qua-ba-diwa. They were, by their own admission, huge supporters of the Parks service and avid environmentalists, and saw themselves as being so very lucky to live in the midst of a state-sanctioned wilderness. When the Knightons moved back, I think it’s safe to say that Parks Canada saw the Knightons as squatters. One of the major flash points for conflict between Parks Canada and the Knighton family was around the way they grew
and disposed of food. The issue of wildlife becoming habituated to human food is an ongoing issue in the Parks Canada parks system, and indeed in all of British Columbia. Bears particularly are of concern (see Harding 2014) because they share similar dietary preferences as humans, and will scavenge gardens, fruit trees, compost heaps, and garbage bins. In some places, like North Vancouver and Whistler, residents are discouraged from growing food attractants. However, in the case of the lighthouses in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, the government recognized the need for a food garden, and as a solution provided the lightkeepers with several wildlife-proofing mechanisms, including, I was told, an electric fence. The Knightons did not have the resources or access to infrastructure to create such technocratic solutions to the age-old problem of multiple species desiring a food source. So instead, they dug deep compost pits and adopted large dogs. The dogs were another source of conflict between the Knightons and Parks Canada. Parks Canada, in accordance with federal regulations regarding canines in national parks, required them to be on leash at all times. This well-intentioned law designed to prevent human-wildlife conflict was rendered ridiculous by the tangle of driftwood logs, beach and rainforest that comprised the Qua-ba-diwa reserve. A lack of fencing, or even terrain where a leash would not easily catch, made the possibility of confining domestic animals impossible. The dogs moved freely, as did the cat named Mess that guarded the Knightons’ larder and liked to leave half-eaten mice on my pillow. Unlike at the lighthouse, where salal abruptly turned into clipped grass, at the Knighton’s the boundaries between domestic and wild space was blurred and uncontained. They were imaginary, only existing on the flat Cartesian representations of the space recorded on government maps.
As I discussed in Chapter 3, the Knightons enacted the role of territorial hosts. Their garden, in this way, was a means of ‘planting’ claim. The residents of Qua-ba-diwa interact with thousands of hikers on the WCT each year, sheltering them, feeding them. Not all these interactions are positive. Monique, by her own admission, uses her cafe as her own personal soapbox and her tendency to loudly rant on a range of political topics made some hikers she spoke with uncomfortable. These hikers expected service at Monique’s restaurant to be more in line with the friendly deference typical of the hospitality industry. However, in their tendency to ‘hold court’ on their beach, the Knightons were reasserting that this was their space, and tourists were there at their behest. Monique’s willingness to interrupt hikers’ soliloquies on the environment with her own opinions (“No our food isn’t organic, ALL food is organic! Organic is just a made-up word
to jack-up the prices for hippies!”), sometimes backed up by Peter's soft smile and twinkling eyes, was a blunt reminder of whose land hikers were on. Between the restaurant and the garden, the Knightons asserted that this space was not simply a place of leisure for hikers or a state-sanctioned wilderness, but their home.

This idea of gardening as a means of knowing an environment (as opposed to taming a non-human nature) is demonstrated in Harvey Feit’s analysis of the way the James Bay Cree deploy the metaphor of gardening as a discursive strategy to communicate to settlers their relationship to territory. In a cross-cultural dialogue with cultural outsiders and colonizers, the James Bay Cree describe their hunting as like gardening and how their hunting lands are like a garden. Gardening is a useful metaphor within cross-cultural dialogues as the complexity of meanings contained within the gardening trope is recognizable both by the Cree and perceptive outsiders. It also implicitly counters the nationalist-wilderness discourse of the Quebec and Canadian governments. Feit explains:

The metaphor of the garden is a fundamental alternative to these linked metaphors of wilderness, European settlement, and nation. Gardening analogies deny that this is a wilderness, and, instead, assert that this is a place that sustains humans. The productivity of the land is highlighted, and it is made a place where people survived and belonged, not a barren land but a home (Feit 2001: 428).

Feit notes that these discourses helped rouse support amongst environmentalists outside the Cree community, as the garden metaphor can both contest wilderness with the idea of a nurtured place, but also is not totally antagonistic to an environmentalist idealization of an Eden-like natural paradise imbued with the divine (as discussed in Chapter 5). The “dual image of garden as natural, sufficing abundance and as a product of civilizing labour cuts across major oppositions in North
American thought” (Feit 2001: 433). In a strange paradox, gardening becomes not only an apt metaphor for the colonial process, but also a means of materially transforming one’s environment in a way that is quite literally, a cultivation of territorial claim. Gardening is discursively used in settler-colonialism to claim territory, but also denotes an active relationship between humans and non-humans that defies the nature-culture binary from which the concept of wilderness originates (as discussed in the previous chapter).

Gardens are, as Longhurst (2006) asserts, paradoxical spaces where imagery of domesticity becomes entangled with the dynamism of non-human forces. In her 2015 PhD dissertation, Julia Ostertag argues for the reconceptualization of gardens and agriculture “not as a standard of civilization but as assemblages of material-semiotic relations and practices, [which] shifts the register of who controls the land, what land-based practices are validated, and how these relationships can be taught and performed” (Ostertag 2015: 63). In a similar vein, Longhurst (2006) contends that gardens hold the potential to refute colonial ontologies of the environment in that as much as they appear as domestic, enclosed spaces, they are very much shaped by weather, terrain, and non-human life forms. They detail how interactions with pests particularly show that in a garden, control over natural processes is an illusion (something any seasoned gardener when confronted with a hailstorm or a pest infestation will attest). Furthermore, Longhurst points out how gardens, figuratively and sometimes literally, “sit at the threshold between private and public space.” This is especially true of gardens in places subject to the “tourist gaze” (Urry 1990) like those at Qua-ba-diwa, and the lighthouses. Furthermore, domestic gardens often blur the boundaries between leisure and work (Longhurst 2006:587) and I would say that in the case of the WCT gardens, they blur the boundary between pleasure and necessity. Gardening is hard work, as I found out quickly during my time weeding and sowing at Qua-ba-diwa. It also is not unskilled
work, as to garden effectively one must rely on a vast body of environmental knowledge (Degnen 2009: 156). Finally, to garden, one must work with, as Monique often said, “what Mother Nature provides” and adapt to the vagaries of the terrain one must cultivate, and other non-human creatures who also make that terrain into their homes.
CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

The West Coast Trail was built as a shipwreck rescue trail and designed as an infrastructural link to bring lost victims back into the arms of civilization. Yet lost seafarers are far from the only things that wash ashore, and the Trail intersects with a diversity of places that mark multiple human interactions with the “wildness” of non-human forces, both historical and contemporary. In the previous chapter, I show how campfires, carved buoys, compost bits, and garden clippings are all debris of human social practices that mark the world and interact with non-human environmental forces. The creation of debris may be unintentional, and some debris may have little negative impact, decomposing with time. But other bits of flotsam and jetsam, like the Japanese drink bottles washed up at Qua-ba-diwa, Pachena, Tscowis, Clo-oose and all over the West Coast from the 2011 Japanese tsunami are markers of disaster and disturbance that are difficult to erode or erase. Tourism is often framed as an ethical or environmentally friendly solution to economic inequality or industrial stagnation caused by the vagaries of global capitalism (Fletcher & Neves 2012, West et. al. 2004). What I show in this dissertation is that tourism, even supposedly low-impact tourism like hiking in a national park, both creates debris and is built on top of the debris of past human-environmental interactions. The West Coast Trails campgrounds are built on top of old village sites, some of which were decimated by the 1700 tsunami, others by disease. The national park itself only became feasible after most of Vancouver Island's old-growth forest, including much of the forest that is now protected within the confines of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, was logged by industry. Historic processes of colonialism, settlement, and state infrastructure planning have produced the geographic remoteness of this section of Canada’s coastline, and made it possible to be consumed as a wilderness product by domestic tourists in search of connection to their national identity.
This dissertation is an attempt to unravel the often hidden politics behind the making of settler sites of leisure. I add depth to prior critiques (Cronon 1996, Braun 2002) of the social construction of wilderness by using anthropological methods of ‘being there’ to complicate assumptions that settlers, hikers, and Indigenous people will conform to the roles and practices structured by hegemonic discourses, narratives and institutions. At the same time as a wilderness landscape is produced by state, the rituals venerating wilderness are performed by diverse humans in dynamic and unpredictable terrain. Slippery mud, unexpected bodies and the presence of gardens add complexity to the tourist experience that can be unsettling, both in the emotional and the political sense, for settler-Canadian domestic tourists. At a Canadian Anthropological Society conference in Quebec City, anthropologist Lori Barkley commented during a panel on decolonization that “if you’re not uncomfortable you’re not decolonizing” (May 3, 2015). I would reverse this statement, and paraphrase it to suggest that in discomfort, there is potential for decolonizing. I suggest that encountering the unexpected and uncomfortable opens up a space of potential for challenging dominant narratives.

Patrick Wolfe makes the point that settler-colonialism has, in many ways, remained impervious to regime change (2006: 402). Some of the Huu-ay-aht and Ditidaht people I spoke with, as detailed in Chapter 3, saw the official co-management of national parks as simply another exercise in the politics of recognition, another way to “manage and neutralize indigenous difference” (Verancini 2011: 8) without any real structural change. My research has described another way to change is created through the ambivalence and unexpected outcomes of cultural practices. As Margaret Werry has described in the case of Aotearoa/New Zealand:

Tourism accentuates a paradox...a paradox familiar from theories of nationalism and globalization: those political formations that appear most stable, hermetic and enduring –
nation, ethnic collectives, and the state – are constituted through circulation. The constant passage of people, ideas, images, and capital, both within their borders and abroad, makes these constructs imaginable, but their continual translation and their becoming through motion is an unsettling condition, always threatening to unseat the certainties of permanence and power to which they pretend. (Werry 2011: xvii)

The circulation and performance of rituals of leisure by distinct peoples in heterogeneous places creates instances of divergence which may challenge monolithic representations and open new pathways to change.

In Turner’s (1969) re-interpretation of Van-Gennep’s (1909) model of rites of passage, in the liminal space where the ritual participants are separated from everyday practices and statuses, there are moments where the potential of rebellion from dominant social structures can be realized. The pilgrimage is also a phase where dominant discourse can be challenged, as the subject is separated from the strictures of everyday life and a reflection and potential critique of those strictures can emerge. The act of ritual requires movement through both time and space, in a way where participants are temporarily set apart from society at large. Yet at the same time the ritual transformation is socially motivated. As Graeburn states, through the secular pilgrimage of the sacred journey, “we are a new person who has gone through re-creation and, if we do not feel renewed, the whole point of tourism has been missed” (1989:27). Within the actual experience of encountering new places and peoples there is ripe potentiality for the disruption of dominant narratives. I wish to complicate my own critique of nature-nationalism that I explored in chapter 3 and point out, following my discussions in chapters 5 and 6, that the messy entanglement of dirty bodies and weather-worlds that emerges from the actual experience of hiking the trail creates unpredictable movements, affects, and encounters. This turns the colonial “contact zone,” to return
to Pratt’s term, into a space of creative potential, where prior assumptions can be challenged, knowledge questioned, and power structures re-negotiated. Thus, it creates a space where colonized subjects can, as discussed in Chapter 3, reconfigure their social position into the role of host and affirm their territorial claims, where women can be dirty and strong (Chapter 4) and a wilderness is revealed to be layered with gardens.

At the same time, in the Turnerian model, ritual processes can serve to renew extant social structures. As I describe throughout this thesis, hiking and camping in national parks are state-sanctioned ritual practices that reify grand narratives of Canadian wilderness that are foundational to settler-colonialism. I suggest that by walking over particularly significant sections of territory, the secular pilgrimage of tourism also holds the potential to renew nationalist visions of Canadian nature, particularly through a re-enactment of territorial conquest. It is important to be wary of claims of tourism as a simple solution to the problems wrought by colonialism and capitalism. As Fletcher and Neves have pointed out, tourism, particularly nature-based tourism or ecotourism, is often touted as a panacea for the inequalities and destruction created by the globalization of capitalism, when it is rather, what they term, “a manifold capitalist fix” (2012:60); a solution to a problem rooted in that same problem. As a capitalist industry “tourism can be seen as itself a product of structural violence inherent in the uneven development leading to the economic and social difference that forms the basis for most of the international tourism industry” (Buscher & Fletcher 2017: 653). Therefore, I end with ambivalence, and with a recitation of what seems to be the rallying cry of the anthropologist (often to the dissatisfaction of undergraduate students and policy writers hoping for a clear and easy solution): “it’s complicated.”

However, going forward from this study, one thing that I think stakeholders in national parks and in domestic tourism could take from this rather critical portrait of the West Coast Trail
is the focus on the Trail as a contact zone. All of Canadian territory is also Indigenous territory, and that fact is something that should not be merely acknowledged, but also understood. To do the latter, a focus on contact, on connections and encounters between settlers and newcomers and Indigenous peoples within “super-natural” British Columbia could perhaps provide a more comprehensive narrative than the segregated one typically found in interpretative materials for parks and outdoor recreation sites. As I describe in Chapter 3, the typical narrative in a nature-based tourism setting in Canada separates history, culture and nature, with the first segregated into distinct eras of indigenous pre-history, colonial settlement, and Canadian modernity. As I stated in Chapter 3, even with the addition of territorial acknowledgements, this segregated history overlooks connections between indigenous peoples and settlers, between colonial resource extraction and park formation, and the ways in which interlocking global, national, and local forces have come together to designate a particular space as wilderness. Of political importance is that this division of interpretative domains glosses over the ongoing process of colonialism and skips over the whole messy business of indigenous depopulation, of reserve formation, of the alienation from territory, of resource extraction without compensation, and of ongoing treaty negotiations. A focus on connections between extant conditions and past processes could replace the projection of distinctive and separate natural/cultural, and settler/indigenous eras that dominate current interpretive materials.

This point brings me to the major limitation of this study, and indeed, of any study that takes a grounded theory approach where questions emerge from the data. There are questions I leave unanswered and stories untraced in this thesis, simply because I carried out my fieldwork in a particular time on the trail (2013-2014) where certain people were present, and others absent. There were people who played and continue to play a role in the trails stories who were simply not
present or available to speak to when I conducted my fieldwork. The stories in this dissertation are, by necessity, a limited portrait and there are some important players whose perspectives may have changed my data had I had access to them (absent lightkeepers and Trail Guardians, long-time and former residents of Clo-oose, and members of the Pacheedaht First Nation).

I also, retrospectively, would like to have examined with more depth the complex subjectivities of hikers in regard to race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. As I state in Chapter 5, where my discussion of gender is supplemented by discourse analysis and autoethnography, I did not intend to discuss gender as a component of this research, but rather its importance emerged from the actual experience of fieldwork. After completing fieldwork, I also began to think more critically about who fits and doesn’t fit into the shifting categories of settler, newcomer, locals and visitors. Although I acknowledge the complexities that race and ethnic relations within settler-colonialism add to the category of hikers, I also note that I lack the fieldwork-based data to comprehensively engage with these topics as much as they deserve. These gaps within my own work highlight the need for comprehensive research into the role race and ethnicity play in the leisure practices of domestic tourists, particularly in the Canadian context.

Although I situate this work in the anthropology of tourism, I also locate it within the anthropology of environment, particularly in my discussion of the ways in which the place is shaped by not only social constructions of landscape that create wilderness, but also non-human forces that form a dynamic and wild terrain. I combine a historical and discursive analysis of the social representations of landscape with a phenomenological exploration of human engagements with the non-human terrain and a processual analysis of ritual practices. To do so, I use the terms landscape, terrain, and territory to delineate both different perspectives on space and different theoretical approaches and methodologies. The term landscape refers to social constructions of the
place as both wilderness and a tourism destination. To explore the landscape of the West Coast Trail, I analyze representations and discourses that frame the space in particular ways for a specific audience, that of settler-Canadian domestic tourists). Territory brings in the politics of belonging to a place and invokes a tension both personal and political that emerges when two groups not only claim sovereignty over a territory but call it home, with the latter evoking affective attachment to place. My discussion of the ritual of pilgrimage in chapters 3 and 7 explores the relationship to territory for settlers in a domestic tourism context, while my discussion of Indigenous hospitality and gardens in chapters 4 and 7 includes the perspective of Indigenous territorial hosts. To explore the importance of non-human forces in shaping the experiences of the Trail I borrow Gordillo’s (2018) term terrain, which expresses the inherent dynamism of a place where topography, climate, atmosphere, and both human and non-human bodies are constantly shifting in and out of different entanglements. Terrain, territory and landscape are used throughout this dissertation not to highlight idiosyncratic theories but rather to point towards the productive dissonance that emerges from their intersection. According to Roy Ellen, anthropology acquires “its vitality from being critically ‘conjunctural,’ and must be ultimately and necessarily a strategic cross-disciplinary theoretical compromise” (2010: 387). In this dissertation I have emphasized the usefulness of combining perspectives that emphasize the social construction of nature and a phenomenological approach where non-human forces also produce the particularities of places. When situated ethnographically, seemingly divergent theoretical approaches can be complementary, in that these different lenses allow the multi-locality (Rodman 1992) of places to become visible.

Furthermore, this oscillation between theoretical tools is useful because the friction between them helps unveil the space as a palimpsest. The West Coast Trail intersects with territories that are layered with stories and histories, some of which are obscured by colonial
visions of the Canadian state. Although it is now a co-managed park reserve, this national park was imposed upon the territory of the Huu-ay-aht, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht peoples without their consent or consultation. The nation-building narratives of domestic tourism obscure indigenous stories, histories and connections with place. At the same time, I show that these dominant narratives are continuously challenged by the actions of Indigenous hosts, by what one hiker termed a “recalcitrant” environment, and by the ways hikers themselves veer off from the well-trodden path through wilderness via intimate, embodied encounters with the peoples and places of the West Coast Trail. Powerful, affective moments are created when dominant tourist narratives are torn apart by an injury, a storm, a story, or a helping hand.

One of the aspects of the West Coast Trail that I’ve emphasized throughout is that it is situated in a dynamic space that is constantly being transformed both by human actions and non-human forces. I conducted my fieldwork in 2013 and 2014 and I have decided in this work to retain the ethnographic present throughout. Yet it is important to acknowledge the ongoing changes that have transformed the people and places I discuss in this dissertation in the years that have passed since. Due to major changes in my own life (marriage, illness, pregnancy and childbirth) I haven’t returned despite living only a short distance (as the crow flies) away in Vancouver. Despite not being physically present, I am aware of several significant changes that have taken place. The most devastating change has been the departures of Monique and Peter Knighton from this earth. Their loss has been deeply felt by many and I find it emotionally difficult even now to write of them. Whether Qua-ba-diwa will continue as a place of hospitality is uncertain, as who has rights to the space, as Peter passed with no biological children, is a subject of dispute between Peter and Monique’s kin and the Ditidaht First Nation. As an outsider, I feel I should not comment on who has rights to the space or how it ought to be used. What I do know is that the presence of both
Peter and Monique will reverberate in the memories of the thousands of hikers they hosted over the past three decades.

The changing climate has also had effects on the terrain of the trail. The past few summers have been some of the driest on record for Vancouver Island. For the first time in its history, Parks Canada has enforced temporary fire bans on the Trail along a coastline that is usually so wet and cool that fires are encouraged to combat hypothermia. In communications with hikers who’ve hiked the trail since my fieldwork, they’ve remarked the effects of these strange dry spells on the trail, most commenting on how “easy” it was when it’s ladders and boardwalks weren’t covered in wet slime and the obstacles of the mudpits were removed. At the same time, the erosion of some of the rocky shelves on the southern end has made previous seaside routes precarious and extremely dangerous.

Another significant change, but not unexpected change, is the expansion of tourism operations by both the Huu-ay-aht and Ditidaht First Nations. The latter has successfully lobbied for the creation of a third entrance point to the trail at Nitinaht Narrows, meaning that hikers can, through Ditidaht-owned and operated ferries, create a shorter trip along the easier, northern section of the trail. The Huu-ay-aht have focused on expanding economic operations both in tourism and through a controversial agreement for liquid natural gas development on their territory along the southern edge of Barkley Sound and the Alberni Inlet. Despite the emphasis in both of these First Nations on economic development, in the summer of 2020 the West Coast Trail, for the first time in its history, is completely closed to visitors due to the assertion of First Nations management of the territory. The global pandemic of 2020 has revived memories of previous waves of disease devastating Indigenous communities, and in response many First Nations in British Columbia have closed their territory to visitors. In contrast, the government of Canada has re-opened national
parks across the country. Despite the emphasis the governments of Huu-ay-aht First Nations and Ditidaht First Nations have placed on economic development in the last decade, they have deemed the danger to their people to be too great to risk the annual onslaught of hikers, and the West Coast Trail Unit of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve remains closed. Although it could be speculated that their agreement might have been more difficult to obtain in previous decades, the government Canada has abided by that decision. One of my Trail Guardian friends, instead of working on the Trail, is now employed as a community security guard in Anacla. He guards the entrance to the village, and turns around several cars of visitors every day who do not believe the signs that Pachena Bay is now for “locals only.”

On my last day at Qua-ba-diwa 2014 I dug a compost pit in Monique’s garden to dump a bucket of carrot peels and apple cores. Qua-ba-diwa would make an interesting archaeological site one hundred years from now, when middens of broken shells and fishhooks are intercepted by the occasional can of Coke (although they brought their cans into port for recycling, Monique was a Coca-Cola addict, she swore her doctor recommended it for her heart condition and I am sure at least one is buried in her garden) or tag from a bread bag that got accidentally mixed up with the compost. Tent pegs from hikers are probably littered under the nearby sand (the sandy beaches have an incorrigible appetite for tent pegs, particularly the small lightweight ones designed to anchor expensive backcountry tents designed for mountaineering). Then I filled up the pit. The next day we planted peas on top and built a lattice to support their growth with tangled plastic fishing line rescued from the sea.
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