“ALMOST LOST BUT NOT FORGOTTEN”:
CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL USES OF CENTRAL COAST SALISH SPINDLE WHORLS

by

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B.A., The University of British Columbia, 1996

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of Anthropology and Sociology)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2000

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Date **April 10, 2000**
Abstract

In this thesis I investigate social processes that motivate the contemporary reproduction and public dissemination of older Central Coast Salish spindle whorls. In a case study, I develop a cultural biography of spindle whorls to examine how material culture produced by past generations informs contemporary activity. Visual materials, first- and third-person accounts and writings in three areas—material culture, the social nature of art and colonialism—are drawn together to demonstrate that spindle whorl production and circulation is grounded in social and historical contingencies specific to Central Coast Salish First Nations. I propose that in using spindle whorls, Central Coast Salish people are drawing on the past to strengthen their position within current circumstances.
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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to a number of people for their interest and assistance during the research and writing of this thesis. First, I would like to thank the four people who granted me interviews. To artists Simon Charlie, Cowichan, at Duncan and William Good, Snunéymuxw, at Nanaimo, I appreciate your willingness to talk with me about your work and lives. To educational programmers Teresa Carlson at the Stó:lō Nation and Sophie McCann at the Nanaimo District Museum, I found discussions with you valuable in understanding the parameters of cultural education programs. In addition, Nanaimo District Museum curator Debra Bodner permitted me to examine exhibit files and University of British Columbia Social Sciences Librarian Beverly Scott discussed with me the evaluation of Internet sources. My advisors were sources of inspiration throughout my studies and during this project. Julie Cruikshank’s interest in oral tradition and material culture led me to explore social connections between older spindle whorls and the people who produce and use new ones. Charlotte Townsend-Gault’s work drew my attention to associations between contemporary art and land claims. Finally, my husband James, daughter Mariel and mother Betty deserve special thanks for their consistent enthusiasm for this project and their cheerful participation in the endless search for spindle whorls.
PART I INTRODUCTION

Ethnographic objects in public and in private collections at times inspire individuals to produce replicas or new depictions of older designs. Examples of such production occur on the Northwest Coast of North America. Here, objects attributed to distinctive First Nations\(^1\) are replicated or reinterpreted and produced anew for exhibition, the art market or for ceremonial purposes. The original objects and such reproductions conventionally are identified as anthropology's “material culture,” traditional “Native” art, or modernism’s “fine art,” among other constructs. In this paper I conceptualize the objects, and refer to them, as visual representations of culture—that is, human-made objects to which culturally-specific meanings are ascribed from emic perspectives by individuals or groups of people. This paper focuses on a late-twentieth century proliferation in the production and dissemination of new visual representations of culture based on older objects. What interests me are social processes involved when objects from the past reappear at later times. Specifically, I am concerned with new representations that are used or disseminated in public\(^2\) settings by people who identify themselves as cultural descendants of the makers and users of the originals.

The study of objects may be approached from a number of perspectives. An analysis within the context of First Nations communities, for example, might focus on the history of use, the interpretation of imagery or the examination of mythological or spiritual dimensions. The approach I have chosen differs from the above. My study investigates social processes that motivate individuals to create new representations of older objects and disseminate these within their own First Nations as well as to the public at large. I explore three questions. 1) What social attributes are objects from the past ascribed that warrants their reproduction? 2) What social circumstances motivate tangible and conceptual redesign? 3) What social processes propel a growing public visibility of new representations? My intention is to gain some understanding of the ways visual representations of culture made by past generations contribute to the lives of people in succeeding generations.

I examine the questions in a case study of the production and dissemination of contemporary representations of older wooden spindle whorls. Carved spindle whorls, some

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\(^1\) I use the term “First Nations” to indicate the original inhabitants of Canada and their descendants. I italicize specific First Nation affiliations and locate these after the names of individuals.

\(^2\) I use the term “public” as suggested by Morris and McCalman (1999:320) to indicate activities involving mixed audiences, the facilitators of these activities, the physical spaces in which the activities occur, and the processes of discussion and evaluation.
plain and others decorated with engraving (Fig. 1), were made and used by Central Coast Salish\(^3\) First Nations who live along the Northwest Coast of North America in what is now known as southwestern British Columbia, Canada. This area was the focus of extensive ethnographic collecting during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (Cole 1995:1) when large numbers of carved wooden spindle whorls were acquired and taken away by professional and non-professional collectors.\(^4\) Many of the early wooden spindle whorls are retained today by non-Coast Salish institutions and individuals. An inventory (Kew 1980a) of nearly nine hundred and fifty objects of Central Coast Salish origin located in just thirteen museums in North America and Western Europe catalogues one hundred and sixty-nine wooden spindle whorls. Additional spindle whorls are in private collections (Carlson 1976:214). Some of these occasionally cross the auction block such as a “superb” older whorl sold in 1973 for $36,000 US (Johnson, H. 1975:18). Still more older wooden spindle whorls may be in the possession of Central Coast Salish people though I found none during the course of my research.

Many authors consider spindle whorls remarkable for two principal reasons. First, a diameter measuring seven to twelve inches and position on a spindle up to four feet in length mark the whorls as part of the largest hand spinning apparatus known on the Northwest Coast (Barnett 1955:118) and in the world (Kissell 1916:270). Second, and of greater importance to this paper, is the artistry the objects exhibit. Many spindle whorls are skillfully and elaborately engraved with geometric or representational imagery of a style considered “distinctive and specific to the Central Coast Salish” (Kew 1980b:5). This style traced through archaeological materials dates back more than 3,500 years (Carlson 1976:203).

The skillful production and visual appeal of many of the early spindle whorls prompts their regular use in exhibits and publications produced by non-Coast Salish institutions and individuals. Exhibits have featured spindle whorls in the contexts of ethnography, ethnographic art and fine art (Appendix II) while photographic and textual representations of them are

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\(^3\) Ethnographer Wayne Suttles uses the term “Central Coast Salish” to designate speakers of Halkomelem and Straits Salish “whose territory includes the lower Fraser Valley, the southern end of Georgia Strait, and the northern shores of the Strait of Juan de Fuca...roughly at the center of the total Coast Salish area...” (1987:47n). Other authors include speakers of Squamish and Nooksack (Kew 1980b) and Clallam (Suttles 1990). Central Coast Salish may also be known as “Gulf of Georgia Salish” (Barnett 1939) or “Coast Salish” (Barnett 1955; Duff 1965). First Nations I am concerned with here are Musqueam, members of the Stó:lo Nation, Cowichan Tribes (Cowichan, Somenos, Quamichan, Comiaken, Koksilah), Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group (Cowichan Tribes, Chemainus, Halalt, Lake Cowichan, Lyackson and Penelakut), Snuneymuxw (Nanaimo), Tsartlip and Malahat.

Figure 1. *Cowichan* spindle whorl; maple; 8.5" diameter; collected 1912 (Inverarity 1950:fig.33). Royal BC Museum negative CPN 2454.

Figure 2. Serigraphs by Susan Point, *Musqueam*. Photo by Diane Keighley.

Figure 3. Corresponding photographs of early spindle whorls. Photo by Diane Keighley.
numerous in ethnographic, art historical and art market publications. Scholars, artists and other researchers have long been interested in wooden spindle whorls. A recent academic study addresses the utilitarian function of whorls as weighted disks designed to enable an accompanying spindle to achieve and maintain the momentum necessary to spin fibre (Loughren-Delahunt 1996). Some earlier studies examine spindle whorls in the broader context of weaving a spun fibre such as mountain goat hair or sheep’s wool (Kissell 1916; Wells 1969; Ashwell 1978; Hawkins 1978; Gustafson 1980; Johnson and Bernick 1986), while others closely examine formal elements of the carving and engraving. Potential associations between spindle whorls and social organization, ancestry and cosmology are also of interest although such relationships are not well understood (Gunther 1966:9-10; Suttles 1976:86; Kew 1980b:10-11; Gustafson 1980:35-6; Macnair, Hoover and Neary 1980:151). Finally, spindle whorls have been and continue to be studied by Central Coast Salish researchers and artists, a topic I explore later in this paper.

Characteristic of the style evident in spindle whorl form is the carving away of negative space to create a positive image—a technique now called block engraving. Central Coast Salish block engraving is distinguishable by the varying depths of the engraving, the incorporation of low relief sculpture, and design elements consisting of curvilinear lines, circles, crescents, “U” incisions, and triangular or wedge shapes. The elements when combined produce geometric imagery, naturalistic representations of animals, birds, fish, human-like faces and bodies and, possibly, supernatural beings. Some of the life-form images have identifiable characteristics. Animals, for example, generally are depicted with blunt snouts, bird wings have straight leading edges and human-like faces are portrayed with full brows (Kew 1980b:14-15).

The production of spindle whorls appears much reduced during most of the 20th century. Since the early 1980s, however, there is ample evidence that Central Coast Salish individuals and

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6 For additional detail of style regarding spindle whorls as well as other Central Coast Salish objects of sculpture and engraving, see Wingert 1949; Holm and Reid 1975; Suttles 1976, 1982; Macnair, Hoover and Neary 1980; Bierwert 1981; Feder 1983; Holm 1987a, 1990; Danford 1989; Gibson 1992; Greene 1996; and Brown 1997.

7 The earliest contemporary example I found is a carved and painted decorative spindle whorl twenty-four inches in diameter by Simon Charlie, Cowichan (Charlie 1957) (fig. 4). Mr. Charlie produced an undetermined number of decorative spindle whorls during the 1960s and 1970s (interview September 18, 1998), including one in 1976 (Simon Fraser Gallery 1992). Other examples are a spindle whorl carved by Cicero August (b. 1940) Cowichan, photographed in 1970 (Dickason 1972:135), a replica carved in 1976 by Charles Elliott (born c. 1950) Tsartlip, and one in 1979 by Rod Modeste (b.1946) Malahat (Macnair, et al 1980). Stan Greene (b. 1953) Stó:lo, produced the earliest serigraph based on spindle whorl imagery, Man with Wolves in 1979 (Simon Fraser Gallery 1994:15), and in the same year, Modeste adapted spindle whorl designs to engraved silver jewelry (Hamilton 1980). Susan Point,
organizations are using the form and imagery of early wooden spindle whorls in an intensified production of publicly visible replicas and new representations. Current works continue to be carved in wood, but also are expressed in new media such as precious metals, ceramics, glass and plastic as well as on paper and cloth, electronically and more. The size, too, has changed. Formerly seven to twelve inches in diameter, spindle whorl representations now contract to fit on a lottery ticket or expand to become the wall of a building. No longer restricted to the domestic domain or to audiences of ethnographic repositories and photographs, these new spindle whorls are circulated widely to the public at large. In Central Coast Salish territory in British Columbia, spindle whorls are readily visible, and indeed promoted, to audiences of Central Coast Salish people, other First Nations and non-First Nations—residents and tourists alike.

The broad public presentation of new spindle whorls and representations drew my attention to two apparent contradictions. First, through my training in anthropology and museum studies I had some understanding of older spindle whorls as personal possessions used in domestic settings, yet today’s representations are seldom utilitarian and are targeted at public audiences. Second, I was perplexed by the contrast between what I had learned was “traditional” design and the atypical ways this imagery is reproduced. Discussions and readings about oral tradition (Cruikshank 1992a, 1995) increased my awareness of socially expressed connections between objects held in collections and the descendants of the people who made and used them. This influenced me to think about contemporary representations of spindle whorls as visual representations of culture which embody social intent.

I am concerned here with the social relations that stimulate the present production and use of spindle whorls. I contend that contemporary spindle whorls are intended to reinforce notions of cultural continuity. They do this in two ways—by affirming an ongoing heritage to Central Coast Salish individuals and asserting a distinctive Coast Salish presence to outsiders. I argue that such use is intended to support current claims to Aboriginal rights and title within specific local and historical contexts.

Theoretical Background

The visibility of current representations attests that associations between Central Coast Salish people and the original objects were not severed by the removal of the objects from the communities of origin. At the same time, the production of new representations raises questions about how such continuity exists. An approach to this issue follows Pierre Nora’s examination of Musqueam, began creating designs based on spindle whorls in 1981 (Duffek 1986) for production in many media. Other individuals may have produced earlier or additional spindle whorls and representations not publicly visible.
of the interface of memory, history and cultural continuity. Memory, as Nora defines it, “is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual...[and] takes root in the concrete” (Nora 1989:9). He proposes that when people experience social disruption, or a rupture with the past, objects can serve as lieux de mémoires, or sites of memory, “the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists” (Ibid., 7).

The concept of lieux de mémoires is apt for spindle whorls made by past generations of Central Coast Salish people. “Although much knowledge has disappeared,” anthropologist Michael Kew points out, “much remains in memory, experience, and oral teachings” (Kew 1993:87). Cultural objects made in the past, or “the physical records of distinctive human ideas, skills, and sensibilities” (Duff 1965:77), can embody cultural continuity when viewed, or used in educational settings, by people who understand them through commemorative associations. Spindle whorls, then, whether in the original carved form, photographs, or other representations, constitute extant links to both the temporal past and to past generations. The phrase, “almost lost but not forgotten” (Point 1994) in the title of this paper alludes to this relationship.

One way of conceptualizing relationships between people and objects that helps bridge temporal gaps is Igor Kopytoff’s proposal that “things” may be perceived as having social lives or cultural biographies. Kopytoff examines the social situations in which “things” are located. He suggests that an object can be viewed as “…a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories” (Kopytoff 1986:68). Investigation of categories, he advises, can reveal processes that influence how an object is socially constructed at distinct points in time. Viewed collectively, the social processes of categorization can illustrate diachronic change. For example, one can examine the social relations that contribute to how and when an object moves into or out of a given category, such as “commodity”. Kopytoff offers a starting point for the examination of social processes that support contemporary spindle whorl production and dissemination as lieux de mémoires. His thinking informs my view of the social trajectories of contemporary spindle whorls and representations and offers a mechanism for linking disparate locations in which spindle whorls and representations occur.

Theoretical perspectives in anthropology, material culture studies and art history also inform my discussion of the spindle whorls as reworked cultural forms with social intent. Anthropologist Nicholas Thomas (1991, 1994) encourages the study of objects from a perspective that acknowledges their “entanglement” in the specific historical contexts in which they are produced, presented and received. Janet Wolff (1981, 1997) similarly argues for the
social nature of production, distribution and reception, while Nelson Graburn's (1976, 1993, 1993a) perspective on various classes of material production helps narrow the focus. Finally, I develop associations between material culture, land and political contest with reference to work by Charlotte Townsend-Gault (1994; 1997), Judith Ostrowitz (1999) and the individuals I interviewed and researched.

My research results in essence are the voices of a few individuals. First, it was not feasible to interview every producer and user of spindle whorls and representations—there are simply too many artists and cultural programmers over a wide geographic area. Second, not everyone I would like to have interviewed had the time or inclination to talk to me. To support the particularity of my sample, I turn to three scholars. Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank develops a collaborative research and writing model that “takes seriously what people say about their lives” (Cruikshank 1992b:1). Similarly, sociologist Howard Becker maintains that social scientists “should fully respect the superior knowledge social actors have of their own lives and experiences” (Becker 1998:98). This is especially important in anthropology, Renato Rosaldo contends, as “No analysis of human action is complete unless it attends to people’s own notions of what they are doing. Even when they appear most subjective, thought and feeling are always culturally shaped and influenced by one’s biography, social situation, and historical context” (Rosaldo 1989:103). Following Cruikshank, Becker and Rosaldo, my argument rests on the perspectives of individuals and their visual, oral, or print depictions of their involvement in social processes that support the production and use of spindle whorls and spindle whorl representations in Central Coast Salish territory in British Columbia.

The Research Project

I was introduced to Central Coast Salish sculpture and engraving during a graduate seminar and a museum internship at the University of British Columbia. I learned about “traditional” elements of design evident in visual representations carved by earlier generations—house posts, masks, rattles and spindle whorls, among other things. I began to notice with increasing frequency new representations of spindle whorls visible in public venues. I decided to investigate associations between the older objects and contemporary representations. I searched for spindle whorls and representations in the public domain in Central Coast Salish territory—the Lower Mainland, Lower Fraser Valley and southern Vancouver Island (Appendix I). Sites

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8 The model developed by Graburn (1976) remains relevant today (Phillips and Steiner 1999:4).
9 It should be noted that some individuals today produce mainly for their own communities rather than for the public marketplace. For this reason, public visibility of representations does not indicate the totality of production.
surveyed in person include public institutions, corporate sites, cultural programs and events, galleries, retail outlets (souvenir shops) and related promotional materials. Internet searches produced web pages published by artists, scholars, First Nations, treaty organizations, governments, educational institutions, corporations, museums, galleries and retail outlets. Library and archival research yielded published and unpublished academic works, popular publications and unpublished files.

I wanted to achieve some understanding of the perspectives of people who make and use the objects. I contacted individuals who identify themselves as belonging to, employed by, or associated with Central Coast Salish First Nations and who appear to be principally involved in the production or social use of spindle whorls and representations. I interviewed the individuals acknowledged earlier: artists Simon Charlie Cowichan and William Good Snuneymuxw and education programmers Teresa Carlson at the Stó:lo Nation and Sophie McCann at the Nanaimo District Museum. I researched publicly visible representations produced by other distinguished artists—Stan Greene, Stó:lo, Susan Point, Musqueam, Charles Elliott, Tsartlip, Rod Modeste, Malahat, and Cicero August, Cowichan. I refer to published and unpublished first- and third-person accounts, artist statements, promotional materials, interviews, and exhibition catalogues as well as academic and popular critiques of their work. Finally, I refer to visual works and associated materials from a number of emerging artists including Manuel Salazar, Cowichan, Joe Wilson, Koksilah, and Maynard Johnny, Jr. Coast Salish/Kwagiulth.

Part II  HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Anthropologist Nicholas Thomas argues that social action is shaped to an extent by the historical context from which it emerges (Thomas 1994:105). He proposes that "the longer-term dynamics of the social situation" (Ibid., 1991:9) are an essential adjunct to the study of the singular. The following historical contextualization is useful here for its contribution to the understanding of contemporary social uses of spindle whorls under circumstances that are specific, local and unique to Central Coast Salish history.

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10 I exclude discussion of metropolitan museums because to include them would necessitate discussion of issues related to an ongoing restructuring of relationships between museums and First Nations which is beyond the scope of this paper. See Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds. (1991), Trudy Niets (1992), Michael Ames (1992), the journal Museum Anthropology and other references in the Bibliography.

11 Individuals refer to themselves and their peers as "artists" or "carvers." I use the term "artist" in the sense that the work they produce, referred to as "art," is embedded in social processes (training, ideology) as are dissemination (patronage, marketing) and reception (audience/consumers). See Wolff (1981), The Social Production of Art.
The apparent decline in production and use of spindle whorls from contact to the late 1970s may be explained, in part, by the arrival on the coast of European manufactured goods that replaced domestic items (Cole 1991:49) such as those used in textiles production (Duff 1965:77). The utilitarian function of spindle and whorl was supplanted by the treadle sewing machine refitted with a large bobbin in place of the sewing head (Hawkins 1978:5). Known as “Indian Head” spinners (Meikle 1987:11), these are still in use today by women who knit Cowichan sweaters (Cowichan Knitting Co-operative n.d.).

New technology was only part of the sweeping change brought about by the arrival of traders, missionaries, officials, early settlers and large numbers of later immigrants (Fisher 1992:96; Barman 1998:157). Some consequences, including epidemics and legislation, were common to all First Nations. Other outcomes, such as contested land ownership, resource use and new population levels, varied with geography and resource base. A factor that sets apart Central Coast Salish experience from that of other First Nations in British Columbia is population demographics. The temperate climate, maritime geography and abundant natural resources make Central Coast Salish territory attractive to newcomers. The land was appropriated earlier and settled more densely than elsewhere on the Northwest Coast (Holm 1987a:33). Land that was once Central Coast Salish today is the most heavily urbanized in the province. On southern and southeastern Vancouver Island, for example, First Nations lost most of their land to industry, agriculture, settlement and the 1854 Douglas Treaties (Snunéumuxw Treaty Office 1999; Marshall 1999:105; Kew 1990:159). Population levels in these areas have increased steadily since the 1850s. Continued growth in population, infrastructure, resource use and environmental impact is predicted in the short term (British Columbia 1997:14) with significant increase in the long term (Land Centre and Urban Futures Institute 1996).

The situation on the Lower Mainland is similar. The 1858 Fraser River Gold Rush attracted “massive migration” (Carlson 1997:60) from the United States and Europe (Ormsby 1958:140). Forest resource extraction for overseas markets was established and municipalities began to grow (Ormsby 1958:237), especially after 1886 when the Canadian Pacific Railroad reached the coast (Ibid., 295-6). Political scientist Paul Tennant observes that from the 1880s the First Nations of southwestern British Columbia were “subject to the full impact of white

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12 Knowledge of spinning with spindle and whorl continued with a few women (Lane 1951; Meikle 1987). Examples of treadle spinners are in the Chilliwack Archives (Object #1842 c.1917) and the UBC Museum of Anthropology (Object #A8186).

13 Descendants of the signatories of the Douglas Treaties comprise the Te’mexw Treaty Association. Member First Nations are Songhees (Lekwungen), Nanoose (Snaw-Naw-As), Beecher Bay (Sceia’new), T’Sou-ke and Malahat (Te’mexw Treaty Association 1997).
settlement, commerce, and transportation” (Tennant 1990:77). The current population on Stó:lo land is two million (Thom and Cameron 1997:164-5), while the Musqueam are located within the city of Vancouver “in a wealthy, fully developed urban area...” (Grant 1993). Increase in population across the Lower Mainland is predicted due to overseas immigration and as a decline in resource-based employment in rural areas forces migration to metropolitan areas (British Columbia 1997:14).

The appropriation of land and its settlement intruded upon all aspects of Central Coast Salish peoples' lives. Historian Robin Fisher observes,

*The combined impact of these groups was to force the pace of cultural change and to take the initiative out of Indian hands. During the fur trade the Indians had been able to select items they wanted to incorporate into their social fabric according to their own priorities and to reject others that were not acceptable. With settlement, this freedom was lost. The Indians were moving from a non-directed acculturation experience to a situation in which culture change was directed from the outside (Fisher 1992:96-7).*

Change affected virtually all domains—economic, political, spiritual and, as in the case of spindle whorls, technological.

Government assimilation strategy interfered with the reproduction of culture in the social situations of daily life. A familiar example is the 1884 amendment to the Indian Act (1880) that eroded economic and political systems normally enacted in gatherings such as the Potlatch (Fisher 1992:207). Other examples are disenfranchisement, the institution of Indian Agents to enforce the Indian Act and government-sanctioned church-run residential schools. The schools are identified today as a major factor in the disruption of inter-generational patterns of learning in the family environment (Carlson 1997:102). Long-term consequences include losses of cultural knowledge and practice, such as languages and the arts (Greene 1996:3; Berlo and Phillips 1998:21). Curator Gerald McMaster maintains that losses of knowledge signify “ruptures in Native American history” including art history (McMaster 1994:112).

Throughout the years of domination issues that affect First Nations remain unresolved. This study takes place at a time when Central Coast Salish First Nations, along with most First Nations in British Columbia, are engaged in individual or collective negotiated redress (First Nations Congress 1991:2), or treaty negotiations, with the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada (British Columbia 1998b). Among the issues on the table are claims to

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14 The 1951 revision of the Indian Act dropped the prohibition, and ceremonies held secretly in the intervening years again began to be conducted publicly (Carlson 1997:99).
15 Catholic and Protestant residential schools operated in British Columbia from the 1880s (Tennant 1992:79); the last to close was St. Mary's at Mission in 1984 (Williams 2000). The mandate was assimilation (Carlson 1997:100).
Aboriginal title to land and rights to resources\textsuperscript{16} as protected by the \textit{Royal Proclamation} (1763) and the \textit{Constitution Act} (1982) and interpreted in the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision \textit{Delgamuukw v. British Columbia} (1997). The \textit{Delgamuukw} decision addresses, “The Content of Aboriginal Title...and the Requirements Necessary to Prove It” (\textit{Delgamuukw v. British Columbia} 1997:6). It reads, in part, “In order to establish a claim to aboriginal title, the aboriginal group asserting the claim must establish that it occupied the lands in question at the time at which the Crown asserted sovereignty over the land subject to the title” (Ibid., 10).

Furthermore, “Occupancy is determined by reference to the activities that have taken place on the land and the uses to which the land has been put by the particular group. If lands are so occupied, there will exist a special bond between the group and the land in question such that the land will be part of the definition of the group’s distinctive culture” (Ibid., 7-8).

The first treaty to be initialed, and at this writing is in the process of ratification, is the \textit{Nisga’a Final Agreement} (British Columbia 1998a). Chapter 17, “Cultural Artifacts and Heritage,” formally identifies a relationship between Nisga’a people and visual representations of culture produced by past generations that are held in federal and provincial museums:

The Parties recognize the integral role of Nisga’a artifacts in the continuation of Nisga’a culture, values, and traditions.

The Parties recognize the Nisga’a Nation’s traditional and sacred connection with Nisga’a artifacts, regardless of whether those artifacts are held by the Nisga’a Nation...[or elsewhere] (British Columbia 1998a).

What is important here is the inclusion of cultural property in the claim for rights and title. I contend that the contemporary social use of spindle whorls supports other action to resolve outstanding legal issues related to land title, occupation and use.

Part III SPINDLE WHORLS FROM SIX VANTAGE POINTS

In this section I identify six ways Central Coast Salish individuals regard older spindle whorls and new representations of them.

1) Exemplars

By the 1980s, museum interpretation of ethnographic collections was moving away from positivist views of out-of-context artifacts and modernist concentration on aesthetics to a recognition of objects as the loci of social relationships among museums, the people whose materials they care for and the public (Clifford 1988:209; Handler 1993:33). Within this

\textsuperscript{16} “Aboriginal rights” refers to two classes of rights—political and property (which includes land rights and resource rights). “The term ‘Aboriginal title’ is used legally to specify Aboriginal rights to land. It can be argued
A paradigm shift is a growing recognition that museum-held objects are visual representations of continuing cultures that are physically, conceptually and socially relevant to the descendants of the people who made and used them (West 1994:54). Connection to objects produced in the past is enacted today in a number of ways. First Nations participate in the management of collections attributed to them (University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology 1997:[1]), for example, as well as in the development of exhibits (Ames 1999) and repatriation negotiations (British Columbia 1998a). The significance of individual objects is evident in the dancing of museum-stored regalia (Macnair et al 1980), in commemorative performance (Hoover and Inglis 1990) or as points of reference in oral narrative (Cruikshank 1995; Clifford 1997:188-191).

An additional use of individual visual representations is that of exemplar or prototype. That is, objects from an earlier period used as sources of information about materials, form and methods of production. This capacity—as models for replicas and new representations—is one way spindle whorls produced in the past are used today. *Musqueam* artist Susan Point writes,

> I have admired and sketched almost every early spindle whorl I've seen. I have found them in several museums,...in photographs and books (Point 1999).

Point and other contemporary artists developed their skills during the 1970s and 1980s—a period when there were few artists with whom to study. The situation was not new.

> There were no serious carvers in the old Salish style when Simon Charlie [*Cowichan*, b. 1919] began his career [in 1933].... Still, there were quite a few of the old carvings around...decorated tool handles, spindle whorls, reed mat creasers...even some ceremonial carving, old Sxwaixwe masks and house posts decorated with spirit helpers. So the basic art was still there to be seen and studied (Todd 1992:28).

Some curators observe that few contemporary artists of any First Nation “have inherited the legacy of their ancestors through an unbroken line, the majority had to gain theirs through lengthy and careful analysis of museum specimens or through instruction from craftsmen trained outside the tribal group” (Macnair et al 1980:24). The individuals I interviewed and researched indicate museum collections, museum exhibits, photographs and art exhibits are principal sources of prototype spindle whorls. “I tried to learn about the Salish,” *Stó:lo* artist Stan Greene writes of his experience in the late 1970s,

> I talked to a number of the Elders. There wasn’t anybody reliable that could tell me what were these elements on this old carving, or the spindle whorl.... I went to the libraries and museums and I studied the pieces (Greene 1996).

William Good, *Snunéymuxw*, allows that without preservation he would have nothing to study. Located in Nanaimo, Good travels to museums to examine spindle whorls and other
objects. He also works from print material, asking museum staff for “all the literature you can send” on Halkomelem art (interview August 8, 1998). On southern Vancouver Island another artist was in a similar position at about the same time. A newspaper article noted,

...[Malahat] silversmith Rod Modeste [b.1946] is re-creating an all but vanished artistic style. With books, old photos and the few remaining wool-spinning whorls to survive the last 100 years as a guide, Modeste is bringing the unique artistic style of the Coast Salish Indians back to life (Hamilton 1980).

What the prototype spindle whorls have in common are the elements of design—positive and negative space, crescents, wedges and others—that mark classic examples of the Central Coast Salish style. “Once the rules and conventions of a given tradition or style have been mastered,” curator Peter Macnair observes, “an accomplished carver can produce a more than acceptable work with relative ease. His [or her] genius can bring life to almost any object...” (Macnair 1998a:53). Furthermore, the “distinguishing features provide a basis for comparison with and understanding of other work” (Ibid., 38) produced in the same style.

The practice of drawing on spindle whorl prototypes is prevalent. Correlation between examples and new representations is evident in Susan Point’s serigraphs (fig. 2) that parallel photographs of actual spindle whorls (fig. 3). A carved spindle whorl by Simon Charlie, Cowichan (fig. 4)17 resembles an older model (fig. 5). Other examples are a serigraph, Wolf Spirit (1982), by Charles Elliott, Tsartlip (Art Gallery of Greater Victoria 1984:33) which resembles a spindle whorl in the Smithsonian Institution (Suttles 1976:85[fig. 1]), and the Stan Greene, Stó:lo, print Man With Wolves (1979) (Gibson 1994:15) that in essence is a spindle whorl in the Royal BC Museum (fig.1). The use of a photographic example rather than a three-dimensional model may be indicated by carved spindle whorls that are of uniform thickness rather than the concave shape of the originals, as I observed in several shops. Finally, spindle whorl images are a signature feature of individual artists. Susan Point is renowned for her work based on the imagery (Laurence 1996:13) while William Good similarly adheres to familiar spindle whorl images in his work (interview August 8, 1998).

Simon Charlie discussed with me his interest in earlier examples. He asked me for photographs of Cowichan and other Coast Salish objects. He wants “pictures” as models for his own work and as examples for younger artists who carve under his direction. He knows the stories associated with many of the representations, the ceremonial pieces in particular, and reproduces some for private use and others for sale. He asked me for photographs of masks,

17 Simon Charlie told me the story of the image he carved. It should be noted that for many artists prototype spindle whorls give form to well-known narratives that may have additional visual representations.
Figure 4. Spindle whorl, cedar, 24" diameter. Carved by Simon Charlie, Cowichan, 1957. Photo by James Spence.

Figure 5. Spindle whorl from Sardis BC. Royal BC Museum negative CPN 9864.

Figure 6. Cowichan News Leader and The Pictorial masthead.
paddles, rattles, spindle whorls, "Anything," he said. He told me he does not require good copies, just something visible. He is compiling a library, he said, because all of his examples were lost ten years ago when his studio burned to the ground (interview September 18, 1998). I prepared a binder for him of two hundred and twenty photocopies of spindle whorls, masks and other carvings.

Some artists rely on the older or "traditional" imagery for inspiration but represent it in new ways. Such innovation may be observed in the way design elements are used, size of a piece or media. Susan Point's work has developed in this direction. She says,

I have become free of the traditional and historical pieces I initially refined and recreated. My works continue to evolve in a "contemporary" manner especially in medium. I...incorporate only Coast Salish design elements in my work, which [remains]... traditional, even though an image is... my own design (Point c. 1994).

Point's use of unconventional media (glass, concrete and others), monumental size and abstract imagery in work that remains "traditional" is but one example of innovative use of design elements and media. Through such experimentation, Point is able to produce "...innumerable fresh compositions that satisfy the requirements of comprehensibility to other members of the culture, and yet are original creations" (Layton 1991:200). I asked Simon Charlie his opinion of Point's work—an etched glass spindle whorl and a monumental wooden one. His face lit up with a smile and he told me Point's work is "traditional." "She uses the old style," he said, and he likes her work for that reason (interview September 18, 1998). Many artists produce innovative compositions in a wide range of objects and media discussed later.

2) Historical Records

Listen
It is Our way
The teachings that we
Pass along to you.
These teachings...
Have always been in
Our families, your family
These teachings...
Will stay with you
When we are gone


I found spindle whorls in many cultural programs and will discuss three of them here.18

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18 Other educational sites using spindle whorls are an exhibit at the Cowichan Native Village, Duncan; teacher resources at the Coqualeetza Cultural Education and Training Centre, Chilliwack; the Stó:lo Spindle Whorl Dancers who perform on the Powwow circuit (Aboriginal Art and Culture Celebration 1998:14); and a second troupe, also
i) Xá:ytem Longhouse Interpretive Centre, Hatzic Rock National Historic Site

On July 11, 1998 I visited this site on the Lower Fraser River. I participated in a guided tour of Stó:lo archaeology, history, and culture designed for school groups and the general public. Part of the tour emphasizes three areas of Central Coast Salish life—fishing, woodworking and weaving. The interpreter in the weaving section used spindle whorls as props to describe how in the past wool would have been spun although she did not actually demonstrate spinning. She drew attention to several objects—a weaving, a large Salish loom and two newer wooden spindle whorls. Associated objects included raw sheep’s wool, skeins of carded, dyed and spun sheep’s wool, photographs of mountain goats that formerly were a source of wool and about fifteen small Salish looms. The interpreter described how fibre was spun to weave into blankets that signified wealth and she invited visitors to try their hand at weaving. The incised designs on the spindle whorls, she advised, were the artist’s own and not “traditional.”

ii) Shxwt'á:selhawtx, The House of Long Ago and Today

.... I don’t actually know of anybody now who uses a spindle whorl to spin. They use a...spinning machine (Carlson interview July 22, 1998).

The Stó:lo Nation education and interpretive centre is located in Chilliwack where I interviewed Coordinator/Curator Teresa Carlson. Programs here are similar to those at Xá:ytem in the focus on fishing, woodworking and weaving. Mrs. Yvonne Joe interprets the weaving section. She demonstrates spinning and talks about how spindle whorls were used in the past (Carlson interview July 22, 1998).

The principal audience is Grade Four students, both First Nations and non-First Nations, who attend school in the area along the Fraser River that was Stó:lo prior to colonization (interview July 22, 1998). The program was developed in response to provincial curriculum that fails Stó:lo children by not differentiating among First Nations and, in effect, promotes pan-Indianism. The local school districts, Carlson says, have units on First Nations but concentrate on Inuit and Plains First Nations. She emphasizes that the program’s intention is to teach local children about activities performed in the past and today by the Stó:lo “who are actually here, where [the children] are living.” Children are targeted because their knowledge base is growing, they are receptive to new ideas, and their opinions are still developing (interview July 22, 1998).


19 Carlson is not a member of the Stó:lo Nation but has worked for the Stó:lo since 1995 (Hiwasaki 1998:13).
iii) Tu Snu'wayulhs Tu s'ulêlxw (From Our Elders' Elders), Nanaimo District Museum

This museum preserves and interprets local First Nations and settler histories (Nanaimo District Museum 1998). There are four permanent exhibits—Tu Snu'wayulhs Tu s'ulêlxw (From Our Elders' Elders), Coal Mining, Old Town, and Chinatown Revisited—as well as a temporary exhibitions gallery and retail shop. Visitors participate in school programs, guided and self-guided tours, slide shows, summer programs and special events.

The exhibit, Tu Snu'wayulhs Tu s'ulêlxw (From Our Elders' Elders) (1995), was developed in collaboration with members of the Snunéymuxw (Nanaimo) First Nation. The exhibit features archaeological material, objects made by past and present Snunéymuxw, photographs, documents and oral history narratives. These are presented with textual and video representation of Snunéymuxw and museum perspectives on current issues such as community relations, concepts of history, and claims to rights and title. Snunéymuxw goals in developing the exhibit, writes former Snunéymuxw Chief Jerry Brown, are “to inform the public about our history and culture” (Brown 1995). The museum’s goals are twofold: “to educate the younger generation both native and non-native, and the general community, in how the Nanaimo people used to live and how they live today...[as well as]...to educate the public in the process of archaeology and the importance of archaeological and cultural resources” (Nanaimo District Museum n.d. “a”). Public Program Coordinator Sophie McCann, whom I interviewed on August 5, 1998, emphasizes the museum strives to help local people, and children in particular, to understand the regional history that is part of their heritage whether they are settlers or Snunéymuxw (interview August 5, 1998).

Archaeology is the major component of the exhibit but spindle whorls nonetheless feature prominently. Twelve spindle whorls are on display. Of these, two stone and five wooden whorls collected from the Nanaimo area now are on long-term loan to Nanaimo from museums in Canada and the United States (Nanaimo District Museum n.d. “b”). An additional five wooden spindle whorls were carved more recently by local artist William Good. The older and newer spindle whorls are featured in a gallery video presentation, guided tours and a school program.

Some of the borrowed spindle whorls are displayed individually in Plexiglas wall mounts. Others are in a case along with a woven blanket or in the diorama The:wtxw (The Big House). Figures in the diorama depict spinning and weaving. The text notes,

These spindle whorls were used along with a shaft to spin wool. The spinner twisted and drew the wool while spinning the tool; the carved image facing her.

Often, the still image blurred into another when spun. The video shows the technique of using a spindle and whorl to spin wool (Nanaimo District Museum 1995). Drawers beneath the diorama hold four spindle whorls carved by William Good. These lack dates, object numbers and text, a perceived deficiency, McCann says, that the museum and Snunéymuxw representatives are in the process of rectifying (Interview August 5, 1998). Finally, the video presentation features Snunéymuxw Elder Eva Thomas (b. 1914) spinning with a spindle and whorl. The video frequently repeats the image of one of the borrowed spindle whorls to visually signify topic transitions.

Interpreters extend gallery use of spindle whorls. The exhibited whorls are examined as examples of the uniqueness of Central Coast Salish engraving and the culture itself. During programs, McCann says,

We talk about the idea of objects being invested with sacred qualities and spiritual qualities connected to the culture. These designs would have meaning for these people and be related to the task at hand. So, really, [the spindle whorls are] just a touchstone for discussion about the culture... (interview August 5, 1998).

Similarly, two additional spindle whorls in the Education Collection are used to support descriptions of spinning technology and technique. Audiences may handle the objects and are encouraged to ask questions.

The exhibit and accompanying programs link spindle whorls with past and current resource use, domestic arts, wealth, and artistic tradition. Spindle whorls do not simply illustrate a past utilitarian function, but are used to make connections between objects, belief systems, the past and the present. These visual representations are used to express contemporary concerns such as cultural dynamism, to demonstrate “that the Coast Salish people are still here” and to enable audiences to recognize that visual representations of culture produced by Snunéymuxw carvers are unique among First Nations (Nanaimo District Museum 1994b).

3) Commodities

... what’s interesting...is that nobody uses a spindle whorl anymore to spin...[yet] the design is still part of the lifestyle even though its taking different forms like an artform or a piece of clothing or something like that. The whorl is still very much a part of the culture (Carlson interview July 22, 1998).

A commodity can be defined as an object “that has use value and that can be exchanged in a discrete transaction for a counterpart...[of] equivalent value,” frequently, money (Kopytoff 1986:68). Arjun Appadurai would further distinguish an object that reaches the commodity state by metamorphosis—that is, exchange was not the original intent in production (Appadurai
An initial exchange of spindle whorls for money a hundred or so years ago propelled them into the marketplace and subsequently into other social arenas such as private collections, museums and beyond.

Today’s production and dissemination of spindle whorls and representations stands in contrast to the above process. Some are made for exchange within Central Coast Salish First Nations but many more are produced specifically for distribution through local, national and international markets. Buyers targeted are collectors (professional, connoisseur or amateur), public and private institutions (many works are commissioned), tourists (national and international, including aboriginal) and local consumers (Central Coast Salish, other First Nations, Canadians descended from settlers and recent immigrants).

Many new spindle whorls and representations can be thought of as “commodities by destination” (Appadurai 1986:17) produced in the historical context of what has been theorized the “Fourth World” (Manuel and Posluns 1974; Graburn 1976) and understood as,

[A] collective name for all aboriginal or native peoples whose lands fall within the national boundaries and techno-bureaucratic administrations of First, Second, and Third Worlds. As such, they are peoples without countries of their own, peoples who are usually in the minority and without the power to direct the course of their collective lives. Not only are they no longer isolated or autonomous peoples as they perhaps once were, but their arts are rarely produced for their own consumption or according to their own unmodified tastes (Graburn 1976:1).

While I resist using “Fourth World” as a label, the concept is useful to the present circumstances. Oral history and the ethnographic record indicate Central Coast Salish First Nations were at contact autonomous peoples who endured profound change. In addition, their artistic production corresponds with Graburn’s distinction of “the inwardly directed arts—that are made for, appreciated, and used by peoples within their own part-society...[and] those made for an external, dominant world” (Graburn 1976:4-5).

Spindle whorl imagery is a recurrent image in the work of William Good. Good says,

I’ve done [spindle whorls] in jewelry. I’ve done them in silver and done them in gold. I’ve put diamonds in them, and other stones. I’ve carved them in wood... in yellow cedar and red cedar. I’ve done huge capes with spindle whorl designs on the back (interview August 8, 1998).

William Good’s statement suggests the wide range of spindle whorl-inspired commodities produced today that are referred to throughout this paper. The genre of concern here are produced for the marketplace and at the same time “adhere to culturally embedded aesthetic and formal standards” (Graburn 1976:6). I am referring to works that have in common the design
elements of the Central Coast Salish repertoire but vary in size, media, technical skill and price.\textsuperscript{21} The works range from “fine art” objects employing Western media that are produced with “skill, virtuosity and elaboration” (Berlo and Phillips 1998:7) to others produced in a range of media and with varying degrees of expertise. Production includes large-scale installations; the portable and relatively inexpensive items purchased as souvenirs by tourists (Graburn 1976:15) or consumer goods by locals; articles of personal adornment and promotional materials.\textsuperscript{22} The range of media and commodities includes singular and limited edition works in wood, precious metals (jewelry), fabric, glass and concrete; limited and unlimited edition works on paper (serigraphs, lithographs and woodblock prints); painting; ceramic reproductions; inexpensive mass-produced works on paper such as stationery (cards and notebooks), books, postcards, lottery tickets, paper bags and stickers; works on cloth including haute couture and casual clothing, tote bags, hats, scarves and clothing labels; promotional materials (signage, billboards, posters, flyers, business cards, advertisements, labels, and publication on the Internet) and even a plastic frisbee.

Unlike First Nations who produce materials primarily for sale in distant places (Graburn 1993a:175), Central Coast Salish artists produce materials mainly for sale in their own territory. In doing so, their work competes with that of other First Nations who live and work in urban Coast Salish territory or produce work for sale there. Achieving recognition and acceptance was difficult for artists producing in the Central Coast Salish style. Stan Greene, Stó:lo describes the circumstances surrounding his initial efforts to produce work for sale.

The woodcarvers in the North [at ‘Ksan, where Greene studied in 1978] thought it was funny that I wanted to carve…. They laughed and said the Salish people didn’t know how to carve… (Greene, n.d.).

Greene produced his first silkscreen print, Lost in the Fraser, in 1982 but was rebuffed by printers and galleries because “the styles of northern native arts were more marketable” (Gibson 1994:4). “I always wanted to do Salish carving,” Greene says, “but there was no market until I started to do the spindle whorl designs” (Greene, n.d.).

Similarly, William Good says he could be successful today producing “Kwagiulth art, a more northern artform” but decided instead to pursue a career in Central Coast Salish art. He

\textsuperscript{21} I differentiate these works from the production of other contemporary First Nations artists who work in fine arts media and whose content “transcend[s] local, Aboriginal-specific issues to address global concerns and who use their art as an expressive outlet for [political] change” (McMaster and Martin 1992:19).

\textsuperscript{22} Concerns relating to the topics of arts and acculturation, authenticity, aesthetics, technical expertise and hierarchy exist regarding the genres I discuss (see Graburn 1976; Phillips and Steiner 1999). I touch on these topics rather than explore them because my intention is not to support or contest constructions, but to discuss how the images and objects are used.
says, "... it's a job, now, where I'm seeing some return—where I can make a living at what I'm doing" (interview August 8, 1998). This was not the case about sixteen years ago when Good decided to learn to carve. At that time he approached his Kwagiulth and Nuu Chah Nulth relatives to apprentice,

And some of the Kwagiulth and Nuu Chah Nulth people...accepted me with open arms. And some of them were offended. They said, "what are you doing, doing our artform? Why don't you do your own?" And they would get very upset with me. And I would explain to them, "Well, I want to do my own but I have to learn how to do art first!" And...I wasn't treated friendly by a lot of native people. But a lot of them treated me really good, treated me with respect and respected what I was doing. And they saw, I guess, the long-term plan...(Good interview 1998).

Clothing featuring spindle whorl designs is a commodity promoted to Coast Salish people, other First Nations and the public at large. Artists working in fine arts media often adapt designs for application to original or manufactured clothing designs. William Good and his family produce an extensive line of clothing and other goods marketed through his store, at conferences, fairs and fashion shows. Good's two-dimensional designs are appliquéd or screened on wool, linen and cotton clothing designed by his wife and business partner, artist Sandra Moorhouse Good. They produce dresses, capes, hats, blouses, suits, pants, sweaters and tee shirts as well as gold and silver jewelry, carvings and paintings (Ay Ay Mut, n.d.). Coast Salish people, in particular, welcomed the clothing. Good says,

...we came out with the Coast Salish clothing line...and it was highly publicized in the native community. I was really excited that there were so many Halkomelem people out there waiting for the clothes.... I found most of our people are just totally in awe and excited about it.... It was really exciting to see that artform go onto a different level and a different part of our history. It took another step, I think, in evolving into something different (interview August 8, 1998).

Consumers like the clothing for a number of reasons. It is portable, intimate, decoration of the body that lets the wearer express personality or personal politics, and it is fashion—changing quickly and signifying multiple meanings. People select clothing for personal reasons but Good identifies cultural reasons as well. He observes,

There are people...in other [First] Nations that wear our clothing.... They said that it was such a joy to be able to wear this clothing because it is not a ceremonial piece. They can't really take their ceremonial cape or their ceremonial vest or dress and wear it just anywhere. They said they were really glad when something came out they could wear just anywhere (interview August 8, 1998).

For the non-First Nations consumer, paper tags printed with images identical to the ones on the garment are attached. The tags relate stories associated with particular designs, which enhances
the attractiveness of an item to potential purchasers. Good reveals a dual nature of the stories—different connotations to cultural insiders and outsiders (interview August 8, 1998).

4) Public Markers of Culture

Elements of style used by northern Northwest Coast First Nations are documented by Franz Boas (1897; 1927; 1955), Bill Holm (1965) and others. Over the years, these classifications of style have influenced publications, exhibits, artist training programs and artistic production. A cumulative effect has been to direct public attention toward the work of specific groups. Elaboration of particular styles of the north coast in effect has “set apart the northern style as ‘true Northwest Coast’ and superior to the southern style” (Duffek 1983:52). At the same time, the inaccurate perception that north coast styles are representative of the entire coast has “deflected the public’s gaze from the uniqueness of lesser known art forms like Coast Salish” (Danford 1989:6) and Nuu Chah Nulth.

Publications and exhibits have advanced this misconception among artists who refer to books and articles for direction (Duffek 1983:52). Today, many artists produce work in the style of First Nations other than their own. Some follow “northern” styles and others mix styles to produce what William Good calls “contemporary” art. He says,

... I see a lot of art [produced by Coast Salish artists] that is what I classify as contemporary. And I'm not saying it in a bad way, it's just that maybe that art is just how [he or she] can make a living. It's an artform that people recognize around the world. It sells (interview August 8, 1998).

Many Central Coast Salish artists intentionally counter the prevailing view that north coast work is representative of all Northwest Coast First Nations. At the same time, they compete with the omnipresent work of other First Nations in the retail environment in Central Coast Salish territory. One way they do this is through the production of silkscreen prints (serigraphs). Two-dimensional designs interpreted in serigraphs were produced by First Nations artists beginning in the late 1950s and became widely popular as commercial art by the 1970s (Hall, Blackman and Rickard 1981:50). The appeal of this medium for artists lies in its versatility with respect to colour, texture and the possibilities it offers for experimentation (Ibid., 59). Consumers in any income bracket can find limited or unlimited edition serigraphs. In addition, some designs are adapted to less expensive works on paper such as stationery. On the wall of a gallery, home or office, or personalized by correspondence, the works invite close

23 Boas examined works by “Kwakiutl”, Haida, Tsimshian and Tlingit. Holm's focus, from Bella Coola north to Yakutat Bay (1965:8) covers works by Bella Coola in addition to the above.
visual examination and become ideal communicators of Central Coast Salish imagery.

Every gallery and shop I visited carried a large selection of serigraphs by artists from many Northwest Coast First Nations. Numerous prints by Central Coast Salish artists feature representations of spindle whorls. Stan Greene, for example, has many produced designs, "the favoured subject of these works is precisely, even meticulously Salish, the spindle whorl (Gibson 1994:12). In Gibson's opinion,

...[N]o medium has been more important in proclaiming to the non-native public the fact that the Salish tribe is alive and very well, than has been silkscreen serigraph printmaking (Gibson 1994:12).

Spindle whorl imagery is central to much of Susan Point's work. Her ingenuity and command of materials and form make her work much in demand. Point enjoys high visibility in the public realm—through serigraphs, carvings, jewelry and other works. Her work is seen in monumental installations, museums, galleries, gift shops and academic and popular presses. Her work, in part, is a conscious effort to counter misconceptions about Central Coast Salish visual expression. She is credited with introducing the imagery,

into the public sphere, and therefore into the public imagination, which, to date, has been dominated by images of totem poles and northern-style killer whales and thunderbirds (Duffek in Laurence 1996).

The narrative content of Point's serigraphs may also speak to the singularity of the style. The print, Overexposure (Point 1998), for example, depicts the competition among Northwest Coast visual representations and at the same time draws attention to distinguishing characteristics of the Central Coast Salish style. This serigraph, "...portrays a northern [ovoid] formline, a key characteristic of northern art, ready to devour a traditional Salish design element, [the] wedge shape" (Point 1998).

Such work is directed at non-First Nations audiences but also at First Nations audiences, including artists. Visual dialogue among artists is similarly evident in the title of the exhibition Nation to Nation: Artists from the Coast Salish, Nuu Chah Nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw Nations (Art Gallery of Greater Victoria 1994). As well, it was,

the steadfast dream of Stan Greene to win recognition for Salish arts from the public and in particular from the established artists from the Northern Northwest Coast...whose art he [learned at 'Ksan and] so admired (Gibson 1994:4).

Clothing and fashion shows also are commodities well suited to the dissemination of visually distinctive materials. Dress is a recognized medium of artistic expression (Berlo and Phillips 1998:27) while fashion shows can be "premier marketing events" (Parezo 1999:244) for
culture and commodity. A show of William and Sandra Good's *Ay Ay Mut* fashions at the 1998 Aboriginal Art and Culture Celebration illustrates the marketing of *Snunémxw* imagery and culture. At this event, singers dressed in the Goods’ designs provided background music while the Goods’ adult daughter, Aunalee Boyd, commented on the garments as the models walked the stage. Boyd drew parallels between the spindle whorl-like designs on the clothing and representations visible elsewhere in *Snunémxw* territory. She noted, for example, that the spindle whorl imagery on a newly designed shirt is similar to that found on two welcome figures carved by her father that greet people arriving on Vancouver Island via the British Columbia Ferry Corporation’s Duke Point terminal near Nanaimo. The same design adorns a cotton dress. After the show, consumers are welcomed to view the clothes more closely at an area set up to accommodate trying on garments and purchasing them.

Cultural programs also have a role to play in assertions of the distinctiveness of Coast Salish visual representation. *Stó:lo* educators stress the uniqueness of Coast Salish imagery to oppose the popular tendency to essentialize Northwest Coast First Nations cultures as well as artistic production. Carlson remarks,

> We’ve really tried to show where the differences are, and how the [Stó:lo] designs are different...when the kids come through here we’re very specific about saying...every Nation has beliefs and practices and designs that are specific to [that] Nation (interview July 22, 1998).

The Internet is used to promote commercial and non-commercial ventures. Images of work for sale or commission are posted on sites by virtual galleries or actual galleries that sell an artist’s work. There are too many sites to enumerate here, but one example is the virtual gallery Art Vision International [www.aabc.com/point/point] that promotes Susan Point. To my knowledge, no Coast Salish artist as yet has his or her own Internet site. Other, non-commodity spindle whorl images are similarly disseminated on the Internet by individual First Nations, Treaty Groups, and cultural educators. The imagery is incorporated into First Nations’ logo designs distributed to officials and the public on stationery, newsletters, billboards, flyers and advertisements. Recent publications by several First Nations—Cowichan, Lyackson and Halalt (*Hul'qumi'num* Treaty Group 1999), Stó:lo Nation (Carlson interview July 22, 1998), and *Musqueam*—all exhibit logos influenced by spindle whorl designs.

5) **Inspiration for Emerging Artists**

Established artists want to ensure the distinctive Central Coast Salish style survives indefinitely. They urge younger artists to “have pride in the *Halkomelem* art” (Good interview
August 8, 1998) yet at the same time they recognize the influence of other Northwest Coast styles promoted in books, photographs, exhibits and the marketplace. Cowichan carver Simon Charlie has taught innumerable younger people to carve during his sixty-year career. He says,

Young people, you know, they're looking for designs. If they don't find anything they use the northern style carving and designs (Charlie interview September 18, 1998).

This circumstance of Coast Salish artists drawing from the work of other First Nations rather than from their own artistic heritage motivates established artists to provide examples and inspiration. Susan Point addresses this concern when she says,

Today, much of the native art associated with the Pacific Northwest Coast is from...the north coast. Because of this, I have spent a lot of time trying to revive Salish art to let my people and the public know that there was, and still is, another art form indigenous to the central Pacific Northwest (Point 1998).

Point’s statement draws attention to a consistent theme in the work of established artists—to recoup for future generations what was lost. The scarcity of objects available for study in their own communities led to reliance on museum collections and photographs. Understandably, artists want Central Coast Salish art to have a vital place in contemporary life yet the legacy of the past is still being worked through. The shortage of materials is attributed to colonial encounters but also to what those interviewed refer to as the “laws” of their culture; laws designed to manage the production of visual representations, among other things. Simon Charlie found himself in the interface of what was acceptable behaviour in the past and how it had to be re-invented due to losses. He encountered resistance from some Cowichan people when he decided to carve, but others were helpful. He says,

Our way of life, you know, we weren't supposed to ask any questions. We had to wait until you were told. But I...[disregarded] that when I found out we were losing so much. I asked questions. And a lot of [the older people] told me different things [to carve] (interview September 18, 1998).

Charlie recreated older pieces from the oral representations and from his own childhood memories. Still, the work put him at odds with members of his extended family and with the wider community. This is evident in a 1959 newspaper item:

While many of his people are burning irreplaceable ceremonial costumes and effigy masks (symbolically returning them to their original owners), Simon Charlie, 39, a Cowichan Indian living near Duncan, is trying to reproduce them so they will not be lost to future generations (Thompson 1959).
Charlie's tenacity is appreciated today. William Good remarks that Simon Charlie, "is our Mungo Martin." Without him so much would have been lost" (Good interview August 8, 1988). I asked Charlie how many carvers he has trained over the years. He said, "Oh, I just lost track of it. So many. Some of them, they tell that they learned from me, and some of them don't" (interview September 18, 1998).

William Good similarly cites historic reasons for the decline in Snunémxw artistic production. He told me a loss of history and associated artistic production is rooted in a longhouse meeting long ago concerning declines in population, land and resource use. The elders passed a law at that meeting to keep “our art, culture and religion” secret so they could not be taken away (interview August 8, 1998). But, Good says,

I find that law [is] long since obsolete...and I think it’s done more damage than good. Because we weren’t allowed to carve and sell these [holding up photocopy of spindle whorls] we’ve lost. A lot of our stories and history have gone by the wayside because nobody’s reproducing them [as art] (Good interview 1998).

William Good, Simon Charlie, Susan Point and Stan Greene are dedicated to creating examples, although they go about this differently. Good, Point and Greene produce in a variety of media but Simon Charlie carves replicas and new objects in what he refers to as “the old way” He says, “This is what I call ‘feathering’…

The old people used to say if a carving wasn’t done that way the carving was unfinished. So, some of my carving I go over the whole thing; after I finish carving I chop with the D-adze (interview September 18, 1998).

Charlie concentrates on masks, poles, talking sticks and teaching, saying he no longer needs to carve spindle whorls. I asked why he used to carve them. “...[A] lot of people like them,” he answered, indicating several friends, but now “my niece that you met here,...her auntie...makes those [spindle whorls]. I leave it up to her. And the other one [she carves] is a woman’s healing rattle, I leave it up to her” to carve women’s things (interview September 18, 1998). The day I visited Charlie’s studio three younger artists were at work there.

Optimism for the continuation of Central Coast Salish artistic production remains strong. Susan Point expresses a common sentiment when she says she expects to see, “...a whole new generation of Coast Salish artists...sure about their tradition and full of imagination and hope” (Point quoted in Cino 1996) for the future.

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24 Kwakwaka'wakw Mungo Martin (1884-1962) restored old carved works and created new ones. He is widely
6) Public Markers of Territory

The final objective addressed here is the use of spindle whorl representations to assert a distinctive visual presence in Central Coast Salish territory. I identify two inducements to mark territory, i) to contest urban encroachment, and ii) to support claims to Aboriginal rights and title.

i) Contest urban encroachment

For us it's very difficult [to remain distinctive] because we were rapidly surrounded by city... (Good interview August 8, 1998).

Expanding cities continue to take over what was once Central Coast Salish territory—Greater Vancouver, the Fraser Valley and southeastern Vancouver Island. Urban growth over the last two hundred years is a global phenomenon. Development since the second World War, in particular, is dissolving distinctive boundaries denoting regions, cities, suburbs and rural areas (Hough 1990:85-87). The corporeal presence of office towers, highways, shopping malls, housing developments, vehicles and ubiquitous commercialism obscure the past. The result is contemporary landscapes that “tell us little of past events or how people lived” (Ibid., 3).25

In Central Coast Salish territory, the visual homogeneity of urban areas engendered by settlement is challenged by visual representations of culture intended to remind the dominant society the land has a past—a history of Coast Salish occupation. Publicly visible works are intended to assert, or more correctly re-assert, a distinctive Central Coast Salish presence on land that was once theirs.26 Such assertions have the added dimension of competing with the visual representations of other Northwest Coast First Nations located in urbanized Central Coast Salish territory. Works by non-Coast Salish First Nations funded by governments and corporate culture brokers are installed in the landscape and in public buildings. Commissions are let to construct national and regional identities (Hawker 1998:77-97), as commemoration (University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology (1997a:[1] or other reasons. For example, Kwakwaka'wakw poles in Stanley Park (Hawker 1998:83-86), a Haida village at the University of British Columbia (Hawthorn 1971:15) and the Vancouver Airport Authority’s monumental bronze casting The Spirit of Haida Gwaii: The Jade Canoe (1994), all are on Musqueam land.

credited with maintaining continuity in Northwest Coast First Nations artistic production.

25 See Thorn and Cameron (1997:163-180) for a detailed account of urbanization along the Lower Fraser River.

26 It would be incorrect to assume that all people of First Nations ancestry live on reserve land or have close social or political association to it. First Nations communities, Marcia Crosby points out, are diverse across social, political and geographical boundaries. Some people live on-reserve, in cities or towns, or commute. Other people separate completely from the reserve while still others are born and raised away, with or without cultural or family ties (Crosby 1997:12-13) or inclusion in negotiations for rights and title (Ibid., 26). “One thing is certain, all Indians do not have a ‘relationship’ with the land, nor have access to it” (Ibid., 27) either by choice or due to circumstances beyond their control.
At the airport site, a massive spindle whorl and accompanying objects project Central Coast Salish imagery into the contested field:

The Arrivals Hall of the International Terminal showcases the world’s largest Coast Salish Spindle Whorl.... It is sixteen feet in diameter, twelve inches thick in the center and is carved of Red Cedar. This Spindle Whorl hangs from a wall of granite “shingles” over which water, representing the rivers of the Coast Salish people, flows (Vancouver International Airport Authority 1998).

The work has added significance because of its connection to the specific property at the mouth of the Fraser River on which the airport is located. Shannon Leddy, in her study Tourists, Art and Airports: The Vancouver International Airport as a Site of Cultural Negotiation, found that “...the Musqueam works in the airport might be read as speaking of a quiet dignity that comes from knowing and claiming one’s history...” (Leddy 1997:46). Similar declaration is evident at the University of British Columbia. A massive Musqueam figure featuring spindle whorl imagery was commissioned from Susan Point by the Royal Bank Financial Group. The figure is installed adjacent to a Nuu Chah Nulth figure near the Museum of Anthropology’s entrance. Text on the base proclaims a reliance on the land on which the museum, its collections, and the representations of other First Nations reside. The label reads,

This Musqueam figure acknowledges the estimated 10,000 years the ancestors of the Musqueam people have lived on these lands, and through the present generation represents the continuum into the future (Imich Siiyem—Welcome Good People 1997).

Susan Point completed another commission, in 1981, for the City of North Vancouver. That work incorporates spindle whorl imagery into that city’s Coat of Arms (Watt 1998).

Examples of corporate promotion of non-Coast Salish First Nations on Central Coast Salish land are similarly visible in urban areas on Vancouver Island. Monumental carvings representing five First Nations are at the Royal British Columbia Museum’s Thunderbird Park (British Columbia 1948) on Songhees land. A few miles north, the City of Duncan’s tourism project to re-invent itself as the “City of Totems” resulted in the installation of eighty poles and figures (Connolly 1990:[6]). Although twelve of the twenty artists involved in the project are Cowichan, the work promoted in city banners, brochures and promotional materials is by a Kwagiulth artist. In contrast, spindle whorl imagery proclaiming Central Coast Salish presence is evident in other important locations. A twenty-eight inch diameter carved spindle whorl was commissioned from Tsartlip artist Charles Elliott for permanent display in the University of Victoria’s Faculty of Law (Begbie) Building (Ferguson 1997). Accompanying text states,

The Sul-Sultun [spindle whorl] and Swaqua’l [blanket] honour the relationship of the Coast Salish people with the land (Thuleescha) on which the Law School
sits, acknowledge the existence of aboriginal legal systems and represent our belief that aboriginal and Canadian legal systems can live together in harmony and balance (Sul-Sultan (spindle whorl) and Swaqwa’l (blanket) 1996).

Still other work may be mass-produced and destined for consumption in the home. The city of Duncan’s semi-weekly newspaper, The Cowichan News Leader and The Pictorial, distributed free to homes and businesses, features a spindle whorl representation in the masthead (fig. 6). The design, depicting the narrative “Thunderbird and Killer Whale,” is an abstraction of a carving (nearly identical to fig. 5) produced by Simon Charlie (date unknown, likely 1960s) as an outdoor sign for the newspaper’s office (Charlie interview September 18, 1998). Circulation of the spindle whorl imagery within the Duncan area is extensive. The newspaper’s semi-weekly run is 19,855 (Cowichan News Leader 2000) while inside each issue the representation is used in advertisements. Similarly, the image is screened onto banners and tee shirts (Cowichan News Leader 1999) or printed on items such as envelopes for theatre tickets. When I asked Mr. Charlie his opinion of the abstracted version and its many years of circulation, he said he is pleased with it. He smiled and laughed declaring, “It’s Cowichan! I like that. It’s simplified, but it’s still there” (interview September 18, 1998).

Finally, mass-produced spindle whorl imagery reaches individuals in an additional way. The BC Lottery Corporation released in June 1998, “a special SCRATCH AND WIN ticket based on Aboriginal art” featuring work by three artists (BC Lottery Corporation 1998). One of Susan Point’s submissions, Moonlit Journey, represents a spindle whorl despite its framing in a square space. The image appears on posters and on tickets sold throughout British Columbia.

ii) Support claims to Aboriginal Rights and Title

The presentation of spindle whorls as visual markers is intended to remind other First Nations and non-First Nations that the land is Central Coast Salish territory. While many of the preceding examples can also be interpreted in this light, several additional cases clearly make the point. The assertion of boundaries on Vancouver Island is evident in William Good’s welcome poles at the Duke Point ferry terminal. The poles and the spindle whorl imagery on them is visible to everyone arriving on Vancouver Island through that terminal. An overhead sign on the poles proclaims, “Welcome to Nanaimo,” but the poles mark Duke Point as a place significant for its burial and resource sites. The formal Snunéumuxw position regarding this location states, “We, the Snunéumuxw will never relinquish our rights to this site” (Nanaimo First Nation 1997).

Cultural programs similarly support claims to land in general and specific sites in particular. The Snunéumuxw exhibit at the Nanaimo District Museum, writes former Chief Jerry Brown, is intended to establish, “... a means of documenting our presence in the region while we
pursue our land claims” (Brown 1995). The museum concurs by noting, “Throughout this exhibit we want to demonstrate—that the Coast Salish people are still here...” (Nanaimo District Museum 1994b). The Stó:lo Longhouse program overtly opposes information circulating in the media that may negatively influence public perception of treaty negotiations. Teresa Carlson articulates Stó:lo strategy when she says, “We hope [problems] won’t come up when the Stólo treaties [are] signed because people will...know what the background is” (Carlson interview July 22, 1998).

Individual artists are unequivocal in their intentions to use Central Coast Salish imagery to mark cultural associations to geographic locations. Charles Elliott, Tsartlip, resolutely advises other artists, “Do your own art form, if it’s Salish, do Salish.... Doing your own art helps to rebuild the Nation” (Elliott quoted in University of Victoria 1998). Finally, Simon Charlie’s work says to all non-Central Coast Salish, “Welcome, but the land is mine” (Charlie quoted in Belton 1986).

Part IV A CULTURAL BIOGRAPHY

Spindle whorls and representations of them can be followed as they move through specific social locations. A narrative created by interpreting historical documents, for example, might begin with the purchase of a spindle whorl by a non-First Nations collector from an anonymous Coast Salish vendor. The transaction transforms the spindle whorl into a commodity—its use value replaced by monetary value (Kopytoff 1986:68). Subsequent processes could shift its value again by way of museum accession, storage, interpretation in material culture studies and art history analyses or representation in photographs and exhibits. The material culture remains constant within, “shifting, multiple, transitory, mutable, invented, even reinvented” (Cole 1995:xiv) social associations that give form to the narrative.

Spindle whorl biographies under the dominion of contemporary Central Coast Salish people, as I imagine them, course through the legacy of colonialism and its interface with Central Coast Salish culture in unique local circumstances. Spindle whorls in collections and photographs are restored to life as lieux de mémoires ascribed personal and cultural associations. They are animated through study, replication and innovative reproduction. As vital examples of earlier conventions of materials and form, they are reproduced in historically contingent media (wood, plastic, paper, glass, precious metals, cloth, clay, paint) and disseminated through historically situated means (educational programs, art market, souvenir market). Representations
are viewed, worn on the body, accessed in print and electronic media, encountered physically in the landscape and more.

An object singularized in multiple phases can be said to have an “eventful biography” (Kopytoff 1986:90). Such is the case with spindle whorls. A replica can be animated while a student attempts to spin wool. A representation can be enlivened as a frisbee tossed in the air. An identical image can have life on a business card handed to a potential client, on a note card personalized with a message and mailed to a friend or on a vest worn in any number of public and private situations. It can cease circulation as a used paper bag thrown in the trash, a worn-out tee-shirt or a winning lottery ticket exchanged for money. A representation can have added social significance when recognized as a family image or the work of an individual artist. It can signify cultural continuity when adorning goods (clothes, prints, and stationery) purchased by cultural insiders and other statements when used or worn by cultural outsiders. An image can embody a culture (a First Nation), communicate history (a story) and mark affiliation to specific geographic locations.

Part V  SPINDLE WHORL CIRCULATION AS ASSERTION

My research concerned social attributes ascribed spindle whorls as well as circumstances of redesign and processes underlying dissemination. It became evident these “almost lost but not forgotten” objects contribute to contemporary culture in important ways. These ways are inscribed in three themes I will explore here. 1) Tradition, cultural continuity and the innovative use of form, 2) rethinking commodities and 3) connection between spindle whorls and land.

1) Tradition, cultural continuity and the innovative use of form

When cultural education programmers cast classic spindle whorls as lieux de mémoires, the objects become tangible representations of history, or “tradition time” (Williams 2000) that evoke a sense of continuity between past and present generations. All of the new representations can also be used as lieux de mémoires with cultural biographies continuing through processes of recognition, reference and interpretation. Classic examples, functional replicas and representations in exhibits, school programs and tours transform spindle whorls from domestic objects into public examples of an activity, spinning, as it is understood to have been performed by past generations. The objects are used to support verbal or textual descriptions of spinning but rarely to demonstrate actual spinning. They also serve as models for art projects and are used to initiate discussion about history, wealth and artistic production. Their use affirms associations among people, objects and culture.
The process of educating audiences about antecedent spinning tools, techniques and associations demonstrates use of selected elements from the past to support contemporary ideology (Ostrowitz 1999:139). Spindle whorls in cultural programs support concepts of tradition and cultural continuity in ways that are specific and local. Audiences do not learn how to spin, and there is no expectation that they will. Educators do not suggest any use of spindle whorls outside the immediate circumstance of the program. Instead, the spindle whorls are used to teach about local history and in doing so encourage understanding of the present. They work in concert with oral history, archaeological evidence and the ethnographic record to achieve educational goals. Graburn identifies a genre of Fourth World artistic production for cultural insiders designed to teach and reinforce group values (Graburn 1976:5). The objectives of spindle whorl use in education programs are clear in this regard.

Artists and others study “classic” or “traditional” spindle whorls to learn about form, materials and techniques used in “tradition time.” Classic examples are referred to and thought about as if they represent the way particular objects consistently were produced over time. The designation of collected objects as “classic” examples, however, poses some difficulty. I am concerned with different ways of thinking about the term. A dictionary definition separates classic into two principal senses. One of these, “remarkably typical” (Allen 1990:208) is the interpretation generally applied to historic objects such as spindle whorls. The content of many ethnographic collections reflects what collectors perceived as typical examples or types of material to salvage (Domínguez 1986:550). Because collecting activity took place at particular points in time, available examples actually are types of material produced or available at the point of collection. Since most of the principal collections of Northwest Coast material culture were amassed between 1860 and 1930, it is the work available to collectors during this time that is considered typical (King 1986:69). Also considered “traditional,” such objects are used as benchmarks “for purposes of definition and comparison” (King 1986:69) in judging later work. These “standards” refer to the second sense of the word “classic,” that is, “acknowledged excellence” (Allen 1990:108) in execution.

Given these nuances of understanding, scholars and artists are engaged in attempting to untangle the conceptual difficulties. I will briefly outline the discourse here. The term “traditional” is popularly thought synonymous with “fixed.” That is, materials intended for a First Nation’s own use (King 1986:85) that remain relatively unchanged over time and are widely believed to represent continuity in form and content from the past through to the present (Domínguez 1986:549). “Traditional” objects that incorporate new media are considered
“acculturated” or “assimilated” (Graburn 1976:7) while “contemporary art” is not tied to tradition but is rendered in Western fine art media, genres and styles (Phillips 1999:103-4). Finally, “innovative hybrid artforms” (Phillips and Steiner 1999:9) represent the processes of change in content, materials and techniques (Wolff 1981:62-3) and in the social relationships surrounding production (Graburn 1976:10).

Jonathan King offers a different perspective, one that I follow here. If native art is seen in the context of its political and cultural situation, then the need to distinguish “traditional” from “nontraditional” art disappears and is replaced by a more subtle understanding of the way in which art traditions emerge, flourish, and decay within the context of Indian society, whether or not they are influenced by white cultures during the process (King 1986:87).

Curator Steven Brown’s investigation of stylistic development supports King’s view. Brown demonstrates that Central Coast Salish, as well as other Northwest Coast artistry, is not static but, “...has continually evolved generation by generation, though it appears that more change took place in the century following...contact than in the several centuries preceding it” (Brown 1997:72). Nevertheless, the conviction persists that tradition legitimates First Nations’ artistic production (Phillips 1999:104).

What is important here is how the people who produce and use the spindle whorls think about the processes they are engaged in. Point’s statement regarding her transition from replicating older spindle whorls to creating innovative representations of them highlights differences between academic discourse and artists’ own understanding of their work. To Point, a “traditional” work is one that incorporates the distinctive design elements. Any new work can be traditional if it features these elements. As my interview with eighty-year-old carver Simon Charlie indicates, the design elements and recognition of them define a piece—not an object’s age, method of manufacture or medium. Greene, Good and others also use the word “traditional” in this way. This line of thinking makes a spindle whorl imagery on a frisbee (Northwest Ultimate Association 1998), a tote bag (Johnny 1998) or an Internet site (Microsoft Corporation 1997) equally as traditional as its prototype.

Artists work to ensure the use of distinctive elements of style not only survives, but thrives. Stated intentions are to recoup losses in artistic production and at the same time furnish examples for emerging artists. A further goal is to inspire innovative artistry by showing younger generations that expanding current limits of stylistic interpretation is an acceptable and even desirable activity. William Good observed that his clothing line takes the art to “new levels” and he acknowledged Charles Elliott, Susan Point and Stan Green for similarly advancing
interpretation of the Central Coast Salish style. Such novel representation may accomplish several things. It can constitute visual dialogue among artists or make it possible to trace influences and identify individual styles as is the case with some north coast carvings (Smith 1998). Ultimately, it effects the continuation of Central Coast Salish artistic production.

2) Rethinking Commodities

The majority of the spindle whorls and representations I found were located in commercial venues. The galleries, souvenir shops and other locations signify financial transactions between artists and others. A closer examination of the commodity status of recent works is salient here because of a pervasive view that the production of commodities is purely an economic pursuit—a belief I encountered among students in the classroom on numerous occasions. A general perception appears to be that financial return, particularly in the case of low-end items, makes the work itself somehow less than serious. I take issue with this perception. Readings about a wide range of contemporary First Nations art objects and their perceived associations with land claims and identity politics (Townsend-Gault 1994; 1997) led me to think about the broader implications of spindle whorl representations and the social forces that propel them into the public realm. I believe the objects may be understood better in the context of the intentions of the artist and the implications of the venues in which they are distributed. Every artist I researched articulated the cultural politics inherent in their work. They also stressed the importance of making the images available to the widest possible audience.

Clothing represents an important interval in the cultural biography of spindle whorl imagery—display on the human body. Personal, portable and affordable, clothing increases potential public circulation of the imagery while at the same time satisfying the creative drive of the artist and generating income. The study of First Nations’ clothing conventionally focuses on ethnographic interpretation. Recently, however, the world of fashion is commanding scholarly attention. An example is Haida fashion designer Dorothy Grant’s collaboration with a professor of anthropology to produce a CD-ROM for use in teaching and marketing (Halpin 1998). Another study investigates mid-twentieth century fashion shows that modeled “Indian women’s clothing from many Tribes and periods” (Parezo 1999:243). Parezo suggests that The Indian Fashion Show was a “...process [that] amounted to a repositioning of indigenous dress as haute couture” (Parezo 1999:244). Designers today, including William Good, draw from their cultural heritage to design haute couture while others (Point, Greene, Wilson and Johnny) lend their
designs to casual attire. Good reveled in taking the step from two-dimensional work to clothing. His remark that he felt good to be taking the artform “to another level” reflects more than simply a desire for increased income. Good is fully aware of the importance of the social circulation of his imagery, in Snunémxw territory and beyond, and clothing is only one means he pursues.

The impact of galleries and other mediators (patrons, museums and retailers, for example) (Wolff 1981:45) on the production of cultural commodities is widely acknowledged. Institutional patrons support specific individuals or groups (Berlo and Phillips 1998:213; Graburn 1993a:184), but such relationships raise questions about the potential influence of the institution on the work itself. Many of Susan Point’s creations, for example, are associated with corporate enterprises including the Vancouver Airport Authority and the University of British Columbia. An underlying relationship not visible in the work itself and unsaid in artist statements or exhibit text exists here. As Judith Ostrowitz observes, artists in patronage relationships, “have seized important opportunities to interact with influential outsiders. They may advance their own needs and in some cases the goals of their communities” (Ostrowitz 1999:18). Fully aware of the implications of these working relationships, Central Coast Salish artists producing work in a Fourth World context make use of these lucrative avenues of production and dissemination.

Competition in the marketplace and consumer preferences for certain items (Phillips 1997:17) are additional factors that impact production. Central Coast Salish produced commodities compete with imported souvenirs (Blundell 1992:3) and with items featuring appropriated Coast Salish imagery28 (Wiwichar 1998). In addition, the perception exists that non-First Nations consumers prefer goods that appear to be associated with popular conceptions of tradition. Artists are well aware of this. Simon Charlie told me he made spindle whorls for certain people who liked to buy them. William Good expanded his clothing line to satisfy demand. My research shows that some artists who produce work that is considered traditional do this for reasons related to cultural affirmation and public relations, in addition to financial return.

The individuals who make and use spindle whorl representations view their work as the thin edge of the wedge in the process of promoting a public presence. They expect audience understanding will grow as increasing numbers of artists find inspiration in the Central Coast

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27 Examples are the Canadian Museum of Civilization’s *Threads of the Land: Clothing Traditions from three Indigenous Cultures* (1995), and the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology’s *Robes of Power: Totem Poles on Cloth* (Jensen and Sargent 1986).

28 Some First Nations are addressing issues of appropriation. The Snunémxw, for example, have raised copyright protection of visual representations of culture in treaty negotiations (Wiwichar 1998).
Salish visual repertoire and as art market and public learn to appreciate this imagery and form. A measure of the success of Coast Salish imagery achieving respect is evident in the recent commemoration of the 125th anniversary of the RCMP. Celebrated Haida artist Robert Davidson was commissioned by the RCMP to carve two poles for installation in Central Coast Salish territory at White Rock—one of the poles was designed by Susan Point (Parry 1998).

While the marketplace is the principal venue for the public visibility and consumption of spindle whorl imagery, most representations cease to be commodities upon purchase (Kopytoff 1986:69). A sculpture in a retail gallery, for example, is a commodity that can be exchanged for money but once purchased and displayed in a buyer’s home becomes a singular representation of something else, such as the buyer’s taste in art, political views, or something altogether different. It is the consumer who determines an object’s future at the point of sale and later. Artists have little if any control over this process although some acknowledge that the images continue to circulate.

3) Connection between spindle whorls and land

The use of spindle whorls is tied to the Delgamuukw decision that makes it incumbent upon First Nations to demonstrate past and present ties to land claimed. Proof of occupation and use of land rests on, 1) demonstrating “the occupation and use of the land as part of the aboriginal society’s traditional way of life” including “practices, customs and traditions,” 2) “identifying general boundaries” and 3) showing continuity in occupation and use (Delgamuukw v. British Columbia 13-14). Tangible benefits are to be gained through establishing connection to the land—the settlement of negotiations of aboriginal rights and title. “A land and resource base is essential,” Marcia Crosby maintains, “for developing stable political, economic and social conditions” (emphasis original) (Crosby 1997:25).

Central Coast Salish First Nations currently are engaged in a number of projects to formally document links between themselves, the land and the past to meet the criteria set out in Delgamuukw. The Snunéymuxw First Nation has identified cultural and burial sites, camps, and resource use areas (Nanaimo First Nation 1997). The Stó:lō Nation has recorded oral narratives and mapped place names and cultural sites (Carlson, ed., 1997:197) while a project by Hul'qumi'num First Nations identifies resource use sites (McLay 1999). Material culture produced by past generations also constitutes evidence of occupation. Archaeological materials, former museum director Michael Ames observes,

... have powerful resonance for the living descendants and thus in a very real sense are contemporary as well as prehistoric...because a First Nation’s historical record is part of its assertion of continuing sovereignty over its territory, and thus over its
My research suggests that spindle whorls and representations also are concrete materials used to mark territory in publicly visible support of the evidence developed to meet the requirements set out by Delgamuukw. The visibility of spindle whorls is intended to promote public recognition and acceptance of claims to specific sites and territory in general.

The stated goals of artists and cultural programmers point to competition with other First Nations and the dominant society for a visible presence in the marketplace and elsewhere. The use of images familiar to cultural insiders to contest conditions imposed by the dominant society is a recognized political strategy (Crosby 1997:25) as is the use of these images as boundary markers in a Fourth World political context (Graburn 1976:5). Visual representations used to communicate territorial boundaries have precedence in Central Coast Salish territory. A recent study examines visual representations used in British Columbia for political ends between 1922 and 1961 (Hawker 1998). Some of the installations discussed concerned land and resource use in the Greater Vancouver area. These were intended to speak, “directly to Vancouver’s non-native population” (Ibid., 23).

The production and dissemination of spindle whorl representations as markers of territory within a politically-charged environment can be seen as “creative processes developed by influential artists and other authorities” (Ostrowitz 1999:139) who select from the past those objects and ideas that advance contemporary concerns. As visual assertions of place, spindle whorls are ascribed meaning unrelated to their original use in spinning wool. In the social arena of land claims, the contemporary manifestation of the colonial encounter, “…objects are not what they were made to be but what they have become” (Thomas 1991:4). Spindle whorl representations selected from the work of ancestors are submitted to the public as visual statements of territorial ownership that reach into the past and project forward to the future. While this view of land ownership is clearly at odds with the status quo, it falls within the process of realignment of ownership currently underway in treaty negotiations. The role spindle whorl imagery plays in such realignment can be seen in the exponential growth of its visibility. Public installations draw attention to disjunctions between aboriginal rights and title and the dominant society. Susan Point’s 1981 commission by the City of North Vancouver to create a design for that city’s Coat of Arms (Watt 1998) inserts Coast Salish spindle whorl imagery into municipal politics. At the same time, it establishes a Musqueam presence.29

29 It should be noted that some claims to land and resource areas are contested among First Nations themselves.
Educational programs similarly refer to geographic locations. While cultural educators do not describe their actions in terms of self representation, it is evident that Central Coast Salish First Nations join other First Nations, groups and individuals (Crosby 1997:25) in controlling public presentation of culture and history. The programs are designed to teach about the past of the individual sites where programs are conducted and where members of their audience live. The programs themselves are geo-political assertions directed at young audiences. Fostering cross-cultural understanding and knowledge in children is key to the long-term program objectives of recognition and acceptance.

This study makes visible the perspectives of individuals. All of the artists researched acknowledge their work is produced in the social and historical circumstances of their lives, their First Nation, Northwest Coast First Nations and the dominant society. Disclosures concerning motivation and objectives reveal artists as individuals committed to their personal visions of the future. Their visions may be sanctioned by their First Nation (such as William Good's spindle whorls in the *Snunéymuxw* exhibit) or may not (Simon Charlie taking the initiative to carve). Their statements and work express similar underlying themes despite their backgrounds in separate First Nations and geographic locations.

**Part VI CONCLUSION**

Rather than looking at spindle whorls from conventional approaches to material culture, I concentrated on social entanglements that inform contemporary production. Distinctions customarily applied to ethnographic objects—traditionalism, artist proficiency and others—diminish in importance as the focus tightens on the social trajectories of the works. Disclosures from primary and secondary sources draw together geographically separated artists and educational programs to reveal an underlying constancy of purpose. The result is a locally- and historically-contingent ethnographic account of the public political intent of contemporary spindle whorls and representations.

I “let the case define the category” (Becker 1998:124) and organized the research results in keeping with the idea that locating objects in social processes can illustrate how “things” are “culturally redefined and put to use” (Kopytoff 1986:67). These locations, when viewed with the benefit of Nicholas Thomas (1991; 1994) and Nelson Graburn (1976) reveal the historical specificity of this Central Coast Salish example while at the same time suggest the case study may not be an isolated phenomenon. I found that contemporary use of spindle whorls extends Janet Wolff's (1981) discussion of art as production that is socially situated to include cross-
cultural socio-political group objectives realized through the individual production of works that derive from a common cultural heritage. While this may be obvious to some, "Good social science," writes Howard Becker "produces a deeper understanding of things that many people are already pretty much aware of" (Becker 1982:x). I have tried to do that.

This study relies on the voices and views of individual artists and cultural programmers engaged in negotiations of accountability and redress that consume the attention of British Columbia First Nations today. Common to the individuals I interviewed and researched are strong links between cultural heritage (the past), material culture (the object) and land (the future). Spindle whorl imagery supports political work by its insertion into the public realm in the effort to make the images familiar and accepted. All of these images—regardless of distinctions of old, new, traditional, authentic, contemporary, or innovative—participate in this process.

Spindle whorls and representations are produced with clear goals in mind. Economic survival is one, but public interpretation of this goal obscures others to the extent that the serious study of commercial arts is infrequently pursued. However, artists promote their work fully aware they are part of a long-term process to win recognition among First Nations and outside as well. Dissemination of a distinctive visual presence supports the negotiation of aboriginal rights and title, in particular. As visible markers of Central Coast Salish territory, spindle whorl images support evidence derived from studies of language, traditional use, mapping, oral history, and archaeology to prove prior occupation of land and/or to show connection between present and past occupation as required by the Delgamuukw decision. The distinctive Central Coast Salish features of spindle whorl imagery support the hard evidence in the public arena by physically marking territory (monumental installations), the market (a wide range of goods) and the individual (clothing and jewelry).

I am left with several questions that require further investigation. The first centers on the selection of spindle whorls for public dissemination rather than other objects. A second inquiry concerns which spindle whorl image is reproduced by whom. With the exception of William Good, artists appear not to discriminate between spindle whorls that are attributed to their First Nation and to others. Still, if it is important to produce work from a Central Coast Salish heritage, would it not also be important to produce from one’s own First Nation? Finally, of interest are the ways audiences comprehend spindle whorl representations. Assessing artist and program effectiveness in reaching audiences is beyond the scope of this paper. Still, there are
important questions to pursue about public education outcomes, public understanding of images and reception across cultural and other boundaries.

As I have attempted to situate this study in social and historical contingencies, I will do the same for my role in it. I have lived in Central Coast Salish territory for twenty-six years. I approach this thesis aware of the legacy of colonialism and the sustained efforts of First Nations to reclaim autonomy. My discomfort with conducting a study of an “other” culture is eased by the fact the representations are public and I am, therefore, the intended audience. As Charlotte Townsend-Gault (1999) points out, occurrences in the public sphere compel attention from those of us observing cultural processes unfold in front of us. I am reminded of the principal title of the Stó:lo Nation publication, You Are Asked to Witness: The Stó:lo in Canada’s Pacific Coast History (Carlson, ed. 1997). Beyond its main function, the title is a request to, “please witness, respectfully watch, and carefully remember the events you are going to see and hear...” (Ibid., 184). I would like to think I am requested to witness the public use of spindle whorls and representations. To those people whose work in public places I have sought to understand and communicate about in this paper, thank you for the invitation.

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Appadurai, Arjun

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Ashwell, Reg

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Charlie, Simon
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Clifford, James

Cole, Douglas

Connolly, Jay

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Crosby, Marcia

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Feest, Christian

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Hawker, Ronald W.
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Hiwasaki, Lisa

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Layton, R.

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Parezo, Nancy  

Parry, Malcolm  

Phillips, Ruth B.  


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Point, Susan  
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1938  *The Native Tribes of British Columbia.* Victoria, BC Provincial Museum.


Rosaldo, Renato  

Simon Fraser Gallery  

Smith, Russell  

Snunéymuxw Treaty Office  
1999  *Snunéymuxw: Their History and Culture.* Nanaimo BC. (Report).

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Thomas, Nicholas

Thompson, Charles

Todd, Norman

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1956 People of the Potlatch: Native Arts and Culture of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery.

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Wells, Oliver N.

West, W. Richard, Jr.

Williams, Michelle

Wingert, Paul S.

Wolff, Janet

Wyatt, Gary
Appendix I  FIELD RESEARCH

Interviews
Carlson, Teresa. Coordinator/Curator, Shxwt’a:selhawtx, Chilliwack, BC. At Chilliwack. July 22, 1998
Good, William. Artist. At Ay Ay Mut Studio, Nanaimo, BC. August 8, 1998

Exhibits

Cultural Programs, Events, and Site
Aboriginal Art and Culture Celebration, Robson Square, Vancouver BC. June 19 & 20, 1998
Cowichan Native Village, Duncan BC. September 19, 1998; August 1999; February 18, 2000.
Duncan Mall, Duncan BC. September 19, 1998. [carvings by Simon Charlie].
Faculty of Law (Begbie) Building, University of Victoria, BC. [Charles Elliott]. July 24, 1998.
Spindle Whorl Dancers, Fort Langley Canada Day Celebrations, Fort Langley, BC. July 1, 1998.

Galleries and Souvenir Shops
Art of the Siem, Nanaimo BC. July 16, 1998. [William Good]
Douglas Reynolds Gallery, Vancouver BC.
Gallery of Tribal Art, Vancouver BC.
Gastown, Vancouver (all galleries and souvenir shops)
Hill’s Indian Crafts, Vancouver (June 7, 1998), Nanaimo (July 16, 1998), Victoria (July 24, 1998),
Leona Lattimer Gallery, Vancouver BC.
Museum of Anthropology shop, Vancouver BC.
New Leaf Editions, Granville Island, Vancouver BC. August 20, 1998. [Susan Point].
Northwest Connection, Qualicum, BC. August 1998.
Potlatch Arts, Vancouver BC.
Raven and the Bear Arts, Granville Island, Vancouver BC.
Sa Nuq Kwa Galleries, Victoria, BC. July 24, 1998.
Vancouver Art Gallery shop.
Vancouver Centennial Museum shop.
Appendix II  Selected non-commercial North American exhibits featuring spindle whorls and representations.


1956  *People of the Potlatch: Native Arts and Culture of the Pacific Northwest Coast*. Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia.

1965  *Art of the Northwest Coast: An Exhibition at the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley*. Berkeley, California.


1975  *Images Stone BC—Thirty Centuries of Northwest Coast Indian Sculpture*. Vancouver Art Gallery and the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver BC.


1986  *New Visions: Serigraphs by Susan A. Point, Coast Salish Artist* (traveling exhibit). University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, BC.


1992  *Simon Charlie: Salish Carver. From the Todd Collection*. Simon Fraser Gallery, Burnaby BC.


1995  *Tu Snu'wayulhs Tu's idéluxw (From Our Elders' Elders)*. Nanaimo District Museum, Nanaimo, BC.

1996  *Topographies: Aspects of Recent BC Art*. Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

1996  *Written in the Earth*. University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, BC.

1997  *Susan Point*. University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, BC.

1997  *Native Visions: Evolution in Northwest Coast Art from the Eighteenth through the Twentieth Century*. Seattle Art Museum and the University of Washington.

1999  *Exhibit "A"*. University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, BC.