Getting to the Roots of Wilderness

Chinese Canadian immigrant perceptions of wilderness in British Columbia

by

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Abstract

For centuries, Western societies thought of wilderness as a barren, desolate place that harboured temptation and sin. Over the last hundred and fifty years, a marked shift has occurred in Western perception of this so-called savage place; it has become revered, protected, and even worshipped. What was once the Devil's playground is now thought to provide a locus of spiritual regeneration and hope for the future. In North America, this pronounced shift is thought to coincide with notions of the sublime and the frontier.

This study explores the perceptions of wilderness among Chinese Canadian immigrants in British Columbia, people who have been less influenced by concepts of the sublime and frontier. It examines closely the idea that wilderness today is a self-evident construct that holds across most inhabitants of the province. Instead, ideas about wilderness held by people who have immigrated from China, similar to the ideas held by early immigrants from Europe, are influenced by tradition (especially Confucianism, Taoism, and, more recently, Maoism), space (i.e. coming from densely populated areas), and language.

Through this study, it has become apparent that the language and discourse surrounding wilderness in Canada is markedly different from that of Chinese Canadian immigrants. While the language and meaning of wilderness, as referred to in Western society, is assumed relatively easily for interviewees, the identification with moral and aesthetic responses common to discussions of wilderness in North America is much less likely to manifest itself. Wilderness, which represented barrenness and desolation to interviewees when they lived in China, has come to represent forests, mountains, animals, and lack of human influence. What previously had different philosophical meaning, now, in a cognitive sense, represents beauty and, potentially, a locus of spirituality.

The results of this study have important consequences for decision-making in cross-cultural environments. Policy surrounding wilderness or environmental preservation may be without meaning or relevance to new immigrants, who bring with them shared meanings and relationships to nature that may or may not be incongruous with Canadian environmental policy. In facing such debates, it is crucial to understand the perceptions of various players and how those ideas are linked to tradition, language, and the geography of the familiar. It is also critical to ask – What is wilderness and why are we protecting it above all else?

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Thank you.

Teasers

"Many people want to live in remote areas, becoming isolated – in cabins or something. My former supervisor had a house on an island, with a garbage can on the roof to collect water. I don't see the appeal; I thought that they were crazy."
(Yin, 2001)

"I stepped off the plane in August and I immediately felt cool, not groovy cool, but physically temperature-wise. I said "My God, I can't believe what a progressive community this is because even the parking lot at the Vancouver airport is air conditioned!" And I had no idea, it just simply was a cooler temperature."
(Johnston, 2001)

"You don't have to go far to look for nature. Right in my doorstep you see nature. Nothing against people going to conquer Himalayas, climbing the rocks – they have their special challenge. For them that's the only way to see nature and find nature, but for me just walking along Marine Drive, walking on a carpet lawn with a scatter of cherry blossom petals scattered along the lawn, is as close to nature as ever."
(Tse, 2001)

"In Hong Kong, I think that people would think wilderness is Vancouver. Development is progress…They would think that Canada is a very backward country because of the lack of urban development. Too few people in such a great, vast land."
(Yiu, 2001)

Introduction

Wilderness is one of the central concepts of the environmental movement in North America today. Countless environmental organisations in Canada and the United States have made it their mandate to "work for the preservation of Canadian and international wilderness" (WCWC, 2002) or to "develop a nation-wide network of wild" (Wilderness Society, 2002), in order that "some of the few remaining pristine ecosystems in the world, remain forever...so that our children and grandchildren can continue to experience what we have enjoyed." (CPAWS, 2002). Wilderness preservation underlies arguments to increase biodiversity, protect endangered species, and slow climate change, making it one of the most pervasive environmental foci in North American environmental law, media and public consciousness.

In 1964, the United States passed The Wilderness Act, an act that defined wilderness as: "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Non-governmental organisations in Canada and the United states have similarly referred to wilderness as "areas where humans are only visitors who do not remain." (Wilderness.net, 2002) Wilderness, then, is a place entirely outside of human existence, a place that is untouched, unsullied by human hands (except for the odd hike or camping trip), and relatively pristine. The meaning of wilderness (as it is presented by environmental groups and law), a concept that is so well entrenched in North American societies, would seem to be self-evident. Organisations that vie for wilderness preservation, therefore, promote the preservation of wild nature that does not include humans.

The very concept of wilderness, however, is under major review. The possibility of such an 'untouched' place has been questioned (McKibben, 1989), as has its historical importance (Oelschlaeger, 1991;

Nash, 1982) and its role in creating an ethical, sustainable place for humans in nature (Cronon, 1996). In this study, I take these concerns a step further by examining the meaning of wilderness in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia today; I examine whether or not the meaning of wilderness, as it is taken for granted in policy, media, and amongst environmental organisations, is shared by members of the Chinese Canadian immigrant[1] communities of the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

According to Treleaven (2001), stories of place must include all peoples who have lived, been displaced, and moved on from that place. This study attempts to fill in the gaps in our current knowledge of this place – British Columbia. Very few studies have attempted to examine the development of cross-cultural environmental perspectives among non-European immigrants. Neglecting to recognise and integrate the beliefs and values of all social and cultural groups within a society has serious implications for decision-making and cultural awareness. It is for this reason that this thesis asks: what does wilderness mean to Chinese Canadian immigrants? How have their views developed? If their understanding of this concept differs from the more widespread definition, what are the roots of meaning and the implications of difference in politics and decision-making?

The trouble with wilderness

The history of wilderness in the North America has focused strongly on the human relationship with the land. According to Leo Marx (2000), Americans have long had a contradictory relationship with nature. People treasure nature as a serene pastoral haven from civilized life, while simultaneously trying to domesticate it. Research into the changing construction of wilderness over the last thousand years has similarly shown that people have a changing and often-contradictory relationship with wilderness (see

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[1] A Chinese Canadian immigrant, for the purposes of this thesis, refers to an individual who was born in the Peoples Republic of China, including Hong Kong or Taiwan. The term 'immigrant' was chosen arbitrarily to refer to both recent immigrants and people who have lived in Canada for much of their lives. Chapter Two outlines the justification for including both recent immigrants and longer-term residents in this study.

Cronon, 1996; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Nash, 1982). These authors discuss the prevalence of the notion of wilderness in religious texts, poetry, art, and policy over the last century. They document the development of North American perceptions of wilderness from the expulsion of Eve and Adam from the Garden of Eden through to the end of the twentieth century; this development has meant a move away from the managed garden as the indicator of beauty and Godliness towards the wild, untamed land as a source of inspiration and hope. What Cronon (1996) draws particular attention to is the fact that this 'new' wilderness is really a managed wilderness, in the sense that it involves removing any previous inhabitants (including Native Canadians), but allowing access for tourism. National and provincial parks, both urban and rural, are often completely altered from their original states; inhabitants have likely been removed, monuments may have been erected, and non-native species have often been introduced (Loo, 1998). It forces us to ask: how wild is wilderness?

Wilderness, says Cronon (1996), is not quite as it seems. Rather than being self-evident, it is a construction of social groups at a particular moment in human history, the product of a particular series of events in European and North American histories. Wilderness was once considered to be a place of savageness, terror and waste, a place on the margin of civilisation where one could lose oneself in moral confusion and despair. No one ventured out into wilderness by choice. The dark, often terrifying, associations with wilderness were frequently attributed to biblical renditions, such as Christ's struggles against temptation and sin for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. This wasteland also existed in contrast to the utopian Eden, from which Adam and Eve were banished. It was only upon being expelled from the idyllic Garden of Eden into the desolate and savage wilderness that Adam and Eve became ashamed and fearful; the creatures of the once peaceful forest became savage and bloodthirsty (Pagels, 1988). The ancient Hebrews have been said to have viewed wilderness as cursed land without water. In each of these accounts, wilderness and paradise were spiritual opposites.

By the mid-nineteenth century in North America, traditional perspectives of wilderness as a place in which one might experience terror or bewilderment were beginning to shift dramatically. According to Cronon (1996), this shift in perceptions was the result of two distinctly North American concepts – the *sublime* and the *frontier.*

The sublime

The notion of the sublime is one of the oldest and most pervasive expressions born out of the Romantic movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this time, wilderness became synonymous with religious experiences; if the Devil could be found in wilderness, then so too might God. Wilderness represented the place where one could find God – in the mountains, in chasms, in waterfalls, or in other vast, powerful landscapes where one felt insignificant and mortal. In these seemingly mystical places, the supernatural lay just below the surface (Cronon, 1996).

William Wordsworth (1770-1850), a renowned English poet of the Romantic movement, believed that the Divine existed in the forms of nature, including mountains, winds, and landscapes, and was expressed through them.

> Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!/...
> Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me/
> The passions that build up our human soul;/
> Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,/
> But with high objects, with enduring things—/
> With life and nature—
>   Wordsworth, *from* "The Prelude" (Bate & Perkins,1986:388)

Sublime landscapes invoked powerful emotions in their viewers. In this poem, Wordsworth emphasises the strength and passion that powerful objects of nature have had on him since his childhood. This love of nature and landscapes beyond the ruins of 'civilization' was common to the Romantic movement and

to individuals seeking the Divine in nature. City dwellers began lamenting the human condition and the human impact on nature:

> The birds around me hopped and played,/
> Their thoughts I cannot measure:--/
> But the least motion which they made,/
> It seemed a thrill of pleasure/
> .../ If this belief from heaven be sent,/
> If such be Nature's holy plan, Have I not reason to lament/
> What man has made of man?
> > Wordsworth, *from* "Lines written in Early Spring" (Bate & Perkins, 1986:382)

A growing belief that humans were changing the landscape and their own attachment to it, led Wordsworth to lament what "man has made of man". Loss of a sense of beauty and appreciation for nature sent city dwellers to seek escape from the burgeoning urban centres of the day into fresh air and open landscapes of rural areas. In these areas, they sought spiritual enlightenment and inspiration through the animals and plants that had been unsullied by human hands.

In the United States, during the time of the Romantic Movement, Henry David Thoreau and John Muir became two of the most influential advocates of wild places for natural beauty and spiritual properties. Thoreau and Muir were exemplars of the American Transcendental movement. At the centre of Transcendentalism was a belief that nature "mirrored the currents of higher law emanating from God" (Nash, 1982: 85). Divinity existed in all nature, including wilderness. Transcendentalists saw no moral danger to humans who spent time in wilderness; instead, believing in the basic goodness of humans, they thought that the chances of attaining moral perfection and coming closer to God were increased by entering wilderness. For Thoreau, wilderness became a figurative and philosophical tool symoblising the unexplored capacities and qualities of humankind; while Thoreau would go into the wilderness for mental nourishment and excitement, he did not wish to remain there. Muir, on the other hand, while echoing Thoreau's belief that natural objects were the earthly manifestations of God, spent as much time in the wilderness as possible, as he found the trappings of civilization appalling; for Muir, wilderness could

inspire and refresh, making every trip to the woods "a trip home" (Nash, 1982:128). The differences in viewpoints between Thoreau and Muir characterise the impasse between the preservation and conservation movements of the nineteenth century in the United States – while the preservation movement supported 'maintaining' wild areas, but allowing human intervention, the conservation movement proposed setting aside large tracks of land, leaving them 'untouched' and uninhabited. Despite their differences, these movements formed the foundation for environmentalism in the United States, paving the path towards legal and public battles over land use.

The frontier

The second factor said to be at play in the creation of wilderness as it is recognised in North America today was the national myth of the frontier. The idea of "the frontier", or the place "that is an edge between the known and the unknown, the settled and the wild...where you are on your own [and] where the rules are not yet made" (ALA, 1996), has played a prominent role in the history of North America (particularly in the United States). This "meeting point between savagery and civilization" (Turner, 1962) was the place where the ills of civilization could be overcome by returning to a more primitive life, a life where cowboys kicked up dust as they rode across an arid landscape. According to Frederick Jackson Turner (1962), the frontier was where people from the eastern United States and European immigrants alike could leave behind civilization and rediscover their primitive energies. This was where Americans could truly experience being American: "at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish...Little by little he transforms the wilderness...[creating] a new product that is American" (1962:4). The frontier separated the weak from the strong and gave the United States a character that distinguished it from Europe. Turner also predicted that this frontier would disappear as free land (i.e. wilderness) disappeared; the notion of disappearing wild lands planted the ideas surrounding wilderness preservation in the United States. If

wilderness was truly the last bastion of rugged individualism, then its loss would mean a loss of the American way of life; it must be protected to save American identity. As lament for the passing frontier reached its peak, the preservation movement gained much momentum (Cronon, 1996).

Longing for the frontier and its heroic men led to a perception of wilderness as the last bastion of rugged individualism (Cronon, 1996). Urban dwellers, who viewed wilderness as a place for recreation, began to praise unworked land, equating productive work in nature with environmental destruction (White, 1996). First Nations peoples, who had long lived on the land, were forcibly removed from 'wild' places in order to make these wilderness areas 'safe' and open for the enjoyment of travellers—the generation's modern explorers. Through these developments, wilderness became touted as a more 'natural' way of life than that of urban life, which was confining, artificial and false; frontier nostalgia became a bourgeois form of anti-modernism, which resulted (ironically enough) in those who were profiting from urban-industrial capitalism wanting to protect it. Wilderness became the destination of choice for elite tourists and urbanites, not for those who already worked the landscape.

Whither wilderness?

> "The history of Canada for about three hundred years was a struggle to escape from the wilderness, and for the last half century has been a desperate attempt to escape into it." (Hutchinson, 1953)

The unique history of wilderness in North America means that there is "nothing natural about the concept of wilderness" (Cronon, 1996: 79); it is a creation of the societies that hold it dear. Although it promotes an environmental consciousness, it offers the illusion that humanity can wipe clean the slate of past transgressions towards the environment, evading responsibility for the consequences of the lives that people actually lead. Because the human is posited entirely outside of the natural (and the desirable)

human presence represents the degradation of nature. In this view, there is no place for humans within nature, offering little hope of discovering a sustainable place for humans *in* nature. This, says Cronon, is a serious threat to living 'responsibly' on the earth. Cronon does not criticise the idea of wild nature per se, but rather the thinking and focus on places outside of the environments in which most of us live that follows from this construction of wilderness. Instead of this tautology, Cronon encourages an emphasis on wonder; by finding beauty in humble places, people can begin to respect a nature they had not previously recognised as natural. Wonder in this way can make wild places part of the solution to our environmental concerns, not part of the problem.

Cronon has been criticised at many levels for his analysis of the wilderness concept[2]. While historians have applauded his research, environmentalists have accused Cronon of being ignorant of the biology and science underlying the conservation movement (Foreman, 1996). Some academic critics, incensed by Cronon's apparent brush with relativism, have argued against his social constructivist tendencies (e.g. Snyder, 1996; Sessions, 1996). Even more strident still, were the critics who felt that Cronon had done an enormous amount of damage to the environmental movement by creating disbelief in the movement to conserve wilderness areas, resulting in a loss of protected areas (Willers, 1996). While I will not go into a detailed examination of these arguments in this study, it is certainly worth noting that Cronon's essay elicited strong responses, both from critics and supporters of his book *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the human place in nature*. When the paperback edition of the book went into print, Cronon responded to many of the criticisms and asked that:

> ...readers resist any impulse they may have to react to *Uncommon Ground* as a hostile attack on the environmental movement....The criticisms we offer—whether of environmentalism in particular or of American ideas of nature in general—are intended to encourage greater reflection about the complicated and contradictory ways in which modern human beings conceive of their place in nature. (1996: 20)

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[2] For a comprehensive discussion of the debates surrounding the 'social construction' of wilderness, see Proctor (1998).

Uncommon Ground, and the essays within it, were written to encourage rethinking of basic assumptions about nature and wilderness in the (North) American context. It is from this vantage point that I have chosen my own research questions based on Cronon's work: If concepts of wilderness in North America truly are linked to ideas of the sublime and the frontier, then people who have not been exposed to those ideals are likely to think of wilderness quite differently. If people who were born outside of North America do perceive of wilderness differently, how do they perceive it and do these views result in differing ways of relating to and husbanding the natural world? What are the implications of Cronon's critique if alternate understandings of wilderness go unheard in environmental and wilderness debates?

While the texts that deal with the changes in notions of wilderness are exhaustive in their accounts of Western perceptions of wilderness, what is consistently absent is any reflection on the perceptions of wilderness by cultures other than those of European descent. When such an analysis exists, it is often as a cursory, superficial glance. In texts dealing with the wilderness transition in North America, the perspectives of the many citizens of non-European descent, particularly Asian, are not considered. The lack of cross-cultural analysis and the influence of other cultures, particularly among Chinese Canadians, who compose over a quarter of the population of the City of Vancouver, on the current conception of wilderness and nature led me to question whether or not their influence has been significant or has been recognised at all. Also, have the traditional perceptions of these people been altered in their move to new and foreign surroundings?

Chinese immigration

While the Western United States were colonised slowly by means of the progression of the frontier, Western Canada was colonised rapidly beginning with the start of the gold rush in 1858 (Yee, 1988). Those who were attracted to the area were there to make their fortunes and, for the most part, to move

on. This area of Canada was, and continues to be, characterized by resource dependency, including forestry, mining, and fishing, and what has been referred to as a boom-and-bust psychology. The rapid growth of British Columbia, in particular, drew men into jobs in fish canneries and pulp mills, as well as into construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), which linked eastern and western Canada by rail. The population of the province was largely composed of men who had travelled from Eastern Canada, the West Coast of the United States, and mainland China.

By 1863, four thousand Chinese were working in the Caribou as gold-seekers (Yee, 1988). Unemployment was very low and non-European immigrants, mainly Chinese and Japanese, were welcomed, as they were willing to take on those dangerous or undesirable jobs that White men did not want. As employment became less abundant, tolerance for non-European immigrants began to wane. Chinese, by the late 1800s, were viewed as threats to White stability and were never acknowledged as early pioneers of Canada (Chao, 1997). In 1884, the first head tax of ten dollars was placed on Chinese arriving in Canada. When the CPR was completed and the services of the Chinese immigrants were "no longer required", this head tax rose to fifty dollars. By 1903, the tax for entry into Canada had risen to five hundred dollars per person, money which often had to be borrowed through high-interest loans that the workers spent decades or a lifetime attempting to repay. Chinese workers continued to leave China, which was in the midst of a population explosion, work shortages, and rebellion, in order to seek out better lives in "Gold Mountain" (i.e. British Columbia). Racism spread during this period in British Columbia, leading to Bill 45 – The Chinese Exclusion Act – in 1923, which put a stop to all new Chinese immigration, prevented the wives of those already in Canada to come into the country and withheld voting privileges from those who were already in Canada, some of whom had lived in the country for their entire lives. The Exclusion Act was in place until 1947, when China became a Western ally in the

Second World War, and the Act was revoked (Chao, 1997). The history of Chinese immigration to Canada is tarnished with rejection and racism.

Today, the Vancouver area has over 280,000 residents of Chinese descent in a total population of 1.8 million (Statistics Canada, 1996). Today's Chinese Canadians are descendents not only of early immigrants from southern China, but are representative of new immigration patterns – people from varying class backgrounds and varying geographical and social origins. There are many Vancouver Chinese identities, but these identities continue to be shaped by cultural differences, native place ties and New World experiences of rejection, alienation, accommodation, and acceptance (Ng, 1999). Chinese Canadians have had a significant presence in the province for a hundred and fifty years, yet their perspectives towards this province, particularly towards nature and wilderness, are little known. Because of their traditionally low political profile and low participation in political processes (Bellett, 1999; Chao, 1997), their values and beliefs have gone unrecognised in the larger Canadian context.

Culture, nature, and Chinese Canadians

Given the historical role and demographic significance of Chinese Canadian immigrants in Canadian society, I have elected to focus on this large, yet underrepresented study group. The study will, I hope, demonstrate that we must neither take for granted the multiplicities of Canadian identities in decision-making nor the 'universality' of this entity so commonly called wilderness.

The way people experience the world is shaped profoundly by the cultural contexts that inform them (Nicolson, 1997). The way that different peoples experience nature and wilderness in North America and the cultural contexts that influence them are not well understood. To say, however, that all persons from country X will perceive wilderness identically is, at best, unfairly reductionist. A culture refers more

closely to shared "webs of meaning" (Geertz, 1973) or shared interpretations (Strauss & Quinn, 1997) that may cross geographical, religious, or political borders. However, just how fully those meanings are shared is influenced, equally, by one's position in society (e.g. by gender or class) and by the specific circumstances at hand (e.g. an immigrant's experiences of Canada). Although shared understandings may vary over time, some shared understandings are resistant to change, broadly applicable, and remarkably stable.

Shared understandings of wilderness may characterise people who belong to similar cultures. As such, the complex array of symbolic relationships that people form with their physical surroundings plays a fundamental role in shaping both social activity and perceptions of the land (Basso, 1996). In order to fully understand how cultures construct their environments, Basso suggests that we must be "prepared to sit down and listen to our native consultants talk – not only about landscapes, which of course we must do, but about talking about landscapes as well" (p. 68). To understand human/land relationships, we must listen closely to what people say about their surroundings and the influence of those surroundings on their perceptions. Engaging in dialogues across cultures or amongst people with different sets of shared understandings promotes analysis and understanding and allows reflection among study participants on the human place in nature and a more sustainable environmental ethic.

The various environmental concerns and relationships to nature of Chinese Canadians, who make up such a significant percentage of the population in British Columbia, have not been examined in any detail or in a context outside that of their homelands. This study will attempt to broaden the knowledge of the diverse cultural make-up of Canada and the religious and cultural contexts that shape the way people view the world around them. In the words of Deutsch-Lynch (1993), nature is "a product of cultural responses to specific historical circumstances which give rise to shared sets of imagined landscapes"

(p.109). This is not to say, however, that nature or wilderness is solely a figment of the imagination, as nature represents both a physical realm that cannot be deconstructed and the realm of cultural ideas and norms (Olwig, 1996). That nature is a "thing" goes without saying. How we speak about nature, however, strongly influences how we see or make sense of the world.

In order to understand how individuals of Chinese descent living in Vancouver perceive and relate to wilderness, it is necessary to understand the historical process within which not only their shared understandings, but their identities, or self-understandings (Holland et al., 1998), have been shaped and have changed since their arrival in Canada. How do Chinese Canadian immigrants perceive of their own place in nature and their relationship to it? According to Hall (1990), it is essential that subjects not be compared with an 'authentic' population, as each area of settlement has its own arena of identity construction and historical and cultural processes must be viewed on their own terms. Because there is a multiplicity of Chinese voices, I have examined the evolution of beliefs and understandings of wilderness within a diverse subset of people in Vancouver, British Columbia. Within this subset, I found significant differences in beliefs and have attempted to trace the dynamic process of identity construction for individuals within these populations by means of an examination of language, tradition, and sense of place.

Research Purposes

In this study, I have attempted to bridge the gap that has been created between peoples in consideration of the evolution of Canada's cultural wilderness and natural heritage. I have focused on the perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes of Chinese Canadians towards wilderness – what wilderness is, what it signifies, and how people figure within it. I could not speak with the original immigrants to this province, those who lived, worked, and shaped the province from 1858 onwards (Yee, 1988) or learn

how their perceptions evolved over time to include or exclude Western discourses and thought. Instead, I have focused on Chinese Canadian immigrants, people who have been born, raised, and/or educated in different social and geographical contexts. Through this study, I have gained an understanding of how the perceptions of wilderness and nature among interviewees have changed over time, particularly with their transition into a new social and geographical setting.

My research purposes, which were examined largely through in-depth interviews, are as follows:

- To determine the way in which perceptions of surroundings are related to history, tradition, homeland, and sense of space. To ask: how dynamic are notions of nature and wilderness? If wilderness is indeed a social construction – "a product of cultural responses to specific historical circumstances which give rise to shared sets of imagined landscapes" (Deutsch-Lynch, 1993) – is that construction mitigated by past events and circumstances?

- To determine how Chinese Canadians view the landscape of British Columbia. What is wild? What is natural? What is the human place in nature? Do they conceive of a more sustainable human place in nature, such as the one that Cronon searches for?

This study will employ qualitative research methods to explore these research questions (see Chapter Two). To date, many of the attitudes of Chinese Canadians to environmental initiatives, such as recycling and composting, have been documented through surveys and quantitative research methods (e.g. Blake et al., 1997). While useful for broader generalizations, quantitative research often inhibits discoveries beyond a limited set of questions. Qualitative research, conversely, explores social or human problems by building a complex and detailed picture through the analysis of words and reports (Creswell, 1998). It allows for a richness, depth, and exploration of meaning that is not possible with quantitative research alone (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). It is for these reasons that I have used

qualitative research (primarily in the form of interviewing and some field work) to better understand how Chinese Canadians perceive wilderness and nature in British Columbia.

Outline

The following chapters will examine the main themes that arose in the analysis of my research data: tradition, space, and meaning. Chapter two outlines the methods I used in collecting my data. Chapter three examines the role of language and meaning in understanding wilderness and how language and meaning, as concerns wilderness, has changed over time. Chapter four explores the influence of Chinese traditions on the human place in nature. Chapter five examines the impact of space and physical landscape on perception, including the impact of rural versus urban space on sensibilities. Chapter six examines the meaning of wilderness to Chinese Canadians and how, if at all, the outdoors factors actively into their lives. Finally, chapter seven, summarises the previous chapters and outlines the significance of the research. I will relate the themes in each chapter to Cronon's (1996) work on wilderness, which suggests that the ideas of sublime and frontier form the roots of the modern North American understandings of wilderness. His work also suggests that a different understanding of the term, one which includes humans and humble places, could lead to a strengthened environmental ethic. How does this environmental ethic manifest itself amongst Chinese Canadian immigrants with differing sets of shared understandings?

Chapter Two

On the ground
methods and madness in research

The purpose of this study is to determine how notions of wilderness evolve over time and adapt according to tradition and sense of place. How does the urban-wild divide manifest itself in Vancouver among the Chinese Canadian community? To date, the attitudes of Chinese Canadians towards the environment have been documented solely through surveys and quantitative research methods. One such survey attempted to link environmentally friendly attitudes with "green" behaviour in Canada (Blake et al., 1997). This study concluded that people of Asian background had an overall lower concern for the environment than did those of European descent. Asians were also, according to this study, less likely to be involved in environmental activism and less likely to be willing to pay for environmental improvements. Similar studies in the United States have suggested that people of colour are less concerned about environmental issues than are the White majority. Jones (1998), however, dissected the "myth" of Black unconcern for the environment, concluding that environmental activism and environmental concern are not synonymous, that Blacks are more active in grassroots environmental groups (than mainstream groups), that the human dimensions of the environmental movement are often ignored by the mainstream, but are of great importance to minority groups, and that Blacks may in fact be more concerned about the environment when discussing toxics and other urban issues.

Studies that use race as a proxy for cultural perspectives, such as those that suggest Whites are more concerned about the environment than Asians or Blacks, serve only to fuel racist or essentialist critiques and do not examine why such differences appear and what the factors are that lead to such discrepancies. Strict quantitative research may limit discoveries beyond a particular set of questions,

failing to explore why differences exist. Qualitative research, however, offers the opportunity to explore social or human problems by building a complex, holistic picture through the detailed analysis of words and reports (Creswell, 1998). It allows for a richness and depth that is not possible with quantitative research alone (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). It is for these reasons that I have chosen to use qualitative research to better understand how Chinese Canadians perceive wilderness and nature in British Columbia.

The method that most closely approximates the approach I have taken to my research is known as *grounded theory*. Developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, grounded theory reflects an attempt to "ground" theory in field data, rather than taking a more theoretical positivistic approach to data collection and analysis. Instead of testing a theory in the field, the researcher develops theory through interaction with their study group. The intent of a grounded theory study is to generate a set of ideas that relate to a particular situation or phenomenon. Researchers develop categories and concepts to develop a set of relationships or theories concerning the group and situation being studied by means of primary interview data and multiple field visits (Creswell, 1998). Grounded theory is meant to encourage flexibility, but maintain a systematic method that links theory construction with data collection and analysis. This method posits the researcher as both interpreter of data and theoretician.[3]

I have employed such an approach because I was primarily interested in developing a set of ideas or theories that respond to my research questions: How do place of birth, language and tradition influence

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[3] Grounded theory has some opponents, who feel that it acts as an excuse for poor research, allowing ineffectual methods to be ignored in the name of "letting data speak". Others suggest that grounded theory means *no* theory, encouraging research that does not examine the wide body of literature that already exists in areas related to the study. It has also been suggested by colleagues that it is a favourite research tradition among graduate students, who, feeling overwhelmed by and perhaps underqualified for the task set out in front of them, enlist grounded theory as a means of covering up for their own unfamiliarity with the theory surrounding their subject area. I will certainly admit to the sense of relief and excitement that grounded theory offered me as I started out with my study, but continue to maintain that it is the most appropriate framework for my research for the reasons mentioned below.

the shared understandings of Chinese Canadian immigrants towards wilderness and nature in British Columbia? Rather than testing an existing theory, I wished to develop one through the data I collected with my interviews of Chinese Canadians living in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. It was my intention to let the interviewees and their data "speak" or, as the case may be, "mumble" (Tansey, 2002) through processes of analysis and interpretation. I chose to use grounded theory because Chinese Canadian immigrant perceptions of wilderness and nature have not yet been researched, so I could not test my data against that of others. Instead, I have drawn, where possible, from existing related literature throughout the body of my study, as a sort of 'conceptual toolbox' (Tansey, 2002), to support or deny my own claims. I continue to use theory (with special reference to Cronon's work on wilderness) throughout the study, which serves to situate my own ideas in the ideas of others.

Background

A grounded theory is a theory that is derived from the study of the phenomenon that it represents; it is "discovered, developed, and verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:23). This study relates to the difference in understandings of wilderness between study participants and the definition of wilderness that Cronon (1996) has linked to contemporary White and middle-class Americans. In most grounded theory studies, researchers conduct twenty to thirty interviews during numerous field visits with the intention of saturating categories (i.e. with the aim of finding out information until interviewees no longer add anything new to the categories) (Creswell, 1998). During the process of data collection, both during interviewing and examining secondary sources, data is gathered, analysed and gathered again in a "zigzag" process (Creswell, 1998); sampling occurs in an iterative fashion by collecting data, analysing existing data, and then collecting data again according to a revised method that will ensure a broad representation of ideas.

For this study, I interviewed twenty-three individuals and facilitated a focus group discussion with six people. Quite apart from interviewing, which generally takes priority in a grounded theory study, I have also chosen to employ a variety of additional sources for data, including analysis of art (painting and calligraphy), writing (poetry and journalism), and community events (theatre and parades). These secondary sources of data will be used to clarify and fill gaps in the interviews, but will also provide illumination on issues that might not have been addressed specifically by interview respondents.

Selecting a study group

Chinese Canadian immigrants and their descendants originate from a wide geographical area including Hong Kong, the Peoples Republic of China and Taiwan. In addition, many people of Chinese descent have come to Canada from other countries, including Mexico, Peru, India, and South Africa. Each of these areas has multiple dialects, climates, religions and sets of traditions, which make finding a statistically 'representative' Chinese Canadian sample unlikely. Instead, I interviewed key informants in the Chinese Canadian communities, individuals who had thought about the issues that I am researching and who continue to be connected politically or socially to the Chinese Canadian communities in Vancouver.

Because the term 'Chinese Canadian' encompasses such a broad spectrum of human and cultural experience, I selected individuals who could help shape theory formation because they represented diverse viewpoints within the Chinese communities. I chose to interview people from both highly urbanised settings, such as Hong Kong and Beijing, and people from rural settings, largely in Mainland China. I also interviewed people of different ages (from 24-70 years of age), with a variety of educational backgrounds, who had lived in British Columbia for between one and fifty years. Although more recent immigrants (i.e. people who have been in Canada for fewer than five years) and longer-term residents

are likely to have widely differing perspectives on the issues being studied, I felt that they could offer a variety of perceptions of wilderness. More recent immigrants may be less able to step back and examine any changes that may have taken place in their ideas about the subject matter; however, they would be able to explore more immediately the influence of spending most of their lives in mainland China, Hong Kong or Taiwan. Longer term residents, on the other hand, whose sensibilities may have shifted to include more North American perceptions, would be better able to reflect on changes that have occurred. It is for these reasons that I elected to interview immigrants of various generations and lengths of residence in Canada. While interviewing such a diverse subset of the Chinese Canadian immigrants communities did serve to add more variables to my research, it also provided the appropriate conditions for an exploratory study of this nature. It raised questions for further research, while providing rich data for analysis.

Participants in the interview stage of the research were recruited primarily from the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. I selected this region because it was the home of the core community of the original Chinese immigrant population in the nineteenth century and remains a vibrant cultural centre for Chinese communities. It is the locus of the majority of Chinese cultural centres and events in the province and contains a wide range of new and old immigrants, as well as a variety of representatives of a variety of professions, religions, and socio-economic classes within those immigrant groups. Vancouver's setting, surrounded by mountains and ocean, provides a perfect opportunity to juxtapose the urban and wild. Immigrants living in other areas of the country are unlikely to be faced with such an obvious contrast between the urban landscape and the forested, 'wild' lands just beyond the city limits.

I spent the first month of my fieldwork meeting people who might be considered key informants, individuals who could provide insights into study participants and point me in the direction of people who

would be useful contacts or interviewees in the process of my theoretical sampling. These key informants included scholars from the University of British Columbia who work in Chinese Canadian communities in British Columbia, government officials, community group leaders, and people involved in Chinese cultural centres and event organisation. While I did go on to interview a number of these people more formally, most of them provided me with names of interviewees according to the needs of my study. Meeting with key informants also provided me with legitimacy as I approached individuals in the study group.

I first contacted interviewees by means of an introductory e-mail or telephone call, in which I explained how I had heard of them, the purpose of my research, why I was interested in their participation, and what that participation would involve. I also left them with a time and date at which I would call them to answer any questions they might have and, hopefully, set up an interview time. Approximately eighty per cent of those contacted responded in the affirmative to my introductory letter or contacted me to grant an interview.

The interviews

Interviewing individuals in was a thrilling and rewarding aspect of my thesis research. It quickly became apparent that the 'zigzag' approach of grounded theory (i.e. going from interview to analysis back to interview again) would not only be fruitful, but also part of a natural drive and curiosity while conducting the research. Analysis and coding became an ongoing process that allowed me to be continuously rethinking my interview questions, my research methods and my approach to the study. The freedom of actively listening to interviewees, without the constraints of a null hypothesis, allowed me to be open to a variety of possibilities and relationships that I might not have noticed had I been following a different research methodology.

Interviews lasted between one and two hours and were semi-structured in design (see Appendix B).

Each interview was tape-recorded and fully transcribed. I began each interview with several closed

questions, which were designed to put participants at ease. I then progressed to more open-ended

questions that were broad enough to allow respondents a certain degree of freedom in their responses

and in their interpretation of the questions. Over time, these initial questions were moulded to reflect

concerns and issues that had arisen in previous interviews (e.g. more emphasis on the reflection phase

of the interview and pointed questions concerning wilderness), but the basic structure remained

constant. After several interviews, I became extremely comfortable with the interviewing process and

was able to reflect on responses as the interviews were in motion. According to Tansey (2002),

researchers cannot expect unity across interviews; instead, contradictions that arise during the interview

process should be used to generate further questions for the next round of data collection. Through this

process I was able to adjust interviews to address contradictions as the interviews were in progress, as

well as adjust future interviews. This ensured that I collected a very rich data set. It also allowed me to

identify parallels or connections between responses long before I began formally analysing the data.

I conducted interviews in a variety of locations, according to the needs of the interviewee. Some of the

interviews were held in coffee shops, others in people's homes, others still in offices or on the UBC

campus. I began each interview by introducing my research and myself and by asking the participants if

they had any questions about their participation in the study. According to the requirements of the

University's Ethics Review Board, I then explained and had participants sign a form indicating their

willingness to participate in the study and to have their interview tape recorded. A number of participants

decided not to sign the form until the interview had been completed, as they weren't certain what kind of

information they would be sharing with me. Each of the participants signed the form willingly, either

before or after the interview, and did not request any aspect of the interview to remain 'off the record'. All but two interviewees agreed to have their names revealed in the body of this report. Those who did not wish to be named are referred to using pseudonyms.

Participants often raised the concern that they could not be considered representatives of Chinese Canadians in British Columbia (i.e. that they represented only one view among many). This was an interesting response that prompted me to reconsider how I was opening the interviews, as I had no intention of having the interviewees speak on behalf of others. I began to question whether this was, perhaps, in response to previous encounters with non-Chinese interviewers. I explained that this was a scoping study and that I would be interviewing approximately thirty individuals to get a broader spectrum of responses within the study group. I also emphasized that I could not hope or even wish for people to act as representatives of a study group that is so varied and large. Ironically, this did not stop people from making generalizations about Chinese Canadians (including such statements as "People from the Chinese culture..." and "People from Hong Kong..."), but put them at ease nonetheless. Other than questions such as this, I did not encounter any concerns or hesitations with respect to the study. On the contrary, most interviewees were extremely interested in the outcomes of my research and even requested a copy of my completed thesis.

In addition to the twenty-three one-on-one interviews, I conducted a focus group with six participants. This focus group was set up through the North American Association of Asian Professionals (NAAAP) office in Vancouver. A selection of the broad group of NAAAP members meets once a month to discuss topical issues that might be of concern or interest to Asian Canadian Professionals. They opened up one of their monthly gatherings for me to facilitate a discussion on my research. This focus group was comprised not only of Chinese Canadians, but also of a Thai Canadian, Korean Canadian, Canadians of

Asian descent (i.e. second- and third-generation Chinese Canadians), and one German visitor, who was conducting research on Asian identities in British Columbia. Because of this variation outside of my original study group, I was able to test emerging theories on individuals of different backgrounds and gain perspective on my research from a variety of angles. While I did go through a variation on my list of interview questions with the group, I focused more closely on wilderness as a concept and facilitated discussion around this. I also asked that participants draw pictures of what wilderness was to them (see Appendix A), which proved to be a very exciting and illustrative process.

Analysis

Data analysis, the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) was ongoing in my study; it began with the first data collected and continued to the end of the process, allowing me to collect new data to fill in gaps and to test new hypotheses that emerged during analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Grounded theory employs a particular set of structures in the analysis phase of the research, as defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the first of which is coding. Coding is the operation by which "data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together again" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:57). A researcher begins developing codes (or categories) of information that reflect a key point or issue of note in a particular passage – this is referred to as *open coding*. Once open coding has been completed for all of the interviews, the researcher begins making connections between the categories, focusing on connections between these categories and the central phenomenon of interest – this is known as *axial coding*. The next step is to construct an explanation or story that connects the categories, which is referred to as *selective coding*. Fragmenting the data and picking out the recurrent themes facilitates the comparison of data within and between categories and, hence, theory building. At the end of the three stages of coding, the researcher is left with a set of theoretical propositions in the form of a hypothesis, visual model, or narrative.

I began the open coding phase of analysis very early on in my study. After each interview, I spent time reflecting and writing notes on some of the central themes and items of interest in each interview. I also revisited the questions that I had asked during each interview and reworked them to respond to new areas of potential inquiry. It wasn't, however, until I had transcribed each interview that I was able to more consciously begin the analysis. Each of the twenty-three interviews was transcribed completely. The discussion from the focus group was not transcribed as a result of noise interference on the tape from the coffee shop where the focus group was held. For this, I have relied on my notes of the proceedings.

In order to begin the process of analysis, I employed qualitative data analysis software, called ATLAS.ti. This software facilitates text analysis and interpretation of qualitative data, particularly in selecting, coding, annotating, and comparing memos. It allows the researcher to load each transcript into a central data bank from which s/he can enter codes and make connections between interviews very easily. The software allows the user to highlight sections of text and name them with a code or memo or to select multiple codes for a particular passage. The beauty of ATLAS.ti is that it keeps an ongoing list of codes used, so that researchers can easily trace or use them; it also allows the researcher to link codes and amalgamate them during the processes of axial and selective coding. Although it took time to learn the software and time to prepare the interview data for analysis, it proved to be very worthwhile, as it encouraged a level of analysis that would be very cumbersome using paper notes. Tracing and grouping codes within codes could be done easily.

I began my initial data analysis by taking my interview transcripts and breaking them down into codes (or categories) of information. Rather than beginning with a set of codes in mind, I went through each

transcript systematically, creating a code every time something arose that seemed important to my central questions (open coding). The number of codes quickly mushroomed into over sixty. As this list was too expansive to allow me to focus on particular ideas or themes, I reduced the number by grouping together linked themes and codes (axial coding). I then reduced these themes into three categories that were representative of the major areas of theory development (selective coding). These three categories reflected what I felt to be the major themes of my study from which the theories developed: language and meaning; tradition; and sense of space. Each of these three themes will be developed in detail in the following three chapters.

Validity

Validity refers to the "correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation or other sort of account" (Maxwell, 1996:87). Rather than referring to any objective truth, it provides a basis for distinguishing credible accounts from those that are not. Achieving validity in research is a challenge that every researcher must face. I have been aware of the importance of being open about my expectations in this study and about its limitations, considering the scope of potential participants and the limited number of interviewees. Given the sample size of my research (twenty-nine individuals, including participants in the focus group), I did not feel that I ran the risk of having incomplete data to ground a theory in the description phase of my research. I have, however, been very cognizant of the dangers of generalising across diverse people based on a small subset of an already diverse group of people and have made special efforts to avoid this. The study is essentially an exploratory one that will lead to greater understanding in this developing field for future research. I have attempted to develop the themes that have arisen from the interviews and have substantiated these themes through my use of literary texts, art and cultural events, where possible.

During interpretation of findings, there always exists the potential for the introduction of researcher bias, through selection of data or drawing inferences from data that seem to fit the emerging theory (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Overcoming these pitfalls involves explaining possible biases and how they will be dealt with (Maxwell, 1996). Because I have been attempting to develop a set of theories inductively from my data, rather than anticipating a particular set of findings , I hope I have been open to multiple scenarios. Possibly the most exciting aspect of this research is the very fact that my findings are completely novel, as no previous studies have been done on this subject.

Interpretation of data can also be influenced by reactivity, the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied (Maxwell, 1996). I was aware of this as a potential threat to my findings, particularly as I was an outsider to the study group. Given that I am Caucasian, English-speaking, and female, I undoubtedly was pre-judged to a greater or lesser degree, but never felt that I experienced difficulty in gaining the trust and respect that I needed as an interviewer. Participants were often curious as to my interest in the topic and the study group, but the interest seemed to hinge more on a sense of flattery than on a sense of suspicion. There were points in my research, however, where I felt that interviewees were attempting to conform to what they felt I might want to hear as an environmentalist, despite the fact that I gave them no reason (other than my affiliation with the department of Resource Management and Environmental Studies at UBC) to presume this.

According to Geertz (1973), the data researchers collect are contingent on their constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are doing. Along the same lines, data are contingent on the constructions by interview participants of what the interviewer is interested in hearing. Given that I am an outsider to the Chinese community in heritage, language, and race, I am limited to translated (or English) literature and limited by participant perceptions of my potentially 'foreign'

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research. The limitations of the language barrier, for those whose first language is not English may be quite significant. According to New (1997), each time a researcher brings her/his language to describe a new environment and voice the values of another culture, the language used may itself be a barrier: "the language is at once an impediment to communication and the very means of communication, a site of paradox, a ground at once of exhaustion and creativity" (p. 11). Terms, such as wilderness, may have entirely different connotations in a Chinese context. Fortunately, these connotations are exactly what I am trying to record. Being an outsider, however, can also be an advantage, as details and differences are less likely to be overlooked. Recognising limitations and dealing with them up front can only serve to strengthen any research project. Given that this research tracks uncharted territory, I am confident that the limitations I have mentioned have not provided an impediment to data collection or analysis.

Maxwell (1996) also notes that a threat to validity during theory formation can lie in ignoring discrepant data and alternative explanations. I have attempted to avoid this pitfall by encouraging the participation of individuals from different geographical settings and of different age groups and backgrounds. Because analysis was ongoing in my research, I was able to recruit interviewees who could offer different perspectives and ideas about the study topic. I have been cautious to let the theory emerge from the data, rather than from my own preconceptions of what I might find. This is undoubtedly one of the more difficult threats to deal with, as there is a strong tendency to seek out similarities rather than differences. I hope that, in the coming chapters, I have done justice to the range and complexity of the responses of my interviewees.

Chapter Three

Defining wilderness
the ever-changing language of nature (and nature of language)

In September of 2001, I had the opportunity to lead a seminar with a group of environmental studies

graduate students at the University of British Columbia. At the beginning of this seminar, I set out a task

for them. As a group, they had to define wilderness. These are some of the words that they came up

with to define the concept:

Trees, animals, water, mountains, rivers, ocean, bears, fresh air, green, birds, without people or human influence

Beauty, freedom, expression, complexity, escape, purity, peace, spirituality.

This set of words proved to be fairly uncontentious to the group. Together, the forty or so participants (or

at least the most vocal of those forty) said that they felt comfortable that these words were representative

of their understanding of the term. This definition demonstrates that there is indeed a popular

understanding of wilderness among British Columbians, very much along the lines of wilderness as

Cronon defines it. In Canada, the dominant discourse of wilderness among the general public,

environmental groups, and the media is that of 'untouched', uninhabited, forested land, complete with

bears and eagles. Wilderness is a place in which humans are rarely seen, and their influence is rarely

felt; it is to be protected for future generations and outdoor enthusiasts. What is natural by this definition

is that which is not human or human-made.

In this definition, lesser-known or understood interpretations of wilderness and nature (i.e. those of

minority social groups) go unrecognised and unnoticed under the umbrella of dominant discourse and

language. In the same group exercise mentioned above, there were, however, a number of outliers to the popular definition. A number of respondents suggested that wilderness meant dense jungle, colonialism, desolation, and moorland. What is interesting about these outliers is that the people who offered these definitions were not born and raised in Canada; the individuals were from Ethiopia, Chile, and the United Kingdom and had spent less than two years in British Columbia, suggesting that meaning may be influenced by place and homeland.

Meaning

If, as Cronon suggests, North American conceptions of wilderness are linked fundamentally to the ideas of the sublime and frontier, what does wilderness mean both to recent Chinese Canadian immigrants (who may not have been exposed to these concepts) and to immigrants who have lived in British Columbia for many years? What then is the meaning and discourse of wilderness amongst Chinese Canadian immigrants to British Columbia? In this chapter, I will examine the *meaning* of wilderness to interviewees and their interest in and commitment to wild places and nature. I will also examine how meaning and language change in the face of a more dominant discourse. Which aspects of meaning are absorbed and which are not?

Meaning refers to the interpretation of an object, event, or word at a given time by a particular person. What something means depends on what that person is experiencing at a given moment and the framework they bring with them from past experiences. Meaning, stress Strauss and Quinn (1997), is shorthand for *cultural meaning*, or the idea that different interpretations would come from those with different life experiences. In this chapter, I explore the meaning of wilderness to study participants. Each interviewee brings with her or him a different history and set of life experiences and will contemplate wilderness accordingly, though some discernable patterns do emerge.

I began my interviews with the assumption that the dominant North American wilderness paradigm would be relatively global in scope, so I was fascinated to begin an interview with someone who, when asked for her or his thoughts concerning wilderness, asked me: "Could you define that concept for me? I'm not familiar with it." So began two of my interviews, where informants who were there to discuss the notion of wilderness weren't familiar with the meaning of the term, or, at least, not in the sense that they thought I might wish them to discuss it. This was my first clue about the need to examine the influence of language and meaning on perception, for not only did these interviewees not have the same understanding of wilderness, but it was not even part of their English vocabulary. The lack of familiarity of these two interviewees suggested that a number of the people that I interviewed may, at one time, have been uncertain about the very meaning of wilderness as used in the English language and in Canada. Wilderness, and the emphasis that is placed on this North American construct in politics and media in Canada, is largely based on Western meanings of the concept, a potentially White middle-class definition that must be learned through language and the meaning of which must be absorbed over time. More importantly still, the commonly understood meaning of wilderness may have little or no relevance to new immigrants.

Language and discourse

Discourse refers to a shared way of looking at the world (Dryzek, 1997), as expressed in and studied through attention to linguistic forms. It is laced with moral and aesthetic questions about livelihood, attitudes and relationships to others. Studies of discourse are important as a means of studying social organisation and values over time and place. Discourse refers to a common way of looking at the world among a particular group of people at a particular period of time (Harré et al., 1999). The shared discourse or talk of wilderness in North America, particularly in White, middle-class North America, is

often considered to be that defined by Cronon (1996), as defined above. We will see in this study, however, that this 'shared' way of conceptualising nature is less pervasive than Cronon claims, particularly as it concerns specific social and ethnic groups.

Studies of discourse may alternatively refer to the way language reflects power dynamics and works to maintain particular social organisations (Foucault, 1972). Both in examinations of language as well as meaning and language and power, discourse can serve to privilege some group-specific meanings while rendering others invisible (Seigler, 2001); having one language or set of meanings that is dominant in political and social spheres means that other outlooks are ignored and may not be recognized at all. In Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Humpty Dumpty makes a similar point to Alice:

> "The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many things."
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all." (Carroll, 1946: 229-230)

As Humpty Dumpty implies, those meanings that are most heard gain representational strength, while other meanings or understandings go largely unheard or ignored. How, then, do immigrants to a new country take on the meanings and words of their new environment? How do language and meaning change in the face of a foreign discourse?

Language and meaning are deeply integrated into cultural discourses and refer to the ways in which people construct, interpret, analyse, and discuss issues. The impact of words and language is undisputed. Whether the medium is poetry, academic writing or journalism, words can influence, persuade and motivate change. Words have the ability not only to represent "but also to create worlds, to offer possibilities, to produce action" (Barnes & Gregory, 1997:4). Meanings are the product of current and past experiences, as they manifest themselves at a given time (Strauss & Quinn, 1997).

Canada is composed of people of diverse racial and social backgrounds who, inevitably, have very different ways of seeing the world. These differences in perception include differences in language. A question then arises – how do people with different languages and ways of constructing meaning in their lives adjust to being immersed in a new context? Assuming that the most prevalent view of wilderness is the one that Cronon examines (i.e. one of untouched, unspoiled land), then how do newcomers to this continent adapt and take on (if at all) a new language and set of meanings? How do meanings change over time for longer-term residents?

The following pages will explore the emerging theory that language can be adopted relatively quickly, while the meanings associated with that language in any given context may take years or a lifetime to absorb, may become integrated with other belief structures to form hybrid meanings, or may be rejected completely. In other words, Chinese Canadian immigrants who have lived here for a number of years have taken on the language of wilderness, but, with the exception of those who spent much of their youth growing up in Canada, have not, by and large, internalised the moral and aesthetic relationships it has come to constitute in Cronon's (1996) examination of wilderness in North America. In this chapter, I will explore the meaning of wilderness for Chinese Canadian immigrants, both before and after their arrival in Canada.

Wilderness through history

The concept of wilderness has witnessed significant change over the last thousand years in the language and discourses of Europe and North America, as discussed in Chapter One. The linguistic roots of the term can be traced to the Latin *wild-deor-ness*, a place of wild animals beyond the city walls (Nash, 1982). The literal translations of wilderness in other languages parallel the early biblical interpretations of wilderness as a place of savageness and unpredictability. In Spanish, for example,

wilderness is *falta de cultura* or lack of cultivation, while in French the equivalent is *lieu désert* or deserted place. In Chinese (Cantonese), wilderness is best translated as *fong ye* or barren, useless, uncultivated land. China's northern countryside, to which youths were sent during the Cultural Revolution, was referred to as the "Great Northern Wilderness" (Feng, 1996), emphasising the remoteness and low arability of the land. Wilderness in all of these translations refers to barren, unworkable land that is undesirable for human habitation; it is the antithesis of civilization. It is only as a result of recent movements that wilderness has become a place of worship and inspiration that is worthy of protection. Although it remains as the antithesis of civilization, wilderness no longer has negative connotations. Hence, the idea of wilderness has shifted along with the idea of civilization; industrialization, with its resultant pollution and crowding, has turned the city from haven to hell.

The language surrounding wilderness in the West has shifted significantly over the last two hundred and fifty years as a result of a number of factors, including movements in Europe and North America (Nicholson, 1997; Nash, 1982), specifically the sublime and the frontier (Cronon, 1996). To the best of our knowledge, the sublime and the frontier have not influenced Chinese development to the same degree that they have in North America. Land in China, in contrast to North America, has been fully cultivated for thousands of years (with the exception of non-arable areas of desert and mountain ranges), so tracks of vast forest and unused[4] land do not exist as they did (and do) in North America. What, then, does wilderness mean in China today? Has its meaning altered since it was defined as barren land and since China has moved towards industrial development with multiple Western influences? How do Chinese Canadian immigrants define and make sense of wilderness in Canada, both upon their arrival and after spending years or decades in the country?

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[4] "Unused" in this sense refers to the modern condition of leaving land unworked and uninhabited, a state of being which has regularly occurred at the expense of its original inhabitants – First Nations or others.

The following sections will outline the reflections of interviewees on the meaning of wilderness before they immigrated to Canada, their understanding and appreciation of wilderness in the present, and their observations on how their own views have changed over time. Were they using language that they had adapted or modified since their arrival to Canada? If their ideas had changed, could they reflect on these differences, recognizing how their own meaning-making had been transformed? If participants could remember feeling differently about wilderness before immigrating, then this would indicate that the concept was a learned one. In order to begin addressing this question, I asked interviewees to reflect on their ideas about wilderness before they immigrated to Canada. Responses to my request for interviewees to reflect on wilderness before they immigrated to Canada were varied, but some patterned distinctions were evident.

No meaning

Many respondents felt as though wilderness had no meaning to them in China; they were only exposed to wilderness on their arrival to Canada: "Wilderness I experienced more in Canada, you see. In other words, in the city you are not aware of any type of life other than the city life." (Tse). Life in the city provided no opportunities for Tse to see or come into contact with wilderness as a physical entity. He suggests that he contemplated wilderness very little before he arrived in Canada. Another respondent echoed similarly: "I don't think it ever was something I really thought about because there was no alternative, I don't think. It was just that little village and without a point of comparison you don't have a wilderness and you don't really have a city. You just have that place where you are" (Li). For Li, wilderness did not exist as a point of contrast. Wilderness, according to both Tse and Li, was an unfamiliar concept prior to their arrival to Canada.

It is unlikely, however, that wilderness, or the Chinese equivalent of wilderness, truly had no meaning for them before their arrival to Canada. What is more likely is that both of these interviewees have already come to understand what wilderness is in the more widely represented North American sense. As such, they are unable to translate this meaning back to their earlier years in China. Both Tse and Li, later in their interviews, reflect critically on the Canadian notion of wilderness, supporting the idea that reflection on alternate meanings is a challenging task. The following headings demonstrate that wilderness did have meaning to interviewees before moving to Canada, but a very different meaning than it does for them in the present.

Parks and open spaces

For some interviewees, wilderness paralleled park land or open spaces where picnics and walks took place: "Wilderness will mean a hike or trip to the country, to the countryside, where you don't find housing, maybe the beach, somewhere you can picnic with less people around, nature. Not wilderness in the total wilderness sense, like here, but just generally where it is reserved not for building, open space." (Wong) Wilderness for Wong meant parkland, open space, or countryside; it was a place with no construction sites or buildings. It is interesting to note that in this quote Wong makes a distinction between how he viewed wilderness while in China and how those views have changed upon arrival to Canada; he distinguishes between wilderness past (i.e. parks and open spaces) and present (i.e. "total wilderness"). Another interviewee reflected on wilderness in China as an area for recreation and socialisation: "there were many and fairly open spaces for wilderness, nature. You could go on picnics. They were very typical. With your classmates, led by teachers or what. I used to find it exhilarating being able to do that. To go out with a bunch of your peers." (Wai) Wilderness is equated with nature, parks and picnics with friends. For Wai, it was a place to socialize with classmates and friends and a place for fun.

Barren, deserted, undeveloped

A third trend in responding to my question concerning reflections on wilderness while in China, Hong Kong, and/or Taiwan raised the issue of development (or lack thereof). Wilderness to some was a place that was undeveloped, backward—wasted space. Several respondents felt that while they were in China, the closest approximation to wilderness would have been Vancouver itself: "At that time, the time I was in Hong Kong, I would think that people would think wilderness is Vancouver. Development is progress...They would think that Canada is a very backward country. Because of its lack of urban development. Too few people in such a great, vast land" (Yiu). Wilderness for Yiu is synonymous with the anti-Edenic narrative and the literal translation of unproductive, un(under)utilised land. According to Yiu, who emigrated from Hong Kong, the wide open spaces are indicative of a lack of development, low population density, and poor business strategy. Such a place is backward and uncivilized, thereby making it wilderness. Yiu generalises his thoughts to include people from Hong Kong, separating himself from his statement, yet indirectly suggesting that the views he is attributing to others may really have been his own.

Johnston, from Hong Kong, when asked what he would have said about wilderness as a child insisted that "It would never even had entered my mind if you had asked me that [what wilderness is] while I was in Hong Kong as a kid. I wouldn't know. I would say the moon. You know, because it's empty and dark. So I would only have entertained that thought. I certainly entertain it now and I would only have entertained that thought here in Canada. The concept of wilderness, you know." The moon, a barren, deserted, undeveloped place, was the closest approximation to wilderness that Johnston could think of in the context of his upbringing in Hong Kong. In fact, he may not have been able to respond to a question asking him to define wilderness, because it was a concept that had no place in his childhood in Hong

Kong. Johnston recognizes his own gradual acquisition of the notion of wilderness since his arrival in Canada, attributing his current knowledge of the term to his time spent here.

Punishment

Two respondents linked wilderness with punishment. Both Yin Yongyuan and Gu Xiong grew up in China during the late sixties and early seventies at the time of the Cultural Revolution. Because they were teenagers during the height of the movement, they were forced to participate in Chairman Mao's reform policy, in which educated youth were to be re-educated by peasants in rural China. Both worked under very harsh conditions in northern China, areas where agricultural productivity was low and droughts common. These areas of remote countryside were referred to as 'The Great Northern Wilderness' by those who spent time there (Feng, 1996): "At that time in China, even until the 1990s, the countryside was a totally different concept than our concept of countryside [in Canada]. It means punishment. When the government decided to send you to the countryside that means punishment...we were starving too. Not enough food to eat" (Xiong). In these work camps, youth worked long days with little food or clothing and could go up to ten years without seeing their family (Xiong). Both Yin and Xiong, as a result of these experiences, associated wilderness with banishment and punishment by the government. Wilderness was hostile, undesirable territory.

These quotes and trends raise important issues in the development of environmental policy and planning. It is quite possible that new Chinese immigrants to Canada do not comprehend or find value in wilderness as it is construed by North Americans. This means that they will not be able to understand or find relevance in a policy aimed at protecting wilderness and that their concerns, which may not translate well, will often go unheard. Chinese Canadian immigrants, therefore, are likely to feel marginalized by language and meanings that are not their own.

The recent debate over tree cutting[5] in Vancouver provides an excellent example of this miscommunication. Some immigrants from Hong Kong, who left very cramped living conditions overseas, arrived in Canada, bought homes and cut back trees on their property (for various reasons including a desire for more space or light, good *feng shui*, property stability, etc.). This enraged longer-time residents, particularly in the more affluent areas of Vancouver, who put pressure on City Hall to put a stop to the tree-cutting practices of the new immigrants. The City of Vancouver implemented a tree-cutting bylaw that allowed only one tree to be cut per year on private property. In this case, the action of the Chinese immigrants (tree cutting) and reaction of long-term non-Chinese residents (fury that the City's old trees were being removed) are important in understanding the difficulties in communicating across environmental discourses.

Gabriel Yiu discussed the tree-cutting issue very thoughtfully:

> Yes, this is a tree in private property, so the owner should have every right to keep it or cut it. But...when people go in that community with those trees who used to climb up those trees who have fond memories...and the new immigrants, the new neighbour comes in and cuts away all those trees, what's the feeling of those people...? And the second thing is...a lot of local people...need some kind of new anchor because...religion...is fading. But deep inside they still need some sort of spiritual anchor. A tree, in terms of its size, its shape, is...very spiritual to a lot of local people. So for people who cut them...it's quite offensive.... So, at least I try to explain to Chinese Canadians, to let them know that the reason why people are so furious, so concerned about people cutting trees...It is not about racism, not about discrimination,...it's not about wealth, it's about spirituality and about values.

Yiu, in his attempt to keep the peace between the fighting factions, outlined beautifully two reasons why longer-term Canadians may value trees more highly than new immigrants—for the memories associated with the trees and the spiritual significance offered through them. Although this debate was constructed

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[5] The tree-cutting dispute in Vancouver proved to be very contentious, upsetting and alienating both immigrant groups and long-term residents. The coverage of the issue is now thought to have been fuelled, to a large extent, by media forces in Vancouver, who portrayed the issue as a racial one. The dispute was limited to a small group of affluent individuals in a select area of Vancouver. I mention this disagreement on a number of occasions in this thesis because interviewees themselves raised the debate, citing it as an important example of cross-cultural miscommunication surrounding the ideas of wilderness and nature in the city.

in the media as a racist one, Yiu has attempted to explain how the meaning of a tree changes across an ocean and how that clash of meanings results not only in a sense of alienation and marginalisation, but in a situation in which two parties feel their rights and values are being interfered with. Yiu has, himself, come to terms with how language and meaning vary across oceans and how they can lead to miscommunication and marginalisation. As New (1997) states, what were considered to be commonly understood meanings can break down when language and its encoded values are brought to a new environment. Language, therefore, can be both an impediment to and a means of communication. In this situation, commonly held meanings, or at least an appreciation for the difference inherent in meanings, may have reduced the tension surrounding the tree-cutting dispute for both parties.

To the present

If meanings are not shared, then in what period of time and under what circumstances do alternate meanings become understood? This section will outline the meanings of wilderness as expressed by interviewees and compare those understandings to what Cronon outlines as the North American wilderness experience. The following paragraphs outline some of their more prevalent representations of wilderness – in the present.

Uncontrolled and isolated

A common theme among informants was a reflection on wilderness in Canada as untamed or uninfluenced by humans: "I think that wilderness implies that things are just sort of wild and not looked after." (Wong). Wong, who expressed little interest in visiting wilderness himself, described wilderness as an untamed, abandoned place that was quite unlike the vista of parks that he described as wilderness in China. Similarly, Tsai described wilderness in Canada as, "Unchanged scenery, including plants and

animals and the environment that are not disturbed by human beings". In Tsai's version of Canadian wilderness, there are no people and no human impact.

According to Leung, in wilderness there is "Nothing man-made in the environment, no cars or buildings". Similarly for Lo, there is "no garbage" in wild places. Leung and Lo, who were both avid hikers in Hong Kong, praised the idea of wilderness as a place without human influence. For Sid Tan, an environmental activist who grew up from a young age in British Columbia, "What makes something wild is what was original before human presence. North America was entirely wild until geologically very very recently...Whenever human beings appear onto some place truly wild...that is the beginning of the end of true wilderness." Tan sees no place for humans, either through recreation or survival in wilderness. Not only is there no garbage, but there are no humans in existence in true wilderness. Absence of human life and human influence (including construction and garbage) is key to the definitions of wilderness offered by informants when reflecting on their understanding of wilderness in British Columbia.

Beautiful

To others, their view of wilderness centred on physical beauty. Wilderness is something to look at, to appreciate from a distance: "To me, it's more like a poster, like a nice picture of freedom, of how animals run wild and free" (Yuen). Yuen did not relate wilderness to her own life or desires, but to a setting where animals could run freely. Wilderness represents freedom and space. This sentiment was echoed by Lo, who described the beauty of British Columbia with great enthusiasm: "When we went up to Abbotsford we always said 'Oh, see that? That could be a poster in a calendar – highway and mountain. Wow! So many posters!' No matter what, you can take a photograph and it can be a calendar, poster, or

something like that." The beauty of the province to Lo was a vision framed by a camera lens, a sense of awe that accompanies a beautiful photograph of a magical landscape.

The sense of beauty as framed in art is certainly not exclusive to those in this study. With each licence plate in the province pronouncing 'Beautiful British Columbia', the "postcard province" is the image that tourism has been promoting for decades. The way in which Lo expressed this appreciation (i.e. as a poster), however, may not be echoed by North Americans, even if they equate scenes with calendars or postcards. There is an honesty and frankness about the way in which Lo and other interviewees expressed their views of wilderness and nature that, I believe, would unlikely be echoed among non-immigrants. It seems that there is a pioneer spirit that remains entrenched in the Canadian psyche that everyone should feel comfortable in and challenged by life in the woods. It is quite possible, however, that interviewees do not feel any of the social pressures to physically experience nature (rather than to simply view it) that longer-term residents might.

Scary

On the other side of beauty, there was often an undercurrent of fear of the unknown in wilderness among study participants: "I think it's kind of the unknown, what's out there. You know. Why would you want to be walking in the woods and you know, you don't know what's going to be sort of coming after you, the animals" (Chin). As she said this, Chin, who was born in Canada, was discussing why it was that she felt Chinese Canadian immigrants had little interest in wilderness-type areas; she felt that the unfamiliarity and uncontrollability of wild places made entering them a terrifying prospect to many immigrants. According to Tzang, from Taipei, Taiwan, "wilderness is scary. Wilderness is where the animals are." Similarly, Johnston, who spent time in Northern Ontario working on a new book said that he had difficulty getting any writing done there whatsoever, because "it was the most terrifying place I've ever been to".

Wild animals and unfamiliar places can increase fear of the unknown. For many non-Chinese Canadians, fear of wilderness and the unknown may be equally powerful sentiments, yet they may be less ready to admit it. If the frontier myth still affects the sensibilities of North Americans towards wilderness, then they may recognize the sense of identity and attachment that 'ought' to be placed on wild landscapes and be much less willing to admit their own fear of, or disinterest in, such places.

Cronon suggests that the dominant idea of wilderness is as a place that does not include people, remote, forested, and attractive due to its promise of escape, unprescribed activity, and, even, spiritual enlightenment. A number of these associations (i.e. no people, remote) are in close alignment to the meanings provided by interviewees concerning their in-China experiences or thoughts about wilderness. Other notions of wilderness (i.e. forested, worthy of protection) are reflected for many in their present-day understandings of the term. The latter associations (i.e. escape, refuge, activity, and spirituality), however, were very rarely echoed by interviewees. Wilderness, for many interviewees, remains a place of remoteness, fear, and isolation. It is unlikely to be a desirable place and offers no thoughts of escape, relaxation or spiritual enlightenment. Language, in this case, has changed, but the aesthetic and spiritual manifestations of wilderness have not conformed to 'Western' thought. The significance or roots of these associations will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Four. For present purposes, however, it is important to trace not only how the study group defines wilderness, but how the moral and physical values affiliated with concepts of wilderness appear to have changed over time. How have the views and understandings of informants changed since their initial impressions of Canada?

Transformation of language and thought

Over the course of many interviews, participants were able to reflect on how their thoughts and perceptions of wilderness and nature had shifted since their arrival in Canada. For a number of

participants in the study, this reflection resulted in a generalization about *other* Chinese Canadians and how they might react in their new Canadian landscape. Yiu, for example, a journalist from Hong Kong, reflected on the tree-cutting uproar that took place in Vancouver in the late nineties, said, "For immigrants who just arrive fresh in Vancouver, they may see things their usual way, so why have a tree in front of their yard? Why have a lawn in front of them?" New immigrants may not have a sense of why cutting down a tree on their own property might be considered inappropriate or offensive to Anglo-European residents. After spending time in Canada, however, Yiu suggested that people would begin to see things differently; they will see the trees as local people see them (or at least have an understanding of how longer-term residents see them, even if they don't see them that way themselves). Acting as a sort of cultural broker, Yiu comments that after some time, new Chinese Canadian immigrants would be able to appreciate the trees in a new way that included, or at least acknowledged, the relationship of the 'others' to their surroundings. Yiu does not suggest that he personally holds trees in high esteem, but acknowledges that his own views and associations with trees have changed since his arrival to Canada.

Li, who said that in China wilderness had had no meaning for her because she had no point of comparison with her small village, described her present thoughts about wilderness as "this sort of pristine bunch of...I think of the Pacific Northwest when I think of wilderness. I wouldn't think the Amazon or the jungles when I think of wilderness. It's always big tall coniferous trees where you don't have a lot of people living. There might be some human settlements but not to the point you have infrastructure. Like big infrastructure, roads and stuff like that." Her reflections have evolved from a word without meaning (see previous discussion under 'No Meaning') to one that mirrors a physical place. The language that she uses to describe this place (i.e. pristine, lack of infrastructure) is reminiscent of the wilderness explored by Cronon in *Uncommon Ground*, although it includes people and human settlements; it is a place where some people live, not a place where people visit for recreation.

Johnston, who was quoted earlier saying that wilderness in Hong Kong would have referred to the moon, explained that friends of his had a cabin in northern Ontario that "truly was in the middle of nowhere. I mean, it was just a cabin in the middle of a forest and overlooking the pebble beach and then Georgian Bay. And that was truly wilderness." Similar to Li's response, for Johnston, wilderness is a remote forest with limited human habitation; people live in this place. When he thinks of wilderness in Canada he thinks of forest, of Northern Ontario, of Sault Saint Marie, and of Manitoulin Island, because of the time he spent in Ontario when he moved to Canada. Wilderness for Johnston in British Columbia would be "one of the forested areas on the islands." No longer the moon, wilderness for Johnston has become an isolated, forested area with few people. It remains a desolate place, but it is composed of trees, water and limited human settlement.

So far, we have traced the differences in the use of language of Chinese Canadian immigrants surroundings notions of wilderness. The following section outlines perceptions of first-generation Canadians of Chinese descent towards wilderness in order to explore whether their new conceptions are reflective of those of first- or second-generation Canadians not of Chinese decent.

Canadians of Chinese decent

Two participants in the study were of Chinese descent born in Vancouver and another grew up in British Columbia from the age of two. These three people were confident in articulating what wilderness was and its relationship to their lives. In contrast to most study participants, who spoke about wilderness with some hesitation, these three discussed the concept of wilderness with me at length and without hesitation, which I have taken as an indication of their familiarity with not only the language, but also the meaning surrounding the concept in the sense of Cronon's Anglo-European context. In the following

quotes, it is interesting to note not only how interviewees define wilderness, but to the moral and aesthetic associations they attach to it.

Chin, a social convener at a community centre in Vancouver, expressed her notions about wilderness as follows:

> Wilderness to me is an area of land that is fairly detached from the urban city we live in. It's about walking for a thousand miles and not having to worry about running into a freeway. Or walking and hiking and being able to listen to the water without hearing a ferry go by. I think it's that point of being totally isolated and knowing that you are far, far away from civilization.

For Chin, wilderness is about isolation and being in the domain of animals. In Chin's wilderness, there are no roads, no intrusive machines, and no human incursions. This is a place for walking, hiking, and escaping civilization. Chin remarked on several occasions that wilderness constituted areas that had not been touched or damaged by humans, thereby ruining the natural cycles of life.

Gordon Mark, a civil servant, also described wilderness as an area that is controlled by nature (i.e. not by humans). Civilization, by contrast, is the place where people are and where people decide what happens or what grows where, whether it be a parking lot or a building. In wilderness, nature chooses what survives and what grows. Mark implied that is was a very good thing that wilderness was quite outside human control. Chin's and Mark's thoughts echo very closely Cronon's description of North American concepts of wilderness, whereby to "manage" wilderness is to damage its very essence and make it no longer natural.

Another interviewee, Sid Tan, who grew up from the age of two in rural B.C., also expressed an appreciation of wilderness on a more spiritual level than that of more recent immigrants: "Pristine, untouched by humans. And to be able to go into areas like that, which I have, that centres you. That's the reality...I think the amount of wilderness that we have will determine the amount of sanity that we have in

this world." For Tan, in the Transcendentalist tradition, wilderness acts as a spiritual centre, focusing the mind. Wilderness is essential in the physical and spiritual senses for human survival. After growing up in British Columbia, Mark, Chin, and Tan had taken on not only the meaning of wilderness that approximates Cronon's description but have incorporated it into their own sense of self and place.

While the language and meaning of wilderness was adopted relatively easily for interviewees, the identification with moral and aesthetic responses to wilderness was much less likely to manifest itself in recent immigrants. The purpose of this chapter has been to document the diversity of meaning immigrants and Canadian-born interviewees attribute to the term wilderness. The concept of wilderness, which is taken so fully for granted, becomes complex when that meaning has associated with it values, attitudes, and semi-religious connotations of place and belonging. What is clear here, at least in this preliminary investigation, is that the language and discourse surrounding wilderness in Canada is markedly different from that of the wilderness discourse in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. What represented barrenness and desolation to interviewees (if, indeed, it represented anything at all) as they reflected on their earliest thoughts on wilderness as place, has come to represent forests, mountains, animals, and lack of human influence. What previously had different philosophical meaning, now, at a cognitive level, represents a concept defining beauty and (Canadian) spirituality. The following chapters will examine in much greater detail the relationship of Chinese Canadian immigrants to landscape and wilderness and will trace some of the traditions and beliefs that influence perception.

Chapter Four

The human place in nature
the influence of tradition on the human place in nature

Changes in the understanding and perception of wilderness among the more vocal environmentalists of

North America over the last hundred and fifty years reinforce the notion that wilderness is as much a

cultural construct as it is a 'thing'. This is not to say that this recently emerged view is the only, or even

the majority view. It is simply the most popularised. Although they may express their positions differently

and use a wide array of tactics, modern environmental groups (who tend to express a more militant

version of the popular viewpoints) posit their concern on wild or natural spaces that exist beyond

humans; what is natural or wild does not exist where humans do. White (1996) asserts that focusing on

'untouched' regions pits productive labour (e.g. logging, mining, fishing) against environment; it detaches

people from the land, even those who work in and on it. According to Di Chiro (1996), environmentalists

are obsessed with protecting 'wild' areas, areas where humans do not exist. This separation is evident

in much of the literature on wilderness. Colonial discourse separates humans from nature, a practice

that is not necessarily representative of the views and beliefs of other cultures existing within the same

landscape. Notions of nature can be tied to notions of community, history, ethnic identity and cultural

survival (Di Chiro, 1996; Lynch, 1993). This chapter will examine traditional Chinese perceptions and

representations of wilderness and nature and examine their connections to the attitudes of Chinese

Canadians. How does tradition influence consideration of the human place in nature?

Roundtable

In the last chapter, we saw that language and meaning differ in response to new social contexts, but that

moral and/or aesthetic appreciation may not become part of immigrant discourse. In this section, I have

outlined the result of a focus group that I conducted through the National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP) office in Vancouver. It acts as a precursor to a more detailed exploration of the human place in nature as it manifests itself in religion and tradition. The participants in my focus group were of Thai, Korean, Taiwanese, Chinese Canadian, and Austrian descent, making it the perfect opportunity to examine how a diverse group responded to a similar task. Their task was to draw (armed with pencil crayons and paper) what wilderness was to them and to explain their pictures to the group. The results of this activity (Appendix A) were intriguing on a number of levels, including in their interpretation of the word, their use of flora and fauna, and, most notably, their inclusion or exclusion of human life in their visual versions of wilderness.

Vincent, from highly urbanised Taiwan, drew a picture featuring rolling green hills, warm-coloured sky, green grass, and a gently flowing waterfall that led to a pond filled with flowers. He described his wilderness as a beautiful place complete with flowers, grass, trees, mountains and water. He noted that there were no animals in his pastoral picture because he is afraid of them. There was, however, a strong human presence in his highly manicured setting.

Soy, of Chinese descent who grew up in a city in Thailand, drew a picture of wilderness that included rolling hills, trees, food crops, sunshine, and, at the forefront of his picture, a small cabin or house. He said that his picture represented a 'natural' wilderness with trees, water, mountains, a river and also a cottage and crops. There is no traffic or noise, said Soy, in his wilderness, but there are fish jumping. This was a place where humans lived within nature and were part of their surroundings.

Andreas, a visiting student from Austria, used browns, blacks, and deep colours to depict his wild place. His picture was dark and foreboding and included storm clouds, a raging river, lightning, rain, dense

forest, fallen trees, and a rather fierce-looking animal. He described his wilderness as pure, untamed nature full of danger and excitement. He told the group about his dream of being a pioneer, fighting against nature and taming it with his bare hands. There would be thunderstorms and wild animals in wilderness, he said. Parks, such as Stanley Park in Vancouver, are far too tame to be wilderness; the paths make them fake. Wilderness is full of savage excitement, ready to be tackled by humans.

Joyce, of Chinese descent who grew up in Vancouver's Eastside, depicted a wilderness of tall grasses, tall trees, water, wildflowers, and a smiling bear. She explained wilderness as being unpredictable, but full of beauty; it sustains life and is part of the bigger global picture. There are no paths in wilderness, she said, and it can be chaotic. She personally has never been off paths and into the wilderness, but insisted that this was a place where humans could visit, but not remain.

Qloyyda, from Seoul, Korea, who grew up with a mother who practiced Buddhism, drew an abstract multicoloured rendition of wilderness, which consisted of circles within circles of colour. Wilderness, she said, is spiritual, mental and physical; it is existence itself and is all-encompassing. The butterfly, drawn into the corner of her picture represented soul and energy; when the butterfly's wings flutter, weather patterns change on the other side of the earth. For Qloyyda, humans are not only part of wilderness, but they come into contact with it through spirituality and touch.

Wilderness, then, means very different things to different people. Amongst the five people who drew images of wilderness, it represented an idyllic landscape, an idyllic farm scene, a savage, unpredictable land, a chaotic, yet beautiful environment, and a spiritual, all-encompassing place. While sample sizes of one cannot pretend to be statistically or even qualitatively representative, this exercise amplified fundamental differences in how people think about wilderness. It also demonstrated differences in the

representation of humans in wilderness; humans could exist and live within the representations of wilderness of Vincent and Soy. Humans in the depictions of Andreas and Joyce, however, were intruders on a chaotic land who could tame the land, if desired. For Qloyyda, wilderness was a spiritual retreat whose existence was largely, or even exclusively, cerebral. What are the influences on these representations of wilderness?

The roots of perception

According to Nicolson (1997), what we see in nature is a result of what we are taught to see in school, church, and books; we are also influenced by the conventions of literature, theology and, more closely, by the human conception of the world we inhabit. The human conception of the world we inhabit and the influence of tradition and teaching on locating the human place in wilderness and nature are the areas of focus in this chapter. In the following pages, I will trace the influence of religion and philosophy on European and Chinese thought about wilderness and nature and examine how these traditions may influence current perceptions of the study participants.

Western thought concerning the relationship between humans and nature (and, indeed, between humans and wilderness) has been influenced strongly by Christian doctrine, as evidenced in writings about the sublime (Nicolson, 1997). Debates continue to arise over the meaning of biblical references to the human place in nature; Genesis II suggests that humans should act as stewards towards nature, while Genesis I implies that humans are to "have dominion over" nature and tame it as they see fit (Genesis, verse 26). Regardless of one's interpretation of the Bible, the overarching theme continues to be that humans are separate from nature.

Lynn White Jr. (1967), in his much-contested essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", wrote that humans grew apart from nature with increasing agricultural practices and technological advancements. By 830 AD, he wrote, man and nature had become two separate entities and man considered himself to be master. With the rise of Christianity, the split between humans and nature became wider still, as the Bible was said to have given man dominion over all:

> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."...and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." Genesis 1:26

White places blame on the Judeo-Christian axiom for the worsening of our 'ecological crisis' and our separation from nature by offering humans dominion over the earth. This notion of dominion, White asserts, is in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and 'Asian religions'; by destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature with complete indifference.

White is neither the first nor the last to blame the West's attitudes toward nature on religious practices (see Passmore, 1980). Cronon (1996) also suggests that the impact of biblical interpretations is a root cause of ecological decline, as humans have been placed entirely outside and above the natural world; placing hope in wilderness as the last bastion for redemption on earth creates an even greater rift between humans and the earth. Looking for *root causes* of environmental decline, however, can be extremely problematic. Ellis (1996) warns of making such claims, suggesting that any attempt to place blame or causality on one particular moment or movement is not only destructive to environmental causes, but completely implausible. Environmental problems are complex and multi-faceted and cannot be traced to one source. This becomes particularly clear when we explore inter-societal meanings of a term, such as wilderness.

The trouble with North American notions of wilderness, or the trouble with the way wilderness has been conceived of to date, is that it posits the human species outside the boundary of what is natural, thereby making areas of concern those that are outside of the human sphere, namely outside the city limits (Cronon, 1996). Writings about wilderness, environmental activism, and governmental policy also encourage us to view wild places as – *over there*. This separation between humans and the natural world leads to a relationship in which areas that have been 'touched' by humans become soiled property, thereby decreasing its value for protection. The idea that humans are masters over nature may also reduce desires or tendencies towards conservation. Dobel (1977) suggests that White has misinterpreted Genesis and that the Bible suggests that the earth is an autonomous and valuable entity. We must, however, be wary of claims that place the Judeo-Christian ethic (or any other ethic) at the root of the Western relationship with the environment.

While the following sections explore Chinese traditions and their influence on wilderness perception, it is not my intention to suggest that they will lead to enhanced environmental consciousness. Both Nash (1982) and White (1967) idealise Asian traditions as being harmonious with nature. Such reductions resonate with the work of Bourdieu (1977) and, more recently, Conklin and Graham (1995) on *symbolic capital*, in which Indigenous or 'exotic' groups or traditions are extolled for their seemingly idyllic relationships with nature. If Christianity is responsible for ecological decline, then, by this argument, 'Asian' cultures must live harmoniously with nature, to the extent that they are not influenced by the Judeo-Christian ethic and that their belief systems are extolled as a compelling expression of symbolic capital. The Peoples' Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan cannot, however, be thought of as places where people live gently with nature. Massive population growth coupled with a push for development and modernization have led to increased demands on the land for food and energy production. Such demands in turn have led to air pollution, desertification, deforestation, and drought

(Smil, 1984; Smil, 1993). While these environmental conditions are not unique to China, they arise in contrast to the symbolic capital associated with the traditions of Taoism and Confucianism.

In a similar vein, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), describe three fundamental relationships between humans and nature: subjugation-to-Nature; harmony-with-Nature; and mastery-over-Nature. The first, which they suggest is common to Spanish Americans, is the idea that there is little or nothing humans can do to defend themselves against nature; if God wills death, people will die. The second relationship, which Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck situate in China, Japan, and among Navaho Indians, suggests that there is no separation between humans, nature, and supernature; each is an extension of the other and wholeness is derived from their unity. The final relationship, mastery-over-nature, is common to Americans who believe that they can overcome natural forces for human use and that the Lord helps people who can help themselves; it is humankind's duty to overcome obstacles and to develop technology. While subjugation-to-nature certainly reflects the concerns of White and others that the Judeo-Christian ethos resulted in the isolation of humans from, with dominion over, nature, what are the roots of the second relationship (harmony-with-Nature) in Chinese society?

Confucianism and Taoism, the two indigenous traditions of China, have had major influences on Chinese thought since the so-called Axial Age in the first millennium before the birth of Christ (Tucker, 1993). In the following pages, these two traditions will be discussed not because they are the only traditions that may influence the relationship of Chinese Canadians to the land, but because interviewees directly expressed connections between these indigenous traditions and their thoughts about nature and wilderness and their influence on environmental thought.

Taoism

Roderick Nash (1982), who wrote the first extended work on the history of wilderness, also depicts the relationship of Eastern cultures with wilderness as one of respect and inclusion (i.e. harmony-with-Nature). Wilderness in China and Japan, Nash writes, was thought of without connotations of evil and ungodliness. Instead, in wilderness one could find spirituality. The harmonious relationship to which Nash alludes, relates most closely to the Taoist tradition.

Taoism is best known for its concern with the Tao (translated as "Way"), which was based on traditional Chinese virtues of simplicity and sincerity. Taoist thought emerged in the fourth and third centuries B.C. by intellectuals who were disillusioned with current philosophical and moral thought. Taoism suggests that everything in the world is formed by the cosmic Way, the Tao, which emphasises harmony and balance (Zhang, 1989). Plants and animals in their natural state should be left untouched, as the Way is far wiser than any person; changing nature would be akin to "asserting our own egos and trying to substitute our own limited knowledge for the wisdom of the universe" (Overmyer, 1986:30). Even modern tourist brochures for Hong Kong, which advertise "unspoiled rural land...characterized by an abiding sense of harmony with nature" (HKTA, 2001), appeal to the harmonious Way of the Tao. The notion of "unspoiled rural land" in North America may very well be considered oxymoronic, as rural lands are already considered by many to be damaged lands.[6]

Taoist thought is generally attributed to Laozi, who lived around 400 B.C. and Zhuangzi, who lived from 369 to 286 B.C. (Watts, 2000). The schools of Buddhism and Taoism are often indistinguishable in China, as Taoism completely permeated Buddhism once it was imported to China. The natural world operates through the Tao, whose true meaning cannot be grasped; nature is *ziran,* or "of itself so". At

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[6] For a discussion on the relationship between manual labour and environmentalism, see R. White (1996) "Are you an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?".

the core of Laozi's written philosophy is the "art of getting out of one's own way, learning how to act without forcing conclusions, and living in skilful harmony with the processes of nature instead of trying to push them around" (Watts, 2000:34). In this way, wood should be cut with the grain; by not interfering with the way of the tree, work is made simple. Taoism is often described as the philosophy of nature. Classic texts refer to the Tao of Earth, the Tao of Man, and the Tao of Heaven, the three of which come together to create life and knowledge; each is essential but cannot exist alone. Practicing Taoists continue to exist today, with the roots of the Tao, or *the way*, influencing their actions:

> "We believe in the formless and eternal Tao, and we recognize all personified deities as being mere human constructs. We reject hatred, intolerance, and unnecessary violence, and embrace harmony, love and learning, as we are taught by Nature. We place our trust and our lives in the Tao, that we may live in peace and balance with the Universe, both in this mortal life and beyond." (WRT, 2002).

Taoists in the fourth century B.C. (as well as today) associated an infinite and benign force with the natural world; they sought out wilderness to find the unity and rhythm of the universe. Modern Taoists may not seek out wilderness, but may seek out the beauty and harmony of more humble places in nature.

For Yim Tse, a calligrapher originally from Hong Kong, Taoism factors strongly within his belief systems and his outlook on life and the human place in nature. When asked for his thoughts on humans and nature, Tse said, "For me, well actually in Chinese philosophy, nature and human should be a harmonious whole. So there should not be nature and man or human to be on two opposite poles. Actually, particularly in Taoism, Chinese philosophy, man and nature should be as an entity. In other words, humans should not really conquer nature, they should be part of the nature because there shouldn't be a demarcation, we are part of nature." Tse, reflecting on traditional Chinese beliefs, noted that humans and nature are as one; conquering nature is not part of traditional belief, but harmony is. At one point in the interview, Tse pushed open the curtains of his studio, revealing a lush garden

landscape; in this way, he told me, he can bring nature into his studio, feeling connected with the outdoors in his work.

A great tragedy for Joe Wai, a Vancouver architect who grew up in Hong Kong, is that the architectural expression inspired by regional character is being lost with globalisation. Architectural spaces, says Wai, can be representative of living harmoniously with the landscape. He hopes to be commissioned to build such a place, a place that might be thought to "grow by itself and become natural", where the landscape and the people within it reflect one another. The picture Wai paints is analogous to traditional Chinese landscape paintings, in which humans live visibly, yet harmoniously, with their surroundings. Taoism supports such living in harmony with nature, as well as the appreciation of nature, even in the most humble of places. While a student at UBC, Wai remembers the forest that used to spread across much of the campus. On his regular walk to classes, he remembers passing through this forest and naming some of his favourite trees, most of which have since been removed. Wai's appreciation of both the 'humble' places in nature and the symbolism and character of regional architecture reflects both the ideals of Taoism and the traditional Chinese art inspired by Taoism in which humans live seamlessly within the natural landscapes.

Agnes Choy, who came to Canada from Beijing as a teenager, noted the influence of Chinese traditions on modern thought about nature:

> Chinese people, I think have a long history of appreciating nature. If you see all the paintings, Chinese traditional paintings and poetry, I would say eighty percent is focused on nature – maybe more than eighty percent....So I think from Chinese history we, Chinese people, and Chinese philosophy, like Taoist philosophy there was a kind of praise for the fact that if you can live in the middle of the mountain with all the quietness and nobody to bother you and all you do is your research or your readings and that's in older Chinese people, that's the best way of living and they will say it's like God's lifestyle, to live like that. (Choy)

Taoism and the communion with nature that its most devout followers would embark upon still lingers on in Chinese lore. The appreciation for natural landscapes and solitude is passed on to younger generations in this way. Later in our interview, Choy confirmed the transmissibility of such ideas when she reported her own desire to live peacefully in a natural setting, with no one about to bother her.

Taoism and Transcendentalism share some commonalities. Both suggest that infinite forces exist within the natural world and that spending time in nature or wilderness unites one with other forces. Taoists, however, have not sought out Divinity in nature, as they recognize that the Tao of Man is equally important and necessary as the Tao of Earth or the Tao of Heaven. Transcendentalists, while besotted with the beauty in nature, sought out nature to be closer to God and to seek out the Divine powers in nature rather than equality in nature. These subtle differences are fundamental to a comparison and examination of North American versus Chinese traditions and attitudes towards nature. In Taoism, there is no searching for the sublime, as Cronon calls it, as the Tao of Earth is present in all life on the planet, not only in awesome landscapes where humans are made to feel insignificant in the face of God. In Transcendentalism, there is no sublime in humble places or manicured lawns; the Divine exists outside of human civilization.

Landscape painters, often in the Taoist tradition, have celebrated wilderness and open landscapes for thousands of years, making pilgrimages to meditate and adore the inner harmonies of wild places. Lo Shyh-Charng, an artist from Taiwan, said that his landscape paintings have been influenced by traditional Chinese philosophy, particularly Taoism: "Man is in nature, lives with nature, and is in harmony with nature. I think that's still my thinking. But...it's kind of an empty phrase now but it's quite true. If I think back I think the whole story, I still feel that way." Lo's paintings focus largely on views of the North Shore mountains from his studio in Point Grey. He delights particularly in the different light that

settles upon the mountains at various times of the day and year. What is conspicuously absent from these paintings, however, is any sign of human existence. I asked him where the people in his paintings were and the houses that crawl a third of the way up the mountains. To this he responded that he did not like to have signs of human

Lo Shyh-Charng, 1997, www.shyhcharnglo.com

settlements in his work, despite the fact that in traditional Chinese painting there is always a figure present in the landscape to show that people live within nature or that they work within it. According to Winchester (1998), the small figures depicted in large classical Chinese paintings indicate mute subservience to nature, a stoic acceptance of the gigantism of nature and the relative insignificance of man. Although Lo's paintings do not contain figures or physical signs of human life, he told me that he tries to convey (by means of the beauty of the land and the gentleness of his painting) that people are still in nature, that they are present there without being visible. In this instance, Lo's Taoist beliefs, his art, and the influence of the British Columbian landscape on his perceptions of beauty and spirituality became strikingly evident, demonstrating the direct influence of tradition on perception.

Confucianism

Confucianism was, and continues to be, the more influential of the two indigenous traditions on a day-to-day basis; it is concerned largely with social reform and just governance. Confucius believed that the ruler and his officials, those who were ostensibly ruling for the people, should hold his moral principles; such leaders should develop empathy and compassion for others. These ethical commitments were "to be expressed in everyday life as reverence for parents, loyalty to friends, and care for the common people, all carried out in a balanced and harmonious way (*li*)" (Overmyer,1986:28). By 100 B.C., the first

stable Chinese empire supported a new form of Confucianism, which supported man's ability to change Nature in an orderly fashion (Nylan & Sivin, 1987). China's goal for civilisation, with the exception, perhaps, of forty years of Communist rule, was based on Confucianism and the search for moral order on earth, sustained by virtue, ritual and reverence for ancestors.

Confucianism has also had a major influence on Chinese society since before the first century B.C. It is "a worldview, a social ethic, a political ideology, a scholarly tradition, and a way of life" (Tu, 1998b:112). Although not an organized religion, Confucianism has had a significant impact on East Asian political culture and spiritual life. At its core is a belief in the perfectibility of each person through personal and communal endeavours. Reverence for the past, emphasis on morality in government, a rationalistic outlook that assumes the intelligibility of the universe, and filial piety (i.e. recognition of and reverence for one's source of life) are also core to Confucian ideals. Confucianism sees the universe as a vast, integrated unit, not as existing in mechanistic parts (as is common to the Enlightenment world view); nature is unified and interconnected and humans are a microcosm in the macrocosm of the universe. As there is no creator God in Confucianism, the universe is thought to be self-generating and organismic. There is no sense of domination or manipulation of nature in Confucian teachings, as humans must seek relational resonance with the cosmos, to form a triad with Heaven, Man, and Earth (Tucker & Berthrong, 1998).

The impact of Confucianism on immigrants to Canada appears to be varied and less clearly linked to their perceptions of nature and wilderness. A number of interviewees stressed the impact of Confucianism on their priorities and their attitudes towards those in positions of power or authority: "Basic Confucianism talked about respect for elders, respect for authority, to work hard, and through education you would succeed. So, typically what happened when I went to school was teachers always

got the impression that Chinese were very well-behaved. They never spoke back, they were very studious and they worked hard." (Mark) According to Mark, the greatest influence of Confucianism on his life was a prioritization of education and authority; his comments are also indicative of his frustration with a lack of understanding of Chinese traditions amongst non-Chinese Canadians.

Daisy Chin, herself a first generation Canadian, remarked: "I know from my own background being a young child growing up in Vancouver and coming down to Chinatown every weekend with my parents, you were taught to be respectful, you were taught to be quiet, you were taught to be able to play in the background and not challenge, so to speak, authority. And I think that's very dominant in our culture. We tend to be very, sort of, go with the flow and see what happens and not sort of fight for what we want. But I think that that is slowly changing or I see that slowly changing." (Chin) Chin, like Mark, noted the practical influence of Confucianism on her daily life growing up in Vancouver; she was taught to be respectful, not to challenge authority, and know her place. Neither Mark nor Chin mentioned Taoism or anything that could be related to Taoism in their discussions of the human place in nature or, indeed, anywhere in their interviews. Perhaps the daily manifestations of Confucianism are more readily passed on in an overseas context than are the more philosophical ramifications of Taoism.

Where Taoism stresses self, blissful ignorance, freedom from artificial constraints, equality, and primitivism, Confucianism stresses wisdom, self-control, hierarchy, and refinement. Tu (1998a), in a paper that resonates with the ideas of Cronon (1996), stresses the problematic relationship that the enlightenment mentality, which underlies major political and social ideas in the West, has had on Western thought. He suggests that when faith in progress, reason and individualism is prized above all else, the results are inequality, self-interest, and individual greed. The dichotomies of matter/spirit, body/mind, and human/nature must be transcended, says Tu, in order to find the unity of Heaven, Earth

and Humankind – the most authentic manifestation of humanity shared by both Confucian and Taoist traditions.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

It would be an oversight at best to ignore the influence of more recent movements on modern Chinese thought about the environment. As communism swept across China in the twentieth century, it attempted to take with it the traditions of Taoism and Confucianism that so permeated society. In its wake, it promoted the ideas of human manipulation of nature for social benefit. The adjacent painting depicts Jin Xunhua, a secondary student from Shanghai who went to work in rural Heilongjiang, "Black Dragon River". In August 1969, Jin drowned attempting to pull a utility pole out of a deluge. The artist, Chu Chunzhong (penname Yi Zhong), was also a youth working in the countryside at the time of the accident. This artwork became one of the "model paintings" of the day, emphasizing the strength of youth as they fight for the betterment of their country. Other paintings similarly depict the virtue and pride of youth who are sent to the countryside to work both for China and towards controlling nature.

Chairman Mao's Red Guard: Learn from Comrade Jin Xunhua, a revolutionary youth model, Yi Zhong (Belkin Art Gallery, UBC, www.belkin-gallery.ubc.ca)

The "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" resulted in some of the formative life experiences for at least two interviewees who lived and worked in the Great Northern Wilderness (i.e. northern countryside) as youths for years according to Chairman Mao's policy of

re-educating the country's youth. I have included the above painting not only because it depicts so clearly the propaganda that surrounded the difficult and painful labour of Xiong and Yin, two of my interviewees, but also the force of nature and the human desire to control it, which became central to Mao's reforms: "Before I came to Canada, I was influenced strongly by communism. Mao Tse-tung was against nature...[He taught us that] human beings can control nature, can beat heaven and, therefore, God. Humans are dominant. We can create species. Everything was created for human use." (Yin). According to Yin's understanding of Chairman Mao's goals, humans could control nature, thereby rising above any external forces. As a Marxist, Mao embraced the Enlightenment idea of progress as a process involving the application of science and reason to achieve mastery over the human and natural worlds. Enormous environmental damage resulted from this period, as resource extraction and industry became major foci of the government's development plan.

The way in which the traditions of Taoism and Confucianism and political movements, such as Communism, have manifested themselves in modern Chinese attitudes towards nature and wilderness is not well documented. Perhaps because Confucianism is widely regarded as a tradition that reflects on the cardinal human virtues of humanity, rightness, ritual, and wisdom (Tu, 1990), Taoism has left a greater immediate mark on the sensibilities of interviewees as they reflect on the human place in nature. As was outlined earlier, both Taoism and Confucianism value the unity of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind. Although they differ in how people might go about achieving this unity, both place great value on trusting in nature and human nature (Watts, 2000). Maoism has also left its mark on the perceptions of interviewees about wilderness, leading them to perceive the human relationship with nature as a hostile one. It is clear that Confucian, Taoist, and Maoist beliefs resonate still with my interviewees as they reflect on their own relationships with one another, with nature and with the meaning of wilderness. What is not clear, however, is how these belief systems influence their physical

attachment to nature and wilderness. The following chapter explores the notion of space on the sensibilities of interviewees, while Chapter Six examines the relationship between informants and wilderness in terms of their interest in outdoor pursuits.

Chapter Five

Spinning through space
the impact of physical place on perception

Consider the story of Kenge and Turnbull in Tuan's (1974) book *Topophilia*. Kenge is a Pygmy who has lived his entire life in the dense rainforest environment. Everything Kenge has seen has been at a very close range. Turnbull, a sociologist (who, by contrast, had not lived in the forest his entire life), takes Kenge outside of the rainforest. Kenge, who lacks the perceptual experience of judging scale, is suddenly bewildered by distance, lack of trees, and the clear definition of the landscape. A flock of buffalo graze several miles away from where Kenge and Turnbull stand in a clearing. As Kenge contemplates the buffalo, he asks, "What Insects are these?" to which Turnbull replies, "they are buffalo". Kenge laughs at this, accusing Turnbull of lying, and asks him what kind of buffalo they might be to be so small. On another occasion, Turnbull shows Kenge a fishing boat with several fishers inside in the middle of a lake; Kenge thinks that this boat is a piece of wood floating in the water.

This story exhibits the influence of physical place on perception. In removing people from one landscape and placing them in another, they bring with them the understandings they have developed through the space and place of their initial surroundings. Early European explorers to the West Coast of Canada are thought to have sought out landscapes of the familiar – gentle hills and meadows that reminded them of their homeland. Mountains rising directly from the sea were neither beautiful nor awe-inspiring, as they were nothing like the park and pastoral landscapes from which they came. The West Coast was a dreary, inhospitable, desolate place full of mournful conifers and raging seas; Grant (Tippett & Cole, 1977), in his 1852 "Description of Vancouver Island" in the *Journal of the Royal Geographic Society*, described the general appearance of Vancouver Island as follows: "Dark, frowning cliffs sternly repel the

foaming sea, as it rushes impetuously against them, and beyond these, with scarcely an interval of level land, rounded hills, densely covered with firs, rise one above the other in dull uninteresting monotony". The West Coast lacked definition and beauty for Grant, as it was dominated by primeval forests, gloom, and savagery. Because the terrain of the West Coast was considered too gloomy and forbidding to be of artistic interest, most of the landscape art by early colonists in the nineteenth century depicted tamed vistas, parkland, and the strength of human endeavours on the landscape. Victoria, the capital of British Columbia, was considered a very attractive and park-like location, a pastoral paradise in the midst of the dreary wilderness of Northwest coast (Tippet & Cole, 1977).

By the mid 1800s, mountains became the subject of emotional and romantic exaggeration in North America (Nicholson, 1997); they were desolate, yet grand. This romanticisation of mountains coincided with the Romantic Movement and the sublime, which suggested that ultimate beauty and salvation could be found outside in powerful natural environments. By the early twentieth century, pioneers were penetrating wilderness, clearing and taming it. The Canadian Alpine Club, which was dedicated to giving Canadians "an appreciation of their mountain heritage" contributed to the idea that wilderness had its own aesthetic appeal. Over time, sensibilities changed to incorporate appreciation of wild places. Artists, such as those in the Group of Seven, began to exalt in free, rough, and "magnificent" landscapes; raw wilderness held a new beauty, as well as moral and spiritual meaning (Tippett & Cole, 1977).

Cronon (1996) explains that the sublime played a significant role in orienting current attitudes towards wilderness. What also influenced understanding of wilderness was the frontier myth, the myth that the true identity of humankind lay in the unchartered, dangerous territory beyond civilization. Both the notions of the sublime and the frontier have, at their roots, a sense of awe and amazement in landscape and space. It was the vast canyons, tallest mountains, deepest forests, and most remote parts of the

country that inspired poets, artists, and early environmentalists to worship and/or seek out the wilderness. Sensibilities and perceptions among European immigrants towards 'untamed' vistas shifted from fear to awe in North America in less than a century. If sensibilities can change in such a short period of time, what is the influence of Canadian space and landscape on Chinese Canadian immigrants as they consider wilderness? Do former urbanites have a different relationship to the Canadian landscape than rural immigrants? How are impressions of Canada linked to impressions of space and place?

Space and Place

Society and its setting cannot be conceived of separately (Harris,1997). Geography and physical environments have enormous impacts on perception. Societies form within the bounds of particular environmental and physical conditions, conditions that have great impacts on how they view new and immediate surroundings. As I interviewed participants, this idea gained increasing relevance. For those interviewees from major urban centres, including Hong Kong, Taipei, and Beijing, one of their most immediate impressions of Vancouver and British Columbia was of the spaces. Many urbanites had difficulty in relating to or finding their way in wide-open streets and parkland. Wilderness, previously an unfamiliar or little used concept gained new meaning with the impact such space and vast tracks of forest had on their perception. Individuals from rural environments, however, found adapting to the physical environment of Canada to be much less traumatic and frequently commented on the beauty of the province or its similarity to their home.

In the following sections, I will trace the impressions and relationships of both rural and urban Chinese Canadian immigrants and their perceptions of landscape and wilderness through their process of adaptation to Canada. I have set out the analysis in terms of participants who were previously from

urban or rural environments in China, Hong Kong or Taiwan, as this is the avenue through which I noticed a significant difference in attitudes and relationships. Consider their reflections on landscape and space in comparison with those of early European settlers, who were intimidated and lost in the vast landscapes of the province.

Urban

Urban centres in Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan are some of the most densely populated areas in the world. Hong Kong Island and Kowloon (the most densely populated regions of Hong Kong) have population densities of 18,000 and 45,000 people per square kilometre respectively (Demographia, 2002a). Beijing has a population density of roughly 31,000 people per square kilometre (Demographia, 2002b) and Taipei's is 10,000 (Taiwan.com.au, 2002). Compared to Vancouver proper, which has a population density of roughly 4,000 people per square kilometre, these numbers are staggering. For someone who has visited or lived in any of these cities, however, these numbers will come as no surprise. These are cities with burgeoning populations. The geographical boundaries of mountains and ocean force these urban centres, as they grow, to grow upwards: "Most accommodation, housing, is going upwards, not like in Canada, North American cities, where you have the luxury of single family dwellings. So it would be mostly in apartment-type housing that people live in and even from that, space is precious, so it is crowded." (Wong). Space is precious and difficult to find in Hong Kong, forcing people to adjust to crowded conditions. According to another interviewee, accommodation in Hong Kong is reminiscent of a shoebox:

> My aunt lived in Hong Kong and her apartment was just, it was a shoebox. It didn't, it's not even as big as a one bedroom here and the whole family lived in that. They were actually lucky because they actually had a bedroom. But the bathroom was so small that the washing machine was put on top of the bathtub so the bathroom was just big enough for a toilet and a bathtub and there was no other place to put the washing machine and you needed access to the pipes. So a board was put across one end of the bathtub and the washing machine was put on top of it. But they were lucky, that was considered a big, a fairly big apartment, in Hong Kong. (Tzang)

Space is at a premium here and many interviewees grew up in these urban settings, where there was little room for grass, trees, playgrounds, or parks, never mind a washing machine.

Chinese society has, for the most part, been removed from North American wild landscapes for centuries, making direct connections with the physical landscape and vast spaces a memory of folklore and storytellers. Interviewees from these densely populated cities consistently commented on space being among their first impressions of Vancouver and Canada: "it was lovely, totally open. Such open space everywhere, no congestion...just generally a very open feeling of everything...It was just so different in terms of the landscape, climate, it was a total change." (Wong) The impressions of Wong and other interviewees on their entry to Canada centred on space, openness and a lack of congestion in comparison to the urban layout that was familiar to them.

Linda Tzang, an historian, grew up in Taipei, Taiwan. She describes Taipei as "relentlessly urban" and as consisting of high rises with open sewers. She came to Canada with her family at the age of five and remembers being astounded by the wide streets and all of the space; the streets in Vancouver were the width of Taiwanese highways, she said, except cleaner and quieter. She was also shocked by the plants, the trees, and the parks with swings and slides because those things were not available in Taiwan due to space limitations. She told me that all of those shocks to the system might result in 'twirling'.

> I think that's why you see a lot of Chinese kids twirling a lot...if you see it they'll just spin because all of a sudden you have so much space. It's hard to get used to, you know, if...you grow up in cramped conditions you don't realize they're cramped until you end up in a place where it's like *whoosh*. And you don't bump into people when you walk down the street. Whereas it's impossible to walk down a street in Taipei without physically bumping into somebody,...you were constantly having to watch being stepped on or crushed. I mean I remember that as a kid, the parents having to go "don't step on my child" and your shoes got wrecked because people stepped on your feet all the time. It was just that crowded. (Tzang)

Tzang suggests that children, on experiencing space (which was previously a rare commodity for them) will begin twirling in the streets because of the overwhelming freedom they experience outside of the cities from which they came.

The themes of space, disorientation and/or exhilaration with new surroundings were common to Tzang and to other immigrants from urban settings. Tzang admitted to never feeling quite at ease with the open spaces in Vancouver; she may have twirled, but she didn't know what to do after that:

> We never came from a place where you could run or anything. So all of a sudden you have a space, you sort of faced with all this big space and you're like, okay, what am I supposed to do with this? So you stuck to the swing set cause you know what to do on the swing set, you swing. And you stuck to the slide and you stuck to the equipment because that at least, we had those in the schools in Taipei. But they would have been in cement playgrounds. So I just don't remember ever running across a field, even though you had all the big fields, you just sort of stuck to the equipment (Tzang).

Tzang felt lost in her new surroundings, unable to determine what to do in parks or in open spaces. She even recalled having to make a conscious effort on her arrival to walk on the grass which previously had been completely inappropriate; grass was to be admired, cement was for walking.

Tzang was not alone in expressing her uncertainty in the face of space. Gordon Mark, who used to take Scout groups who arrived from Hong Kong on camping trips through the Lower Mainland, said, "When you come from a place like HK where it's crowded, space becomes very precious and suddenly you've got a vast amount, it's really overwhelming." The boys he led on trips would take days or weeks to find their feet, many of them finding it difficult to leave the paths and the group leader. Similarly, Johnston, who moved to Canada as a university undergraduate, remembered well his own impressions of space, "The vastness was so huge that I shut it out. I just completely shut it out. It's the only way that I could deal with it." As he made his way across British Columbia with his brother shortly after his arrival, he remembered being delirious with fatigue and confusion. He could not relax, absorb, or appreciate

anything around him, as it was so entirely foreign that he had no points of comparison for the physical enormity of what he was experiencing.

Johnston expressed his first impressions of Canadian landscapes as ones of fear and awe. He was invited to the Banff School of Fine Arts as a resident director for their opera program and spent one summer there. He remembers hating the experience:

> I hated the experience not because of the environment but because it was so beautiful in Banff...it's fabulous. It's halfway up the Rockies as you well know, surrounded by these magnificent mountains, beautiful daily and they were perfect...in every way. I mean they were perfection. I mean you couldn't improve on the beauty of the mountains, the clouds, the air, wildlife, the flora, the fauna, you know. You couldn't improve on that. And not only that but everyday it changed. The light changed and the various parts of the mountain would be highlighted and on other days it would be hidden. And I found it impossible to create art inside a rehearsal studio when the competition outside the window was so magnificent.

Johnston became very depressed by the beauty, clarity, and enormity of the Banff landscapes. He felt that what he was doing inside the theatre (i.e. creating beautiful music) was meaningless because of what he and the musicians were up against. They were trying to create musical perfection indoors for their audiences against a backdrop of physical perfection: "It seemed totally insignificant because whenever you walked out of the rehearsal hall you were confronted by how inadequate you were as an artist." Johnston found his art to be in competition with the mountains, colours, and vastness of the landscapes. He felt overwhelmed by the presence of the environment and tried to shut it out, to no avail. He was reminded on a daily basis of his own weakness and insignificance in the face of nature.

Many interviewees from major cities, such as Johnston, found great comfort in visiting North America's major cities for respite from the confusion of space. Johnston expressed his relief on visiting New York very clearly:

> I was in my element. I understood it, I understood the rhythms, I understood the crowds, I understood the buildings; I understood the hustle; I understood the stinks; I knew where I was. I found my way around New York instantly, instantly. I had zero problems because the environment

was so similar. And I could survive; I knew how to survive in New York. I mean, I knew how to get work, I knew where to stay, I knew who to be friends with, I knew who to be suspicious of, I knew who to stay away from, you know, I just knew my way around, instinctively. And then later on in Toronto, as well, as Toronto started getting real, becoming a really big city.

For Johnston, visiting New York and Toronto made him feel as though he were at home. He instinctively knew his way around the streets. He told me that in an open field he would feel completely panicked, but in a city he could navigate with ease. The competition of the geography was no longer a source of anguish for him when he was in a cityscape. Attempting to create musical perfection in New York was possible amidst the familiar chaos of urban life.

Gabriel Yiu, also from Hong Kong, said that most people from Hong Kong would prefer to go to cities, such as New York, London, Paris or Tokyo, if they had the choice, as they were quite used to that type of environment. Yiu suggested that many people from Hong Kong who arrive in Vancouver are disappointed by the emptiness and lack of activity. Over time, people may come to realize that Canada is different and that protecting the natural environment is important, but many immigrants, he says, will either take some time to realize this or may never see things this way. On his arrival to Vancouver, he "noticed there was a downtown with some tall buildings. I was so happy because I worried that in Vancouver that we wouldn't have any skyscrapers…I would miss those kind of city scenes…I was so happy to see, oh we've got some sky-tall buildings!" For Yiu, his level of comfort in his new surroundings increased due to strong elements of the familiar – in this case the familiar of tall buildings. Like the early European immigrants to North America, he sought out landscapes that resonated with his own background and social conditioning.

Parks and green spaces may be of little interest to many former urbanites, not because they have no appreciation of the physical beauty of nature (see chapter on Human Place), but because they have not developed the same relationship with space as those who are born in British Columbia, or have lived in

the province since their youth, or those who grew up in rural areas in China may have developed. Agnes Choy, who came to Canada as a young girl from Beijing, was used to parks in China as places where families went for entertainment, games, and socializing: "When I first come here when I go to a park and I will see, oh, just trees and trails. I go that's not fun, I mean what can I do? Like, I can do nothing...I became really bored because I find there's no place I can go out and entertain myself. If I go to a park you still have to find fun by yourself." At first, Choy found no enjoyment in Vancouver's parks, but, over time, she gained an appreciation of the space, "Finding fun means that you have to enjoy nature, you have to realize that's a form of enjoyment." Space and the need or desire for space develops for many after spending some time in Canada. Choy expressed an increasing interest in space and wild places over a period of time in Canada: "when I first came here...I just thought what a disappointment! And I never realized there was a need, that I need to get away from people going into the wilderness, even though I lived in the city. I'm so used to it, right? I never felt there was need for that. But now as I grow up more and I realize, yeah perhaps that is a nice place." Although Choy acknowledges that wilderness held little appeal or interest for her on arrival, she is developing an increasing desire and need for space and privacy. She told me that her dream was to own a house on the water somewhere quiet, where there was no one around to bother her.

As noted, urbanites have very distinct first impressions of Vancouver and of Canada. The vast spaces, low population density, and emphasis on green spaces (including parks) can result in shock, disorientation, or disappointment. The familiar of other urban environments, such as New York or Toronto (or even downtown Vancouver), provide an anchoring for most new immigrants, who feel much more comfortable and at ease in densely populated environments. This need to find familiar landscapes echoes the experience of European immigrants upon setting camp in Victoria. Adapting to the emphasis placed on parks and nature can take a great deal of time for some immigrants, whose priorities lie

elsewhere. For others, particularly those who arrived at a young age, wilderness areas, solitude, and space have garnered a great appeal and priority in their lives. The following section will outline the impressions of Canada on immigrants from rural settings.

Rural

In the nineteenth century, immigration to Canada was largely from the region of Sze-yap in Guangdong province. Early immigrants were attracted by the prospect of gold and later were encouraged to come to the country for construction of the railway. These rural immigrants left behind conditions of poverty and came with the hope of securing a livelihood to support their families, most of whom remained in China. Far fewer immigrants today come from rural farming backgrounds. A number of my interviewees, however, were from rural areas and spent the first years of their lives in the countryside of Mainland China or Taiwan. Their impressions of the Canadian landscape and open spaces are markedly different from those of urban dwellers. Their impressions are not of great space and expanses of land. Instead, their views of the landscape are tempered by political insecurity, nostalgia for home, and artistic impressions. In other words, their arrival was not mediated by a shared sense of shock or physical displacement, but of social isolation.

Gu Xiong grew up in a small village in southern China. The only access to this village was by foot or by boat, as there was no road access for vehicles. Xiong grew up surrounded by space, mountains, and open vistas, but did not learn to appreciate such spaces until he had spent much time in Canada. He associated walking and the outdoors with survival. He had never associated space with choice, mobility, or enjoyment. In the mid-eighties, when Xiong was accepted into the Banff School of Art through a university exchange, he first came across the idea that nature could be used for means other than survival: "I walked into the forest and I said, "Oh, this is amazing! So many dead trees! Why just lying

here? These can be used!" Then I saw people make fire with those trees. They cut down the big trees, then cut them into small pieces just for fire, not for survival. I was really surprised!". In Banff, nature served as a locus of enjoyment and adventure, concepts that were foreign to Xiong. Despite being taken on various hiking and camping trips, his art focused on enclosures, both political and physical. He painted canals and chain-link fences within Banff's landscapes. Space did not make him feel free or at ease because he was constantly aware of the invisible, but real, borders of language, history, and politics that followed him from China.

Xiong returned to China after his year in Banff and did not return to Canada until 1990, when he and his family fled after the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing. He arrived in Vancouver with his wife and daughter and realized that his life in Banff was markedly different from his life in Vancouver where he had little money and a growing family. Xiong, who had felt entrapped by the space of Banff also felt entrapped in Vancouver. Language barriers, menial jobs, and lack of attention to his art pushed Xiong to feel trapped both by the landscape and by his apartment walls.

Space does not necessarily represent freedom. Open landscapes, mountains, and forest can be as oppressive to new immigrants as they were to early European immigrants who associated the landscapes of British Columbia with desolation, hostility, and inaccessibility. With recognition for his art, more meaningful work, and strengthened language skills, Xiong began to blend into the landscapes and life of the city. Now he is a strong proponent of environmental and cultural preservation and the promotion of humans living within and as part of the natural world; "Destroying nature," says Xiong, "means destroying ourselves".

Fred Mah spent the first twelve years of his life in rural Guangdong province in southern China. He describes the village as hilly and difficult to farm. Unlike his urban counterparts, he recounted "most of my time was outdoors in actual fact because there's not a heck of a lot indoor stuff, there's no gymnasium or anything like that and so you spend all your time outdoors." He and his friends would catch birds and go fishing when they weren't in school, spending much time outdoors. When he was fourteen, he moved to Dawson Creek in northern British Columbia to join his father and grandfather, who ran a restaurant in the town. He doesn't remember the transition to Dawson Creek being a difficult one: "I enjoyed it very much because it's in a rural area and I had some good friends who we'd go up to their farm... we would go to muck around in the creek and build our own shed so we can camp-out and that type of thing. And we always go grouse hunting and squirrel hunting." The landscape in Dawson Creek was not dissimilar to the one he left behind in China, allowing for a sense of physical continuity between countries.

For Mah, who described his transition to Canada as relatively seamless, the geography of the familiar aided in his aclimatisation. Like the early European immigrants who sought out the landscapes of the familiar, Mah was able to transfer his knowledge of, and appreciation for, the land to his new surroundings in northern British Columbia. Even now, Mah feels that his appreciation for the land is greater than that of immigrants from urban areas:

> I grew up in a rural area so I enjoy nature much more than I would say the Hong Kong people who grew up in the city, have never seen the rural areas at all. And I notice that the Hong Kong people, even when I cut my lawn for instance, they say well, what are you doing? And I say I'm cutting my lawn. And they say you can make more money doing some other things instead of cutting your lawn. And I say well, I enjoy it. That type of thing, it's a different mentality.

Mah's relationship to the land and his appreciation of the outdoors began in rural China and was developed more strongly in Dawson Creek. He compares himself to urban Chinese immigrants, emphasizing their disinterest in the natural world (due to their detachment from it). His beginnings as an

outdoor adventurer led him to a career in the environmental field and to sit on many development and planning boards.

Sandra Li spent the first four years of her life in a small village outside of Guangzhou, China. There were fewer than one thousand people in the village where Li and her family lived in a very small house with no heat or running water. Her strongest recollection of her childhood in rural China is that it was "very yellow because of the wheat". She remembers traversing the flat, yellow landscape with her father, who would put her "near the front or the back of the bike and we would sing as we went down this country road, unpaved, and I would remember yellow on either side of us." As wheat does not grow in sub-tropical Guangzhou, Li's memories from China have been influenced by her time in Canada, where a field of yellow is likely to contain wheat. She spent her early years in this small village and recalls her impressions of Canada on arrival: "I got the impression that it was big and had lots of trees." The impact of geography on perception did not seem to be a major hurdle for Li in adapting to her new environment. Her youth and her familiarity with open spaces made her transition to Canadian spaces an easy one.

Lo grew up in Ching Zsu county in the Taiwanese countryside. He and his grandparents lived with five other families in the hills, most of whom were farmers. His family had been in the same area for over two hundred years, so many of his neighbours were also his relatives. He described the area as being very close to nature, with a stream nearby, a small mountain, and lots of trees:

> We went to school and we played around the whole area. There were no boundaries; you could go anywhere because we had a small hill in the back and front, lots of playground, lots of nature... I think that played a very strong role in my early life because we were able to enjoy the space so much. We were living in the landscape. I still treasure that daily.

For Lo, living in the country had a strong influence on his sensibilities and future. He moved to Taipei at the age of ten to live with his parents. There, he found the space to be incredibly tight and the streets crowded. There was no possibility to run around in a natural setting as there was in his first home.

Lo moved to Vancouver after he finished university and recalls his first impressions of the city being associated with colour and clarity: "I liked Vancouver so much...the landscape and the colour were the strongest feelings I got. I kept on watching the mountains, the colour, that's the mostly strong impression I got at the time. It's totally different...It's so clear, the colour is so different." He mentioned to me on several occasions how the colours and the light of the seasons changed the view from his window each day. For Lo, Vancouver is a city of colour, light, and space. When asked how he felt about Vancouver now in relation to Taiwan, he answered: "I enjoy the landscape here much more than in my hometown because of the water. You have the ocean here and the mountains. In my childhood the landscape is much smaller, just the hill and no water around. No ocean, just a small stream. It's different...after I live in Vancouver here and compare it with that hometown landscape, it's no comparison." He speaks with passion about Vancouver and its influence on his art and his sensibilities. His love of nature and landscape through art has brought him closer to nature and given him an appreciation of colour and space that is not apparent among interviewees from urban areas.

The Chinese Canadian immigrants whom I interviewed from rural China had a much smoother transition to Canada from the perspective of physical space, as they were familiar with open space and greenery. A large number of those from rural settings also spent some time in larger cities before coming to Vancouver, which undoubtedly tempered their reaction to Vancouver and offered them the points of comparison to see the city as an inviting one. Perhaps the early Chinese immigrants from rural settings found the landscapes here less troubling than did the European immigrants. Familiar with mountains and challenging terrain, Chinese immigrants may have adjusted to their new homeland more smoothly.

William Wordsworth believed that the Divine existed and was expressed through nature, that a child who grew up surrounded by nature could sense the presence of the Divine in the mountains, the wind, and the harmony of a landscape (Bate & Perkins, 1986). Wordsworth may have been correct that the environment in which one is raised leaves its mark on the sensibilities of the person who grows up there. For immigrants from urban Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, the open spaces, low population, and wild geography of Canada elicit fear, uncertainty, disorientation and depression. Over time, feelings of fear or unease may be eroded, but for most, they are likely to find beauty in smaller, more humble scenes of nature. For Chinese Canadian immigrants who have immigrated to Canada from rural settings the Canadian landscape and outdoors is much less daunting; for these people there is much beauty and solace to be found in nature. The geography of space is a powerful one, one that is best experienced from an early age to find space for human life within it.

Chapter Six

Getting to the root of activity
spending time in the Great Outdoors

According to Cronon (1996), the polarization between humans and wilderness that has arisen as a result of Western notions of the sublime and the frontier proves to be extremely detrimental in attempting to locate a sustainable human place in nature. Cronon advocates an appreciation of the humble places in nature and an acknowledgement of the human place in nature to foster a more productive environmental ethic. Based on previous chapters, it has become apparent that Chinese traditions *do* place humans within nature and advocate an appreciation of the humble places within nature. Previous chapters have also explored the impact of space on the sensibilities of Chinese Canadian immigrants, people who have not known of the frontier or the wide open spaces that constitute it. Is the Chinese Canadian notion of wilderness accompanied by an interest in outdoor pursuits or spiritual meaning? Are ideas of recreation and outdoor activity, which are central to the more widely heard North American definitions of wilderness, reflected among short-term or longer-term Chinese Canadian immigrants?

Although Taoism and, to a lesser degree, Confucianism, have resulted in thinking about nature in a particular way, going to the mountains to "commune" with nature was not a common occurrence at any stage in China's history, particularly not in the last century since Maoist reforms. Seeking spiritual enlightenment has traditionally been limited to monks, hermits, poets and the very wealthy. Only the most devout (and most privileged) Taoists would head to the mountains to reflect on the nature of the universe. In this chapter I will explore the physical manifestations of the philosophical roots of the human place in nature. In practical terms, do study participants see themselves as part of nature in a physical

sense? Are they interested in the out-of-doors, nature, and wilderness and/or, as Cronon hopes for, a more sustainable human place in nature?

Associations with the outdoors

The majority of Chinese did not, and indeed could not, view nature as a place for escape and truth; instead, it was a place that held toil and uncertainty: "The village where I lived was far away from the small town, maybe seventy kilometres. There was no road. If you wanted to go into that small town to do things, you had to walk, walk on the mountains for one day...And sometimes you had to carry food or rice or equipment or supplies from the small town back to the village. There wasn't any enjoyment; this was for survival." (Xiong). Gu Xiong, an artist who spent his teenage years in rural China, associated the mountains with impasses on an already difficult route; although he saw beauty in nature, he never associated wild spaces with physical enjoyment. The Chinese appreciation of nature and landscape became one of artistic appreciation – an appreciation for beauty, rather than one of physical connection to place.

Many interviewees expressed an appreciation of nature on an aesthetic level, describing Vancouver, Banff, or Whistler as "very beautiful", but could not connect with the landscapes as new immigrants:

> I moved to Vancouver...I found it very difficult. After my wife and my daughter landed here, we were living in a basement. I remember one day I asked my wife – "Vancouver is a very beautiful place, don't you think?" – and she thought for a while and she said, "Well, it is like a basement." Well, I was shocked, but she was right. For people without a language, without knowing the society, it doesn't matter how beautiful the landscape is, it does not belong to us. (Xiong)

Here, Basso's (1996) work on place meanings comes into focus. If we are to listen solely to how people describe their environments (in this case – "beautiful"), then we miss out on the complex relationships people hold with their surroundings. The landscape for Xiong and his wife was beyond their reach. Despite the beauty of their surroundings, they never felt comfortable in the city because they lacked the

language and the knowledge of their new homeland to give them a sense of belonging. Without an understanding of place, neither Xiong nor his wife could appreciate environmental concerns, for their concerns were much more basic, focusing on identity and belonging.

Priorities

Other interviewees were also quite direct in expressing that their own or their family's priorities and goals did not include the outdoors or nature in any tangible way. Instead, their focus was on securing their and their family's future in terms of education, career, and housing. Chin, a community centre director in Vancouver, said that her constituents are unlikely to make themselves present at community meetings about improving the neighbourhood because their immediate concerns focus on improving their families – getting settled, finding good employment, and ensuring that their children are doing well in school. She said that immigrants will ask themselves:

> How do we make the money to live by, how do we find a house that's going to be affordable, you know, those types of issues are much more dominant in terms of their everyday living ...and how do I feed the family, you know, food and shelter. The basic needs are something that is much more important to them so they have less energy and less time to look at something as, you know, green space in the park.

Improving parks or green space in the city would be seen as a much lower priority for recent immigrants than ensuring their family is settled and well fed. Thinking about nature, never mind holidaying in it, is a luxury they have not felt secure enough to indulge in.

The immigrant groups of which Chin speaks, have, in many cases, come from environments in which life was a daily struggle. In Chin's own family, this struggle was very evident:

> My parents...grew up in an era where they had to fight for their life, really, basically. I mean my mom grew up during the war, World War Two. Bombs were flying everywhere and certainly they had to worry about getting killed and there were a lot more issues with regards to disease and illness and health concerns. Couldn't pay for Medicare or any of that so for them it was always about fighting to stay alive.

When her parents came to Canada after living in wartime China, they were suddenly able to work, earn a living, and save money. Chin's mother had a very strong work ethic, which kept her focused on earning money for the well-being of her children. Chinese Canadian immigrants of her parents' generation, said Chin, are focused on securing better lives for their children. Supporting the family through university and health care needs were, and continue to be, of far greater priority than recycling or composting. Such activities, said Chin, are foreign to them.

Others, however, do not come from backgrounds of poverty or struggle, yet environment, nature, and wilderness are quite low on their hierarchy of concern: "to me there's much more important things to argue about and protest over and I think for most Chinese people there's a very strict hierarchy of concern. And people generally come first on that list, then animals and nature come sort of, once you get all the people sorted out then you can worry about the animals." (Tzang) According to Tzang, an art historian, "Chinese people" put humans first, and animals and nature much farther down the list of concern.

Interestingly, when Chin and Tzang made statements about the priorities of Chinese Canadian immigrants, they did so from the distance of generalizations – "Chinese people are like this" or "the Chinese culture prioritises that". Both spoke about Chinese Canadian immigrants and not directly about themselves, which is perhaps reflective of their own sense that it is more appropriate to distance themselves from such claims in the eyes of a non-Chinese Canadian. Also, Chin was born in Canada and Tzang immigrated to British Columbia as a young girl, thereby removing them from identifying themselves as part of "the Chinese culture".

A number of interviewees, when speaking about environmental or wilderness concerns, expressed anxiety relating to human health: "To me, it's [wilderness is]...like a nice picture of freedom, of how animals run wild and free, but then you relate that to us, to human life, to human living. Then you realize that we are actually on the same planet, on the same earth. If anything happens to them it's going to happen to us." (Yuen) Concern with damage to the environment arises on a practical level about the implications for human survival. Using animal health as an index of human health, however, is certainly not an association limited to Chinese Canadian immigrants. Arguments related to economic and physical health are common to requests by environmental and public advocacy groups for preservation of wild areas or improvement of air, water, and soil quality.

The wilderness experience

In order to examine Chinese Canadian immigrant sensibilities towards wilderness and the outdoors, I asked interviewees about how they spent their holiday time, whether or not they enjoyed spending time outdoors, and whether they had been hiking or camping. When asked about their outdoor activities, interviewees responded in one of three ways. The first was with relative disinterest (i.e. they spoke little about it or changed the subject), the second was with an appreciation of nature (from a distance), and the third was with an almost apologetic sense of 'ought', as though being truly Canadian meant that they should pursue such activities. There were very few self-proclaimed outdoor enthusiasts in the study group.

Appreciation, yet from a distance

A common theme among participants in my study was that they appreciated nature and saw beauty in it, but they would prefer to look at it than to be *in* it. Joe Wai, for example, mentioned that his relationship to trees and wilderness was "standoffish" when he arrived in Canada. I asked him to elaborate on this:

"...you know, you're not there to hug it, you're just there to look at it. Stand back looking at it....I love this act of looking at it more than anything else. Looking at it and taking pictures and drawing." Commenting undoubtedly on the notion of environmental 'tree huggers', Wai confirms that he would much prefer to stand back and appreciate nature through art or contemplation than through physically attaching himself to the landscape. Wai prefers to give trees names than to climb or hug them.

Similarly, when asked what she thought of when she thought of nature, Linda Tzang responded: "[that nature is] over there. You know, to me it really is over there. I'm quite happy to look at it, it's beautiful but it's not part of my life. And I'm quite happy to reap the benefits of it....Nature is the view from my window." (Tzang) Rather than seeking out the highest peak or camping on a deserted island to find nature, Tzang sees nature through the window of her house. There is no need to conquer nature, or tackle it with physical force, as it can be appreciated from a distance.

In 1994, protests erupted over Clayoquot Sound, a relatively untouched forested area on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Hundreds of protesters built a camp in the area to protest the logging of the so-called wilderness area. Tzang, from Taiwan, mentioned these protests in her discussion of logging: "watching the protests over Clayoquot Sound, I just couldn't understand how people could get that worked up over it. I've seen the pictures, they're very pretty, but I would never drive up there to look at it in person because I've seen the pictures and that's enough." Her appreciation of wilderness is very much an aesthetic one. She has no desire to go into wilderness or to protect it in a physical sense. She appreciates, yet is physically detached from, nature and wilderness. Tzang goes further with her self analysis by attempting to explain why Chinese people may not have an active interest in wilderness:

> Communion with nature [for Chinese people] is a very quiet sedentary one. So it doesn't translate to the activities, you know, the need to walk through nature. You know, we climb a mountain, we sit down, we look at it for a while. I mean that's what all the old stories are, you know. You go somewhere and you look at it, you say great, you're communing with it on a

spiritual level and then you leave and you go back to your city. You know, unless you happen to be some kind of monk who lives there, in the wilderness, but is a contemplator in life, it's not an active one. And I think that really skews how Chinese people see nature because you're not interacting with it. You know, whereas I think in the Western tradition, it's a much more active communion. You know you're hunting, you're running, you're setting up camps, you're discovering nature.

Tzang relates her attitudes towards nature as culturally based. She suggests that the traditions of meditation and spiritual connection with nature outweigh any physical connections; Chinese people are simply not interested in actively communing with nature. Tzang's analysis provides an interesting variation on Thoreau and the Transcendental movement in which retiring to the wilderness for spiritual enlightenment was expected and not linked to a monastic lifestyle. Tzang's ideas and comments surrounding a detached appreciation of nature resonated through many of my interviews. Again and again, an appreciation and sense of awe associated with nature was expressed clearly, yet the interest in physical pursuits surrounding wilderness or outdoor exploration was minimal at best.

Yin Yongyuan, an environmental scientist in Vancouver, was quite concerned about environmental quality in Vancouver and in his homeland, China. He spoke at length of the worsening environmental conditions in cities in China. When speaking about wilderness, however, he distanced himself from any desire to head back to primeval roots: "Many people want to live in remote areas, becoming isolated – in cabins or something. My former supervisor had a house on an island, with a garbage can on the roof to collect water. I don't see the appeal; I thought that they were crazy." For Yin, environmental concern is very much associated with urban environments; there was work to be done in Vancouver and urban China. Living in the wilderness, being isolated from humanity, has no appeal.

For Ng Tse, a calligrapher and Chinese historian who came to Canada as a university student in the 1950s, nature is something that is accessible from his window and his garden: "Well frankly I'm not an outdoor type in the sense you know I go to hiking and I try to conquer certain mountains. For me the whole environment

being green and being able to just take walks in this quiet environment is good enough. In other words, I don't have to go to wilderness to conquer or to be within nature, you see...Even in the city I walk in the garden and I feel I'm close to nature...I don't have to really go to rock climbing, go to hiking." Tse feels no need to go out and tame or control nature to be close to it; instead, he finds beauty right outside his door:

> I think for me nature is just outside. Now the cherry blossom in full bloom and later on when you can see the petals fall down and scatter along the green lawn. And this serve as a painting, this serves as a walk in heaven. You walk along the lawn with all the scatter cherry blossom petals; it's a sight in itself. It's just like walking in a carpet like this, you see. And that is nature, you don't have to go far to look for nature. Right in my doorstep you see nature. Nothing against people going to conquer Himalayas, climb the rocks and they up their physical challenge. For them that's the only way to see nature and find nature but for me just walking along Marine Drive walking on a carpet lawn with a scatter of cherry blossom petals, scatter along the lawn. It is as close to nature as ever. It's very poetic, very poetic.

Nature for Tse represents something quite different from a physical challenge; it represents beauty, but in the tiny details.

Cronon would, no doubt, be very pleased to hear Tse's words, as Cronon writes that his "principal objection to wilderness is that it may teach us to be dismissive or even contemptuous of...humble places and experiences...wilderness tends to privilege some parts of nature at the expense of others." (p. 86) Tse expresses an appreciation of humble places and experiences and finds no need to tackle nature through physical challenge when he can find beauty walking among cherry blossoms in city streets. Tse, however, does not rank environmental concerns particularly highly, although he enjoys gardening and working the earth with his hands. His art and his own personal philosophies are of utmost importance to him in living his life.

Apologising for not participating

A number of participants literally apologised to me for their lack of interest in hiking and wilderness exploration. It was clear that they felt that hiking and camping were important pursuits from the

perspective of a Canadian (namely the interviewer in this case); they wanted to be able to say that they engaged in such activities. When I asked Yiu, a journalist from Hong Kong, if he went hiking, he responded:

> No, I'd love to try it but up till now I haven't started it. But another thing is also my worry about my health because I don't know I'm a person who cannot stand cold....I can wear a linen suit under the sun for half an hour without sweating in Hong Kong. Well, that is a good thing. But in Canada I cannot stand the cold. So my worry is that the weather in such an outdoor environment for half a day or a day I wouldn't be able to stand it. I haven't tried it but yeah. I really love to try because I think that is the best way to appreciate, to enjoy Canada. Oh and plus the other reason is I've got too much work to do.

In Yiu's brief discussion of hiking, he raises a number of points. Firstly, he feels that hiking would be the best way to appreciate Canada; what follows, however, indicates that it would be far from his own sense of a desirable way to enjoy the country. Secondly, although he says that he would love to do it, he makes a number of excuses for his inability to do so, including his concern that he wouldn't be able to stand the cold and the fact that he has too much work to do. Clearly, he has never tried (nor does he ever really intend to try) hiking, but he wants me to know that he is aware of the significance of doing so. Yiu has recognised the significance of outdoor pursuits in the cultural discourse of Canadians concerning wilderness, but has not internalised those desires.

When I asked Stefanie Yuen, a food critic, if she enjoyed being outdoors, she answered, "Yes and no. I would actually love to, I would....I love flowers and I have a lot of house plants, but because of my allergies in the summertime, that becomes a perfect excuse not to do the lawn or anything, but I love them. I do a lot of walking around gardens with my mother and my sister." Like Yiu, Yuen expressed an appreciation of nature (defined here as house plants and gardens), but a lack of time (and perhaps interest) in spending much time outdoors. Similarly, other interviewees acknowledged that they were not outdoors people, but they were quick to state their appreciation of nature.

Simon Johnston, who initially feared, and felt insignificant in the face of, Canadian wilderness, recalled how he began to enjoy being outdoors after many years in Canada. He joined a hiking club and began fishing and going on excursions. This struck me as an enormous leap, from fearing wilderness to purposefully going out to explore it, so I asked him what it was that caused him to be drawn in by wilderness, rather than repelled by it. To this, he answered, "I don't know, I think that's a really good question. I think I just wanted to be a part of it. If you want to understand something that is so overwhelming and touching you to such a great degree, I think you want to get to know it better. So I think it was a way of trying to find a way to control it, maybe. If you walked it you could somehow control it. If you fished it, you could somehow get something out of it." Johnston, in his relatively short time in Canada, may have taken on the mentality that Tzang described as belonging to the Western tradition – the desire to control, conquer, and tame nature. Johnston's desire for control, however, may relate more closely to taming and controlling his fears than taming nature itself, but this may also have been the driving force for the 'true' American cowboys before the end of the frontier. When Johnston mentioned that he "wanted to be a part of it", perhaps what he wanted was to be part of the 'Canadian experience' rather than nature itself.

Two interviewees, Arthur Lo and Wilma Leung, a husband and wife team who build 'healthy homes' in Vancouver, were avid outdoor enthusiasts when they lived in Hong Kong. Leung was an excursion leader for a local hiking club, planning trips into the countryside and mountains once or twice a month. According to Lo and Leung, only a tiny percentage (less than a tenth of a percent) of Hong Kong residents might choose to go hiking around the city. This number would appear to be representative of most interviewees, who showed a definitive lack of interest in outdoor physical pursuits. Interviewees would suggest that humans, on a symbolic level, were part of nature, yet personally they remained physically separate from it. An appreciation of nature, however, for study participants did not require a

physical confrontation with nature or wilderness, but rather a quieter contemplation of its beauty and an exploration of *the way*.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

Research from the 1950s through to late 1970s tends to essentialise study groups, suggesting that people from the same geographical area will conceptualise and respond to stimuli in the same way (e.g. Banfield, 1958). Such studies have been discounted in recent years for their inability to address diversity and cultural variation within national or regional boundaries. Similarly, the definition of wilderness that is assumed to hold across the North American and, to a large extent, the European 'West' ignores differences among humans and the complex cultural, social and historical reasons why different people feel differently about wilderness.

Concern over wilderness and wilderness preservation has been an emphasis of North American activism and politics for over a century. The ideas about wilderness that fuel such protectionist ideas centre around the notion that wilderness is a place where there are no humans or where their influence can be little felt. This definition, although seemingly pervasive, does not account for the way in which the concept of wilderness has been constructed and how its value has been created as a result of distinctly North American imperatives, namely the sublime and the frontier. Each of the chapters in this thesis has been set out to explore the influences and shared sets of understandings of wilderness among Chinese Canadian immigrants.

As Cronon notes, there is nothing inherently dangerous about the notion of wilderness. Instead, focusing on wilderness above other areas as the locus of environmental concern posits humans entirely outside the natural, making all that humans do or touch inherently un-wild and undesirable. It allows humans to evade responsibility for the less grand areas that are also deserving of human consideration and does

not allow for an appreciation of the wild in more humble places, such as in urban or rural environments. In this study, I have attempted to examine two basic premises of Cronon's argument. Firstly, if the sublime and the frontier are at the root of our current environmental consciousness, then how do Chinese Canadian immigrants, who have not been exposed to such movements, perceive of wilderness and nature, particularly in the North American context? Secondly, if the traditions and history of Chinese immigrants emphasises an appreciation of the wild and nature in more humble places, does this lead to a greater appreciation of and/or attachment to nature?

For many Chinese Canadian immigrants, who have taken on a new language since their arrival in Canada, wilderness meant something entirely different in China than it does in Canada. As they reflected on the views they held of wilderness before immigrating to Canada, interviewees suggested that wilderness held associations of barrenness, punishment, and desolation on the one hand and thoughts of parks and manicured vistas on the other. After their arrival in Canada, many informants expressed wilderness in the commonly-held North American designation – far away, trees, no people, no garbage. Few interviewees, however, took on the romantic notions of wilderness, such as purity, escape, and spirituality, that seem to be pervasive through Western discourses on the subject. Language and meaning can change within a lifetime, but the aesthetic and spiritual manifestations of wilderness are much less likely to conform to Western thought so that efforts to protect wilderness for its 'inherent' worth are meaningless to many immigrants, both newly arrived and long-term residents.

Tradition, particularly Confucianism and Taoism, and history, most recently Communism, have had significant influences on current Chinese thought. While both traditions remain central to the ideologies of many interviewees, Taoism has had a more immediately apparent impact on Chinese Canadian immigrant perception of wilderness than has Confucianism. Taoism recognises the human relationship

with nature as inherently harmonious – humans, the earth, and the heavens are equally important and influential. Such traditions of harmony and human integration with the natural world do not, however, seem to have manifested themselves as heightened environmental consciousness. More recently still in China has been the influence of Communism on the human relationship with nature. Chairman Mao advocated controlling nature for human use. Interviewees who were sent to China's 'Great Northern Wilderness' to be re-educated by peasants learned to associate wilderness and time in nature with punishment. While Taoism, Confucianism, and Maoism have each had significant influences on the sensibilities of interviewees, there was no apparent correlation between their interest in nature and wilderness and their political or philosophical beliefs.

Physical space, in addition to language and tradition, has also had significant impact on Chinese Canadian immigrant perceptions of wilderness. Interviewees who immigrated from urban environments tended to experience greater fear, uncertainty, and unease in the face of open spaces or wilderness areas. Immigrants from rural areas had a greater level of comfort in parks and rural settings in Canada and were more likely to engage with nature as a matter of course. These results may hold quite well across non-Chinese immigrants and/or first-, second-, and third-generation Canadians – an interesting avenue for further research.

What, then, is the Chinese Canadian immigrant attachment to physical place, in terms of interest in spending time out-of-doors, in vast landscapes? Chinese Canadian immigrants studied here were far less likely to embrace an interest in outdoor pursuits. Family outings were distinctly urban and few interviewees purported to be interested in hiking, although they recognised that it would be a good way to explore Canada and, perhaps, even become 'more' Canadian. In a recent study, reported on CBC radio, fifty-two percent of all Canadians spend their holiday time in the outdoors, camping, hiking,

canoeing, or otherwise. This number would likely be distinctly lower amongst these interviewees who have not come to associate wilderness and parks with recreation and physical challenge. What may also be true is that the Chinese Canadians surveyed in the study implicitly recognised wilderness ideas as essential attributes of being "Canadian".

Based on this study, there is little evidence to suggest that Chinese Canadian immigrants have been strongly influenced by movements approximating the sublime and the frontier. Instead, their consciousness has been influenced by language, tradition, and space. The meaning of wilderness in China does not carry with it notions of the sublime (i.e. the mystical in nature) or the frontier (i.e. the sense of physical challenge and adventure). Instead, notions of wilderness include such ideas as barren, undeveloped, non-arable land, and governmental punishment. Perceptions of nature are influenced by Confucianism and Taoism (both of which support harmonious relationships between humans, the earth, and the heavens), as well as Maoism, which has promoted the idea that humans can conquer nature. As immigrants adapt to life in Canada, they adapt also the language of wilderness as a locus of spiritual enlightenment and physical challenge. Although interviewees recognised and reflected on Canadian connotations of wilderness, they were unlikely to embrace the notions of hiking, camping, or communing with nature. Nature could be found in small, intimate places and did not need to be sought out through vigorous outdoor pursuits. While Cronon advocates such an appreciation of the humble places in nature, such an appreciation of the wild may not lead to a more sustainable human place in nature.

Areas for further study

There is a great deal of room for further study in this area. As a relatively new means of approaching multiculturalism and multiple meanings, there are many questions that remain unanswered. For

example, what are the perceptions of non-urban Chinese Canadian immigrants towards wilderness and nature in British Columbia? I selected a study group that was homogenous in one sense – they were from the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. If I had selected rural-dwelling Chinese Canadian immigrants, how might my findings have varied? Another question that arises is how do the views of non-immigrants (i.e. first-, second-, or third-generation Canadians) vary in their interpretation and understanding of wilderness and the human place in nature? Also, what are the influences on perception of non-Chinese immigrants who move to Canada?

Implications of research

There are many limits to our current understandings of human-land relationships. In order to fully comprehend the extent of such relationships, it is necessary to clarify how people see and speak about landscape (Basso, 1996). In this study, I have examined not only what wilderness *means* to new Chinese Canadian immigrants, but how they talk about wilderness and how they place themselves within natural landscapes. It has become evident that how people define wilderness does not necessarily correspond to their own personal interest in natural landscapes. There is no one common understanding of wilderness in a multi-societal nation, such as Canada. Meanings change and adapt, but physical and spiritual attachment is much less likely to become central to the discourse of Chinese Canadian immigrants, be they from mainland China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan.

The implications of this study are multiple, as are the areas for further study. From a political perspective, this study suggests that greater research is needed to understand the influences of tradition and space on the language and meaning of immigrant groups. For Chinese Canadian immigrants, who, along with first-, second-, third-, and fourth-generation Chinese Canadians, make up a significant proportion of the population of the Lower Mainland, this study suggests that environmental policy,

particularly that concerning wilderness preservation[7] will not only be little understood, but may have little relevance. At the very least, policies designed to protect wilderness or to address other areas of environmental concern are likely to result in misunderstandings and feelings of marginalisation and alienation among immigrants. Consider the example of tree cutting in Vancouver, where arguments that may have originated in cross-cultural misunderstandings led to allegations of racism. A more appropriate approach would have been to examine why such differences in perception and attachment to nature exist. Similarly, environmental policy concerning wilderness preservation may not be meaningful or relevant to new immigrants whose understanding of wilderness is limited or non-transferable to the Canadian context. Canada is a nation of immigrants. Studies that examine the multiplicity of views and perceptions that exist in such a society are crucial both to effective intercultural understanding and to getting to the roots of wilderness.

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[7] For a discussion of wilderness and sustainability policy in British Columbia, see Cashore *et al.* (2001).

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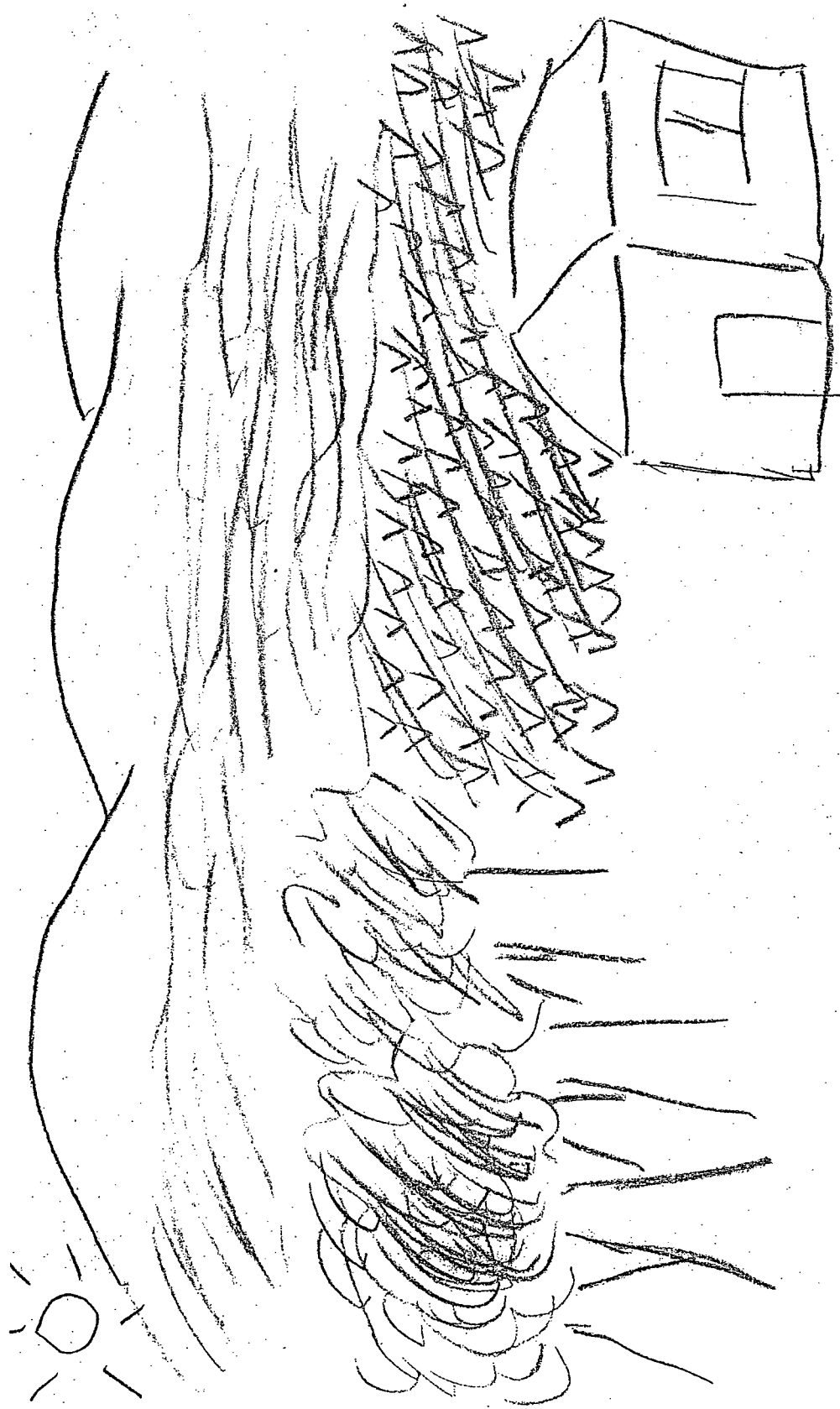
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Sample Interview Questions

- How long have you lived in Canada?

- Where did you move to Canada from?

- Tell me about where you lived in China/Taiwan/Hong Kong.
  - What was the climate like?
  - Were there a lot of people?
  - Was it rural or urban?
  - Where did you spend most of your time?
  - What do you remember about the landscape?
  - Do you remember spending time outdoors?
    - If so, where did you go?
    - What did you do there?
    - Did you go alone or with others?

- Was there wilderness in your home country?
  - What was it like?
  - What do you think of when you think of wilderness there?

- Tell me what it was like to move to Canada.
  - What were some of the things that surprised you when you arrived?

- Tell me how the landscape here differs from the landscape of X.

- How has the Canadian landscape influenced your work?

- Do you think that there is an 'ideal' natural environment?
  - If so, what is it?
  - What makes it ideal?

- Do you think that there is such thing as an 'un-natural' environment?
  - If so, what is it?
  - If not, why not?

- What words come to your mind when I say 'wilderness'?
  - What is wilderness?
  - What is wild/non-wild?
  - Is it important? Why/not?

- What are your thoughts on conservation and/or preservation?

- What do you think the appropriate role for humans is in the natural world?