

**"WE BEGIN THIS WORK TO CALL TOGETHER WITNESSES": THE MEMORY
OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN STÓ:LO COMMUNITIES, 1993-1995**

by

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Abstract:

In 1993, the Stó:lō raised a memorial housepost in recognition to the contributions of Stó:lō military veterans at home and abroad. The following year, a second commemorative ceremony was held for Stó:lō veterans at the war memorial. This thesis describes a portion of these two ceremonies. It examines how recollected knowledge about the past is communicated, and the setting of the commemorations in a personal, social, and cultural context. Research for this thesis is based on oral history interviews with nine Stó:lō veterans and numerous other family members, participation in the 1994 commemoration, and a review of the literature on Coast Salish ceremonialism and Stó:lō oral traditions. I argue that Stó:lō commemorations are a special form of social reciprocity, which involves the coordination of public support for veterans, and the sharing of responsibility to remember the past. [Coast Salish, aboriginal war veterans, commemorative ceremonies, oratory and oral history]

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Introduction:

It was a day of healing and a day of cultural awareness. On November 11, Remembrance Day [1993], over 400 people squeezed into the Coqualeetza Longhouse to participate in and witness a ceremony commemorating the sacrifice and service of Stó:lō veterans. The ceremony centered around a traditional housepost carved by Stan Greene depicting a 'typical Stó:lō warrior.' Accompanying the carving was a large bronze plaque listing the names of over 100 Stó:lō service men and women who laid their lives on the line in conflicts ranging from the Boer War to Operation Desert Storm (Carlson 1993:6).

In the 1990s, our past seems to me like the shore on the edge of an ocean, with the dawn of a new millennium on the horizon. The closer it gets to daylight, the more defined becomes the shore, and the more compelling becomes our past. We fill up each year with commemorations: 500 years after Chris Columbus, 50 years after the Second World War, 50 years of driving the Alaska Highway, 30 years after passage of the Wilderness Act, and 20 years of remembering Vietnam. Some of these commemorations are propaganda; they come from the outside and are a chance for governments or the media to impose meaning on the past. Others come from a genuine process of community appreciation and involvement, where meaning is internal, and socially derived. The ceremonies commemorating Stó:lō veterans are of the second kind.

Held forty-eight and forty-nine years after the Second World War, commemorations for Stó:lō veterans are a specific kind of historical practice. They are about history, and they have a history. They follow a form that is immediately recognizable to Stó:lō people. The ceremonies are performed to bring social support and proper acknowledgement to veterans. They do so by calling people together in a community, and by involving them in a cooperative process that makes unique social demands. This thesis is a description of a portion of these ceremonies. It

attempts to tell a story that has no starting point and no end. I can find no starting point in the process of community appreciation and involvement that culminated in the creation of a war memorial for Stó:lō veterans. I can see no end in the capacity of people to share the sorrow and sadness of others.

The Stó:lō are a Coast Salish people, and an aboriginal First Nation in Canada. There are close to three thousand registered members of Stó:lō bands, the majority of whom live on Indian Reserves scattered along the lower Fraser River and its tributaries in southwestern British Columbia. The Stó:lō region includes "... 83 parcels of Indian reserve land which are allocated to 24 bands of political administration, each band having an elected chief and council" (Bierwert 1986:2). The word Stó:lō /stáləw/ is Halq'eméylem¹ for "river." A Salishan language of the Central Coast branch, Halq'eméylem "... is spoken on Vancouver Island (from Malahat to Nanoose), on the Fraser River and its tributaries from Vancouver, B.C. to five miles above Yale, B.C., and in Whatcom County, Washington by a number of members of the Nooksack tribe" (Galloway 1988:291). Those who call themselves Stó:lō are "the people of the river," a name that reflects a profound cultural attachment to place, and to a sustainable way of life on the lower Fraser and its tributaries.

In this thesis, I look first at the questions that researchers have brought to the subject of commemorations. In what follows, I focus on three different moments in the lives of Stó:lō veterans of the Second World War. First, I look at the experience of veterans after the War, and briefly examine their treatment by the government, and in their home communities. Second, I look at the involvement of veterans in a history of recent research, and in particular at my own work with Stó:lō veterans and our efforts to document their oral history. And third, I write about the war memorial itself, and the ceremony that witnessed its location on the

Coqualeetza Grounds. This last section is titled "the Past in Remembrance." It is possible to read it alone, but its placement at the end of this thesis suggests something more. It suggests how commemorations themselves were a response to the personal history of Stó:lō veterans. To paraphrase from a recent study of war narratives (Jackson 1990:412), this thesis deals less with the content of commemorations, and more with the profound feelings that make commemorations necessary and useful.

Issues and Approaches to Commemorations:

The oral tradition is a very important part of Stó:lō ceremonies. The ceremonies commemorating Stó:lō veterans are a specific practice of oral history. They are "... a blend of typical Remembrance Day activities and traditional Stó:lō practices" (Carlson 1993:7). They are a tangible encounter with a specific kind of shared activity, and a serious invitation to share with others the responsibility of remembering the past. Later in this thesis, I describe in some detail the commemorative ceremonies themselves. As a participant in Stó:lō commemorations, I share my observations about the complex and fluid relationships between culture and history.

Remembrance Day in Canada has always been a widely appreciated observance. On November 11th, people meet at memorials throughout the country to observe a silent moment of mourning on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. This is the time the armistice was signed at the end of the First World War. "At a critical point in the service the bugle sounds 'The Last Post.' That is the traditional end to the soldier's day. The Last Post symbolizes death and is followed by two minutes of silence" (Shipley 1987:142). In the past two years, people have met on Remembrance Day at the war memorial for Stó:lō veterans. The memorial itself is compelling in its physical presence. Since its creation in 1993, it has become a focal point at Stó:lō commemorations, and a living symbol of Stó:lō traditions and the respect that Stó:lō people have for the past. While some activities at Stó:lō commemorations are familiar to a general audience, others are part of a more specific cultural practice.

The focus of attention at Stó:lō commemorations is on the "work" or "business." In describing ceremonial events, Stó:lō people use special terms as a

common frame of reference. Whether such terms are expressed in Halq'eméylem, or in English translation (the more common today), they convey to those who understand them a rich complexity of ideas. In contemporary practice, the "work" (hereafter written with no quotes) can be one part of several different kinds of ceremonial gatherings. As such, it refers to a larger cultural context of Coast Salish ceremonialism. It consists of a set pattern of exchanges (both social and material), which Suttles and others say derive from the older practices of the intercommunity potlatch.² "... the 'work' that is inserted into the middle of the 'big dance' [i.e., the contemporary spirit dance] is quite clearly the sort of thing that went on in the middle of the potlatch" (Suttles 1987a:205). It is also the sort of thing that goes on today at funerals, feasts, weddings, educational conferences, political meetings, sporting events, and Stó:lō commemorations.

Ceremonial work involves a coordination of social roles, and the exchange of wealth as payment for ritual services, and as gifts. "Every important social event among the Upper Stalo [Stó:lō] was signaled by a public ceremony ... where important persons could be 'hired' to 'do the work' and where the assembled people would witness the event" (Duff 1952:87). Some of the ceremonies that require special ritual services today include the initiation of a spirit dancer, the validation of family prerogatives at namings, the remembrance of the dead at memorials, and the reciprocation of past hospitality.³ The sponsors of such work take the initiative in planning, and act as hosts. They follow a formal procedure for making public announcements, which includes the hiring of ritual functionaries. They appoint a professional speaker, who talks for the sponsors during the ceremony. They summon witnesses, who are paid to remember and respond to the work. And they hire other people to perform services as needed: ritual specialists, singers, cooks, fire-tenders, etc. On such occasions, the sponsors are responsible to their own role

as hosts, and to the help they receive in staging the work. "All services including the mere presence of guests, are acknowledged, and gifts of blankets, towels, household wares, and money are made" (Kew 1990:478).

"Respect is essential" writes Stó:lō educator Jo-ann Archibald. "Everyone has a place within the circle. Their place, their role is honored and respected" (White and Archibald 1992:161). Ceremonial work is part of an oral tradition of collaborative learning and record keeping. It is tied to a cultural process of sharing knowledge that involves both reciprocity and responsibility. In the oral tradition, writes Archibald, listeners have a responsibility "... to make meaning from the storyteller's words and to put this meaning into everyday practice, thereby continuing the action of reciprocity" (1992:161-62).⁴ At Stó:lō ceremonies, speakers and listeners participate in a cooperative social process, which involves a sharing of responsibility. The sponsors require a speaker to represent the work, and witnesses to uphold it. "When a ceremony is to take place," writes Stó:lō historian Sonny McHalsie, "Elders and Siyams [*sí:yá:m* (pl.), or respected leaders] from near and far are invited to attend the gathering. They are asked to share in the work of the day; to look after what we are doing; and to ensure that the work is done according to our teachings. But more importantly, to witness and to remember the work for years to come, in order to testify should the need arise" (McHalsie 1993:14). Later in this thesis, I describe in greater detail the specific practice of ceremonial work with respect to Stó:lō commemorations.

In the literature on commemorative ceremonies, Cohen (1994) and Connerton (1989) make important theoretical contributions. The process of articulating experience and reflecting on historical events is very complex. Cohen examines the problem of the past, how forgetting is a powerful process of historical production, and how memory struggles against all kinds of forgetting. "My

attention moved ever so slightly from questions about what [historical] texts really said about the past to how these texts, and the knowledge within them, came to be" (Cohen 1994:xvii). Connerton examines how recollected knowledge of the past is conveyed and sustained by ritual performances. Societies are self-interpreting communities, and rituals draw the attention of participants to objects of thought and feeling that have special significance. Social groups are made up of systems of communication, and "... to study the social formation of memory is to study those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible" (Connerton 1989:39). The struggle of memory against forgetting, the social production of recollected knowledge, and the role of ritual and communication are all areas of study relevant to Stó:lō commemorations.

Stó:lō commemorative ceremonies are part of the struggle of memory against forgetting. They attempt to recover from the past memories that might soon be forgotten. "Should we recognize that history and memory are as much about repression and suppression as they are about creation and recollection" (Cohen 1994:7). Remembering is a constructive process, and it is selective. It can tie together people, times, and places; and it can estrange people, undermine confidence, and be the source of a dispute. Cohen writes about this struggle: the ways in which commemorations comb over the past and restore it at the same time. "Commemorations are socially constructed events in which struggles for the control of knowledge may break out into the open, yet may also be regulated and contained" (Cohen 1994:246).

Stó:lō commemorative ceremonies are also part of the social production of recollected knowledge. They work to situate narratives about war in the collective memory of Stó:lō communities. "The narrative of one life is part of an interconnecting set of narratives; it is embedded in the story of those groups from

which individuals derive their identity” (Connerton 1989:21). Remembering is part of an intersubjective process. We do not remember in common, but we locate our memories within a common frame of reference that is shared by others (Halbwachs 1992:52). When we speak of social memory, we speak more of a resource than a representation. Social memory refers to the shared traditions of a group. It is connected to the characteristic ways that groups of people communicate about the past. “If there is such a thing as social memory, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies” (Connerton 1989:71).

Stó:lō commemorative ceremonies are a specific form of remembrance, and a shared tradition of ritual performance. For Connerton (1989), ceremonies are not texts to be read, but actions to be enacted. They are commemorative in so far as they are performative. They “... specify the relationship that obtains between the performers of the ritual and what it is that they are performing” (Connerton 1989:54). Remembering is an action that brings something into existence. With respect to social memory at commemorations, it brings into existence the shared traditions of a group, and the formal structure of ritual performance. It is part of a social context where speech is patterned and behaviour is prescribed. “... once we begin to consider the form of ritual, as distinct from the form of myth, we come to see that ritual is not only an alternative way of expressing certain beliefs, but that certain things can be expressed only in ritual” (Connerton 1989:54).

Commemorations are cooperative social contexts where the conventions of discourse, and the pragmatics of involvement, work as interpretive frameworks to recover from the past memories that are significant for participants. In this thesis, I try to remember in my writing how commemorations are a specific practice of oral history.

Two Moments in Time:

The commemorations in 1993 and 1994 focused specifically on the experience of Second World War veterans. In particular, they focused on a history of neglect and betrayal, which left behind in its wake a legacy of personal pain. In my research documenting the oral history of Stó:lō veterans, I heard many unequivocal stories about hardship after the War.⁵ When Stó:lō veterans came back from overseas, or from home-defence, they received little public recognition for their military service. Veterans say they were treated like "second class citizens" by the government, and by other Canadians. They were restless for a better life, and the years following the War were difficult for them. While other Stó:lō people (as status Indians) experienced some of the same forms of discrimination, the sting of social inequality after the War was uniquely felt by veterans. Veterans were shaped by a different past than family and friends on the Reserve. Their sense of the world derived from a contrast between their life at home, and their life in the military. The severity of their discontent was connected to the succession of their experience before, during, and after the War.

Before the War, living conditions on Stó:lō Indian Reserves reflected a meagre standard that was common to other rural areas of Canada in the 1930s. In most cases, Stó:lō families lacked conveniences that we take for granted today. Few Stó:lō homes, for example, had running water. People used to carry water up from the river for baths, gardens, or for cooking. There were also small farms on several Reserves, but few families had the machinery to work them. Most of the work was done by hand, I was told, and people assembled on a seasonal basis to help out. "What you don't know, you learn to accept," concluded Harold Wells in one of our interviews. In retrospect, there were other hardships, and veterans concur that

they were accepted in the same way. "Years ago, we didn't have a lot of things, which was true, but at the same time we didn't miss it, because we never knew that something was missing" (interview Wes Sam).

Before the War, discrimination was another (more specific) kind of hardship for Stó:lō people. The Indian Act prohibited status Indians from participating in the potlatch, from organizing in land-claims related activities, from voting in national elections, and from purchasing alcohol, among other things (Tennant 1990). In town, Stó:lō people were prohibited from certain restaurants and stores, and it was difficult for them to find work outside of logging, fishing, and farming.⁶ Instead of attending public schools, most Stó:lō children attended Residential Schools.

Veterans have vivid recollections of these things, but they also remember how they were tolerated at the time. "What's really difficult for people is that once they got to know that other lifestyles exist other than what they had, then they start to yearn for something better than what they're getting" (interview Wes Sam).

Many veterans lived several years away from the Reserve before joining the military. They first left home to attend Residential Schools, where they remember how "everything was regimented." Afterwards, many entered the workforce, and took jobs in logging or the railroad, which took them further off the Reserve.

Canada entered the Second World War on September 10, 1939, shortly after the German invasion of Poland. During the War, the Canadian armed forces offered a different lifestyle to Stó:lō men and women. Many volunteered for military service. Others were conscripted. I spoke with two veterans who received conscription notices, and who were told about deferments.⁷ They decided to join anyway. For people who were undecided about whether to join, soldiers returning home on their embarkation leaves showed off what the military was like. One veteran told me he gained 30 pounds in the army. "I got addicted to grapefruit juice," he said. "I never

knew there was such a drink before ... I was never so healthy in my life.” Others were dressed to impress in new uniforms, and had pride in their sense of civic obligation. Stó:lō men and women had various reasons for joining the military. While conscription is a complex issue historically, it is my sense that most Stó:lō veterans made a personal choice, and joined the military on their own terms.⁸

Looking back on the Second World War, many Stó:lō veterans remember how the military was a positive experience in their lives. The Royal Canadian Navy and Air Force had special entrance restrictions, but otherwise there was little discrimination and no poverty in the military. Some veterans say it was the best years of their lives. They never felt more needed or accepted:⁹

Everybody's the same.
It doesn't matter what colour your skin is,
or what your name is.
Everybody was there [overseas] for one purpose.
The only way you're going to get the job done
was that everybody had to help each other out.
You had to pull together
(interview Harold Wells).

One thing about it [the army],
you were treated equal,
that was the best thing that came about:
everybody had the same amount of pay,
same rations,
same everything.
There was no second or third class, or whatever.
... I was allowed to vote at that time;
I was allowed into beer parlours,
you name it,
because we were treated equal.
Colour doesn't mean a damn thing in there

(interview Archie Charles).

None of the veterans I spoke with served together. They were each assigned to different regiments, batteries, corps, etc. Throughout the War, all reported that they were treated with fairness and equality. When the War ended, veterans returned from the military with positive expectations, but they returned to a life of poverty and discrimination on and off the Reserve. They returned "... to a society that had not changed, where intolerance and prejudice were still the order of the day" (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples 1995:4). They returned to take up their former lives, only this time those lives did not seem so full, or so easy to accept.

As long as you were in a uniform
it didn't make any difference to anybody else
where you came from.
You get used to that over there,
and then you come back here
and it is kind of hard to understand.
... When we were being demobilized,
they said, "well,
you guys are free to go,
go back home and get the pick of any job you want."
"Oh," I said,
"that's great."
They handed me a pick,
"now go find a shovel and start working"
(interview Harold Wells).

Throughout the War, Stó:lō veterans worked together with people from different social backgrounds. Back home, they say their contributions were forgotten. The government, for example, shifted its administration of benefits from

the Department of Veterans Affairs (D.V.A.) to the Department of Indian Affairs. While non-aboriginal veterans dealt directly with the D.V.A., Stó:lō veterans dealt with an intermediary, the Indian Agent. At the Legion, many Stó:lō veterans were initially not permitted to enter the Legion Hall. As status Indians, they were subject to the Indian Act, and could not purchase alcohol there. Stó:lō veterans say they were even disregarded by their own communities. Some say they were not welcome at traditional gatherings, and few attended. Others experienced resentment from people for leaving their families, and when they returned it was difficult to know where they fit in. It hurt veterans deeply to be overlooked in these ways.

Stó:lō veterans never forgot their experiences in the military. They remember both the tragedy of war, and its ability to bring people together. In its proportions, the momentum of the Second World War seemed uncontrollable. It was larger than any individual experience, and it changed veterans in ways that are difficult to express. After the War, veterans were dismayed by the contrast between their experience in the military and their lives at home. "Continued prejudice and unequal treatment left them feeling disillusioned and betrayed" (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples 1995:13). For many years, Stó:lō veterans found it difficult to share their stories about the War. Their experiences overseas seemed so unfamiliar to family and friends back on the Reserve. Commemorative ceremonies are situated in this history. They speak out to end the silence of the past, and they reach out to help remove some of the pain that has accumulated over the years.

Commemorative ceremonies are also situated in a history of recent research. Work to document the long-standing grievances of Stó:lō veterans has been ongoing at the Stó:lō Nation for several years. The Stó:lō Nation is a political organization that provides services and representation to 21 of the 24 Stó:lō bands. So many years after the War, and there are still medals to issue, pensions to pay out,

and grave markers to place. The Stó:lō Nation has petitioned the Government to provide compensation for entitlements such as these, which some Stó:lō veterans and their families never received.

In 1993, the Stó:lō Nation¹⁰ responded to a social need, and initiated a planning process for a commemorative ceremony. This process involved meetings with Stó:lō families, collection and verification of Stó:lō veterans' names, raising funds to commission a war memorial, organizing a committee of veterans and family members to oversee the commemoration, and much more. Planning for a second commemoration in 1994 followed a similar vein. Commemorative ceremonies, and research with Stó:lō veterans, are both conducted under the aegis of the Stó:lō War Veterans Project and the sponsorship of the Stó:lō Nation. In 1994, I was invited to make a contribution to the Project. I write about this work here because, for many people, it is a familiar background to the commemorations, and it is connected to the treatment of Stó:lō veterans after the War.

The U.B.C. Ethnographic Fieldschool represents a collaboration between the Stó:lō Nation and the U.B.C. Department of Anthropology and Sociology. Beginning in 1993, the Stó:lō Nation has acted as host to the Fieldschool for three consecutive summers. In its second season, the Fieldschool was composed of six students, including myself, and two supervising faculty members. Among the students, we each developed individual research projects in consultation with area specialists at the Stó:lō Nation. I worked with Keith Carlson, an historian at the Stó:lō Nation and the primary researcher on the Stó:lō War Veterans Project. Prior to the Fieldschool, he and I met at length to discuss personal interests and on-going research. Keith told me about the history of the Project, and why people felt it was necessary work, and I told him about my interest in storytelling, and in how people talk about the past and reflect on historical events. Eventually, we decided on research that was consistent

with the Project, and that would be useful to Stó:lō people. We decided I would spend time with veterans, and with their permission document their oral history.

During a four week period, I met with eight veterans of the Second World War, one veteran with overseas service after the War, and a widow who married her Stó:lō husband while he was stationed in Jamaica. Among these men and women were all the Second World War veterans who attended the first commemorative ceremony in 1993, and who it was still possible to interview. In many cases, I met with them two and three times, often with other family members present. I was careful to keep a thorough record of our time together, either by taking notes during the interviews or by meticulously transcribing immediately afterwards our interview tapes. The notes and transcripts from these meetings constitute nearly 300 single-spaced pages, and fill one three-ring binder stored at the Stó:lō Nation. It was important to me that these materials be comprehensive, and at the same time non-intrusive. Since this written record would not exist without the cooperation of Stó:lō veterans, I detail below the nature of our collaboration.

Stó:lō people have expressed to me a concern about researchers in the past who did not give anything back to the community. I did not want to let this happen in my work. Most of my interviews with veterans were arranged ahead of time, after a proper introduction from a family member, or by someone at the Stó:lō Nation who had worked with that person in the past. I always arrived on time for our meeting, and usually brought with me a gift to express my thanks and respect. Some veterans were more accustomed to the interview situation than others, and asked right away about my project and what I wanted to know. I explained to them my research, how these interviews might be put to use, and asked for their permission to document their personal stories. It was important for them to know that we were creating a public record together, and that what they told me was not

going to be forgotten (at least by me). Each interview lasted between one and three hours, and often ended with veterans bringing out their medals, army photos, or discharge papers, as if to give ethnographic authority to their stories. At our next meeting, we discussed the interviews, and I provided veterans with copies of our tapes, transcripts, and any duplicated photos for their own records.

There is a concern among oral historians whether the social setting of interviews is a foreign form of remembering for the people with whom we work, or an imposed form of communication (see Briggs 1986). Speech in Stó:lō communities certainly seems to be organized along traditional lines, where the structure of conversational involvement is determined by kinship, initiation, social standing, age, and degree of intimacy. But there is diversity here, too, and a specific competence in adapting to the situation. It is my sense that Stó:lō elders are better able to use the interview to their own purpose than researchers, and this usually involves helping the researcher with his or her project. Elders teach us to be generous, and to approach our life's work in a respectful way, and this is no different with interviews. For the most part, veterans accepted my questions, and I accepted direction from them. The best interviews, I found, were reflexive in practice, and involved a mutual sharing of information. Some of the time, it is enough to listen. At other times, we need to know how something is being heard. Through the course of an interview, this sense of timing is taught to participants, each to the other.

For me, the interviews were connected to a learning curve. When I began working on the Project, I did not at first recognize the distinction of working with veterans. For war veterans, looking back on the past can be both arduous and a source of pride. It is always an on-going process. There is the War itself, in which veterans made a contribution, and there is the memory of the War, which is

something quite different. There are their feelings then, and there are their feelings now, and I was surprised to hear veterans make a careful distinction between the two. War is busy work. Veterans were trained how to take orders, and what to do in combat, but not what to feel. During a battle, it was imperative to focus on the job at hand, and only later did they reflect on their experiences. For veterans, there is no easy reconciliation between the past and the present. At the same time that they were witnesses they were also participants. "The army hired us to be killers," said one veteran, "and gave us 'good conduct' medals." After the War, veterans returned to communities that were shaped by a different past. One veteran said they had to be "reintroduced to their families." It was nearly fifty years before veterans began to talk openly about the War.

Today, in talking about the War, Stó:lō veterans must deal with the contradictions and silences of the past. They do not do this alone. The stories we share about the War reach outward. They change the people who tell them and who hear them. They create connections with other stories shared between family and friends. They convey to us something experienced in the past, as well as something about the experience of remembering itself. They are about history, and they themselves have a history. With each new attempt to reach out and involve different audiences, stories about the War become deeper in their connotation, and broader in their application. To hear this in stories takes time. When telling me about their lives, the associations that veterans make come directly out of their experience, as well as from connections that build up over time. Some of the references in their stories I did not share with veterans until after my involvement in the second commemorative ceremony in 1994. Some of these stories I heard for the first time over a year ago. I will still be thinking about them, and telling them, for years to come.

The Past in Remembrance:

The political offices of the Stó:lō Nation are located on the Coqualeetza Grounds just outside of Chilliwack, B.C., on the lower Fraser River. When you visit this area for the first time, the influx of recent suburban sprawl betrays a rich history. The past is still very much alive in the memories of Stó:lō people.

The word Coqualeetza is both a place name and a remembrance. It is based on the Halq'eméylem word *kw'oqwálíth'a*, which means "beating blankets." As a term, it is used to describe any place where clothing was taken to be washed, but it also refers to an oral tradition story and the legacy of Stó:lō Nation lands. "Albert Louie says that the name came originally from the story in which the men, who were being pursued by their wives, knew they were very close at hand because they could hear them beating their blankets in anger" (Wells 1987:18). This took place during a time of famine, and these men were not thinking of their families. They were fishing at a communal weir, but they were reportedly keeping all of the fish for themselves. Sometimes, we remember Coqualeetza by this history. Like a beating of blankets, we hear in the name and see in the land a story that reminds us how to live.

Coqualeetza is also layered with many other stories. Its buildings are richly arranged in space and time. From 1886-1941, Coqualeetza was the site of a Methodist Mission and Residential School. When the School closed in 1941, its buildings were converted to an Indian hospital with a special wing used as a tuberculosis sanitarium. It is said that many of today's elders were cured of tuberculosis in this hospital. In the early 1970s, the hospital closed and there was a political struggle over Coqualeetza. The Stó:lō began an occupation of the buildings, and appealed to the government for a return of federal lands to Stó:lō control. Twenty years later,

jurisdiction to Coqualeetza is still unresolved. It is home to a cultural center, and to several different Stó:lō service agencies. Its lands and buildings are part of a complex cultural heritage.

In 1993, a memorial consisting of a housepost and a plaque was raised for Stó:lō veterans on the Coqualeetza Grounds. During my work on the Stó:lō War Veterans Project, I often met with people at the war memorial. It is a quiet place, and a good place for reflection. To get there from the Stó:lō Nation offices, you walk across a dirt driveway, and then down a long and open grass field that is lined with trees. On a clear winter day, when the leaves are gone from the trees, you can look back along your path and see Mount Cheam in the distance. One of several peaks, Cheam has a commanding view of the whole lower Fraser River valley. She is a comforting presence, prominent in the landscape and in the stories of Stó:lō people.

The memorial itself has a specific identity. The housepost faces Mount Cheam and the buildings of the Stó:lō Nation, and the plaque contains for all time the names of Stó:lō veterans who served in the armed forces. Around the housepost is a cedar hedge, and on each side of the plaque there are two benches. The hedge contains the wreaths, flowers, cedar boughs, and other tokens left behind as a remembrance, and the benches are a fine place to rest, to talk, to think, or to pray. Carved into the housepost is the figure of a veteran. He or she is wearing a cedar hat, like that of the Stó:lō warriors who protected people in the valley from coastal raiders, or who conducted their own revenge raids on distant villages. An eagle is carved above the veteran as a symbol of spirituality and prayer. The artist, Stan Greene, calls him "the creator's pet": a guardian who protected veterans overseas. On an eagle feather, your prayers are carried to the creator. The veteran also holds a Canadian flag to signify service in the Canadian armed forces.

In its own way, the memorial is a prominent presence in the landscape of the

Coqualeetza Grounds and in the remembrance of Stó:lō people. The carved housepost is a point of view. The veteran looks out over the plaque and onto the Coqualeetza Grounds beyond. Like the runners once stationed at *Stiytós*, a lookout high above the nearby Vedder River, the veteran keeps a vigil at the memorial, and watches over the buildings and activities of the Stó:lō Nation. From his or her vantage point, the veteran looks out over the layers of history on the Coqualeetza Grounds, and over the present occupation of the Stó:lō people. Visitors to the memorial do the same.

The memorial is responsive. The housepost is made of cedar. Its features are worn smooth by the touch of comforting hands. People come to the memorial to join hands with the veteran. They may also place their hands on the veteran's shoulder. "This here now is very strong, what is in this ground for our peoples," said elder Mary Uslick at the pole raising. "When we see this carving, it is our tradition, our beliefs, something very important. The people who work here at Coqualeetza should come out now and then, when they have a lost feeling, and pray for strength."

The carving of a veteran is a memorial housepost, not a memorial cenotaph. In the past, the Stó:lō had two types of carved poles: grave figures and houseposts. "Both were called *xwe'si* [*sxwíthi*], which informants translated as 'picture,' and which is used to-day for any picture or photograph" (Duff 1952:51). Grave figures "... were erected in honour of respected persons and were supposed to be likenesses of the deceased" (Duff 1952:51). Houseposts were erected as the walls of a smokehouse. They supported the home, and were carved to express the affiliation of an extended family group. The war memorial is carved in the likeness of a veteran, but it is carved out of a cedar plank. It does not form the wall of a smokehouse, but it is placed near the house of the Stó:lō Nation.

At the second commemorative ceremony in 1994, the speaker explained to the

assembled guests the cultural context of the memorial housepost:

We chose the housepost
because in the past,
the housepost was the main part of a home.
The housepost told the story.
All the Stó:lō people in all the longhouses throughout the territory,
from Yale all the way down to Musqueam, to the mouth of the river,
everyone had houseposts.
The reason for the houseposts was,
throughout our territory
everyone was connected through extended family relationships,
different families had different animals,
ours are through the *syúwél* [guardian spirit],
or through legend,
so different people,
when they went to a smokehouse away from their home,
they always had their place.
Each of the posts were carved houseposts of a particular animal,
and that family knew where they sat.

Before the raising of the war memorial, Stó:lō veterans did not have their own place. "They always wanted some place to go," I was told, "but they didn't really know where to go." Many people were involved in creating a memorial on the Coqualeetza Grounds in 1993. The memorial showed the veterans where to gather, and it showed the people how the veterans supported us in their sacrifice. "I ask you all," one speaker said at the second commemoration, "[to] look around you and look at the life that you have now, and think about how it might have been if it wasn't for our veterans." It was their sacrifice that protected our homes - that helped to shore them up against the weight of persecution. As an obeisance, the memorial housepost is iconic. It shares a quality of support with the experience it

commemorates.

The Stó:lō war memorial is a resting place, where people go to be with other people. It is a place of remembrance, where people go to pay their respects, and receive in return a sense of direction. It exists for those who fought in war, for those touched by its losses, and for people in the future to learn about the sacrifices of the past. Like other Canadian memorials, this one is a visible expression of "... ideas and feelings that often cannot be easily expressed in other ways" (Shipley 1987:18). The memorial is an expression of a collective feeling. Together, people decided on its placement, and on its design. It looks back on the personal past of Stó:lō veterans, and on the collective history of all Stó:lō people. The list of names on the plaque is a powerful testimony to the suffering and sadness of war. But the strength of expression in the memorial, its power to heal, comes from our ability to look back on past pain with something other than pain. The memorial provides visitors with a vantage point. It is a place of support, a physical and metaphysical promontory, where people and ideas come together (see photo pg. 23).

In the past two years, the Stó:lō war memorial has been the center of activity for commemorative ceremonies on Remembrance Day. The first ceremony in 1993 witnessed the location of the memorial housepost on the Coqualeetza Grounds. The second in 1994 witnessed the annual remembrance of veterans, and recognized their contributions at home and abroad.

While I did not attend the first ceremony in 1993, the memory of its significance has been passed on to me. I know about it from conversations with people who were there, and from a video of the ceremony that was made by the Coqualeetza Education Training Centre. My knowledge of the second commemorative ceremony in 1994 comes from being a participant. I was one of the first people to arrive at the memorial in the morning, and helped to build the fires



Figure 1.

At the war memorial, Stó:lō veterans receive commemorative plaques and ball caps during the first commemorative ceremony, November 11, 1993. Photo by Ann Mohs. Reproduced courtesy of the Stó:lō Nation. Veterans identified as (front row left to right): Dan Francis*, Archie Charles, Stanley (Moody) Michele, Richard Kelly, Fred Kelly, Fred Myra, Benny Joe (in front), Ronald Joe*, Kenneth Ned (in back), Wes Sam, Joe Alex, and Harold Wells.

* Indicates family member of Stó:lō veteran.

in the smokehouse where the ceremony would begin. Later, the sponsors of the ceremony called me to be a witness to the work, which gave me the opportunity to speak to the assembled, and to publicly express my thanks to the veterans who worked with me to record their stories. Here, I want to look at a portion of these two ceremonies. I want to remember them as a witness, and write something down about them as a teaching. I have talked with the sponsors, and we agree that this is consistent with the outward expression of the ceremonies.

In the first commemoration, as in the second, the sponsors extended invitations to a broad range of people. They also posted a general announcement to the wider community. People attended from the military base in Chilliwack, from the Royal Canadian Legion, from the Lions organization, from the RCMP and other government agencies, and from church organizations. Aboriginal veterans and elders attended from Washington State, from the Nisga'a Nation, and from the different Stó:lō bands. These people, all of them from different geographic areas and social backgrounds, assembled together in a spirit of cooperation to commemorate the men and women who performed a service for their country. They came together to fulfil an obligation to the past, and at the same time to emulate it. "War does not discriminate," explained one witness in the first ceremony. It unites people from different social backgrounds in a common purpose and common obligation. Commemorative ceremonies do the same. They re-enact a diversity of participation, and claim continuity with the solidarity that veterans experienced during the War.

The commemorative ceremonies begin in the smokehouse. "The smokehouse is looked upon as a house. It is not a hall or special meeting place but a counterpart of the old plank house ..." (Kew 1970:131, emphasis in the original). Like any residence, the smokehouse is a private space with its own code of behaviour and

etiquette. When visitors are invited inside for the first time, the householders explain to them through hired speakers the kind of personal conduct that is appropriate. When you cross into the space of the smokehouse, you leave behind a casual persona appropriate for the street, and adopt a more formal persona appropriate to a home.

Inside the smokehouse, you are invited to sit in a circle along the walls with the other guests. At an invitational gathering, there are designated places for people to sit, but at both commemorative ceremonies it was enough just to sit in a circle, where everybody can see and be observed by everybody else. "... the circle is an enclosure which expresses both the unity of the total gathering and a continuous alignment, in which each group flanks and is flanked by the others" (Bierwert 1986:224). This spatial arrangement of people helps to promote the spirit of cooperation that is a part of every smokehouse gathering. At both commemorations, a significant number of visitors were invited to the smokehouse for the first time. They were brought together under one roof to share in the teachings of the elders. While they participated fully in a spirit of cooperation that was reminiscent of past times, they were also exposed to the richness and complexity of the present lives of Coast Salish people.

One of the central teachings of the smokehouse is the importance of the spoken word. Like the strength of a physical object, the spoken word can touch a person inside. The people who speak at smokehouse gatherings choose their words carefully, and the people who receive these words listen with the same intensity. "... there is a teaching that the speakers are genuinely spontaneous, that the choice of words comes from the heart, the spirit" (Bierwert 1986:452). This teaching also applies to the people who hear spoken words. You do not listen with your ears, because your ears hear everything. You listen with your mind, and you listen with

your heart. Within the space of the smokehouse, spoken words are efficacious. When you listen correctly, they have the power to change a person. They can create in the hearts and minds of those who hear them the awareness and sensitivity that is in the hearts and minds of speakers.

There is also an immediacy to the spoken word. In the smokehouse, spoken words go out in a circle and come back to the sponsors. The sponsors of traditional work hire speakers. Their job is to "... express in appropriate fashion the sentiments behind the donor's actions" (Kew 1970:188). The sponsors also summon witnesses, who respond in kind to the words of the speaker, and to the appropriateness of the action. In this way, the people hired to speak in a smokehouse create a circle of words. They are trained to be careful in what they say. If they are kind, kindness returns to the sponsors. If they are injurious, injury returns. To protect the integrity and immediacy of spoken words, speakers may prohibit writing in the smokehouse. They may not permit spoken words to be disseminated without context outside of their proposed circle of reference. For one reason, it is difficult to listen correctly to a written record of a spoken account. For quite another, a written record has few safeguards, and people may be harmed by the misplaced efficacy of spoken words.

Commemorative ceremonies for Stó:lō veterans are both a form of recognition, and a collective expression of empathy for what veterans had to endure in battle, and in their communities. The ceremonies are at once expressive and reflective; they reach outward to educate an audience, and inward to provide social and spiritual assistance to individuals who experienced a lifetime of emotional distress. The ceremonies are part of an oral tradition. They emphasize the importance of the spoken word. The sponsors also permit the use of recording equipment and cameras in the smokehouse, which is part of the collective effort to

document oral history for outsiders. At another type of gathering, there might be an uneasy contradiction in this. At commemorations, however, the coexistence of two archiving systems epitomizes the dual utility, and pluralistic design, of the sponsor's actions. The spoken record of the oral tradition must be heard. It promotes people coming together in a way that is consistent with the inward orientation of empathy. An electronic or written record lacks this immediacy. It is more consistent with the outward orientation of recognition.

As a shared tradition of ritual performance, commemorative ceremonies follow a form that is immediately recognizable to Stó:lō people. They exemplify certain teachings that are central to Stó:lō identity, and that convey empathy and recognition in a distinctively Stó:lō way. To illustrate some of these ideas, I would like to briefly describe below portions of the two commemorative ceremonies.

Traditional Stó:lō gatherings involve an immense amount of planning and preparation. They begin many months before guests arrive in the smokehouse. For the first commemorative ceremony, a committee of veterans, family members, and Stó:lō Nation personnel met regularly to determine the scope of the ceremony. In concert, they acted as the sponsors of the work. They hired Steven Point, a lawyer and prominent leader from the Skowkale Reserve, to speak for them at the ceremony.

On the day of the ceremony, guests arrived in a steady stream. The people who had services to perform were busy in preparations. The sponsors put a blanket and scarf on Steven, and they pinned money to him as payment for his services. He stepped out onto the floor, and welcomed the assembled guests. Although it was Steven who spoke, it was the sponsors who were recognized:

All the visitors that are here,
I would like to welcome you to our humble home.

We would like to apologize for the size of the building.
For those of you who have not been here before,
you are going to be witnessing a ceremony this morning;
one taken very seriously,
but at the same time a very happy occasion.

For the first time,
our Stó:lō Nation is going to remember some of those men and women
who fought and died for our country.

For that reason
it is a serious occasion.
This is the reason why you have been invited here.
I am honoured and happy
to speak on behalf of the Stó:lō Tribal Council.
They have invited you here today ...

I also mentioned it is a happy occasion.
Being together in a circle like we are today,
we get to share with one another the words and teachings of our elders,
and the kindness and respect they have passed down.
That is why I am honoured to see the chiefs,
elders,
men in uniform present today,
all of the people.

With these words, Steven made the guests feel at home. He identified the sponsors of the ceremony, and he introduced the work. He expressed his pride at the response of the people to the invitations of the sponsors. In fact, the turnout was phenomenal - over 400 people - and it warmed the hearts of the veterans who were present.

People refer to ceremonial work as 'the business of the house.' There are a series of prescribed payments to make, and there are various rites to perform.

These help to define relationships of respect within the Stó:lō community. Steven continued in his words:

The way we do our business
is to call witnesses to remember what has taken place.
... When you are called as a witness
you have a right to speak when the work is finished,
that is your privilege.

The calling of witnesses is integral to the oral tradition of Stó:lō people. This was explained at the beginning of each commemoration to orient new visitors to the traditions of the house. Witnesses take no notes, it was said, but they remember everything. Certain people, those with Stó:lō names, are called as witnesses at each gathering. The sponsors stand them up, and give them recognition for their work. They are paid to perform a service for the people, which is to participate in the oral tradition, and to remember all the things we need to know. There is a teaching that says: "take only the good words, and leave the bad." Witnesses are called upon to be helpful in their recollection, and to bear lifelong testimony to the business of Stó:lō households.

The first ceremony witnessed the location of the memorial housepost. In the presence of all the people, the housepost was carried from the smokehouse, where it was a guest of honour, to its resting place on the Coqualeetza Grounds, where it maintains a vigil. It was raised in song and prayer, and became the focus of collective attention on Remembrance Day. People gathered around the housepost to hear the Last Post, to observe a minute of silence, and to hear Reveille. The leaders of the Stó:lō Nation marked the housepost with *témelh*, a sacred paint made from red clay and bone marrow. In the words of Steven Point:

What the Chiefs have done,
they marked this now.
It is a sacred place now.
Its been blessed by the elders and the priests,
and witnessed by all the people.
The Chiefs have marked it now.
No one can do anything to this,
to mark it in some bad way.
No one can disgrace this,
or destroy what has been done by the leaders here.

The plaque was then unveiled, and a speaker was hired to recite the names of Stó:lō veterans. As a presentation to the men and women who did not return from war, each person placed a cedar bough at the base of the memorial. There were also presentations to the living, and veterans and family members lined up in front of the memorial to receive commemorative plaques and ball caps. Veterans, in this way, were brought forward and recognized, and this completed the location of the memorial housepost.

For many years, the Second World War was a silent memory in Stó:lō communities. When Stó:lō veterans looked back on the past, they usually did so alone. Until very recently, no one was there to help them with that memory. Commemorative ceremonies respond to this history of neglect. Veterans are the guests of honour at commemorations. They do not pay anybody to perform services, and they do not speak to the assembled guests. They are the focus of collective attention, and the work is performed for their benefit. One person I talked with compared this to the collective expression of empathy and consolation at a Stó:lō funeral:

It's not so much the person,

you've got to help the person, right,
but it is what they've done that you're looking at.
Just like a funeral.
When the people gather for a funeral,
it's like,
when the people leave,
they are taking part of that grief away, that's how it's explained.
So when the people gather for a ceremony,
and the person's carrying all this if you want to call it a weight,
you know,
of everything they've seen and done,
when the people come and they shake hands,
they're either giving him strength to carry on,
you know,
or they're taking away part of that that he had to carry,
so he's not carrying it by himself,
you see.
There's a lot of reasons why they do things, you know,
but the reason why they collectively do things like that is because
you're no good by yourself.
You can be a rich man
and have all the material things in the world,
but it doesn't mean a thing if you don't have the friends and the family.
... That teaching was so strong,
and we still have that.
That's one thing our people still have
that probably never was understood or could be taken away.

There are three parts to commemorative ceremonies: the ceremony itself, the talking, and the sharing of a common meal. The ceremony begins in the smokehouse with a series of presentations and payments, and concludes at the memorial with customary expressions of remembrance. At this point, I would like to turn to the talking, to the part of commemorations where named witnesses are

called upon to respond to the words and deeds of the sponsors. In the first ceremony, this took place in the smokehouse, and in the second, in a boardroom of the Stó:lō Nation. "It is good to see the work go on," said several witnesses at the second ceremony. As an annual occurrence, the two commemorations share a time that is qualitatively identical, and repeatable. I here document a portion of the speeches at the second commemoration. By doing so, I refer to the sense in which witnesses respond to the totality of the work.

Large gatherings are "... times when one is invited to partake of hospitality" (Kew 1970: 135). After ceremonies at the war memorial, the sponsors invited the witnesses to speak, and the people to share a meal. In their comments, many witnesses responded to a theme of racial equality and cooperation. They referred to the past, and to the experience of veterans in the armed forces. They also referred to the contemporary challenges of Stó:lō people, and to the diversity of participation in the commemorations. They spoke directly to the assembled guests about the importance of history as a collective legacy, and of the commemorations as a social imperative. Their words went out in a circle, and formed a strong link to the past. To quote from one Stó:lō witness:

It is ironic sometimes,
when you examine the history of our relationship,
aboriginal people and non-aboriginal people.
A lot of it encompasses one another.
A lot of it we have been at odds on many issues:
everything from culture, to language, to land, to fishing.
We don't seem to have very many areas in kind to make us come together
on a common ground,
to enjoy one another's company
with a common purpose.
And today, I see and witness one of those days. One of those times,

when we can stand together in a circle as brothers in humanity,
to remember something, to honour people,
and to enjoy our company in a common meal, as we are doing now.
That is in fact my prayer for the future.
... You and I have to start looking beyond the skin colour of each other,
beyond the independent aspirations and goals of individual leaders,
and begin to search for the common objective
that's there (as a far more noble objective) of all mankind.
Something that our veterans have fought for.
Something that is far more worthwhile to pass on to the next generation.

Both commemorations promoted a spirit of cooperation between people from a diversity of social backgrounds. The sponsors called people together, and they named witnesses so that the work would not be forgotten. At the end of the work, many witnesses responded with appreciation to the actions of the sponsors. They spoke about an obligation to learn from commemorations, and from the past. "If we can come together today as one, then we can do it the other 364 days." They also spoke about the social support extended to veterans:

It's a great feeling
as an elder
to share the sorrow of the veterans together,
because that is the way the great maker wants us to be.
If we are sorrowful we can work it together,
and if we are happy we have to work it together,
because it is the way he told us to do with each other,
not criticising or running each other down.
... I really enjoyed being here today,
and I thank you for all your togetherness.

Just prior to the second commemorative ceremony, the Stó:lō Nation submitted a Statement of Intent to the British Columbia Treaty Commission. There

has always been a land question in B.C. In the history of contact between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people on the coast, there were never any treaties or formal surrenders of land. The Stó:lō Statement of Intent opens a negotiation process between Canada, B.C., and the Stó:lō. "A treaty between us is a final document that will define our territory and what rights we have over our lands, resources and people" (Pennier 1994:2). One witness was involved in these negotiations, and he related his personal experiences and hopes for the future to those of Stó:lō veterans.

I think veterans would appreciate
that there's an opportunity now for First Nations people
to negotiate a new relationship
with British Columbians and with Canadians.
One that finds a new place for aboriginal peoples in British Columbia.
One that defines a relationship based upon respect,
based upon acknowledgment of cultural differences,
based upon acceptance that we have different world views.
Not that one is better than the other,
simply that we are different.
So, when I see our warriors from Canada come and participate in
ceremonies that are important to the Stó:lō,
I appreciate that you come with open minds,
open hearts,
and that you visit with us, that you share food with us,
and you spend time with us.
Because to me, that is what building a treaty is all about.
It is building bridges,
building relationships,
building respect and trust amongst our different peoples.
... I really appreciate that we come together in this way,
and that we remember the contribution made by our warriors.

More than 50 years ago, aboriginal people throughout Canada responded to a call for volunteers to join the Canadian War effort. They answered a similar call years before, in the First World War, and they would continue to offer their service to Canada in the Korean War, the Gulf War, and in peacetime actions with the United Nations. Stó:lō people were not obligated to sacrifice their lives for Canada, but they served willingly, and they served with distinction. What did they get in return? In 1994, Canada and British Columbia entered treaty negotiations with the Stó:lō. This is expected to be a long process, and the Stó:lō have hopes it will result in a recognition of their inherent right as aboriginal people to self-government. Stó:lō veterans share these hopes, but they also share a history of disappointment. The Stó:lō war memorial stands as a remembrance to the place that veterans earned in Canada and in their communities. It stands as a reminder of the independent contributions of Stó:lō veterans, and of the right of Stó:lō people to define their own destiny.

Veterans no longer remember the past alone. They hear other people speak about their experience in the smokehouse, and they see people work together in the maintenance of a memorial. When witnesses speak back to the sponsors at the end of the ceremony, their words create an atmosphere of reassurance and faith. They speak within a social context where words have efficacy and actions have results, and where people are truly changed. They exhibit empathy for what the veterans had to endure, and take into their own hearts some of that personal pain. They look back on the past, and remember what is important to people in the present. They complete the circle of words, and welcome veterans back into the home from their long journey.

Conclusion:

I remember a meeting with Harold Wells, a Stó:lō veteran of the Second World War who fought in Europe with the Royal Canadian Artillery. He and I were both involved in the 1994 commemoration, and a transcript of the speeches from that day lay on the table between us. During lulls in the interview, Harold would page through the transcript until something caught his attention, and he would tell me about it. "Oh, Chaplain Fred was there," and this would lead to a discussion of Chaplain Fred's work at the army base in Chilliwack, to his work in Harold's parish in Hope, B.C., and to the role of the army Chaplain in the War. When he started to page through the transcript again, I asked him about the speeches - the words of the elders - and this led to a discussion of a naming on the Chawathil Reserve, where Harold was asked to pass down his grandfather's name, and to a funeral that Harold attended as a boy, where a ritualist conducted a burning for the spirit of a drowned Stó:lō fisherman. In our conversation, it was easy to see how the commemorative ceremonies were limitless in their connotation. The people and speeches connected on Remembrance Day were connected in other ways to Harold's experience.

In a way, I must yield in my conclusions to the versatility of commemorations to do many things at once, and for many different people. "We understand human affairs in terms of narrative," writes Bruce Jackson, "and the narrative of our lives is protean, forever subject to new depths or breadths of understanding" (1990:415). At commemorations, the practice of oral history is full of contemporary applications. A story about the War may be heard as an invitation to join in collective action. It may be heard as an opportunity to create in the present a condition of the past. Or it may be heard as a chance to establish in the hearts and minds of listeners a circle of awareness and sensitivity. "Words have a physical

quality that bridges the space between communicants" (Ridington 1995:7). The stories that people share about the War are bits and pieces on the edges of a life, on the edges of a war. They do not reveal fully the life of veterans, or the wars in which they fought; they are not finite in this sense. Instead, they are infinite in the connections they create: connections between the past and present, the near and far, the teller and listener, and the individual and community.

I cannot speak for veterans whether the commemorations were an adequate response to the history of what happened, but I can observe what has changed. In the years since the first commemorative ceremony, more veterans are speaking openly about their wartime experiences. There is a memorial to veterans that many people visit throughout the year, and the memory of war has become a powerful symbol of acceptance and support in Stó:lō communities. One veteran recently told me that in our research two summers ago, the stories we documented he shared for the first time. Months later, he said, his daughter took an interest in this work, and made copies of our interview tapes for other family members. These things, I believe, are like the concentric waves that form after a pebble's splash on a still pool. Commemorative ceremonies are a special form of social reciprocity. They coordinate public support and consolation, and focus on the removal of grief and on interpersonal healing. They leave behind in their wake a sensitivity to human emotional needs, and a responsibility to put "meaning into everyday practice" (White and Archibald 1992:162). When veterans participate in oral history research, they continue an action of reciprocity. They return a gift of knowledge, and extend a new invitation to respond appropriately to their stories by listening and sharing responsibility.

Commemorations for Stó:lō veterans involve people in the community as witnesses to the production of the past. They join people together in a formal

pattern of visiting, and promote a spirit of cooperation that is not limited in its effect to the ritual occasion, but is a lasting legacy of traditional work. In the smokehouse, people act in careful accordance with respected conventions of discourse and involvement. The sponsors conduct their business through a formal system of hiring practices, and the assembled guests are called upon to listen and respond to the work. At the war memorial itself, people renew their annual commitment to the memory of the past. Their support for each other is reflected in a housepost, and in the way it brings the people together on Remembrance Day. As a genuine form of community appreciation and involvement, commemorations provide a critical link between people. They draw on existing social relationships, and they renew for participants images of their shared history.

Notes:

1. In this thesis, Halq'eméylem words are (in most cases) italicized and spelled using the writing system adopted by Stó:lō people. For an explanation of this system, which is called the Halq'eméylem phonetic writing system, see Galloway (1980). Halq'eméylem words not italicized in this thesis include the names Stó:lō and Halq'eméylem.
2. The term "potlatch" has diverse references in Northwest Coast ethnography. "The word 'potlatch' reputedly entered English from Chinook jargon, which borrowed it in turn from the Nootka word for 'giving'" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1990:36). Suttles used the term as a gloss for a precontact Coast Salish intercommunity gathering, or /st|ánəq/, the "... principal overt purpose [of which] was the validation of claims to high status through the giving of wealth" (1987a:204). Elsewhere in the literature, "... studies of the potlatch focus on rivalry and emnity [sic.]: *Fighting With Property* by Helen Codere (1950), and *Feasting with Mine Enemy* by Rosman and Rubel (1971)" (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1990:37). The intent of this study, as with that of the Dauenhauers, is "... to provide new primary data rather than to enter into dialogue with the existing studies on potlatch" (*ibid* 1990:37). In their presentation of oratory from Tlingit memorials, the Dauenhauers do not disconfirm the prestige or economic dimensions of the potlatch. Rather, they highlight an additional dimension which has often been obscured. They "... emphasize the extent to which the content of Tlingit 'potlatch' oratory focuses not on rivalry, but on healing ... we feel that there are more important spiritual and healing dimensions that have often been overlooked, ignored, or denied" (*ibid* 1990:38).
3. Duff (1952), Bierwert (1986), Suttles (1987b, 1990), Kew (1970, 1990), and Amoss (1978), among others, describe ethnographically such events for the Central Coast Salish (in particular for the Stó:lō, Musqueam, and Nooksack). Primary source material on the Stó:lō can also be found in Ware (1983).
4. I did not become aware of this article (White and Archibald 1992) until after the second draft of this thesis. I would like to quote in full Archibald's observations about Coast Salish reciprocity and discourse. As a leader in Stó:lō communities and a scholar, her perspective speaks to many of the issues raised in this thesis. She writes: "I have heard and come across many speakers' messages about the power of words: power to heal and the power to hurt" (*ibid* 1992:161). She equates this power with knowledge, and continues: "The movement of power is not hierarchical, as from the teacher (the top) down to the student (the bottom). I picture the movement of power as flowing between concentric circles. The inner circle may represent the words, knowledge itself that expands and moves

as it is taught to and shared with others. The other circles may represent the individuals, family, community, nature, nation, and spiritual realm that are influenced and in turn influence this power. I call this knowledge-as-power movement cultural reciprocity grounded in respect and responsibility. Respect is essential. Everyone has a place within the circle. Their place, their role is honored and respected. All also have a particular cultural responsibility to their place, their role: the storyteller-teachers to share their knowledge with others; the listener-learners to make meaning from the storyteller's words and to put this meaning into everyday practice, thereby continuing the action of reciprocity" (*ibid* 1992:1961-62).

5. Much of the historical information in this section is based on interviews with Stó:lō veterans of the Second World War. I describe this history as a background to the commemorations, and to my own work with Stó:lō veterans. I met at length with nine Stó:lō veterans, one widow of a Stó:lō veteran, and numerous other family members, as I describe later in this thesis. Other sources of historical information include the literature on aboriginal involvement in the military. For involvement in the Canadian military see Gaffen (1985), Dempsey (1989), Walker (1989), Summerby (1993), and Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (1995). For involvement in the American military see Holm (1985), Barsh (1991), Bernstein (1991), Franco (1991), and the people they cite in their bibliographies. In most cases, these texts do not focus on any particular aboriginal group or band, but examine the whole of aboriginal involvement, and sometimes for both World Wars. There are few contemporary studies comparable to those of Adair (1948), Vogt (1951), and Adair and Vogt (1949), which focus on veterans from a specific cultural group or groups (e.g., Zuni and Navajo). In this section, I describe in a general way the lives of Stó:lō veterans, which includes the time I shared with them. For the most part, I save for another paper much of the rich specificity that comes from doing oral history research with veterans.
6. Several people I spoke with referred to these examples of discrimination for the period before the War (1920s-1939), and after (1945-1950s). One person was a non-aboriginal woman who married a Stó:lō man during the War. Two others were the wives of veterans. I also heard the subject of discrimination in town discussed from a personal perspective at one of the elders' conferences organized by the Coqualeetza Training Education Centre.
7. These deferments were the result of employment in essential industries during the War: fishing and the railroad.
8. With respect to the issue of conscription in Canada, and its relationship to aboriginal enlistments, there is still much work to be done. "Compulsory service

for home defence began in June 1940 and required a nationwide registration of everyone over 16. In 1942, compulsory overseas service was introduced. In 1943 the government declared that, as British subjects, all able Indian men of military age could be called up for training and service in Canada or overseas" (Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples 1995:9). After a Cabinet review in December 1944, "... certain tribes that had signed Treaties 3, 6, 8, and 11, were to be exempt only from compulsory military service overseas" (Gaffen 1985:67). The Inuit were exempt from both compulsory home-defence and overseas service during both World Wars (Summerby 1993:20). While the policy of conscription may have been unambiguous, its implementation was less than straightforward. The sources cited in endnote #5 detail protests by some aboriginal people against the principle of conscription during the War. They relate examples of miscommunication regarding the policies of registration and overseas service, whereby aboriginal people equated mandatory registration with enlistment, or were not told that they had a choice between home-defence or overseas service prior to November 1944. The nine Stó:lō veterans I met with did not make an issue of conscription, but this represents a small sample. Four of the nine were conscripts. While they were all well informed, the specific interpretation of national policy on a local level deserves further research.

9. Oral discourse is represented as linear poetry in this thesis, rather as than block prose. Line breaks follow conventions of pitch and pause identified by Tedlock (1977, 1983), and attempt to reproduce on the page the cadence of delivery and emphasis in the spoken original. All the quoted discourses in this thesis are excerpts from longer narratives. They were originally delivered in English, and occasionally included untranslated Halq'eméylem words. Only the speaker on pg. 33 ("It's a great feeling ...") is fluent in Halq'eméylem. I use ellipses (...) in the transcriptions for material that has been deleted, and square brackets ([]) for material implied by the speaker. Indented lines indicate a continuation of the previous line, which had to be broken to fit within the margins.
10. At the time of the first commemorative ceremony, and during my research on the Stó:lō War Veterans Project (which I describe later), Stó:lō communities were represented at the regional level by two political organizations: the Stó:lō Tribal Council, and the Stó:lō Nation Canada. In the Fall of 1994, these two organizations (both of which were located on the Coqualeetza Grounds) united, and became the Stó:lō Nation. In this thesis, I have chosen to use the contemporary designation Stó:lō Nation throughout, even in reference to the past. It is necessary to point out, therefore, that the first commemorative ceremony in 1993 took place prior to unification, and reflected the research and commitment of the Stó:lō Tribal Council. Likewise, the Stó:lō Tribal Council held the portfolio for the Stó:lō War Veterans Project prior to the Fall of 1994.

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