REGULATING TRADITION:
STÓ:LO WIND DRYING, AND ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

by

CAROLINE F. BUTLER

B.A., McGill University, 1996

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Anthropology and Sociology)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 1998

© Caroline F. Butler, 1998
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Anthropology and Sociology
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date Sept 21/98
ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the changing meaning of wind dried salmon in contemporary constructions of the culture of the Stó:lo First Nation. Wind drying has been a method of preserving salmon for the Aboriginal peoples of the lower mainland of British Columbia since time immemorial, providing significant winter provisions. However, over the course of the last one hundred years, participation in this fishing activity has been drastically decreased and currently only a handful of Stó:lo families maintain dry racks in the Fraser canyon. As a result, wind dried salmon has gone from being a staple to a delicacy, and is now valued as a cultural tradition, rather than merely as a food product. This change in culturally inscribed meaning is a product of the relationship between Stó:lo fishing activities and fishery regulations imposed by the settler state. Increasing restrictions of Aboriginal fishing rights have resulted in decreased participation and success in the Stó:lo fisheries. Furthermore, regulation has artificially categorized and segregated Stó:lo fishing activities, dislocating the commercialized fresh catch from the “subsistence” dried fish harvest. The response to this regulatory pressure has been the traditionalization of the wind dry fishery, situating the activity as a cultural symbol and a point of resistance to external control. Wind dryers currently refuse to commercialize the wind dry fishery, thus resisting outside control of the management of the fishery and the distribution of the harvest. This situation is discussed in light of anthropological understandings of the construction of traditions, and the issues of Aboriginal rights surrounding contemporary Stó:lo fishing activities.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgments ................................................................................................. IV
Dedication ............................................................................................................... v
Introduction .......................................................................................................... 1
Methodology ......................................................................................................... 7
From Food ............................................................................................................ 8
...To Culture ....................................................................................................... 10
A Century of Disruption ....................................................................................... 13
Regulation: Artificial Categories and Government Control............................... 16
The AFS and the Question of Commercialization ............................................... 21
Preserving Tradition ............................................................................................. 25
An Aboriginal Right: Sale and Self-Determination ............................................ 35
Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 39
Bibliography ......................................................................................................... 45
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank the Stó:lō wind dryers who so generously shared their knowledge and time with me. I am tremendously grateful to all the families who contributed to this work and it was a privilege to learn from them. I extend special thanks to Bear and Vicki for taking me into their home, to Aunt Birdie, Ivan and Diane, and the Pettis family, for their special kindness and ongoing friendship. To Chief Frank Malloway and his family, my immense gratitude for their warm hospitality during the 1997 Field School. A big thank you also to Herman Peters for his support and friendship.

Thank you to the many individuals at Stó:lō Nation who assisted me throughout this work, and I greatly appreciate the contributions of Coqualeetza Elders to this research, and the valuable input of staff at the Coqualeetza Cultural Centre.

I owe great deal to my advisor, Professor Charles Menzies, for his encouragement, insight and patience. He has been a fantastic role model and mentor. Many thanks to Professor Bruce Miller for his energetic commitment to my project, for numerous pep talks and helpful guidance.

Thank you to all my friends at Green College and the Department of Anthropology and Sociology who have been sympathetic, encouraging and inspiring.

I can’t thank my parents enough for their support of my work, emotionally, intellectually and financially. And Richard and Toni for their insightful contribution to my library!

And finally, thanks to Chris, my favourite distraction and my most loving supporter.
Dedicated to my grandmother Jean McGeary (1906-1998).
Introduction

It has been our traditional way for many centuries. What I am doing now is for my children and my grandchildren and for generations to follow, that we will hold on to our traditional ways, our traditional fishing grounds.

Elder Fred Prentiss

Aboriginal peoples have been traveling to the Fraser canyon, about 140 kilometers east of Vancouver, since “time immemorial” to take advantage of the unique conditions of the canyon for catching and preserving salmon. The fish are filleted and hung on racks along the canyon bluffs to dry. Wind dried salmon was a critical component in the diet of the First Nations of the lower mainland until at least the early part of the twentieth century. Today, wind dried salmon is valued as something more than food; it is constructed as a link to the past and to the river and as such, is considered an important cultural activity. During the twentieth century, wind drying participation and harvest success have been drastically reduced due to the imposition of fisheries regulation by non-Aboriginal governments. Now only approximately fifteen Stó:lō families from five reserve communities in the Fraser valley, continue the seasonal trek upriver to dry salmon at drying racks above the town of Hope. Their dried fish harvest is considerably smaller than past yields. Over the

1Names have been changed to protect the privacy of contributors.
2A phrase ubiquitous in discussions of Aboriginal practices, I use “time immemorial” to reflect the scope of historical continuity through which participants understand the activity of wind drying salmon.
3The Stó:lō First Nation (a member of the larger Salish cultural category) has a population of approximately five thousand, most of whom live on twenty-three reserves which lie along the Fraser River between Mission and Hope B.C. The word “Stó:lō” is the name of the river in the Stó:lō language Halq’eméylem (Carlson 1996: 140). The number of families participating in the fishery fluctuates yearly, as different families return to drying, and others terminate their involvement. There is a core group of approximately ten drying families who have been participating yearly for two decades or more. I use “family” to refer to extended family groups, which may include several nuclear families or households.
course of the last hundred years, wind dried salmon has gone from being a staple to a
delicacy: "it's like what caviar is to some other people" (Colin Duncan).

This change in diet and in culturally inscribed meaning is reflected in the way
Stó:lō wind dryers now label wind dried salmon a "traditional food". In addition to a
change in the way that the product of the fishery is considered, the process of wind
drying has been attributed a new significance; the activity itself is cherished as a
"traditional practice". This transformation is related to the changes engendered by the
colonization of Stó:lō territory and the alienation of Stó:lō resources by non-Natives or
Xwelítem. As the government and the industrial fishery have impacted the success of
Stó:lō fishing, wind drying has become an important symbol of Stó:lō culture and a
focus for the Stó:lō struggle for Aboriginal fishing rights. The commitment of the
Stó:lō leadership to the protection of wind drying rights was recently emphasized
during the 1998 drying season. When the fishery was closed after only a few days,
Stó:lō Councillors and Chiefs met with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to
affirm Stó:lō drying rights. The leaders rallied behind the wind drying families,
asserting the importance of wind drying for the Elders, refusing to subordinate the
fishery to the conservation concerns of the DFO. The circumstances of this focus on
the wind dry fishery are geographically and culturally specific. Up-river from the

---

4 The Halq'emeylem expression used to refer to people of European ancestry, "Xwelítem" translates
as "hungry people" (Carlson 1996: 51). Several participants suggested to me that this derives from the
need of the Fort Langley residents to purchase food reserves from the Aboriginal peoples of the area,
however, the term also has an ironic significance which refers to the greed of non-Natives and their
"hunger" for Native land. I use this expression to refer to non-Native residents of British Columbia
because the ironic implications of the term are appropriate to the discussion of fishing rights in Stó:lō
territory.

5 For the details of this recent affirmation of the importance of wind drying to the Stó:lō First Nation, see
Stó:lo, the First Nations near Lytton, British Columbia dry a great deal more salmon and sell a large portion of their harvest to the Stó:lo communities. For these bands, wind drying has not developed the same political and cultural complexities. The downriver Musqueam First Nation and Salish tribes in the U.S. no longer wind dry salmon at all and therefore the issues surrounding fisheries in those communities are somewhat different. The Stó:lo occupy a unique territorial niche where wind drying is practiced by a very small group and consumed by many members of the communities, where the fishery’s size and success is decreased by government restrictions and where wind dryers’ concerns are sometimes at odds with the prerogatives of the other Stó:lo fishing activities. It is in this singular situation that wind drying has become, for dryers, a cultural battle.

The cultural connotations of wind drying direct this discussion to some of the issues most basic to the study of anthropology. In the last few decades, the key terms which anthropologists once relied upon as “givens” have come under increasing scrutiny. “Culture” has been problematized and is now a shaky foundation upon which to build a discipline. “Tradition” has similarly been destabilized, and is wrapped up in

---

6 The Nlakapamux First Nation (formerly Thompson Indians) dry a great deal of salmon; some estimates are more than double the Stó:lo dry harvest. By the time the sockeye swim that far up the Fraser they have lost a considerable amount of fat and the fish dry in less than half the time it takes to dry them at Yale. This ease of drying, and the fact that the participants in this area live closer to their dry racks has resulted in higher levels of participation. Many dryers from the Lytton area dry enough salmon to be able to trade/sell more than half their harvest.

7 The Musqueam First Nation’s traditional territories are at the mouth of the Fraser river.

8 The issue of internal politics and competing interests within the Stó:lo First Nation particularly since the agrandizement of Stó:lo Nation’s involvement in fisheries management through the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy is a new complication in the politics of the wind dry fishery. This is, however, beyond the scope of this paper, which seeks to trace the changes to the fishery over the last century, during which time the Canadian state wholly controlled the management of Aboriginal fishing. Increasing Aboriginal control of management and regulation structures is changing the dynamics of resource access and is an issue that requires further investigation.
the debate around questions of “authenticity” and the complicated engagement of
anthropology and historical consciousness. However, as Clifton points out (1997: 146)
the public popularity of concepts such as tradition make them difficult to abandon.
Culture and tradition, as unstable as they may be theoretically, remain ensconced in the
self-awareness of the people with whom and for whom anthropologists work. This
paper is a consideration of the way that Stó:lō wind dryers talk about wind drying and
fishing in general, and their descriptions of the activities are fraught with the loaded
terms “culture” and “tradition”. My project is not to deconstruct the expressions of the
participants, nor to delegitimize their values, rather, I discuss the construction of wind
drying as a tradition in light of the growing literature on the issue, and use the
articulations of wind dryers to address current regulatory and management concerns. I
suggest that contemporary constructions of Stó:lō wind drying are shaped by the
relationship between the Stó:lō and the dominant society, deriving specifically from the
interaction of Aboriginal fishing efforts and the fishing of the nation state.

Contemporary constructions of wind drying emphasize the activity’s worth
beyond its contribution of food resources. That a food-gathering activity should be
invested with social value in a contemporary First Nations community is neither
surprising, nor unique to the experience of Stó:lō wind dryers. Research on subsistence
activities in Aboriginal communities in northern Canada has confirmed that “modern”
subsistence has a value far beyond economic benefits for its participants. Usher notes in
reference to Dene hunting activities that “foods have a richness of meaning which stems
from their procurement, distribution and preparation, as well as their eating” (1976:
Similarly, Wenzel, in reference to Inuit resource production observes that Baffin Islanders consider the value of subsistence to lie in its continuation of a "social economy" (1989: 16). Aboriginal understandings of a difference in social worth between store-bought and "country" food is identified in scholarly literature as a basic aspect of self-differentiation for subsistence harvesters. There is, however, a more complicated value differentiation involved in the construction of Stó:lō wind drying.

Stó:lō fishers have been selling a portion of their fresh salmon catch since 1992 through the pilots sales program established by the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy and the economic development interests of Stó:lō Nation9 have turned to the commercial viability of wind dried fish. My initial research on wind drying was in response to this interest. As part of the University of British Columbia's Ethnographic Field School10 I embarked upon a feasibility study of commercializing the wind dry fishery. The response of the wind dryers to my initial questions resulted in the complete transformation of the project into a documentation of expressions against commercializing the fishery; they were unanimous in their opposition to the commercial sale of wind dried fish. However, several of the wind dryers are involved in the Stó:lō commercial fishery. They sell a large portion of their fresh catch and trade a significant amount of their dried salmon. The question arose, why is selling fresh fish acceptable and yet selling wind dried fish is considered to be "stepping outside our culture" (Ed Newman)? And more importantly, how can the wind dryers' reluctance to

9 The administrative body and political unit for twenty-one Stó:lō bands.
10 The UBC department of Anthropology offers a 6 credit ethnographic field school as a course option for graduate students. The school is run in collaboration with Stó:lō Nation, and each of the students undertakes a research project of interest to Stó:lō Nation. In May 1997, six students and two professors, Yeqweyeqw1:ws reserve near Chilliwack B.C. while conducting the research for these projects.
sell their harvest be reconciled with Stó:lō Nation’s endeavors to secure a constitutional right to sell fish based on Aboriginal rights and the Stó:lō’s long history of trade and exchange of fresh and dried salmon?

In this paper I discuss how the shift in the meaning of wind drying from an economic value as food to a social value as "tradition" has significant implications for the management of Stó:lō fishing activities. This transformation will be illustrated through an exploration of the different ways wind drying Elders and young people talk about dried salmon. The transformation from ‘food’ to ‘culture’ can only be understood through a careful examination of the history of non-Aboriginal interference with and restrictions of Stó:lō fishing activities in general. In fact, the regulatory actions of the settler state have played a critical role in the social construction of Stó:lō culture. This is not to deny the legitimacy or authenticity of Stó:lō culture, nor do I suggest that the cultural politics of wind drying are solely the result of government regulation. I take as my focus one particular process in a network of forces that have impacted upon and continue to influence the circumstances of wind drying. Over the last century the Canadian state has increasingly regulated and controlled Aboriginal fishing, and only very recently has entered into co-management agreements with First Nations. Government control of Aboriginal resources has necessarily impacted the relationship between First Nations and these resources and it is this process of transformation that is the focus of this paper. The disparate values attached to dried salmon and the commercialized fresh catch are discussed in light of the transformations engendered by state regulation. Finally, I discuss how the value of dried salmon is
related to the unanimous reticence to commercialize this "traditional food" through the AFS, and the broader issues of Aboriginal rights and self-determination.

**Methodology**

The research for this paper was conducted in two parts. During the four weeks of the Ethnographic Field School in May 1997, I conducted interviews with seven Stó:lō Nation employees, and with members of ten wind drying families. I visited several wind drying camps during the fishery opening in early July of 1997. From November 1997 to March 1998 I conducted follow-up interviews with several participants, in addition to contacting five more Stó:lō Elders who had wind dried as children and/or continue to do so now. There are several more individuals and families who wind dry whom I was unable to interview, however I did contact most of the established, long-term dryers - Elders who have participating in the fishery continuously over the last few decades. There was a high degree of consensus in the communities regarding who are "experts" on wind drying and I was able to speak with a core group of these Elders. I also interviewed the children or grandchildren of these Elders to achieve a perspective on the differences between generations.

During the twelve months of fieldwork, I spent a considerable amount of time in Stó:lō communities, in family homes and longhouses, talking, listening, observing and learning. Many informal discussions on wind drying with Stó:lō persons who do not dry fish, also inform this paper. During July 1998 the wind dry fishery was closed after only 3 days due to a conservation concern for the Early Stuart sockeye run. I attended a meeting between the wind dryers of the Seabird Island band and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans; this experience also informs the conclusions of this work.
From Food...

That is all they lived on in the wintertime.
Elder Rosie James.

Ethnographer Wilson Duff emphasized the historical importance of the Fraser river to Stó:lō economy (1952: 14); salmon, fresh and preserved, formed the basis of the diet and trade of Stó:lō ancestors. Prior to the limitations to Aboriginal fishing activities engendered by non-Native settlement in Stó:lō territory, the Fraser and its tributaries provided the “people of the river” with abundant food resources. Old Pierre, a Katzie Indian who spoke to anthropologist Diamond Jenness in 1936 emphasized the significance of the Fraser fisheries for the Aboriginal peoples of the past:

In earlier times this Fraser River resembled an enormous dish that stored up food for all mankind; for the Indians flocked here from every quarter to catch the fish that abounded in its water. (in Jenness: 1955: 10)

The Fraser river salmon population prior to European settlement in British Columbia was adequate to support the needs of a substantial resident and migrant First Nations population. Anthropologist Mike Kew has estimated peak returning populations at 60 million (1992: 214); journalist and researcher Terry Glavin has suggested the possibility of 160 million sockeye alone (1996: 15). For the Stó:lō particularly, the wind dry fishery provided a substantial portion of their winter food provisions. Elder Bonnie Penner relates the long-established importance of the canyon:

I think it has been going on for years and years, long before my time...
The Elders long ago, there are still rocks piled here and there where they had barbecued, they are still there. They fished all along the bank of the river, all through the canyon, both sides of the river they fished. It was very good dried fish too.

The oral tradition associated with the wind dry fishery emphasizes the many First Nations who once participated. According to Colin Duncan:
There was always an annual migration into the canyon, from as far as the southern tip of Vancouver Island and the U.S. Hundreds of canoes were used.

Elder Lena Moran also suggests the great number of fishers in the canyon prior to the coming of “Xwelítem”:

When you are on the [south side] you can see every few feet there’s underground remains of huts or houses, all through there. There’s hundreds of remains where they had their dry racks.

Even in the post-contact era, the migration continued, and the Hudson Bay Company clerks at Fort Langley recorded the many canoes passing by the fort on their way to the “Rapids” to fish. The Musqueam, Nanaimos, Cowichans and Sannich peoples are mentioned frequently as annual visitors to the canyon and as trading partners. Clerk James MacMillan noted in 1827 “Indians in swarms proceeding to the fishery above”. The journal also reveals the importance of wind dried salmon to the economy of the fort and to the diet of its residents. As the fishers from the coast passed the fort on the way down from the fishery, they traded their surplus stock of salmon, fresh and dried for other goods. The fort traded buttons, axes, knives, beads, and tobacco for large quantities of wind dried salmon.

Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, Stó:lo fishing activities continued to follow established patterns of participation and the river continued to provide the bulk of Stó:lo food and trade products. However, as non-Native settlement increased in Stó:lo territory, Aboriginal access to the river was compromised and fishing participation decreased. In recent decades, with only a dozen or so families wind drying

---

11 Fort Langley was established by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1827 as an inland trading post. This was the first permanent non-Native settlement in Stó:lo territory (1996: 49).
12 All were recorded with numerous variations in spelling in the journal.
salmon every year, dried salmon has come to be valued as a limited resource. Its economic importance as a food item is being eclipsed by a perceived cultural value.

... To Culture

*Even having the ability to sit by your rack and be there while it is drying is a strong statement that you are culturally ingrained, that you are Stó:lō. You have the ability to be who your ancestors were.*

Ed Newman

Dried salmon's social and cultural value has increased as it has become less of a staple. The transformation of the activity over the last century from a food-gathering endeavor to a cultural tradition is reflected in the way that wind dryers of different generations talk about drying. Elders, and those persons whose families have continuously dried, speak about salmon as food and do not differentiate between the importance of dried salmon and fresh, smoked or salted fish. Younger people and those whose families have more recently returned to their dry racks emphasize the cultural value of the activity. It appears that the Elders value the product and the younger generations attach a significant value to the process.

Dryer Tim Moran told me that his motivation for learning and continuing to wind dry derives from its value as a cultural activity:

*The heritage of being a Stó:lō Indian, I thought I had to be up there learning from my mother, my grandfather. I think it’s cultural. We’ve been doing it for thousands of years.*

Tim’s mother, Elder Lena Moran, recognizes the cultural value with which drying is now invested, but focuses on the food value of dried salmon and suggests the changing value over time:

*During my grandfather’s age it wasn’t just traditional, it was a staple.*
I never went into it thinking of it as culture, but I did it because I liked it. I don’t think of it as Indianness, I just do it because I like it.

Lena grew up eating dried salmon, stopped for a few decades while she had young children, and then returned to her family’s dry rack later in life. Her son learned to dry fish as an adult because he considered it an important cultural tradition that he should maintain. Similarly, Ed Newman has chosen to return to his family’s dry rack as a statement about his involvement with his heritage. Ed is a young man whose family has not been drying fish for almost fifteen years; he emphasizes the cultural value of the activity. His statement, which opens this section suggests that wind drying establishes a connection with his Ancestors. Elder Bonnie Penner, on the other hand, says that she continues to wind dry because dried fish is an important food. Mrs. Penner talks about the importance of all fish, and does not identify dried salmon as more valuable or traditional:

[It is important] because it is our food. If we don’t have our dry fish or our canned salmon, or salt fish, we’re hungry.

This suggests a broader understanding of the fishery, as a time to preserve salmon by a variety of means, all of which have a food value and a cultural significance.

The difference between the value of drying fish for older and younger generations is epitomized by efforts to maintain a dry rack in the canyon for the purpose of supplying fish to Elders. For the last 15 years there has been a fishing camp in the canyon a few kilometers up-river from Yale where volunteers come to the camp to catch and butcher fish to provide winter food for the Elders. Elders teach the young

---

13 This association seems to be similar to the kind of connection to the Ancestors maintained through the transfer of Indian names. Names are inherited from an Ancestor and are sometimes passed to family associated with rights to places and resources (Thom and Cameron 1996: 167).
Stó:lō volunteers how to butcher the fish for drying, and also for salting, canning and smoking. The Elders camp thus provides food to the older generations and cultural education to the younger people. The young volunteers are not harvesting fish for themselves, but rather contribute to the community by helping the Elders, and are receiving instruction on a skill that was considered a valuable cultural tradition.

Decreasing participation in fishing due to increasing non-Native control of the resource has gradually contributed to a change in the role of fish in the wind dryers’ experience. The younger generations have grown up with grocery stores, resulting in the development of labels such as “traditional food” and “Indian Candy” for dried fish. This pattern of change is not unique to the lower mainland of British Columbia. An attitude survey of contemporary Dene, Inuit and Métis communities in the Northwest Territories revealed that a general preference for “country food” derives from the subsistence harvest’s cultural connotations, more than from its food or economic value (Bone 1985: 1). While dried salmon continues to make a valuable contribution to the diet of wind dryers, the process of fishing has taken on a new meaning; it is no longer only a means to an end, but is now prized for its own value as a tradition.

Fishing has come to be valued for its cultural worth, however, this transformation from food to culture has been somewhat selective. Elder Hal Putner, while acknowledging that dried salmon is considered a “traditional” food and is important as such, does not consider himself more traditional for continuing to dry salmon.

*It’s not more traditional, it’s just our way. It’s just in us to do it.*
His daughter Marie Putner emphasizes the contribution of dried salmon to traditional gatherings and its importance for feeding the Ancestors. She makes a differentiation between drying salmon and the commercial fishery in a way that aptly reflects the attitudes of many wind dryers:

*With commercial fishing and drying, the one that is older, that is more culturally intact should be prioritized.*

Wind drying is considered "more traditional" and "more culturally intact" than other fishing activities, particularly the commercial sale of the fresh catch. Stó:lō people have always caught and traded both fresh and dried salmon; this differentiation on the basis of tradition appears to be a relatively recent shift in their understanding of fishing. This shift is related to the disruption of Aboriginal fishing on the Fraser river by non-Native settlement and government regulation.

**A Century of Disruption**

*The Indians used to roam all this land. Now they stick us on little reserves.*

Elder Rosie James

The history of the canyon is a story of environmental degradation and increasing non-Native inhibition of Aboriginal fishing. Stó:lō fishing in general and wind drying in particular have been significantly impacted by the changes in the area since the mid-nineteenth century. The establishment of Fort Langley in the mid-nineteenth century does not appear to have significantly inhibited the canyon fishery, rather, the involvement of the Hudson Bay Company in the trading of wind dried fish injected more goods into the already existing trade networks. It was later settlement and development along the banks of the Fraser that began to limit the success of the fishery. As Duff points out, during the gold rush of 1858, some of the most gold-rich stretches
of river were found between Hope and Fort Yale (1952: 41). The movement of Stó:lō villages to new communities down river was accelerated by the influx of white settlers during the gold rush (ibid.). It was during the next few decades that the seasonal migration of other First Nations from the coast to the canyon slowly petered out, and the Stó:lō people who had moved from the Yale area to the valley began to make a seasonal migration to their canyon fishing sites.

The gold panners came and went from the canyon; their disruption was intense but short-lived. The most physically destructive force was the railroads that were constructed around the turn of the century. The construction of the Canadian Pacific line on the west bank of the river resulted in landslides that buried many dry racks and shifted the flow of the river, destroying eddies in which people fished. The construction of the Canadian National line was even more devastating. The track was built only a few meters from the water, leaving little space for the erection of dry racks to replace those lost during construction. The damage of the CNR to the salmon fishery in general was staggering. In 1914, blasts from the railroad construction caused a huge landslide at what is known as Hell's Gate (up river from Spuzzum). The slide resulted in a narrowing of the river and consequently, a quickening of the current. Salmon were unable to swim past the slide and died en masse before reaching their spawning grounds. The Aboriginal peoples in the area were prohibited from fishing in the canyon, although the commercial fishery at the coast remained in operation (Glavin 1996: 106).

During the next few decades, however, forces other than environmental destruction worked to decrease Stó:lō drying participation. Shrinking catch sizes and restrictions of the sale of the Indian catch motivated many people to turn to wage labour
for income. It was at this time that many families stopped drying salmon; employment in the industrial or agricultural economy rarely accommodated seasonal harvesting activities. Elder Jim Collie told me that he stopped drying salmon when he began working in the logging camps in his teenage years. Seasonal work such as berry picking and hop picking also drew people away from the canyon. Mr. Collie suggests that it was in the hop yards\textsuperscript{14} that Stó:lō people first began buying dried salmon with cash.

\textit{They started buying it from Lillooet people at hop picking time, then the whole thing started to catch on. In the thirties, the Douglas and Thompson Indians came down to pick hops and brought it to sell; hop picking time is right after drying. That is the first time I saw them give money for it.}

Mr. Collie remembers the thirties as the time when wind dried salmon first became an item of purchase for many Stó:lō people.

Many wind drying Elders suggest that the low point of participation was between the 1940's and 1960s. Several families who had stopped wind drying resumed the activity during the 1970s. Elder Hal Putner recalls that only eight other families were drying when he built his rack in the early seventies. Elder Lena Moran suggested to me that the gap is the result of residential schooling. Mrs. Moran is in her seventies and believes that the children of her generation who were sent to residential school lost a great deal of their culture through the assimilationist policy of the schools:

\textit{Over the generation we never though to teach the kids Native things. We were whitewashed, brainwashed.}

The Fisheries Manager for Stó:lō Nation focuses his explanation of the

\textsuperscript{14} Hops, a grain used in the beer-making process, was a popular crop in the Fraser Valley during the early twentieth century. In the early Autumn pickers, including many First Nations people, lived in temporary camps beside the harvest.
shrinking of the fishery on the aggrandizement of government control and regulation of
the river:

There was a decrease because of the introduction of federal regulations, population loss, the industrial fishery on the coast, the movement of labour to the canneries, regulations inhibiting the barter and trade of salmon above the tidal boundary at Mission. The forces pulling the people away from the canyon are large forces.

Regulation: Artificial Categories and Government Control

We had our laws, now we have to obey your laws.
Elder Alan Cameron

So many closures for so many years, I guess they just gave up.
Elder Ellie Haller

According to wind dryers, the strongest force pulling Stó:lō fishers from the canyon has been the increasing regulation of the fishery by the Canadian state. The history of regulation is the story of the partition of the Stó:lō fishery. Stó:lō fishing activities were once an integrated activity providing food and products for trade and sale. Through the intrusion of government regulation, the Stó:lō fishery has become separated into different categories, creating different fisheries.

Government regulation began to impact Stó:lō fishing in the late nineteenth century. In 1878, weekly fishing closures and gear regulations were first introduced on the Fraser as British Columbia was brought under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Fisheries Act.\(^{15}\) Initially, the Native population was unofficially exempt from these regulations by the first B.C. Fishery Inspector A.C. Anderson, however, the distinction was made between “Indian fishing” and “modern fishing”:

---

\(^{15}\) The extension of the act to British Columbia had occurred in 1868, but the regulations were not issued in the province until a decade later (see Ware 1983: 16).
Where fishing with white men and with modern appliances, the Indians so fishing should be considered as coming in all respects under the general law. (Department of Fisheries, Annual Report, 1877, Canadian Sessional Papers No.8, 1878, cited in Ware 1983: 18)

This distinction engendered a racial categorization of fishing techniques and a racialization of technology. This early differentiation of "modern" and "traditional" fishing has had significant ramifications on both Aboriginal fishing rights and the attribution of cultural meaning to contemporary fishing activities.

During the 1870s, Reserve Commissioner G.M. Sproat initiated the creation of Indian fishery reserves in the Fraser canyon to avoid the total displacement of the Indians from their canyon fishing sites. Creating fishing reserves in the canyon was intended to enhance the survival of "traditional" food-gathering activities and the reserve initiative was crucial in the cultural differentiation of the Indian fishery. In 1879 Sproat reserved fishing stations in the lower canyon and today these reserves are for the most part held by the Yale Band (one station was transferred to the Ohamil band in 1913). The tenure of these reserves is an issue in the continuance of Stó:lō participation in the commercial and wind dry fisheries, but is beyond the scope of this paper.

In 1888 this distinction of fisheries became fully legislated, with the creation of the Indian food fishery. A proviso to the Fisheries Act initiated the licensing of the industrial fishery, and limited the Indian right to salmon caught only for the purpose of feeding themselves (see Newell 1993: 47). This legislation created an artificial economic distinction between Aboriginal fishing activities, making subsistence an "Indian" activity and situating the sale of fish as a "White" enterprise. Under the terms
of the Fisheries Act, Indians selling fish to the canneries were performing a non-Aboriginal act. The complementarity of exchange and consumption was denied and the fact that Aboriginal people had exchanged salmon for other goods for centuries was ignored. According to Stó:lō Nation’s Fisheries Manager: “The Stó:lō people never had a food fishery, they had a food fishery imposed on them”. It is this invented food fishery which remains the model employed by the settler state to address First Nations fishing rights.17

The legal right of Indians to catch salmon for personal consumption was more closely defined in 1894. An Order in Council implemented a permit system for the Indian food fishery. Indians required permission to fish for food, were subject to the seasonal closures, and their gear was restricted to the most inefficient nets (Ware 1983: 22, Newell 1993: 89). In 1909 another Order in Council resulted in weekly closures in the food fishery (Newell 1993: 94) and a requirement for Indians to report the size of their catch (McKay 1977: 44). Elder Jim Collie remembers the attempted enforcement of this regulation:

Fish wardens started coming when I was a boy; they didn’t want us to fish on Sundays. My grandfather was so mad, he kept on fishing.

The major changes in access to the river since 1909 are reflected by the shift in language used to describe fishing periods. In the early part of the century the issue of access was discussed in terms of weekly closures. Today Stó:lō fishers talk about rare and short openings. Elder Fred Prentiss told me a story about how the understanding of access to the river has been changed by a century of regulation.

16 For a full discussion of this issue see Carlson and Eustace’s (1998) paper prepared for Stó:lō Nation.
17 See discussion of the A.F.S. below.
My white son-in-law told me I should be happy - We've given you three days to fish, he told me. I said, No you didn't. He said, Yes we did. I said, No - you have taken four days away. Before you came here, we fished everyday.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the coastal interception fishery and industrial logging have put more and more pressure on the salmon runs and the resulting conservation concern has impacted heavily upon the Aboriginal river fisheries, and particularly wind drying. Duff noted that the preferred salmon for drying was the Spring salmon (1954: 62), however during the last three decades, restrictions on seasonal openings have made it necessary for St6:l6 dryers to dry sockeye instead. The Early Stuart is the only sockeye run appropriate for wind drying, coinciding with the necessary weather conditions and which precedes the arrival of pests such as flies and bees. The Early Stuart run, however, has become a conservation concern during the last thirty years due to industrial pressure on the stock. Conservation initiatives by the DFO have thus been extremely detrimental to the wind dry fishery, causing openings for the fishery to be too late in the summer for successful drying. In 1967, the food fishery on the Fraser between Mission Bridge and Lytton was closed between July 3 and 25 (wind drying season) in order to conserve the Early Stuart run; the industrial fishery at the estuary remained open (Newell 1993: 146). Chief Albert Douglas of Cheam asserted: "This is nothing but discrimination against Indians" (Vancouver Province, July 20 1967). More recently, in 1996 dryers were unable to successfully dry their catch because the fishery was not opened until too late in July. In 1998, the wind dry fishery opening was less than seventy-two hours long. Wind dryers question the legitimacy of the conservation initiatives and complain that the conservation responsibilities fall on
them after the commercial fisheries at the mouth of the river have over-fished the 
stocks.

_The Indians are easier to control that the offshore fleets. They do a lot in the name of conservation, but we have to conserve for everybody else_.

Increasing regulation of the Fraser river fisheries is cited as a reason for decreased Stó:lō participation in the wind dry fishery particularly. Wind dryers suggest that drying has gotten harder and harder as increasing closures have become short openings and conservation concerns have pushed the drying season later and later. Wind drying Elders emphasize that the regulations have worked to inhibit Stó:lō fishing activities:

_Ninety years ago it was a way of life, everyone from the valley went up. It was almost like shoulder to shoulder up there at the time. I don't know if it was when they issued fishing licenses, I think that is when it declined._

_We're regulated to death. We should have some say in how we work, when we do things... The Department of Fisheries never dried a salmon and they are trying to regulate it to their thinking. We've been doing it all our lives and they are trying to make us to it their way._

The last century of external control of Aboriginal fishing has resulted in a decrease in wind drying participation and in harvest success, but regulation has also resulted in a more subtle and more general transformation of the relationship between the Stó:lō and the salmon. In the past the Stó:lō people fished for a significant portion of the year, preserving the salmon in a variety of ways, depending on the daily weather and greater seasonal changes. Some was traded for food products such as fruit with the First Nations of the Interior, or sold in order to acquire other goods. The regulatory structure introduced by the government has worked to transform the Stó:lō Fishery into

---

18 Anonymous by request.
a number of different fisheries, creating false distinctions and artificial categories.

Rather than a preservation method utilized during appropriate weather conditions, wind drying has become a separate fishery requiring a separate license and allotted a different opening. Regulation has created a discrete “wind dry fishery”, divorcing it from the other Stó:lō fishing activities. This pattern of separation was established by distinguishing between Indian and “modern” fishing techniques in 1878, furthered by the creation of the food fishery in 1888, and finalized by the issuing of dry rack licenses in 1975\(^{19}\). Most recently, the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy has contributed to the differentiation of Stó:lō fisheries by permitting the sale of fresh salmon and continuing to outlaw the sale of processed fish.

**The AFS and the Question of Commercialization**

*We can hardly talk about commercialization of wind dried fish...*  
*I wouldn’t want to touch it because of respect.*  
Fiona Duncan

Despite stringent regulation of Aboriginal fishing for over one hundred years, Aboriginal rights to fish resources have not been extinguished, and these rights are subordinate only to conservation concerns; they are to be prioritized over industrial and sports fisheries. This was the ruling of the 1990 Sparrow case\(^{20}\), which examined a Musqueam First Nation member’s right to fish. This ruling necessitated a meaningful transformation in First Nations access to the Fraser river salmon runs. In light of the Sparrow decision, Aboriginal groups began to insist on their right to sell fish (Glavin 1996: 115). Consequently, the Aboriginal Fishing Strategy was introduced to create a

\(^{19}\) This date is approximate as DFO records and wind dryers' recollections cannot supply a definite date.  
structure for the sale of fresh salmon from the food fishery allocations of several First Nations, including the Stó:lō First Nation.

The Stó:lō Nation sought a legal recognition of their Aboriginal right to sell salmon through the Van der Peet case\(^\text{21}\), which went to the Supreme Court of Canada. The 1996 ruling failed to recognize that the Stó:lō have a constitutional right to commercial sale. The AFS thus gives the Stó:lō a provisional right to sale pending the settlement of a treaty currently being negotiated with the federal and provincial governments, or the establishment of new legal precedents regarding First Nations access to resources.

The AFS, however, does not provide Stó:lō fishers with their desired access to the salmon resources. The pilot sales allocation has been unreliable and fishers suggest that it has failed to yield the anticipated economic advantages. One fisher explained to me that the legal right to sell fish was not worth the resulting loss of access to the river:

*After they signed the agreement for commercial fishing our fishing time got cut to one day a week. You always lose something.*

The AFS has also impacted the wind dry fishery, although dried salmon is not part of the pilot sales program. The wind dry quota is part of the general allocation for the Stó:lō under the AFS and the wind drying opening is negotiated through the AFS agreement. Furthermore, the pilot sales program has put the wind dryers in competition with an enormously expanded fleet of Stó:lō commercial fishers. While an attempt is made to secure an wind drying opening prior to the commercial fishery opening, this is not always successful, which significantly decreases the catch of the dryers. Wind

\(^{21}\) [1996], 2 S.C.R. 507. (Supreme Court of Canada Appeal).
dryers say their daily catch drops from one hundred to three sockeye during a
commercial opening. The wind dryers appear unanimous in their desire to have the
wind dry fishery removed from the AFS agreement and negotiated separately.

There was complete unanimity in the reactions to my preliminary research on
the commercial viability of wind drying. Dryers were critical of the impacts of the pilot
sales program and vehemently rejected the idea of selling dried salmon in a similar way.
Many people suggested that commercialization would increase participation in the wind
dry fishery, limiting individual success because of the catch limitations of the fishery.
Furthermore, the specific skill required to dry salmon would result in wasted catches
when newcomers' failed and their fish spoilt. Elders suggested that people would sell
their harvest and there would be no dried salmon remaining in the community.

As soon as it was commercialized, there were too many people on the river.
It would be the same with wind dried.

There would be people who don't know what they are doing. There would be
a lot of waste.

Whenever something goes commercial you never have any left for the local
people or family. Now the kids can come and get all the fish they want.
If I had sold it, they wouldn't have it.

Many dryers also suggested that it would be wrong to commercialize dried fish, that it
would go against their culture. They spoke about wind dried fish being a traditional
food: "the food the ancestors eat". However, it is because wind dried salmon is
regarded as a traditional food that those who do not dry fish feel the need to purchase it.
Elders suggest that it is important to serve dried salmon at cultural events because it is
an appropriate offering to the Ancestors. There is thus a great deal of dried salmon
traded and sold within the community and the fifteen or so families that continue to
wind dry are important suppliers of a culturally valued delicacy.

The primary issue concerning the commercialization of the wind dry fishery
therefore is not about the sale of fish. Most of the dryers do dispose of at least some of
their dry fish harvest through trade or sale within the Stó:lō communities. As Chris
Duncan states:

*We sell our [dried] fish too. I don't think anybody hides it. It's just part of
reality. We've sold our fish, we've traded our fish ever since we could I guess.
Ever since it benefited us.*

The sale of wind dried fish is not new in the 1990s. Chris’ grandmother, Elder
Elizabeth Duncan describes the trade and sale of dried salmon in the 1930s:

*The most you got for a fish then was $5. Mostly we traded for dried berries
from the Interior, sometimes dried clams or fresh seafood.*

Elder Fred Prentiss trades a significant part of his catch:

*This is the most valuable thing that I have. I can use it to trade for clothes,
deer, moose. There’s no way I can place a dollar value on it. It’s very
sacred to me. If I had three fish, one would be for me, one for the have-nots,
and one for trade.*

The underlying issue concerns how the fish is sold; this relates to questions of control
and regulation, and of distribution. The wind dryers do not refuse to sell dried fish,
they refuse to *commercialize* dried fish. Commercialization, for Stó:lō dryers, appears
to imply sale within an imposed system of regulation. Commercial openings through
the AFS are limited in both frequency and length, activity on the river is monitored both
by the DFO and Stó:lō Fisheries, and fish must be transported directly to a weigh
station where they are counted and channeled to a buyer. Were the wind dry fishery
commercialized through the AFS, the fishery would be subject to the limitations which
currently regulate the fresh fishery. Wind dryers choose to continue to sell or trade their fish according to their own established network of exchange in the communities and according to their own rules.

The Stó:lo wind dryers differentiate between incomes in terms of their cultural value. Elder Fred Prentiss asserts: "We don't want to make this our way of living. This way we stay close to our traditions." Usher suggests that "modern industrial society fails to distinguish between peoples' livelihoods and their ways of life" (1976: 118).

Stó:lo fishing has been differentiated into these two categories as access to the river and the place of fish in the economy of Stó:lo communities has been altered by external forces. Harvesting the resources of the river is a way of life for the Stó:lo, even for those whose current participation in fishing is limited. Wind drying is an identified tradition in this way of life. The commercial fishing, as currently structured by the AFS, is a livelihood. What has come to light by examining the attitudes of wind dryers to commercialization is that not all aspects of a way of life, not all activities associated with the river resources, may be transformed from a way of life to a livelihood.

Preserving Tradition

_It is the only thing we've got that hasn't been taken away._

Elder Gus MacDonald

Regulation of Stó:lo fishing and Stó:lo responses to this regulation have resulted in a shift in the cultural construction of fishing, through the separation of the fisheries and their restriction. Waldram, in his discussion of First Nations traditions, suggests:

Members of cultural minority groups often do not have the luxury of simply living as cultural beings... Culture tends to be considerably
more reified as the need to protect its most central, tangible and significant elements grows. (1997: 30).

The regulations structuring Stó:lō wind drying have provided the conditions for the cultural reification of the fishery, and a resulting drive to preserve an activity in peril. Elder Lena Moran’s understanding of the growing value of wind drying articulates this feeling of threat:

_What makes it so special? Because there are so few of us that do it._

Wind drying participation has reached alarming lows during the last forty years; during the late 1960s about eight families were drying salmon. Elders recall that the fishery almost disappeared and there remains an underlying fear that if not supported through a sympathetic management structure, families will be unable to continue wind drying.

Smith, during his work with a community in Peru, identified a similar production of cultural value, initiated by external threat:

_The productivity of culture increases at historical moments of heightened resistance and rebellion, because the valued components of culture are challenged, threatened from without and so must be articulated within”_ (1991: 182)

Smith’s suggestion of the articulation of culture as a mode of resistance may be considered in light of both greater historical processes and the more immediate pressures on the wind dry fishery. Government fishery regulations have significantly inhibited Stó:lō salmon harvests during the last century. Coincidental to these decades of increasing pressure on the food-gathering activities of the Stó:lō was the residential school period during which children were removed from such activities, and the decades of significant environmental damage to the canyon. As the Indian food fishery has become situated in opposition to industrial goals and government, the food fishing
efforts of the Stó:lo are considered to be under siege. More recently, wind dryers' find themselves in conflict with government (DFO) conservation provisions, and with Stó:lo Nation regulation and management. Wind dryers situate themselves as defendants of their fishery, and the language of this defense is that of culture and tradition.

The wind dry fishery has been attributed a value as tradition and there is a resulting drive to protect the fishery and secure Aboriginal control of its management. The fresh catch, as a commercialized fishery is not attributed a similar degree of cultural value and is not considered as "traditional" as wind drying. My consideration of the development of the wind dry fishery as a cultural practice is premised upon the concept of "tradition" as a process of valuation, rather than a natural category. Wind drying has been "traditionalized," that is, it has been invested with cultural value. This understanding of tradition as an attributed value is derived from the significant changes over the last two decades in the way that tradition and culture are understood in anthropological theory.

The early 1980s saw a burgeoning literature on the discussion of the constructed nature of culture and tradition, as the foundational assumptions of anthropology became increasingly questioned. Wagner's *The Invention of Culture* (1975) illuminated the general and overreaching presuppositions of anthropology' project of "making the strange familiar" (11). Anthropology as a discipline was dependent on the existence of "culture" and failed to problematize this monolithic idiom. Wagner prompted anthropology to investigate its own assumptions. Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The*

---

22 I am adapting and expanding this term from Dell Hymes' use; for original application please see his article "Folklore's nature and the sun's myth" *Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 88, 1975: 345-369.
Invention of Tradition (1983) successfully pulled the focus of inventive agency away from anthropologists to the societies themselves. This germinal work provided interesting insights to the constructed nature of traditions that claim antiquity. Hobsbawm introduces invented traditions as novelty dressed up as antiquity (1983: 5), for the purpose of establishing social cohesion, legitimizing institutions, or inculcating conventions of behaviour (1983: 9). Hobsbawm and Ranger prompted anthropology to investigate its subjects’ assumptions.

The Invention of Tradition and later, similar works have been extremely important in provoking discussions of issues of authenticity, of the dynamic nature of tradition and culture, and of the pragmatic uses of tradition for social purposes. However, the particular construction of tradition that I am seeking to understand in the context of wind drying is considerably different from the examples of falsified antiquity that form the basis of Hobsbawm and Ranger’s work. Wind drying has been going on for many centuries and forms part of the heritage of the people of the river. It is the dryer’s investment of this fishery with a high degree of cultural value, making it “more traditional” than other fishing activities with the same historical continuity that is the issue behind the rejection of commercialization and the vehement efforts to protect dryers’ rights.

In a response to Hobsbawm and Ranger, Handler and Linnekin shifted the focus from questions of authenticity to the process of formation of tradition. They identified the “common sense meaning” of tradition as being: “an inherited body of customs and beliefs” (1984: 273). It is this understanding of tradition that has been embedded in both anthropological theory and public consciousness and it is this naturalized meaning
that scholars continue to struggle against in efforts to reveal the practical needs and
desires behind the traditionalization of practices. Handler and Linnekin themselves
offer a definition of tradition as “an assigned meaning” which is achieved through a
“symbolic process” (1984: 286). This definition expands on Linnekin’s work on the
construction of tradition in Hawaiian communities. She suggests in another paper that
tradition is a conscious model of the past and a selection of meanings made in the
present and used in the construction of contemporary identity (1983: 241).

The selective nature of tradition is also emphasized by political economists and
Marxist scholars who relate the issues of cultural production and the invention of
tradition specifically to class and the domination of marginalized groups. Williams
(1977) suggested that tradition is a selective version of the past, in which certain
meanings and practices are given emphasis over others (115). He attributed this
selection to the hegemony of the dominant class, which promulgates a selective
tradition in the interest of continued and aggrandized power. Linnekin, on the other
hand, placed the agency of selection in the hands of the minority group, for whom a
“defining tradition” is a basis of otherness (1983: 250). Similarly, Sider, in his
discussion of the Lumbee Indian experience in the southeastern United States has
posited tradition as a means of differentiation, as a means of resistance to forces of
oppression:

Tradition names processes of continuing cultural and social construction
through which they seek to distance themselves from the dominant society.
Sider approaches tradition as an expression of the relationship between the
disempowered and the powerful, and as reflection of both the vulnerability of the
marginalized and their struggle for dignity.

The construction of wind drying as a tradition can be seen as a product of the
Stó:lō relationship with the dominant society, particularly in the context of the
Aboriginal struggle for access to resources. Wind drying has been identified as a
tradition as a result of the restrictions placed on the Stó:lō fisheries. In this particular
case, the selection of tradition was made, as Williams asserts, by the dominant group.
Fisheries regulations posited food fishing as an “Aboriginal” activity, pushing
commercial sale outside the realm of tradition. However, in accordance with
Linnekin’s model and that used by Sider and others, the selected tradition has provided
the “minority” group with a positive basis of differentiation, utilized in contemporary
constructions of Stó:lō identity.

As Handler and Linnekin suggested, tradition, in the case of wind drying, is an
assigned meaning; more specifically, it is an assigned value. Why this value is assigned
to wind drying, and not to the commercial fishery is linked to issues of self-
differentiation and self-determination.

1. Wind drying and Stó:lō identity

*It's part of our heritage. It's in us to do it.*

John and Sarah Haller

Wind drying has a paradoxical role in Stó:lō culture; it is used as both a point of
differentiation and of similarity. Wind dryers emphasize the uniqueness of the
preservation process, how it is particular to the canyon, suggesting it as something
inherently Stó:lō. They also, however, emphasize similarity and continuity with other First Nations who dry fish. Many dryers talked about how everyone from the lower mainland and the Island used to dry fish in the canyon; some dryers noted the similarity of preservation methods in the Arctic, that the Inuit also dry fish. The most common articulation regarding the uniqueness of wind dried fish was that non-Natives don’t like dried salmon, but all Indians love it. It is sometimes called “Indian Candy”, with the understanding that only First Nations people appreciate the taste.

Drying salmon is identified as a “traditional Stó:lō activity”, but at the same time there is recognition that they are not the only First Nation that preserve fish in this manner. The most important differentiating aspect of wind drying is in opposition to non-Native culture. Wind drying is most importantly something “Indian”; wind dryers assert that non-Natives don’t do it and most don’t like the taste. Investing cultural value in an activity appears to be a function of its opposition to the dominant culture and is related to contemporary Aboriginal identity politics. Aboriginality as an identity emphasizes consanguinity and historical continuity, but is also based on an opposition to non-Aboriginal cultures. Thus, Aboriginality is a negatively defined identity of relatively recent origins. First Nations-hood is a result of the arrival of second nations; Aboriginality is a consciousness derived from contact with an Other, and from the power relations engendered by that contact. As Salée suggests, “present day Aboriginal identity is undergoing a process of reconstruction which brings it to define itself against non-Aboriginal society (1995: 289). The understanding of wind drying as a traditional activity and part of Stó:lō culture is part of the construction of contemporary Stó:lō identity.
Alfred, discussing Aboriginal nationalist movements suggests that in the quest for self-determination, identities are forged which are "strongly rooted in tradition, but adapted to the modern political reality" (1995: 179). The traditions to which Alfred links these movements, however, are just as much a product of the relationship with the state and the dominant society as the identity which is based upon such traditions.

Wind drying is an Indian way of preserving fish and non-Natives don't do it. Dryers consider the Stó:lō fresh catch, conversely, to be embedded in the Xwelítem world through its sale under the structure of the AFS, despite the fact that the catch and trade/sale of fresh salmon has been an Aboriginal activity for all of remembered time.

The consideration of commercial sale as a non-Native activity is a product of the legal categorization of the activity as such. Fishing regulations dating from 1878 labeled commercial fishing a non-Native endeavor. More recently, Supreme Court Chief Justice Lamer in the Van der Peet ruling categorized any practice shared by Native and non-Native societies as necessarily non-Aboriginal. While the Stó:lō fresh catch and its sale has a historical continuity similar to that of the wind dry fishery, the law has made commercial fishing non-Native, and thus, non-traditional. According to the Supreme Court of Canada, and the DFO, Stó:lō fishers are "White" while selling their fish. The law has categorized the wind dry fishery as Aboriginal (and thereby traditional) because it remains a fishery unique to the Stó:lō and other First Nations. First Nations fishing remains tangled in a legal net and is necessarily considered in light of legal categories: tradition is something distinctive, it is differentiating and can be claimed as part of a unique identity.
2. The Continuum of Control

You have to get permission before you can go and fish...
Elder Bonny Penner

The self-identified aspects of a people’s culture are necessarily those over which they have control. The regulation of the Stó:lō fishing activities has constructed a continuum of control in the management of the separated fisheries. The Stó:lō commercial fishery is more stringently regulated than the wind dry fishery. While the wind dryers do not feel that they have the desired degree of control over the wind dry fishery, they do have more agency in the performance of that activity than have the participants in the commercial fishery.

The pilot sales program is very strictly regulated; the openings are short and tightly monitored, the catches are weighed an inspected at stations in the canyon so that no fish are transported down river uncounted. The Stó:lō fishers are allotted a predetermined portion of the run that passes Mission Bridge, and every fish is counted. The wind dry fishery is also monitored and subject to inspection, but is allowed more flexibility. Catches are monitored through a daily visit from an Aboriginal Fisheries Officer, rather than being transported to a DFO weigh station, and dryers appear to be given some license in determining the size of their harvest. In accordance with the history of fisheries regulation, the government appears to be much more flexible in the management of perceived “food fisheries” than perceived “economic” activities.

Furthermore, the Stó:lō currently retain a greater degree of agency in the disposal of the wind dried harvest than the commercial catch. When fishers sell their

---

fresh under the AFS, the resource leaves the community, and is consumed by outsiders. Dried salmon is distributed throughout the communities through established patterns of trade/sale and the dryers maintain control of the resource.

The commercial fishery is defined by Xwelítem rules, rights of access, and distribution patterns. Although the fishery has continuity with the past because Stó:lō have always caught and traded/sold fresh salmon, this practice is now firmly embedded in a non-Native system of management. Wind drying on the other hand, is understood as still existing within the realm of Aboriginal control, and the family camps are still very much managed by Elders.

The question of how something becomes a tradition can be an issue of threat and preservation; endangered activities are drawn into a protective discourse of culture and tradition. Why the wind dry fishery has come to be protected in this way relates to the relationship between the Stó:lō wind dryers and non-Native society, in the form of both a dominant culture and a hegemonic regulating structure. The interaction of state regulation and wind dryers' resistance to non-Native control has produced the emphasis on tradition in contemporary constructions of wind drying. The wind dry fishery has been invested with a high degree of cultural value because it is an activity that is considered to have remained uniquely Indian, and one over which the wind dryers retain a relative degree of control. The discrimination against Indian sale of salmon in the regulation of British Columbia’s fishing industry has forced the commercial sale of Indian catches into the exchange structure of dominant forces, and has dislocated this part of the subsistence of the Stó:lō from their control and as a result, from their
“culture”. The wind dry fishery is thus considered by wind dryers to be a last bastion of Stó:lō fishing tradition, resulting in its high cultural value. Elder Alan Cameron articulated this issue of preservation in saying: “They can take everything away but this one”. Wind dryers appear to consider the fresh fishery given up to the external forces of regulation and rally around the wind dry fishery as a point of resistance. They are thus unwilling to sell their dried salmon commercially, to subject it to the same pressure and discrimination that the fresh fishery has suffered. Their stance regarding the sale of dried salmon is a hard line on Aboriginal rights, that demands self-determination in the management of the fishery and the disposal of the catch.

An Aboriginal Right: Sale and Self-determination.

The bottom line is, it is in us to go out and fish, and it is our right to go out and use the salmon, and it is our responsibility to see that the salmon survive. I am not confident in the way the DFO manages it. We should have more of a strong hold on it.

Chris Duncan

The Stó:lō are fighting hard for the recognition of their Aboriginal rights to land and resources in their traditional territories. The ruling in Calder case, \(^{25}\) recognizing the continued existence of Aboriginal title to lands in British Columbia, instigated the creation of a land claims process to address the tenure of Aboriginal territories. Stó:lō Nation is currently negotiating a claim to Stó:lō territories through this system. The Stó:lō have also sought recognition of their rights through the courts; when Dorothy Van der Peet was charged with the illegal sale of fish, the question of the Stó:lō’s Aboriginal right to fish sales was pursued to the Supreme Court of Canada. The ruling,

\(^{24}\) The dry rack licenses of seven out of the ten families who participated in this research are registered to an Elder.

according to legal scholars, undermined the First Nations perspective on Aboriginal rights (see Zalewski 1997), through its “majoritarian” definition of tradition (see Barsh and Henderson 1997). However, the case affirmed Stó:lo Nation’s commitment to the recognition of the historical continuity and significance of Stó:lo salmon sale and trade, and their Aboriginal right to maintain this activity in contemporary fisheries. The pilot sales program provides a legal structure of sale while the struggle for recognition of Stó:lo rights continues.

Yet, some Stó:lo fishers are extremely critical of the AFS structure and the commercial fishery it has established, and vehemently object to the idea of commercializing wind drying. This appears to position wind dryers in opposition to the prerogatives of Stó:lo Nation. However, the reluctance of wind dryers to commercialize the wind dry fishery does not undermine Stó:lo Nation’s struggle for the Aboriginal right to sell fish. Rather, the wind dryers’ position on commercialization strengthens the argument for Stó:lo self-determination in the use of the salmon harvest by resisting non-Native definition of the conditions of sale. The central concern is the control of resources and self-determination in the disposal of the Stó:lo salmon harvest and commercialization is one facet of this deeper issue. Wind dryers sell dried salmon but they are just not willing to do so under the rubric of the AFS.

According to the wind dryers, the AFS pilot sales program does not give Stó:lo fishers the necessary degree of self-determination in the management or disposal of their salmon harvest. Sto:lo commercial fishers struggle to make a living under circumstances that do not derive from a recognition of their Aboriginal rights to the Fraser river resources. They fish during short and infrequent openings in the shadow of
a regulation system that is now Aboriginally-enforced, but established according to non-Aboriginal priorities and laws. Although the pilot sales program is constructed as an Aboriginal commercial fishery, it is derived from the persisting “food fishery” model and is ultimately shaped and controlled by the DFO.

Colin Duncan emphasizes that the current structure does not recognize Aboriginal knowledge:

_I think some of our rights are being neglected. Last year when the season came, the DFO asserted a conservation concern; our people didn’t agree... The system is neglecting traditional knowledge. When the fish are in the river that’s when you are supposed to go fishing._

Colin’s nephew Chris Duncan similarly argues that the structure of management and regulation should be derived from Aboriginal principles:

_They should base the techniques on our values, the same goals. The objectives should be traditional and there should be different strategies._

Dissatisfaction with the existing commercial structure makes wind dryers reluctant to situate dried salmon under a management regime that appears so dislocated from Aboriginal values. The pilot sales program forces fishers to choose between the legal sale of their catch and self-determination in its disposal. Dryers want the wind dry harvest to remain under Aboriginal control and express reluctance to threaten the “integrity” of the fishery by commercializing it according to the rules of the AFS.

Wind dryers may be considered to be taking a hard line approach to the Aboriginal rights questions facing the Stó:lō First Nation. They are reluctant to negotiate for the right to fish, or to sell their fish. One Elder told me:

_I can do other things than to go sit down there [at meetings] all day long just to go to fish. I shouldn’t have to argue for it, it’s our right to go fish... I told them - when the time comes to dry, I am just going to go._
This Elder does not acknowledge state authority over her inherent Aboriginal right to fish. Along similar lines, several wind dryers expressed skepticism about the potential of treaty negotiations to secure adequate access to the river and self-determination in fisheries management. Wind drying Elder Gus MacDonald suggests that in negotiating a treaty with the federal and provincial governments, the Stó:lō are conceding that they were conquered and now require state recognition of their rights:

"It is ours already. We don't need to ask for it."

Stó:lō fisher Richard Lewis also expresses fear about the potential losses incurred through extinguishing Aboriginal title to Stó:lō territories. He suggests that the treaty might prove a poor deal for his people:

[The government says:] I'll trade you two humpies for a sockeye. That's a bad trade. Or - if you trade an arm for a leg, you are still missing a limb.

Mr. Lewis' trade metaphor is an apt one. The Stó:lō are being asked to trade one right for another, an inherent Aboriginal right for a contingent legal right through both the AFS and the treaty. The land claim negotiations and fishing regulations rely on the same premise: government control of Stó:lō resources. The refusal to submit the wind dry fishery to an aggrandized degree of government control is a point of resistance against this premise. The commercial structure open to Stó:lō fishers is at odds with Stó:lō self-determination and their Aboriginal right to fish and they refuse to sell wind dried salmon according to this structure. Having suffered the loss of control of the fresh catch with commercialization, Stó:lō wind dryers seek to retain the wind dry

---

26 See Asch and Macklem 1991 for a further discussion of the inherent theory of Aboriginal rights and Asch and Zlotkin 1996 regarding the consequence of extinguishment clauses in treaties.
fishery as an Aboriginal fishery, specifically, a fishery that is Aboriginally-controlled and Aboriginally-defined.

The refusal of the wind dryers to commercialize the wind dry fishery does not reflect an aversion to the sale of fish nor does it undermine Stó:lō Nation’s struggle to secure a legal recognition of their right to sell fish. What many wind dryers are holding out for is not a negotiated privilege but a recognition of their inherent right to fish and to control their fisheries.

**Conclusion**

*It's just the simple reason they don't want to be controlled by government. If they commercialized wind drying, the government would have control. This way we do it our way, not theirs.*

Elder Alan Cameron

The Stó:lō peoples have a long tradition of resisting non-Native control of their land, resources and culture, which has been manifest in many forms: public protest, legal action, and the perseverance of customary activities despite their inhibition and/or prohibition by the Canadian state. Wind drying is a contemporary point of resistance in the sphere of Stó:lō fishing rights; this resistance currently takes the form of a refusal to commercialize the fishery. A cursory investigation of this refusal to commercialize would suggest that wind drying is a purely subsistence activity that provides winter food provisions to the handful of families that participate. However, the significant amount of trade and sale of dried salmon that occurs in Stó:lō communities, up to a third of some harvests, suggests that the refusal to commercialize reflects an aversion to selling dried salmon according to non-Native rules, rather than an aversion to sale.
Why Stó:lō dryers are averse to subjecting wind dried salmon to external control is a result of the non-economic value attributed to both the practice and the product of the fishery. Wind drying is considered a traditional practice and dried salmon a traditional food, and tradition is fervently protected from the restrictions associated with non-Native management and regulation. This tradition, however, has partly been constructed through the Stó:lō experience of non-Native regulation of Aboriginal fishing. Increasing government intervention in Native fishing, and Aboriginal resistance to this intervention have significantly impacted the relationship between the Stó:lō and the salmon resources of the Fraser river. As regulations have inhibited fishing success, wind drying has become a focus of the struggle for Aboriginal rights and as a result, the construction of the activity has shifted to emphasize cultural values.

Stó:lō fishing, prior to extensive Xwelítem settlement in Stó:lō territories, was an integrated system of resource use. Families harvested fish as required, and preserved food for the winter through a variety of methods, depending on the run, the season and the weather. Fish was eaten and traded/sold, providing the Stó:lō with both food products and other necessities. As the Canadian state has increasingly controlled the river and its resources, Stó:lō fishing activities have been separated and re-defined by the regulation structure imposed upon them. Specifically, wind drying and the fresh catch (as a commercial product) have been thoroughly segregated. This began with the legal distinction between Indian and modern fishing techniques made in 1878 applying general law to Indians fishing with gillnets, and a later spurious differentiation between fish for sale and fish for consumption. More recently the numerical division of catch
allotments for wind dry and fresh fisheries, their chronological distinction through
different openings, and their bureaucratic separation through the need for different
licenses has thoroughly bifurcated the fishing activities. A product of the structural
division of the Sto:lo fishery has been the differentiation between the wind dry fishery
and the commercial fishery on a cultural level.

Wind drying Elders call dried salmon food; younger people and those families
ceased drying salmon several decades ago emphasize that drying salmon is a cultural
activity. During the course of this century, the meaning of dried salmon has changed
for Sto:lo wind dryers. This shift is a consequence of the experience of regulation.
Ironically, this change in meaning and attribution of aggrandized cultural value has
significant implications for the regulation of the fisheries. Having made wind drying a
threatened tradition, the Canadian state has raised the stakes in the struggle for control
of the Aboriginal fisheries. The wind dryers are battling for control of a traditional
practice and a cultural symbol, as well as an economic resource.

Why the wind dry fishery appears to have more cultural currency than the
commercialized fresh catch is also a consequence of wind dryers’ reactions to the
external control structure. It is not because fresh salmon has been a less important food
for Sto:lo peoples in the past, nor because selling fish is at odds with Sto:lo history or
culture, that the commercial fishery is considered to be less “culturally intact”. For over
one hundred years the sale of salmon has been legally defined as a non-Aboriginal
activity; this has legally dissociated selling salmon from constructions of Sto:lo culture.
Since 1992 the pilot sales program allowing the sale of “food fishery” salmon has
established a commercial structure that is defined and controlled by non-Aboriginal
parties and that restricts all Native fishing activities on the river. This appears to have distanced the sale of salmon from Stó:lo aspirations of self-determination and assertions of their Aboriginal right to fish. Wind drying as a “food fishery” continues to be associated with legal constructions of Aboriginal tradition, and as a non-commercial activity it is more flexibly regulated, allowing for relatively greater Stó:lo self-determination in the disposal of the harvest.

I argue these points not to undermine Stó:lo self-determination of culture, nor to suggest that contemporary Aboriginal identities and traditions are wholly derived from contact with non-Native society. The historical continuity of Stó:lo fishing activities is indisputable; wind drying and the sale of fresh salmon are long-established customary activities that form part of the cultural heritage of the Stó:lo. Furthermore, the Stó:lo have a long history of resisting Xwelítem attempts to control and dictate their cultural practices, particularly in regards to fishing rights (see Ware 1983). My project is to elucidate the impacts of non-Native regulation of Aboriginal fishing on the experience of Stó:lo wind dryers. The consequences of restrictive and discriminatory state regulations regarding First Nations access to resources are far-reaching and profound. Such discrimination persists today, despite growing success in the recognition of Aboriginal rights. The Canadian state has legally and socially defined Aboriginal fishing through the imposition of an alien regulation structure, and continues to do so notwithstanding recent changes to this structure. Cultural definitions of Aboriginal fishing have been shifted in reaction to this structure.

Government regulations define the practice of Aboriginal fishing. Gear restrictions, time restrictions, sale restrictions and harvest quotas shape the performance
of Aboriginal fisheries. Moreover, these same regulations define the rights of Aboriginal fishing within the Canadian judicial system. Regulation dislocated the sale of salmon from Aboriginal fishing in 1888 with the creation of the “food fishery” (Newell 1993: 47); this has continued to be the model for the consideration of Aboriginal fishing rights. The Sparrow ruling rejected the idea that fishing regulations had extinguished Aboriginal rights to the resource (Bowker 1995: 7), however, the Musqueam right to sell salmon was not addressed. While the ruling established the priority of Aboriginal fishing for food, ceremonial and social purposes, the omission of the right to sale or barter mirrors the division of the regulatory scheme (ibid.: 8). The courts continue to assess Aboriginal rights according to the tenets of non-Aboriginal fishing regulations.

Aboriginal response and resistance to restrictive regulations and judicial discrimination has somewhat redefined the tradition of wind drying. Contemporary constructions of Stó:lō fishing activities appear to be significantly influenced by the regulatory structure. Commercial sale, while it has a historical continuity equal to that of wind drying, is not assigned the same degree of cultural value by dryers as the wind dried food fishery. Regulation has engendered the protection of one activity over the other, resulting in a fierce resistance to the commercialization of wind drying. Having been denied Aboriginal control of the fresh commercial catch, Stó:lō wind dryers hold fast to wind drying as a tradition.

A project that began as a discussion of the meaning of wind drying has been aptly transformed into a consideration of Stó:lō fishing in general. This is because Stó:lō fishing activities must be considered in their totality (fresh and preserved,
commercial and “subsistence”), and in light of the regulations that have artificially separated them and restricted their success. The story of the traditionalization of wind drying is as much about the loss of control of the commercial catch as it is about the maintenance of dry racks.

Although the last century of disruption and restriction has shifted the relationship between the Stó:lō and the salmon of the Fraser river, there persists a bond that has not been broken by regulation. Despite the discriminations of fishery regulation, the Stó:lō have maintained connections to their territory and resources, and continue to celebrate the significance of salmon to their experience and identity. During the last five years the Stó:lō First Nation has regained a significant degree of control of their resources, suggesting that in the future, the practice, the rights, and the tradition of Stó:lō fisheries will be increasingly Aboriginally-defined.
Bibliography

Alfred, Gerald

Asch, Michael and Norman Zlotkin

Asch, Michael and Patrick Macklem

Barsh, Russel Lawrence and James Youngblood Henderson

Bone, M.

Bowker, Andrea

Carlson, Keith and Sarah Eustace

Carlson, Keith Thor

Cheng, Chilwin Chienhan

Clifton, James A.
Duff, Wilson
1952 *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia.* Victoria, B.C.: British Columbia Provincial Museum and Archives.

Fort Langley Journal
1827- By James MacMillan (June 27, 1827 - October 8, 1828) and by Archibald McDonald (October 10, 1828 - July 30, 1830). Transcribed by Winnifreda Macintosh, January 9, 1963.

Glavin, Terry

Handler, Richared and Jocelyn Linnekin

Hobsbawm, Eric

Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger

Jenness, Diamond

Kew, Micheal

Linnekin, Jocelyn S.

McKay, William
1977 *A Socio-economic Analysis of Native Indian Participation in the BC Salmon Fishery with the Proposed SEP.* Vancouver: Department of Fisheries and Environment.
Newell, Diane
1993  *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Salée, Daniel

Sider, Gerald

Smith, Gavin

Thom, Brian and Laura Cameron

Usher, Peter
1976  Evaluating Country Food in the Northern Native Economy. *Arctic* 29(2): 105-120.

Wagner, Roy

Waldram, James B.

Ware, Reuben

Wenzel, George
Williams, Raymond  

Zalewski, Anna  