

UNSETTLING TIMES: INTERIOR SALISH RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO THE 1872
EARTHQUAKE IN THE INLAND NORTHWEST

by

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Abstract

On December 14, 1872 at 9:40pm the Inland Northwest experienced its biggest earthquake since the eighteenth century. While seismologists have begun investigating this historic quake, scholars in the humanities have thus far ignored it. To begin to rediscover the human dimension of the earthquake, this paper explores how the Interior Salish – the most numerous group in the region at the time – experienced it as a spiritual event. To respond appropriately to it, it appears that they summoned their *sumíx* (power helpers) at *snyx^wám* (winter dances); sought out Christian missionaries to perform rituals such as baptism and marriage; and turned to prophetic movements, an established part of their religious practice, which had taken on both Christian and anti-colonial elements during the nineteenth century. Many Interior Salish individuals used all three responses simultaneously, unsettling notions of “authentic” indigenous spirituality and demonstrating indigenous adaptability and flexibility. By drawing on more contemporary Interior Salish voices, this paper also contends that many aspects of their worldview have persisted since the 1872 earthquake.

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I. Introduction:

Rediscovering an Earthquake through Indigenous Experiences

On December 14, 1872 the night sky was clear and the air was crisp in the Inland Northwest, the region that now encompasses eastern British Columbia and Washington State. The area had just received a snowfall, and the stars and full moon that evening illuminated the peaceful winter scene. At 9:40 p.m., though, the quiet was abruptly upset by the largest earthquake the region has experienced since the eighteenth century.¹

The earthquake that occurred that night registered an estimated Modified Mercalli intensity magnitude of 6.8.² This was enough to cause rock slides along the Columbia River near Wenatchee, Washington that not only succeeded in damming the river for a few hours after the quake, but reportedly killed several indigenous people there. The quake also created large fumaroles in the Similkameen and Okanagan Valleys of British Columbia, releasing clouds of sulfurous gases into the air.³ Despite its intensity, the 1872 earthquake and its numerous aftershocks have received scant attention by scholars. This is partially due to the fact that seismologists themselves have only recently agreed that the Inland Northwest is

¹ This region lies within the Cascadia subduction zone (CSZ), a fault line that runs from mid-Vancouver Island to Northern California, separating the Juan de Fuca and North American tectonic plates. For more information on the CSZ please see: Ruth S. Ludwin et al., "Dating the 1700 Cascadia Earthquake: Great Coastal Earthquakes in Native Stories," *Seismological Research Letters* 76: 2 (March/April 2005): 140-8; "The Earthquake Up Country," *Victoria Daily Standard*, December 16, 1872; and "An Earthquake!," *Daily Pacific Tribune*, December 16, 1872.

² Seismologists use the Modified Mercalli intensity magnitude scale to measure felt reports for earthquakes that occurred before the development of the Richter scale in 1935. I have relied on William H. Bakun et al.'s calculations, but this earthquake's precise epicenter and magnitude remain controversial among seismologists. William H. Bakun et al. "The December 1872 Washington State Earthquake," *Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America* 92, no. 8 (December 2002): 3239.

³ "When a Mountain Slide Once Dammed the Mighty Columbia," *Wenatchee Daily World*, June 15, 1922. This place, just north of Entiat, WA is still called "Earthquake Point"; *The Oregonian*, December 30, 1872; Julien M. Baudre to Louis D'Herbomez. 28 December 1872, Records of the Oblate Missions of British Columbia (microform), University of British Columbia Library (hereafter cited as: ROMBC, UBCL); and *The Cariboo Sentinel*, January 25, 1873.

seismically active. Since the “rediscovery” of the region’s seismicity in the past decade, seismologists have begun taking an interest in the 1872 earthquake and other historic quakes. Scholars in the humanities and social sciences, however, have continued to ignore it, relegating it to a chapter of the region’s “natural” history.⁴

Historian Raymond Fogelson considers in his article “The Ethnohistory of Events and Non-Events” why it is that some historical occurrences are considered important and others are not. He contends that contemporary historical concerns and methodologies lead to the “variable valorization of events,” resulting in “latent events” – events that occurred but are not yet considered historically important – being overlooked.⁵ As Fogelson notes, however, by asking “the right questions” and constructing “suitable narratives” we can “reveal these undiscovered events.”⁶

Traditionally, histories dealing with environmental events like earthquakes hinge on body counts and socio-economic tallies of the destruction of infrastructures and means of livelihood. Using these measures, it is not surprising the 1872 earthquake has remained a “latent event”: it is insignificant compared with the 1906 San Francisco earthquake or, more recently, the 1964 Alaskan quake. By asking different questions of the 1872 quake and other “natural” events, however, they can suddenly become germane historical happenings.

Our questions, though, are often restricted by the epistemological limitations of Western scholarship. In terms of the 1872 earthquake, Julie Cruikshank’s observations concerning the

⁴ Ludwin et al., “Dating the 1700 Cascadia Earthquake,” 140. Some scholars working in the humanities have begun to take an interest in the “rediscovery” of Cascadia’s seismic history. Historian Coll Thrush recently co-authored a paper with seismologist Ruth Ludwin on this topic that is tentatively titled “Finding Fault: Indigenous Seismology, Colonial Science, and the Rediscovery of Earthquakes and Tsunamis in Cascadia,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 31, no. 4 (Fall/Winter 2007) (forthcoming).

⁵ Raymond D. Fogelson, “The Ethnohistory of Events and Non-Events,” *Ethnohistory* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 142.

⁶ Fogelson, “The Ethnohistory of Events,” 143.

separation of what is considered “natural” and “cultural” in Western thought are especially relevant.⁷ In her recent work, *Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* Cruikshank argues that a distinction between “nature” and “culture” is a relatively recent construct. Furthermore, it is a fiction that is increasingly challenged by evidence of nature-culture overlaps like “ozone holes, mad cows, and genetically modified crops.”⁸ Nevertheless, it has had tremendous power to dictate what is “considered a rational discourse,” restricting the questions we ask, the approaches we take, and the conclusions we reach.⁹

In order to bring the 1872 earthquake and similar events out of the shadows, it is first necessary to bring nature and culture closer together. As Cruikshank found in her work with Tlingit and Athapaskan elders, their oral narratives of glaciers in the Yukon demonstrate an “intense entanglement” of “cultural” and “natural” histories.¹⁰ This entanglement, she argues, is not limited to the indigenous peoples in her study: non-indigenous actors - explorers and scientists, for example – also experienced encounters with “natural” forces through their socio-cultural lenses.

The populations living in the Inland Northwest at the time of the 1872 earthquake likewise understood it according to their worldviews. Whether a Catholic missionary, a *senx^wya?lpitk^w* (Colville) woman, or a Chinese miner, each individual made sense of the earthquake through her or his understandings of how the world worked. Due to time and space

⁷ Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 143.

⁸ Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?*, 257.

⁹ Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?*, 62. Linda Tuhiwai Smith also discusses these ideas in her work, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1999).

¹⁰ Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?*, 243. Richard Atleo, a Nuu-chah-nulth hereditary chief, expresses this concept as “Tsawalk” – “everything is one” – in his work, *Tsawalk: a Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).

considerations, I have not explored how all these groups experienced the 1872 earthquake as a cultural event in this study, although I plan to in a future work.¹¹ Instead, I will focus on the most numerous group in the region, the Interior Salish, and how they responded to the quake.¹²

For the Interior Salish, the 1872 earthquake was specifically a spiritual event. As I contend in the first section of this paper, at the time of the earthquake the Interior Salish deeply valued their relationships with the spirit world. Individuals and communities would reaffirm these bonds through specific protocols at different times of the year, ignoring them at their peril. The earthquake indicated to the Interior Salish that these relationships had not been properly honoured, and the praying and dancing they engaged in after the quake was likely linked to their relationships with *sumíx* (power helpers) and sacred *sn̓yxʷám* (winter dances).¹³

The Interior Salish did not limit themselves to the above responses. As I argue in the second section of this paper, they also solicited Christian sacraments from the Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the region. While many missionaries attributed this resurgence in interest to divine will, the evidence strongly suggests that the 1872 earthquake was central to the Interior Salish's "awakening." Furthermore, in the third section I assert that the Interior Salish also turned to an established prophetic tradition that had, in the course of the nineteenth

¹¹ I am in the process of gathering materials on how other populations in the Inland Northwest reacted to the 1872 earthquake for later publication. So far, the earthquake appears to be an excellent window into settler ideologies and insecurities regarding the colonization of the west.

¹² Anthropologists group the Interior Salish together because of shared cultural and linguistic characteristics. Interior Salish individuals, such as *syilx* (Okanagan-Colville-Lakes) storyteller Harry Robinson, and writer Christine Quintasket (often known by her pseudonym, Mourning Dove) speak of extensive socio-economic and kinship ties in the past and present. For more information please see: Douglas R. Hudson, "The Okanagan Indians of British Columbia," in *Okanagan Sources*, ed. Jean Webber (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 1990), 54-89; Lee Maracle et al., eds. *We Get Our Living Like Milk from the Land* (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 1994); Christine Quintasket, *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography*, ed. Jay Miller (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); Harry Robinson, *Living By Stories: A Journey of Landscape and Memory*, ed. and comp. Wendy Wickwire (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2005).

¹³ I have followed Wendy Wickwire's transcription of *sumíx* (which she indicates is pronounced shoo-MISH) and *sn̓yxʷám* (shnay-WHUM) from the *syilx* language. *Nature Power: In the Spirit of an Okanagan Storyteller*, by Harry Robinson (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2004), 248.

century, become both Christianized and anti-colonial. The Interior Salish understood that the world was finite and that creation was an ongoing process. The earthquake, epidemics, and the Interior Salish's struggles with colonialism indicated that apocalypse was at hand. To hasten this process, individuals engaged in prophetic movements that sprung up around their territory. In effect, after the 1872 earthquake, the Interior Salish drew upon all the religious beliefs and rituals at their disposal - often simultaneously - to respond to this spiritual event.

The Interior Salish's use of multiple, seemingly contradictory, practices is not confined to this one moment in time. More contemporary voices, like Harry Robinson's, clearly demonstrate that the Interior Salish have persisted in their adaptability and flexibility, much like other human populations.¹⁴ The Interior Salish and indigenous people more generally, though, are often held to unfair and unrealistic ideas of identity, standards to which non-indigenous people are rarely subjected. Even now, some non-indigenous scholars with the best of intentions inadvertently perpetuate rigid categorizations. While it is important that we continue to investigate the power relations in any encounter, Susan Neylan and other scholars remind us that these historic actors will always defy our attempts to classify them.¹⁵ By creating binaries and categories, furthermore, we diminish indigenous agency, circumscribe indigenous experience, and give fodder to dangerous ideas around who is and is not, in historian Paige Raibmon's words, an "authentic Indian."¹⁶

¹⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty engages with the complexity of human experience and how to translate this into historical writing in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). I found chapters 3 and 4 particularly helpful for framing my research.

¹⁵ Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 12-16; Winona Stevenson, "The Journals and Voices of a Church of England Native Catechist: Askenootow (Charles Pratt), 1851-1884," in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press Ltd., 1998): 304-329. As a non-indigenous scholar working on missionization and colonial relations in North America, I have certainly come face to face with many of my own assumptions regarding the actors in various colonial struggles.

¹⁶ Three excellent book-length studies on questions of indigenous identity and "authenticity" in Canada and the United States are: Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-*

Rediscovering the 1872 earthquake through the Interior Salish's religious experiences is by no means a straightforward process. As Fogelson notes, events leave behind "a residuum of cultural data These include values, meanings, symbolism, worldviews, social structural principles, and other variables of cultural analysis."¹⁷ In trying to unpack the natural-cultural event of the 1872 earthquake, I have discovered that the evidence is often fragmentary and more suggestive than stated. In addition, some of the "data" that Fogelson mentions – meanings, symbols, worldviews – are slippery cultural concepts that resist regulation.

In large part my evidentiary and interpretive challenges stem from the historical fields with which I am engaging: indigenous, cultural, and religious histories bring unique opportunities, but they also present difficulties. As outlined above, one major struggle is recognizing and overcoming Western epistemological biases that dictate what is "rational" and "real," as well as what sources are "true" and "objective." In terms of indigenous history, within the last decade Western scholars have largely accepted the validity of oral histories as sources and, as Cruikshank notes, are becoming more theoretically aware of how to engage with them.¹⁸ Many scholars operating in the Western historical tradition, however, still face significant challenges when writing about spirituality; this is especially true when it is not framed as a "rational" tool to meet a material end. As historian Joy Dixon notes in her work, *The Divine Feminine*, there remain "significant limitations to the effort to make the spiritual a

Century Northwest Coast (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Fogelson, "The Ethnohistory of Events," 141.

¹⁸ Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?*, 60; Daniel Clayton, "Captain Cook and the Spaces of Contact at 'Nootka Sound,'" in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, ed. Jennifer S.J. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1998).

category of historical analysis.”¹⁹ Part of this, according to Dipesh Chakrabarty, is the nature of the historical discipline. As he observes in *Provincializing Europe*, “A secular subject like history faces certain problems in handling practices in which gods, spirits, or the supernatural have agency in the world.”²⁰

Despite the narrowness of this study and its acknowledged limitations, by connecting the fields of indigenous history, environmental history, and religious history through the 1872 earthquake I am able to access a previously “latent event” in the Inland Northwest’s history, as well as suggest a possible avenue for uncovering other events in the future. Furthermore, this study contributes to a growing literature that challenges the primacy of Western epistemological norms; not only does this serve to limit what history is being done and how it is being approached, but it marginalizes other ways of knowing and being in the world. Finally, Interior Salish religious responses to the 1872 earthquake provide one small example of indigenous peoples’ adaptability in the face of considerable changes to their world and ways of life, while also highlighting how indigenous worldviews have persisted since the late nineteenth century.

¹⁹ Joy Dixon, *The Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 12.

²⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 72.

II. “Trembling of the Earth is a Warning by the Great Spirit: People Reform Yourselves!”

In a letter dated November 10, 1874 Father Urban Grassi, a Jesuit missionary, wrote to his superior to describe his work among the Interior Salish east of the Cascade Mountains in Washington Territory. In this letter he reported that the 1872 earthquake and its effects on the landscape had profoundly affected the Entiat: “this tribe, ... remarkable first for their libertinism, are beginning to fear and then to pray, and although the earthquakes have not caused them to abandon their vices entirely, it has nonetheless greatly subdued their spirits.”²¹ The available evidence suggests, however, that the earthquake had the exact opposite effect: rather than subdue the Entiat’s spirits, it had awakened them.²²

The earthquake occurred in the winter, a time of heightened spiritual sensibility for the Interior Salish when they gathered in winter villages to engage in *snyx’ám* and reaffirm their relationships with the spirit world. While the season likely contributed to the Interior Salish’s spiritual conception of the 1872 earthquake and its effects on their communities, it was certainly not the only reason. Several sources demonstrate that the Interior Salish already had a sense that earthquakes were a message from the spirit world to reform their behaviour. In addition to returning to acceptable modes of living, from the evidence it appears the Interior Salish also engaged in specific ceremonies and rituals intended, as scholar Douglas Hudson notes in his work on the *syilx* (Okanagan-Colville-Lakes) of British Columbia, to transfer

²¹ Grassi to Joseph Giorda, 10 November 1874. Pacific Northwest Seismic Network, “The 1872 North Cascades Earthquake Washington Reporting Localities,” http://www.pnsn.org/HIST_CAT/1872/Weston/washington/lkchelan.html (Translator unknown. Original in the author’s possession. Hereafter cited as PNSN). “questa tribù ... rimarchevoli prima per loro libertinaggio cominciarono a temere poi a pregare, e quantunque il terremoto no abbia fatto loro abbandonare interamente i loro vizii, ha però grandemente soggiogati i loro spiriti.”

²² I would like to thank Dr. Coll Thrush for highlighting the above passage.

“power from the natural and supernatural worlds to the human world.”²³ Having this power would allow them to protect themselves, heal others, and ensure the spiritual and physical well-being of the community in the coming year.

In the weeks after the earthquake, there were several newspaper reports that indigenous people had been adversely affected or even killed by the earthquake’s rearranging of the landscape. For many Interior Salish, these events likely would have provided proof of spiritual imbalance brought about by improper actions. On December 30, 1872, for example, *The Oregonian* reprinted a *Walla Walla Statesman* article about the earthquake’s fatalities: “There is a report that up in the Spokane country, the earth opened and swallowed up a number of Indians and their horses.”²⁴ Shortly afterwards, *The Walla Walla Union* related to its readers that “Some Indians are reported to have been killed by the earthquake near White Bluffs on the Columbia by the rocks shaking loose and rolling down into their camp, which was near the bluff.”²⁵ The earthquake also contributed to hardships in the coming months. Peter Wapato, an Entiat man who was 15 years old at the time of the earthquake, told the *Wenatchee Daily World* in 1925 that the earthquake “opened a seam in the earth at Chelan ... right in the middle of an Indian camp and soaked their provisions with foul smelling water. This was a real catastrophe in those days, as all the food they had stored for winter was destroyed.”²⁶ While many today might consider the 1872 earthquake and other environmental events random acts of nature, the Interior Salish knew that the deaths and hardships were warnings from the spirits, telling them

²³ Hudson, “The Okanagan Indians,” 86. I employ the term *syilx* following the Okanagan Nation Alliance’s usage of the term to refer to *syilx*-speaking peoples on both sides of the border. Please see: Lee Maracle et al., *We Get Our Living Like Milk from the Land* (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books Ltd., 1994); and the Okanagan Nation Alliance’s website: www.syilx.org.

²⁴ *The Oregonian*, December 30, 1872.

²⁵ *Walla Walla Union*, January 11, 1873.

²⁶ *Wenatchee Daily World*, August 8, 1925.

that they had not been behaving properly. This idea is reflected in a statement made by Clara Covington, a *senx^wya?lpitk^w* elder, in the 1980s to Father Patrick J. Twohy, a Jesuit priest working on the Colville Reservation in Washington State: “Trembling of the earth is a warning by the Great Spirit: People reform yourselves! This is an Early belief.”²⁷

Covington’s statement is mirrored in newspaper articles from the time of the 1872 earthquake. In an article published in the *Walla Walla Union* a year after the quake, the author related to his readers that, “Some of the Indians look upon the disturbance in the bowels of the earth as a judgment sent upon them to punish them for their misdeeds.”²⁸ In December 1874, a concerned citizen wrote a letter to the editor of *Spirit of the West* about the devastating effects of the earthquake on the water of Lake Chelan. This settler wrote, using the Chinook trade jargon: “Well may the poor Siwash with fear exclaim as he watches these convulsions ... ‘Wake Klosa Sockalee Tyee biss sulux’. (i.e. ‘Not good. Great Spirit very angry.’).”²⁹ Several decades after the 1872 earthquake, Charles Hill-Tout conducted ethnographic research among the *syilx* of British Columbia. There, he encountered a strong belief among the elders that “the excessive mortality among them is mainly due to the decadence and non-observance of the customs and practises of their fathers, and more particularly that of the *stcuEntcut* [refers to the period of seclusion when children went to acquire a *sumix*].”³⁰ Hill-Tout and the 1874 settler quoted above certainly need to be read with a critical eye, but their statements do echo the ideas, and

²⁷ Patrick J. Twohy, *Finding a Way Home: Indian and Catholic Paths of the Plateau Tribes* (Spokane, WA: University Press, 1983), 23.

²⁸ “An Occasional Shake,” *Walla Walla Union*, December 27, 1873.

²⁹ “The Earthquake Phenomena of Lake Chelan,” *Spirit of the West*, December 4, 1874. “Siwash” originally comes from the French “sauvage.” It passed into Chinook trade jargon as a general term for indigenous peoples during the fur trade era. Since the late-nineteenth century, however, it has become a pejorative term for indigenous peoples.

³⁰ Charles Hill-Tout, *Report on the Ethnology of the Okanák?en of British Columbia, an interior division of the Salish Stock* (London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1911), 132. *stcuEntcut* is pronounced s-tchoo-uhnt-shoot. Thank you to Dr. Coll Thrush for providing the pronunciation key.

even the words Covington used in the late twentieth century to describe the spiritual message earthquakes and other “natural” occurrences brought.³¹

In order to respond appropriately to the earthquake, then, the Interior Salish had to reform their ways and attempt to restore spiritual balance through religious actions. These often included dancing, singing, and praying. Two weeks after the earthquake, Father Julien M. Baudre, director of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate’s Okanagan Mission, near what is now Kelowna, British Columbia, penned a letter to his superior. In this letter, he describes the immediate reaction of the *syilx* at the mission:

The earthquake that we experienced really scared our Indians who believed that the end of the world had come. I know some who spent the night in prayer. At the time of the earthquake some Indians took to dancing their excessive dances and like the others they ended up so scared by the dance of the earth that they got down on their knees praying, crying, screaming.³²

The Salish in other parts of the Inland Northwest also responded to the earthquake immediately by dancing and praying. On January 28, 1873 the Kootenay correspondent for the *Victoria Daily Standard* reported (in the stereotypically racist tone of the time) that “Mr. Indian was badly frightened; they took to prayer, as they thought the devil was coming for them.”³³ The *Walla Walla Statesman* reported a similar story in what is now eastern Washington: “The Indians were the worst frightened; their lodge poles danced and swayed, the dogs howled; in a

³¹ For a concise explanation of *syilx* critiques of Hill-Tout and other ethnographers’ approaches and works concerning the Interior Salish, please see Hudson’s article, “The Okanagan Indians,” and Wickwire’s introduction to *Living By Stories*. For a more general critique of anthropology’s interactions with indigenous peoples and alternative models for research, please see: Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

³² Baudre to Louis D’Herbomez, 28 December 1872. ROMBC, UBCL (All translations are mine unless otherwise stated). “Le tremblement de terre que nous avons éprouvé a beaucoup épouventé nos sauvages qui se croyaient arrivés à la dernière heure du monde. J’en connais qui ont passé la nuit en prière. Au moment du tremblement quelques indiens se livraient à leurs danses extravagantes. Comme les autres, ils furent si épouventés de la danse de la terre qu’ils se misent tous à genoux priant, criant et pleurant.”

³³ “The Earthquake,” *Victoria Daily Standard*, March 12, 1873. The Kootenay correspondent submitted his original report on January 28, 1873 but because of the slow pace of communication – especially in winter – it took almost two months to arrive in Victoria.

minute or so, the old chief, Joseph, rang the bell and summoned all to prayers, as he said the devil was coming for them.”³⁴ What non-indigenous observers saw simply as “dancing and praying,” though, obviously had much more specific significance to the Interior Salish. It is difficult, as well as inappropriate, for me to attempt to pin down exactly what these prayers, dances, and songs meant.³⁵ Drawing on anthropological literature as well as sources written by Interior Salish individuals I will speculate about the general nature and structure of these religious observances, arguing that they were most likely tied to reaffirming spiritual relationships in order to access protection.

One of the most important spiritual relationships an Interior Salish individual could hold was with her or his *sumix*. The Interior Salish *sumix* could be Blue Jay, Deer, Ling Cod, Salmon, Eagle, or Sweatlodge, among other beings. Harry Robinson, a *syilx* storyteller, underlines the importance of this relationship repeatedly in his conversations with Wendy Wickwire, an anthropologist who worked with Robinson from 1977 until his death in 1990.³⁶ In the introduction to his first collection of stories, Wickwire reproduces one of Robinson’s statements on *sumix*:

You got to have power ... At one time, just like school. Nowadays when every child get big enough to go to school, they got to go to school. That way for the Indians long long time ago. Just like a night or even in the daytime and left them someplace. Leave ‘em out there alone by himself or herself. Got to be alone. Animal can come to him or her

³⁴ “Earthquake,” *Walla Walla Statesman*, March 29, 1873. It is unclear who “Chief Joseph” is in this article. It is possible that it refers to Chief Joseph of the Nez Percés, but there are indications it may have been a Kootenai leader.

³⁵ Power songs and *sumix* were and are the property of an individual or family. While an individual could invite others to help her or him sing, or could give permission to other use her or his song, the songs have cryptic words that are unintelligible to others. For more information on this, please see: Hudson, “The Okanagan Indians,” 22; and Loran Olsen, “Music and Dance,” *Handbook of North American Indians: Plateau. Volume 12*. ed. Deward E. Walker Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 549.

³⁶ During this time Wickwire recorded their conversations and his stories. As she notes in the introductions to Robinson’s stories, which he told her in English, he was eager to transmit these stories to both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples to help improve intercultural understanding.

and talk to them and tell them what they got to do after middle age. And that's their power. They give 'em power and tell them what to do.³⁷

To access the aid of their *sumíx* at *snyx^wám* and in times of crisis, an individual sings her or his power song. As anthropologist Loran Olsen noted in the late twentieth century, these songs are often used "to summon tutelary power in times of need" and to "escape from danger."³⁸ Robinson himself recounted numerous stories of individuals drawing on their *sumíx* through power songs to protect themselves and their communities. Generally, as he notes, an individual was to use her or his *sumíx* "just for themselves."³⁹ In "Don't Forget My Song," however, Robinson, who had no *sumíx* of his own, is protected by *?axmín* (Awk-Meen or Margaret), an "Indian doctor."⁴⁰ One winter, while working as a young man near Omak, Washington, *?axmín* told Robinson that she was going to hold a *snyx^wám* for him. At the *snyx^wám*, she discovers through her *sumíx* that "Some bad people, bad ladies, they do some witchcraft on you, so you can be bad luck, or maybe you can be die that way."⁴¹ In order to protect himself at that moment as well as in the future *?axmín* tells him he can sing her power song since he does not have his own *sumíx*.⁴² In another story, Harry relates how a group of *Secwepemc* (Shuswap) from Sicamous, British Columbia sang their power songs together, summoning their *sumíx* to protect their community from the noisy new train running through

³⁷ Wendy Wickwire, introduction to *Write It on Your Heart: the Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller* (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 1989), 25.

³⁸ Olsen, "Music and Dance," 549.

³⁹ Wickwire, *Nature Power*, 11.

⁴⁰ This was not for lack of trying. Robinson was trained and sent out to acquire a *sumíx* but was unsuccessful in the end. As Wickwire notes in the introduction to *Nature Power*, because of his *sumíx*-less state, "he considered himself vulnerable to sickness and bad luck." (12); Harry Robinson, "Don't Forget My Song," *Nature Power: In the Spirit of an Okanagan Storyteller* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2004), 170.

⁴¹ Robinson, "Don't Forget My Song," 195.

⁴² Robinson, "Don't Forget My Song," 208.

their territory. In this story, the *Secwepemc* decide to use their *sumíx* to place an obstruction on the tracks. In the end, one of them “put that big boulder on the track” and each time the train came to that spot, “the wheel was spinnin’” and the train could not pass until the *Secwepemc* men removed it.⁴³

At the time of the 1872 earthquake, an Interior Salish individual had to dance out the power of her or his *sumíx* and sing its power song during *snix^wám* in order to maintain the relationship. It is possible, then, that after the earthquake the Interior Salish turned to these ceremonies to strengthen relationships with their *sumíx* and draw on their power to restore spiritual balance. As Quintasket noted in the early twentieth century, it was during winter time “when the powers and their representative spirit guides were strongest.”⁴⁴ This was the time when the “bond” between *sumíx* and human was “expressed at a public gathering” through song and dance.⁴⁵ It was also the time, she states, when “a budding medicine man or woman” would be initiated by a seasoned “shaman” and when “a general healing of the afflicted” took place.⁴⁶ After the 1872 earthquake, the Interior Salish were certainly afflicted with a sense of spiritual crisis as well as physical hardship and so, as in the case of the *Secwepemc* men who succeeded in stopping a train, it is likely they turned to the combined strength of their *sumíx* to respond effectively to the quake.

⁴³ Harry Robinson, “The Indians, They Got the Power,” *Nature Power: In the Spirit of an Okanagan Storyteller* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2004), 227-8.

⁴⁴ Quintasket, *Mourning Dove*, 129.

⁴⁵ Quintasket, *Mourning Dove*, 123.

⁴⁶ Quintasket, *Mourning Dove*, 125-6. The *snix^wám* name for the Winter Dance - *snix^wám* – according to Kennedy and Bouchard means “take sickness and drop it down” indicating this important function of the ceremonies. Dorothy Kennedy and Randall T. Bouchard, “Northern Okanagan, Lakes, and Colville,” *Handbook of North American Indians: Plateau. Volume 12*. ed. Deward E. Walker Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 259.

Sources by and about the Interior Salish suggest that it is very likely they sang their power songs to summon protection from their *sumíx* at *snyx^wám* after the earthquake. While winter was the prescribed time of year for this ceremony, as Robinson's stories demonstrate, individuals and groups could call on their *sumíx* at any time. Due to the continuing aftershocks in the months after the 1872 earthquake, the Interior Salish likely would have continued to call on their *sumíx*. As they moved through their seasonal subsistence calendar, the Interior Salish would have also continued to reaffirm their relationship with the spiritual world through other ceremonies and protocols. Then, as before and after the earthquake, they would likely have enacted first food ceremonies, observed specific protocols, and engaged in established rituals to demonstrate respect for the spirit world and guarantee the renewal of resources.⁴⁷ These ceremonies were important ways to communicate respect for the spirits and restore equilibrium.

In the months and years after the 1872 earthquake, the Interior Salish would have likely continued holding *snyx^wám*, invoking their power songs, and performing other religious acts in an effort to reinstate spiritual balance. In these efforts, as sources by and about Interior Salish demonstrate, they would have turned especially to the religious leaders in their own communities to guide them through this time of turmoil and prevent further hardship. These religious specialists were an essential means by which the Interior Salish connected with the spiritual world. By the time of the 1872 earthquake, however, "Indian doctors," as Harry Robinson called them, were not the only religious specialists living in Interior Salish territory.

⁴⁷ Christine Quintasket devotes a significant amount of space in her memoirs to discussing first food ceremonies and other protocols her community followed to ensure their future well-being. Her chapter on the fishery at Kettle Falls is particularly illustrative.

III. "A Great Change Has Happened Among Them"

By the time of the earthquake, Christian missionaries from various denominations had lived and worked in Interior Salish territory for several decades. As mentioned in the introduction, there were two Catholic missionary organizations in operation: the Jesuits, who had gained a foothold south of the international border in the middle of the nineteenth century; and the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (hereafter referred to as the Oblates), who were firmly established in the interior of British Columbia.⁴⁸ There were also Protestant missionaries who carved niches out for themselves on both sides of the border, occasionally straying into what the Catholic missionaries considered "their" territory.⁴⁹

The majority of Interior Salish living at the time of the 1872 earthquake do not appear to have been overly concerned with the missionaries' denominational conflicts. While they were aware of differences between individual missionaries and sects, they seem to have been much more interested in the missionaries' ability, like Interior Salish religious specialists, to conduct rituals that would help them respond effectively to the earthquake and other spiritual events. While some Interior Salish had denominational preferences because of previous contact with particular missionaries or organizations, the majority were simply interested in receiving Christian sacraments.

⁴⁸ Vincent McNally, *The Lord's Distant Vineyard: A History of the Oblates and the Catholic Community in British Columbia* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Western Canadian Publishers, 2000); Wilfred P. Schoenberg, S.J., *Paths to the Northwest: A Jesuit History of the Oregon Province* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1982), remains the most complete history of the Jesuit Order's history in Washington Territory but its analysis is limited.

⁴⁹ For a critical historical study of Protestant missionary activity in British Columbia, please see: Neylan's work, *The Heavens are Changing*.

In the summer of 1875 Reverend Cushing Eells, a Presbyterian missionary, went to Spokane Falls in Washington Territory and, according to historian Clifford Merrill Drury, “was amazed to see the extent of the revival which had swept through the Spokane tribe.”⁵⁰ As Drury goes on to note, this revival was particularly gratifying for Eells, who had worked among the Spokane (*Npoqinišcn*) with Elkanah Walker for nine years in the 1840s without winning a single convert.⁵¹ In Drury’s words, the “seed [that] had been sown” by Eells and Walker all those years ago was finally coming to fruition and could be harvested by later Presbyterian missionaries like Henry H. Spalding and Henry T. Cowley.

Drury, a Presbyterian pastor himself, attributed the religious “awakening” of the Spokane to providence and the charismatic appeal of Spalding and Cowley.⁵² What Drury and other authors writing about the Spokane’s “change of heart” in 1873 tend to ignore, however, is that it followed very closely on the heels of the 1872 earthquake.⁵³ While Spalding and other Protestant missionaries in the region may have been impassioned preachers, and while it is possible that God’s grace inspired the Spokane and other Interior Salish to seek out baptism, the evidence suggests that the 1872 earthquake had much to do with their interest in Christianity.

⁵⁰ Clifford Merrill Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1936), 410.

⁵¹ Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding*, 410; William A. Lewis, “The Case of Spokane Garry,” *Bulletin of the Spokane Historical Society* 1, no. 1 (January 1917): 16; and Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding*, 410. The Spokane Nation today do not use *Npoqinišcn* in their public communications, but it is apparently a name they have used for themselves.

⁵² For a discussion of the concept of providence among nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries and its effects on historical study, please see: Brett Christophers, *Positioning the Missionary: John Booth Good and the Confluence of Cultures in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), 4-6.

⁵³ Clifford Merrill Drury, *A Teepee in His Front Yard: A Biography of H.T. Cowley* (Portland, OR: Binford & Mort Publishers, 1949): 105. The majority of the biographies I looked at concerning Eells, Spalding, Cowley, or Spokane Garry do not mention the earthquake. It is possible that these men did not record the earthquake and so there were no documents on which these scholars could draw. Time limitations and financial considerations meant I could not do an exhaustive search of these individuals’ papers. My research into Jesuit and Oblate records, though, only revealed two missionaries who wrote about the 1872 earthquake, suggesting that the missionaries may have considered the earthquake a non-event or suppressed it in an effort to make themselves seem more central to the Christianization process.

Some Spokane made this connection themselves in a 1916 statement to the Spokane Historical Society. According to the group of men:

there was a big earthquake. The earth shook for about fifteen minutes The Indians all thought that the end of the world was come. On account of this and the Catholics, Spokane Garry called a meeting of the Spokane Indian[s] ... at another meeting held a little later four men were appointed to go to Kamia [Kamiah, Idaho] to bring Mr. Spalding to us. These men were Chettle-Sote, No-wit-chi-tache- mo-qualte, Sha-a-mene, Tsch-tako and Charley Warner here went with these men. They brought Mr. Spalding from Kamia to Spokane. On the Spokane prairie he baptized all the Spokane Indians. Some had already been baptized by the Catholics, these Mr. Spalding baptized again. The Indians did this so that if another earthquake and the end of the world came they could all go to Heaven.⁵⁴

This account clearly illustrates that in the memories of these Spokane men, the search for Reverend Spalding and Christian baptism was inextricably tied to the 1872 earthquake. The account also highlights the religious diversity of the Spokane: while Drury speaks of the “Spokane Tribe” as a homogenous group in his statement, they were not united in their preferences regarding Christian missionary organizations. Spokane Garry may have sent emissaries to Spalding in the months following the 1872 earthquake, but other Spokane – like Baptiste Peone - turned to the Roman Catholic Jesuits.

It is interesting that Spokane Garry felt the need to call in Spalding at all after the earthquake. Since his five-year stay at an Episcopal mission school at Red River (near what is now Winnipeg, Manitoba) between 1825 and 1830, Garry had professed Protestantism and attempted to spread its teachings to other Interior Salish peoples.⁵⁵ Elkanah and Eells had tried to win converts among the Spokane in the 1840s, however, Drury notes they were unsuccessful

⁵⁴ “Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane County,” Statement of Thomas Garry, Moses B. Phillips, Aleck Pierre, Charley Warren, John Stevens, David John and William Three Mountains, made to William S. Lewis, Recording Secretary of the Spokane Historical Society on October 20, 1916. Pacific Northwest Seismic Network, “The 1872 North Cascades Earthquake Washington Reporting Localities,” http://www.pnsn.org/HIST_CAT/1872/Weston/washington/rvrstation.html#Spokane%20County (hereafter cited as PNSN).

⁵⁵ Drury, *A Tepee in His Front Yard*, 102-3; Lewis, “The Case of Spokane Garry,” 16; and Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 62.

in their aims and attributes this failure to Garry's negative attitude toward them.⁵⁶ By 1872 Garry had been central to the Christianization of the Spokane for almost forty years and had generally rejected the incursions of other missionaries. Why, then, would he send emissaries 200 miles to Kamiah, Idaho to find Spalding after the earthquake? I contend that Garry and other Protestant Spokane believed after the 1872 earthquake that they needed to seek out a Christian religious specialist like Spalding. While Garry could have provided Christian hymns, prayers, and lessons from the Bible, he could not confer Christian sacraments. It was no accident, I would argue, that in the letter Garry dictated to R.M. Benjamin, a local settler, he specifically asked Spalding to "come and Baptize his People and marry them According to Laws."⁵⁷ In order for Garry and other Protestant Spokane to respond to the earthquake appropriately, they wanted the rituals of baptism and marriage.

The Protestant missionaries' records support the idea of increased Spokane interest in Christian sacraments after the 1872 earthquake.⁵⁸ In a letter to Reverend John C. Lowrie dated September 3, 1873 Spalding raved of his successful missions to the Spokane over the summer months: "During my three tours in June & July & Aug. to the Spokans I have baptized into the church of Christ 334 including 81 children."⁵⁹ In a letter from Cowley to Lowrie on May 25, 1875, the former describes a March visit to the Spokane in similarly glowing terms: "the

⁵⁶ Lewis, "The Case of Spokane Garry," 17. It would seem as if Spokane Garry rejected Elkanah and Eells because they did not allow him to work as an indigenous preacher, only an interpreter, thereby restricting his role in the church.

⁵⁷ The letter is reprinted in Thomas E. Jessett, *Chief Spokane Garry, 1811-1892: Christian, Statesman, and Friend of the White Man* (Minneapolis, MN: T.S. Denison and Company, 1960), 172.

⁵⁸ Missionary records are problematic sources of statistics. Missionary organizations demanded that their agents keep records to determine how funding would be apportioned as well as for promotional purposes. Individual missionaries might also be led by their egos to inflate their successes. Finally, human error is also a factor, as Drury notes in his biography of Spalding. The latter, according to Drury, may have re-baptized individuals several different times due to poor eyesight in his old age (408).

⁵⁹ Drury, *A Tepee in His Front Yard*, 106.

baptism of eleven adults and ten infants [took place] at a large meeting in which several bands of natives were represented. This was followed by an unusually large gathering the first Sunday for the celebration of the Lord's Supper at the Mission, when ten more adults and three infants received baptism."⁶⁰ While the pace of baptism had perhaps slowed, it seems clear that the Spokane continued to engage with Cowley and his brand of Protestantism in a sustained fashion in the first few years after the earthquake.

Those among the Spokane who had professed Catholicism were equally interested in receiving Christian sacraments after the 1872 earthquake. Since the mid-1860s, Baptiste Peone and the Upper Spokanes had been connected with the Jesuits at St. Francis Regis, a mission near what is now Colville, Washington.⁶¹ By the time of the earthquake, Peone and the Upper Spokane had allowed the Jesuits to build several structures over the years in which to hold Catholic services.⁶² The Jesuits named this mission St. Michael's and by 1868, according to historian Thomas Jessett, Father Joseph Cataldo had "baptized 145 members of Peone's band."⁶³ After this initial flurry of baptisms Upper Spokane interest in the Jesuits and Roman Catholicism continued, but was not nearly as intense. In 1870, the Jesuits at St. Francis Regis

⁶⁰ Drury, *A Tepee in His Front Yard*, 140.

⁶¹ I could not find much information on Baptiste Peone in the literature. Jim Kershner, a reporter for the *Spokesman Review* wrote two articles on him in 2005. Kershner and other authors do not speculate as to why Baptiste chose to be baptized Catholic and have the members of his family and community align themselves with the Jesuits. After all, as an adopted member of the Spokane he could easily have followed Garry's lead and been baptized Protestant. I believe there are several possible reasons for his actions. First of all, Peone comes through the historical record as a shrewd entrepreneur and a cultural broker. He may have decided to seek out relationships with the Jesuits to challenge Garry's influence among the Upper Spokane. Also, his father, Louis, who was from near Montreal, was reportedly half French-Canadian and half indigenous. It is possible Baptiste had links to Kahnawake, an Iroquois community with significant historic ties to the Jesuits, and Roman Catholic Québécois. For more information on Catholicism in Québec and Kahnawake please see: Terence J. Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics: Gallicanism, Romanism, and Canadianism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Christopher Vecsey, *The Paths of Kateri's Kin* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997); and David Blanchard, "To the Other Side of the Sky: Catholicism at Kahnawake, 1667-1700," *Anthropologica* XXIV (1982): 77-102.

⁶² Jessett, *Chief Spokan Garry*, 164.

⁶³ Jessett, *Chief Spokan Garry*, 161.

Mission noted that Father Pascal Tosi had baptized a total of 16 Spokane at St. Michael's Mission.⁶⁴ In April 1872, the St. Francis House Diaries record that Tosi spent 11 days among the Spokane at Easter; during this time he baptized eight people, heard 180 confessions, and gave communion to 90 people.⁶⁵ Assuming that Tosi had held several masses during that period - which was generally the practice for short missions - and that those 145 Spokane baptized in 1868 had not been severely depleted by illness or injury, the numbers are quite conservative. Between 1868 and 1872, it would seem, Spokane interest in the Jesuits had begun to wane.

After the 1872 earthquake, however, many Upper Spokane demonstrated an increased appreciation for the Christian sacraments. The House Diary for St. Francis records that over a Christmas stay with the Spokane right after the earthquake, Tosi heard 936 confessions, baptized 30 people, married 21 couples, conferred 40 or 50 first communions, and gave communion to 300 people.⁶⁶ Indications that the Upper Spokane were especially receptive to Catholic teachings, ceremonialism, and sacraments continue in diary entries over the next two years. On March 3, 1873, for example, the entry states that Tosi and J.A. Simms, Indian Agent for the Colville Agency, had just returned from the Spokane and were "very satisfied" with what they saw there.⁶⁷ Apparently the Upper Spokane as well as the Kalispel also made the trip to St. Francis in early June to "celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi." Numbering altogether about 200 at this occasion, the author of the diary entry noted with satisfaction that "the

⁶⁴ Chronology (1838-1888) of sacramental activity, Box 5, Folder 4, St. Francis Regis Mission Records, Jesuit Oregon Province Archives, Gonzaga University (hereafter cited as Chronology, St. Francis, JOPA).

⁶⁵ House Diary, 24 April 1872. Box 1, Folder 22, St. Francis Regis Mission Records, Jesuit Oregon Province Archives, Gonzaga University (hereafter cited as St. Francis, JOPA).

⁶⁶ House Diary, December 1872. St. Francis, JOPA.

⁶⁷ House Diary. 3 March 1873. St. Francis, JOPA.

procession [was] butifull and with great piety.”⁶⁸ Finally, among the House Diaries from St. Francis are what appear to be drafts of responses to a questionnaire intended for a central administration audience. In this draft, the Jesuits report that there are approximately 1560 indigenous people in the Colville Agency, from a variety of tribes. Of this number, they claimed 1100 church members, “all [of which] attend faithfully to the church.”⁶⁹ Before the earthquake, it is unlikely they could have claimed this.

It was not just the Spokane who sought out Christian missionaries and their religious ceremonies after the 1872 earthquake. Christine Quintasket makes similar connections in her memoirs. While she was not alive at the time of the earthquake, she notes that: “Old Indians remember that the frame church was put up soon after the great 1872 earthquake The tremors recurred with diminishing intensity and violence for three days. During that time my people stayed close to the priests. The Black Robes had no difficulty making lifelong Colville and Okanogan converts at that time.”⁷⁰ Quintasket’s account of the events after the 1872 earthquake speaks to an immediate interest among some Interior Salish in the Jesuits and their spiritual abilities. The Jesuits’ records from St. Francis Regis Mission support her statement: they report a steady increase in the number of baptisms performed at the mission from 1871 through to 1874. In fact, the number jumped two-fold between 1873 and 1874 – from 57 to 100 - after the earthquake’s aftershocks had continued unabated for over a year.⁷¹

⁶⁸ House Diary. 12 June 1873. St. Francis, JOPA. The Spokane may have also been interested in the presence of Agent Simms who attended the Mass and procession. I am following the Kalispel Tribe of Indians’ website for terminology www.kalispeltribe.com.

⁶⁹ The information in the previous two sentences was taken from: House Diary, St. Francis, JOPA.

⁷⁰ Quintasket, *Mourning Dove*, 152.

⁷¹ Chronology, St. Francis, JOPA.

The Interior Salish on the British Columbian side of the border were also more interested than usual in Christianity and its messengers after the 1872 earthquake. The Oblates had worked there for more than a decade by the time of the quake and, during this time, the Interior Salish's interest in them waxed and waned. In a letter dated June 21, 1869, Baudre, director of the Okanagan Mission, complains to his superior, D'Herbomez, that: "The Indians that live among us are not any more enlightened [than the other Interior Salish] which is almost the same thing everywhere among the natives who are close to the priests. Like the Canadiens say: Close to the Church, far from God."⁷² In another letter to D'Herbomez dated December 9, 1872 – a mere five days before the earthquake - Baudre relates his sound rejection by a Similkameen leader: "a chief, or rather a doctor told me directly that I'd do well to leave, that the Indians were angry with me, that they didn't want to hear my message and other pleasantries of the sort."⁷³ Right before the earthquake, it would appear, the Oblates were not very popular among the Interior Salish.

Immediately after the earthquake, however, the Interior Salish connected to the Okanagan Mission apparently underwent a dramatic shift in their attitudes toward the Oblates. In a letter dated December 28, 1872, Baudre reports to D'Herbomez that: "Almost all of the Pentekten [Penticton] Indians spent Christmas with us. Almost all of the people from this place attended the church services. A good number of Indians from Head Lake [Head of Okanagan

⁷² Baudre to D'Herbomez, 21 June 1869. ROMBC, UBCL. "Les sauvages qui vivent avec nous ne sont pas les plus édifiants ce qui est presque pourtant la même chose parmi les natifs qui sont près des Sainte Pères comme disent les Canadiens: Près de l'Eglise, loins de Dieu."

⁷³ Baudre to D'Herbomez, 9 December 1872. ROMBC, UBCL. "un chef, ou plutôt un docteur, m'a dit sans détour que je ferais bien de m'en aller; que les sauvages étaient enragés de moi; qu'ils ne voulaient point de ma parole, et autres politesses du même genre."

Lake] came in spite of the snow.”⁷⁴ While Baudre noticed significant behavioural changes in the Interior Salish around the Mission at the time, he - unlike the Protestant and Jesuit correspondence and records mentioned above - tied this renewed interest to the 1872 earthquake. For example, on March 17, 1873 he wrote D’Herbomez that the Similkameen: “were and are still very frightened because of this and other earthquakes that had occurred since Christmas. They have proposed to come in great numbers at Easter to be baptized and married. I know that since Christmas they regularly say their morning and evening prayers and the more knowledgeable among them teach what they know about the catechism.”⁷⁵ An even more direct connection can be found in a letter dated April 14, 1873: “I never saw so many Indians at Easter than I did this year. On all sides it is apparent that a great change has happened among them. Public prayer is rooted in all the camps of our mission. The whites themselves admit this return but in their wisdom they attribute it to the earthquakes from last year.”⁷⁶

Baudre’s March 17, 1873 letter abounds with descriptions of these sorts of “awakenings” among the indigenous peoples associated with the Okanagan Mission. In this letter he relates that the *syilx* near the Mission, “come regularly to mass, and they say prayers publicly in each dwelling night and morning I learned with the greatest pleasure that in the midst of the trouble and fatigue of the big deer hunts, they showed themselves dedicated to

⁷⁴ Baudre to D’Herbomez. 28 December 1872. ROMBC, UBCL. “Presque tous les sauvages Pentektens sont venus passer la fête de Noël avec nous. Presque tous nos gens de notre place ont assisté aux offices. Bon nombre d’indiens de Head Lake sont venus aussi malgré la neige.”

⁷⁵ Baudre to D’Herbomez, 17 March 1873. ROMBC, UBCL. “Ils [les Similkameen] étaient et ils sont encore très effrayés de ce premier tremblement et de beaucoup d’autres qui ont eu lieu depuis Noël. Ils se proposent de venir en grand nombre aux fêtes de Pâques pour être baptisés et mariés. Je sais que depuis Noël, ils font régulièrement les prières du matin et du soir et les plus savans [*sic*] parmi eux enseignent ce qu’ils savent du catéchisme.”

⁷⁶ Baudre to D’Herbomez, 14 April 1873. ROMBC, UBCL. “Je n’ai jamais vu à Pâques autant d’indiens que cette année. De tous côtés, il me revient qu’il s’est opéré un grand changement parmi eux. La prière publique est établie dans tous les camps de notre mission. Les Blancs eux-mêmes avouent ce retour mais dans leur haute sagesse, ils l’attribuent aux différens [*sic*] tremblemens [*sic*] de terre de l’hiver dernier.”

prayer.”⁷⁷ The *syilx* at Head of the Lake who had, according to Baudre, always put off being married in the church were now “learning their prayers and the catechism essentials to follow the right path.”⁷⁸ Even the *syilx* at Osoyoos Lake and Penticton, who had previously resisted Christianization and given Baudre much heartache were now “disposed to become good.”⁷⁹

In the coming months, these *syilx* apparently followed through on their promises to Baudre and sought out Christian sacraments in record numbers. On April 14, 1873 he joyously wrote to D’Herbomez: “I never saw so many Indians at Easter than I did this year In the past three and a half months I have blessed 18 marriages and others are preparing themselves for it.”⁸⁰ This was a significant increase from the 31 marriages Baudre had reported performing during the twelve months before the earthquake.⁸¹ Furthermore, after the 1872 earthquake, Baudre’s letters are peppered with requests for marriage dispensations for the local *syilx*, and, in a January 28, 1875 letter to D’Herbomez he proudly reports that *syilx* couples living outside Christian wedlock were in the minority.⁸² In that same letter, Baudre also assures his superior

⁷⁷ Baudre to D’Herbomez, 17 March 1873. ROMBC, UBCL. “viennent régulièrement à la messe. La prière se fait publiquement dans chaque loge soir et matin.... J’ai appris avec le plus grand plaisir que au milieu du trouble et des fatigues des grandes chasses aux chevreuils, ils se sont montrés fidèles au devoir de la prière.”

⁷⁸ Baudre to D’Herbomez, 17 March 1873. ROMBC, UBCL. “apprennent leurs prières et les choses essentielles du catéchisme pour se mettre dans le bon chemin.”

⁷⁹ Baudre to D’Herbomez. 17 March 1873. ROMBC, UBCL. After reading through all of Baudre’s correspondence with D’Herbomez and other Oblates, it becomes apparent that Baudre was not one to engage in the shameless self-promotion or sensationalism characteristic of other missionaries at this time. In fact, he often appears over-cautious and quietly pessimistic about his missionary abilities, making his glowing statements after the earthquake surprising and giving them more weight. “Les sauvages de Soyoos Lake sont aussi disposés à devenir bons.”

⁸⁰ Baudre to D’Herbomez, April 14 1873. ROMBC, UBCL. “Je n’ai jamais vu à Pâques autant d’indiens que cette année Depuis trois mois et demi j’ai béni 18 mariages et d’autres se préparent.”

⁸¹ Baudre to D’Herbomez, December 9 1872. ROMBC, UBCL.

⁸² The following letters from Baudre to D’Herbomez from after the 1872 earthquake contain requests for marriage dispensations: 26 February 1873; 26 March 1873; 24 April 1873; 5 May 1873; 28 May 1873; 14 July 1873; 14 November 1873; 30 March 1874. ROMBC, UBCL.

that, "In the missions confided to my old zeal, there are not more than twenty Indians who are not baptized."⁸³

The Interior Salish were not only eager to engage in Christian rituals: they were also impatient. On March 17, 1873, Baudre wrote D'Herbomez that: "A marriage was blessed by a Jesuit not far from our territory. Many of our flock went. However, I found out that the two parties ['Pierre Kouleoulitsa or Sankitsa and Elisabeth Nia-tom-Achenalax'] to be married did not speak to me about a hindrance of sanguinity in the first degree, the man having had an illicit affair with one of the woman's sisters."⁸⁴ The fact that both members of the couple had Christian first names indicates they had been baptized; this was most likely done by the Oblates as Baudre appears quite annoyed by the fact the couple did not speak to him about the hindrance and have him bless their union. From reading Baudre's correspondence with D'Herbomez, though, it becomes clear that seeking dispensations for these sorts of hindrances could be a lengthy process. Letters were carried by voyageurs and pack trains and in the winter months especially, could take a very long time to reach their destination.⁸⁵ In the months after the earthquake, the Interior Salish – like this couple – were interested in having rapid access to Christian rituals.

Spokane Garry, Baptiste Peone and many Interior Salish near the Okanagan Mission sought out missionaries from denominations with which they had had previous contact. It

⁸³ Baudre to D'Herbomez, 28 January 1875. ROMBC, UBCL. "Dans les missions conférées à mon vieux zèle, il ne reste pas vingt sauvages non baptisés."

⁸⁴ Baudre to D'Herbomez, 17 March 1873. ROMBC, UBCL. "Un mariage a été béni par un Jésuite venu donner une mission non loin du territoire dont nous avons charge. Plusieurs de nos tribus s'y rendirent. Or, il est venu à ma connaissance que les parties contractant mariage m'ont point parlé d'un empêchement d'affinité au premier degré, l'homme ayant eu un commerce illicite avec une des soeurs de sa femme."

⁸⁵ In a letter dated April 10, 1872 Baudre tells D'Herbomez that he must cut the letter short in order to give it to the voyageurs who are about to leave. In another letter dated November 14, 1873 he tells D'Herbomez that during the winter the mail only comes once a month, and even then only if the snow allows for it. ROMBC, UBCL.

would appear, however, that for many Interior Salish it was simply important to participate in Christian rituals and receive Christian sacraments, no matter the missionary. This idea is supported by the case of Pierre and Elizabeth above, but there are also many other examples. One particularly illustrative one is the case of the nominally Protestant Spokane who turned to the neighbouring Jesuits at St. Francis Regis after the earthquake for baptism. Relying on information contained in a letter from Spokane Garry to Agent Simms, anthropologists Robert Ruby and John Brown contend that a “large number of Spokanes [were] fleeing to the priests for baptism.”⁸⁶ From the evidence examined thus far, it should be clear that the Spokane were not “fleeing” but rather actively seeking out rituals from the closest Christian religious specialists. Once Garry summoned Spalding to the community, though, the stream of Lower Spokane to the Jesuits stopped. As Jessett notes, Spalding “even brought back some who had been led into that church,” indicating that they may have been “stocking up” on baptisms.⁸⁷ The 1916 Spokane statement reproduced above further supports this idea. According to the speakers, “Some had already been baptized by the Catholics, these Mr. Spalding baptized again.” It is likely, then, that by the time of Spalding’s visit many of these Spokane had been baptized several times by missionaries representing different denominations.

Father Grassi, who was working among the Middle Columbia Salish at the time of the earthquake, wrote in a letter dated November 14, 1874 that the indigenous peoples in that region also seemed to have had little denominational preference. Using the anti-Protestant idiom of the day, he describes the situation among the Entiat to his superior, Father Joseph Giorda: “It is true, however, that the Devil [Protestants] prevents the Missionary [Grassi] and avails himself of their good disposition to give an impulse in the wrong direction to their minds,

⁸⁶ Ruby and Brown, *The Spokane Indians*, 159. They reproduce a letter from William Three Mountains, a Spokane man, to Agent Simms, 29 January 1873.

⁸⁷ Jessett, *Chief Spokan Garry*, 173.

by appearing to one and another and wishing to show them how to pray, and in only one case that I know of has he gone off foiled in his purpose, while in five or six others he has succeeded in his intentions.”⁸⁸

Grassi did find some reasons to celebrate after the earthquake, though. In the same letter he tells Giorda that the Entiat and Chelan have become much more receptive to him since the land “has been visited by God with earthquakes.”⁸⁹ While they may have been more receptive to his presence and some Christian teachings, they had by no means “converted” to Catholicism. This is made abundantly clear in his description of a visit to the Chelan in the spring of 1873:

I went with the others to the prayer ... Their priest was an old ‘medicine man’ much opposed to the Blackrobe. He began with an exhortation and ended by reciting together with all the others, with great tranquillity and devotion a short prayer, the whole lasting 7 or 8 minutes. When they were finished, I asked who had taught them this prayer, and [a] good old man answered me: ‘Old Blanchet’, and when I asked for more enlightenment, he added: that it was only since the time of the earthquake that the Cilans had prayed; on feeling the earth move beneath their feet for the first time they were all in great consternation, and said among themselves: let us pray. But since they did not know how, an ancient old woman said in Chinook [trade jargon] a short prayer which Bishop Blanchet of Portland had taught her about 30 years before, and which she always said every morning and night; this prayer they translated into their language, and adopted for their prayer.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Grassi to Giorda, 10 November 1874. PNSN. “È vero però che il demonio prevenne il Missionario, e si avvalse della loro buona disposizione per dare un impulso alle loro menti nella falsa direzione, apparendo all’uno e all’altro e volendo mostrar loro a pregare, e in un sol caso per quanto io sappia ando fallito nei suoi calcoli, mentre in 5, o 6 altri riuscì nel suo intento.”

⁸⁹ Grassi to Giorda, 10 Nov 1874. PNSN. “visitata da Dio col terremoto.”

⁹⁰ Grassi to Giorda. 10 Nov 1874. PNSN. “Andai cogli altri alla preghiera ... il loro Prete era un vecchio ‘uomo di medicina’ molto avverso alla Veste Nera; cominciò con un’esortazione e finì recitando esso e tutti gli altri insieme con gran posa e divozione una corta preghiera, il tutto può aver durato 7, o 8 minuti. Usciti domandai chi avesse loro insegnata quella preghiera, un buon vecchio mi rispose: “Il vecchio Blanchet,” e domandando di chiarimento egli aggiunse che non è che dal tempo del terremoto che i Cilan hanno pregato; al sentirsi la terra muovere sotto i piedi per la prima volta esse popolo era in una gran consternazione e dissero: preghiamo. Ma non sapendo come, una vecchia selvaggia disse in Chinook una corte preghiera che il vecchio Blanchet di Portland la insegnò circa 30 anni fa, e che essa sempre diceva mattina e sera; questa preghiera essa tradussero nella loro lingua e l’addottarono per loro preghiera.”

For the Chelan – much to the confusion of Grassi - it was not contradictory for an indigenous religious specialist to denounce a Jesuit missionary and then join in Christian prayer. Baudre, the Oblate missionary working in the Okanagan Valley, also reported that the Interior Salish groups under his care behaved in seemingly conflicting ways. In a letter dated December 28, 1873 Baudre happily reported that “Almost all of the Indians from Head Lake and Pentekten, with representatives from Spalumcheen and Okanagan ... came” to the Okanagan Mission for Christmas.⁹¹ Nevertheless, in that same letter it is clear that he is perturbed by the fact that many *syilx* are drinking alcohol, playing card games, and gambling, as he asks D’Herbomez: “To prevent by all means possible the “tamanouas” [Chinook jargon for magic or spirit], the card games and other sources of disorderliness, as well as the selling of alcohol.”⁹² The Interior Salish simply did not see these different beliefs and activities as being mutually exclusive. This ability to adopt multiple religious elements at once continues to the present day. As Clarence Woodcock, a *senx^wya?lpitk^w* elder, told Father Twohy – another Jesuit – over a century later: “The People also believed that the powers of this faith would complement their beliefs and help them to be strong and brave, help them in their life.”⁹³ For the Interior Salish in 1880 or 1980, individuals could hold several beliefs at once.

The religious autonomy of the individual was also important for the Interior Salish’s interest in Christianity after the 1872 earthquake. In Grassi’s letter, an Entiat man is chastised by others in his community for mocking the Jesuit: “Then the rest of the audience took my part and reproached him indignantly, telling him that if he did not believe, there were others there

⁹¹ Baudre to D’Herbomez, 28 December 1872. ROMBC, UBCL. “Presque tous les indiens de Head Lake et de Pentekten avec des représentans [*sic*] de Spallumcheen et d’Okanagan sont venus.”

⁹² Baudre to D’Herbomez. 28 January 1875. ROMBC, UBCL. “Empêchez par tous les moyens possibles les tamanouas, les jeux de carte et autres sources de tant de désordres et la vente des boissons.”

⁹³ Twohy, *Finding A Way Home*, 21.

who thought differently from him, and that he should at least in his outward manner respect the Blackrobe.”⁹⁴ While Grassi appreciated this characteristic when it favoured him, he was less pleased when it mitigated against his Christianizing efforts. Writing about the same Entiat community, he reported to his superior that:

I found others who did not oppose themselves to the prayers of the Missionary, but only on condition that he should leave them quietly to their Indian prayer. We are all sons of the same Father, one of them said to me, and we do not know whether my prayer or yours be the good prayer; on the last day, God will take the veil away which now covers our eyes and then we shall see who was right; in the meanwhile let us live together like good friends. And if I told them that then it would be too late to retrace our steps and put ourselves on the right path, they indignantly shake their heads.... It is only pride that makes you talk like that, you wish to show that you know how to pray better than all and that you excel all. Do you come from Heaven? -- You are a man like ourselves and should not set yourself above us.⁹⁵

The Entiat speaker above firmly indicated to Grassi that all forms of prayer were equal before God and that it was up to individual discretion to decide which to follow.

While the Interior Salish may have been interested in Christian sacraments and Christianity more generally, they were not necessarily “converting” to it in a way that the missionaries would have liked or necessarily understood.⁹⁶ The numbers of baptisms, marriages, and attendance at Christian church services certainly increased after the 1872 earthquake, but the Interior Salish did not completely overhaul their moral and spiritual

⁹⁴ Grassi to Giorda, 10 November 1874. PNSN. “allora il resto degli auditori presero mia parte a lo rimprocciarono altamente dicendogli che se esso non credeva c’erano altre che la sentivano diversamente da lui, e che dovrebbe almeno esternamente rispettare la Veste Nera.”

⁹⁵ Grassi to Giorda. 10 November 1874. PNSN. “Trovai altri i quali non si oppongono alla preghiera del Missionario ma con condizione che esso pure si lasci tranquilli nella loro preghiera Indiana. Noi siamo tutti figli di un medesimo Padre, mi diceva uno, e non sappiamo ora se la mia o la tua preghiera sia la buona; l’ultimo giorno Dio toglierà il velo che copre ora i nostri occhi e allora vedremo chi ha ragione; intanto viviamo da buoni amici e se loro diceva che sarà troppo tardi per rivernire sui nostri passi e mettersi sul buon cammino, crollano idegnosamente il capo non è che superbia che ti fa parlare così, tu vuoi mostrare che tu sai pregare meglio di tutti e noi premeaggiare. Vieni tu dal cielo? Tu sei un uomo come noi e non devi preferirti a noi.”

⁹⁶ Neylan discusses the idea of the “contested meanings” of conversion in indigenous-missionary encounters in nineteenth-century British Columbia in *The Heavens Are Changing*, (9-10).

universe. Instead, they sought out Christian rituals as an additional means to respond appropriately to the earthquake, conceptualizing these rituals within their own worldview and cultural framework. This is further substantiated by another spiritual practice the Interior Salish engaged in after the quake.

IV. "Some of the Indians Described It As the End of Their World"

In 1930, Rachel Commons, an ethnographer working among the *syilx* in Washington State, published a set of notes relating to a conversation she had had with Cecile, a Kalispel woman.⁹⁷ In these ethnographic notes, Cecile describes a resurgence of prophecy among the Interior Salish peoples at the time of the earthquake and the movements that sprung up afterward. According to her, qEla'sqEn (often anglicized as Kolaskin or Skolaskin), "dreamed about the earthquake before it happened. He told his people about it, and had them come over to Kartar to be saved from the earthquake."⁹⁸ Cecile goes on to say that Chief suepEq :e'n, who was "frightened of the earthquake, had his dream afterward, and prayed with the people the following summer."⁹⁹

The dreams that qEla-sqEn and Chief suepEq :e'n had were, in Cecile's words, "religious dreams" or *smepEno 'mst* in the *syilx* language. Commons translated this into English as, "when you dream about talking to God, and tell the people about it."¹⁰⁰ These dreams often concerned the whole community for, while it was the individual who spoke to God, she or he often received religious instructions to transmit to the rest of her or his community. The

⁹⁷ Rachel Commons, Okanogon Ethnographic Notes, 1930. American Council of Learned Societies, Committee on Native American Languages, Franz Boas Collection, American Philosophical Society. Okanogon RC 18-8-30 (hereafter cited as Commons, Okanogon Ethnographic Notes, APS). I would like to thank Dr. Coll Thrush for sending this to me from the archives in Philadelphia.

⁹⁸ Commons, Okanogon Ethnographic Notes, APS. Much of the work on prophetic movements focuses on the importance of individual prophets. It would appear, however, that with the Interior Salish, anyone could be a "dreamer" or prophet and the individual dreamer was simply part of a larger movement. For more information on Skolaskin, please see: Robert H. Ruby and John Brown, *Dreamer-Prophets of the Columbia Plateau: Smohalla and Skolaskin* (Norman : University of Oklahoma Press, 1989); and Verne F. Ray, "The Kolaskin Cult: A Prophet Movement of 1870 in Northeastern Washington," *American Anthropologist*, New Series 38, no. 1 (January to March, 1936): 67-75.

⁹⁹ Commons, Okanogon Ethnographic Notes, APS. According to Cecile, Chief suepEq :e'n received knowledge from God that "the people who were coming to teach the Indians would be white men. This was a few years before the priest actually came to Omak Cr[reek]."

¹⁰⁰ Commons, Okanogon Ethnographic Notes, APS. Cecile used the term *qElEntso'tEn* to signify a higher power; this is very similar to the term that the *syilx* authors of *We Get Our Living Like Milk from the Land* use to signify "the Creator": *k'!l'ncút'n*. In Harry Robinson's stories, he uses the terms "God," "Creator," and "Big Chief" interchangeably.

dreamer, for example, was often given detailed information – such as specific dances and songs - for believers to follow in order to hasten the end of the world.¹⁰¹ Chief suepEq :e'n's dream and the prayerful summer that he and some Kalispel led, are indications that they were engaged in one of many prophetic movements that arose among the Interior Salish after the 1872 earthquake. The quake, its aftershocks, and other concurrent natural phenomena may have indicated to the Interior Salish that the end of the world was at hand.¹⁰² To respond appropriately, the evidence suggests they turned to prophetic movements, an established spiritual response to times of crisis which, by the time of the earthquake, had adopted both Christian and anti-colonial elements.¹⁰³ These ceremonies were intended not only to bring about the destruction of the world, then, but specifically to rid it of settlers and what the Interior Salish deemed the negative effects of colonialism.

According to several ethnographers who documented Interior Salish stories around the turn of the twentieth century, the end of the world was an expected event in their cosmology.¹⁰⁴ Interior Salish stories – especially their creation stories - are a valuable source for

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Vibert, “‘The Natives Were Strong to Live’: Reinterpreting Early-Nineteenth-Century Prophetic Movements in the Columbia Plateau,” *Ethnohistory* 42, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 200.

¹⁰² Leslie Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Co., 1935), 7. British Columbian newspapers reported meteor showers, shooting stars, and volcanic activity in the weeks after the earthquake; these events would also have been taken by the Interior Salish as portents of the impending destruction of the world. The *Cariboo Sentinel*, January 18, 1873; *Victoria Daily Standard*, December 23, 1872; and *Victoria Daily Standard*, January 3, 1873.

¹⁰³ As Elizabeth Vibert notes, there has been a debate in the literature on prophetic movements in the Northwest that centers on the “aboriginal-origins hypothesis” versus “cultural deprivation theories” (Vibert’s terms). From the available evidence, it is clear that the Interior Salish had a prophetic tradition before non-indigenous peoples came into the region. For a concise overview of the debate before 1995, please see: Vibert, “‘The Natives Were Strong to Live,’” 201-5. Since her article appeared, one major study has been written on Interior Salish religious responses to social and material change since 1700. While Larry Cebula’s *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003) allows that the peoples of the Columbian Plateau had a prophetic tradition before contact, his discussion of these movements in the nineteenth century clearly tends toward Vibert’s latter category.

¹⁰⁴ Spier, for example, wrote in 1935 that he had found “an old belief in the impending destruction and renewal of the world, when the dead would return” (5).

understanding this concept. While, as anthropologist Wendy Wickwire notes, these accounts can vary widely depending on the teller or the group, there are several common threads. One of these is that the earth was not created out of thin air but rather, as Wickwire writes, “from something already existing.”¹⁰⁵ In the 1980s, for example, *syilx* storyteller Robinson told Wickwire in “Earth Diver” how the earth was created from a grain of sand found in a body of water.¹⁰⁶ Several other documented Interior Salish creation stories centre on the idea that “Old One” created “the earth out of a woman.”¹⁰⁷ Earth-Woman could not live forever, though, and eventually would die.¹⁰⁸ This did not mean that existence would end, however; it was simply a part of the never-ending process of creation and renewal.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, according to many Interior Salish, the death of Earth-Woman would be heralded by the return of Coyote, whom God had banished for his hubris but, as Robinson related, would “send back before the world end.”¹¹⁰ The end of the world, in Interior Salish cosmology, was not a negative event, but simply part of a cycle of destruction and regeneration.

In fact, the Interior Salish attempted to hasten this event by engaging in specific religious ceremonies according to instructions given by God to “dreamers” like Chief *suepEq* :e’n and *qEla’sqEn*.¹¹¹ These dreamers were given specific dance choreographies, songs, and

¹⁰⁵ Wickwire, introduction to *Write It on Your Heart*, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Harry Robinson, “Earth Diver,” *Write It on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller* (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 1989), 37.

¹⁰⁷ Wickwire, introduction to *Write It on Your Heart*, 17.

¹⁰⁸ Wickwire, introduction to *Living By Stories: A Journey of Landscape and Memory* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2005), 25; and Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Wickwire, introduction to *Write It on Your Heart*, 18; Vibert, “‘The Natives Were Strong to Live’,” 201.

¹¹⁰ Harry Robinson, “They Tell ‘Em All About What the White People Hiding From the Indians,” *Living By Stories: A Journey of Landscape and Memory* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2005), 98.

¹¹¹ Spier called this the “prophet dance complex” while Teit termed it “religious or praying dances” in his ethnographies.

moral edicts to transmit to their co-religionists. As mentioned in the first section of this paper, dancing and singing were central to how the Interior Salish reaffirm spiritual relationships. Visions and prophecy were also common elements. As Robinson demonstrates in his stories, *sumix* first speak to individuals in a vision and communicate with them later in life in this manner. Christine Quintasket, the *senx^wya?lpitk^w* writer, also gives an account of a *snyx^wám* where a shaman's *sumix* – Ling Cod – speaks through him, prophesying the coming of a stranger the next day and indicating where the people might find a man who had drowned.¹¹²

While there are several similarities between Interior Salish prophetic movements and the religious practices described above and in the first section of this paper, anthropologist Leslie Spier contends that there were also significant differences. For example, Spier argues that proselytizing was a unique feature of the prophetic movements.¹¹³ The general form of the dance was also different from other dances performed during ceremonies, according to him: "In all cases where the form is described the dancers were arranged in a circle, perhaps always a divided circle with two arcs of dancers. This usually formed around the prophet or a pole at the center." Finally, dances, songs, and body paints in the prophetic movements were "in imitation of those used by the dead as revealed to prophets and others who had visited the afterworld." As Spier notes, the Interior Salish do have stories and rituals where individuals go to the land of the dead: religious specialists might go to help cure a patient, for example, and one story involving Coyote's trip to this land helps to explain why humans are mortal.¹¹⁴ The other-worldly instructions for dances, songs, and paints, though, appear to be limited to the prophetic movements.

¹¹² Quintasket, *Mourning Dove*, 135.

¹¹³ The ideas and quotes in the next three sentences are taken from: Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 12-13.

¹¹⁴ Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 13-16.

It is not clear when prophetic movements first appeared among the Interior Salish, but evidence suggests that they had existed for a century or more before the 1872 earthquake. In his 1935 work, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest*, Spier attempts to trace the genealogy of what he calls the “Prophet Dance Complex” among indigenous peoples in the region. The Interior Salish accounts he relates speak of prophecies dating back at least to the late-eighteenth century volcanic ash fall and the sighting of a “double-headed four-legged goose” shortly afterwards.¹¹⁵ In these early accounts, Spier notes, strange environmental events or bird messengers were “taken as a portent of the approaching end of the world.”¹¹⁶

Historian Elizabeth Vibert argues that the Interior Salish also engaged in prophetic movements at the turn of the nineteenth century in response to smallpox epidemics. According to her, epidemics were “read as a spiritual crisis within Plateau societies” and prophetic movements were meant to restore spiritual balance.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, there is fragmentary evidence that during the winter of 1873 some Interior Salish were affected by epidemics. Father Pierre Richard, an Oblate missionary working at the Okanagan Mission, wrote to D’Herbomez on December 18, 1873 that “epidemic is reigning among the Indians and has sent many to their graves.”¹¹⁸ Grassi, the Jesuit missionary working among the Middle Columbia Salish groups, reported on November 10, 1874 that, “This tribe [Entiat] like all the neighboring tribes, present now the appearance of a pruned vineyard, the epidemic of last winter having carried off from

¹¹⁵ Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 8-9; James Teit, “Salishan Tribes of the Western Plateaus,” in *Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution*, 1927-2. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1930), 291-2.

¹¹⁶ Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 9.

¹¹⁷ Vibert, “‘The Natives Were Strong to Live’,” 199.

¹¹⁸ Richard to D’Herbomez, 18 December 1873. ROMBC, UBCL. “il regne [*sic*] parmi les indiens une épidémie [*sic*] qui en emmène plusieurs au tombeau”

them almost all the younger generation.”¹¹⁹ Later that same year, a settler wrote to the editor of *Spirit of the West* about the deleterious effects the earthquake had had on the water of Lake Chelan. In this letter, he says that “An old Indian [told him that] ‘not one child was left under two years of age, between the mouth of the Met-thow [Methow] and Wenacha [Wenatchee] River.’ Thus to the dread of trembling earth was added this dire effect.”¹²⁰ As in earlier times, the 1872 earthquake and subsequent epidemics may have indicated to the Interior Salish that the end of the world was at hand. Considering this evidence, it is not surprising they turned to prophetic movements - an established spiritual response to crisis - after the earthquake.

While the Interior Salish may have engaged in prophetic movements centered on their cosmology and ceremonialism, these movements were by no means incapable of absorbing new elements; nor were these movements only useful as a response to environmental crises and epidemics.¹²¹ During the nineteenth century, for example, the prophecies began including references to the approach of new peoples. Cecile, the Kalispel woman mentioned above, told Commons that “Many years before qEla’sqEn” had his dreams, *.mcel*, “received a promise from God to take him to Himself, and died soon after,” but not before prophesying “that the white man was coming.”¹²² While this prophecy appeared to be neutral in tone, by the 1840s other prophecies were surfacing which were decidedly anti-settler. One such example is related by ethnographer James Teit. According to him, “a Thompson woman from Nicola ... travelled in Similkameen and Okanagon, telling the people about the spirit land, and also relating how

¹¹⁹ Grassi to Giorda, 10 November 1874. PNSN. “Questa tribù come pure le sue vicine presentano ora l’aspetto di vigne potate, l’epidemia dell’inverno passato avendo loro colto quasi tutta la giovane generazione.”

¹²⁰ “The Earthquake Phenomena of Lake Chelan,” *Spirit of the West*, December 4, 1874.

¹²¹ Vibert notes the “capacity of prophetic movements to innovate” in her study of smallpox epidemics among the Interior Salish at the turn of the nineteenth century (220).

¹²² Commons. Okanogon Ethnographic Notes, APS. *.mcel* most likely refers to the Keller, WA prophet Leslie Spier calls “Michel” (9).

the coming of whites would result in the destruction of the Indians. She prophesied the stealing of the Indian's lands and the destruction of the game by the whites, and stated that they would destroy the Indian by pretending to benefit him."¹²³ In order to avoid this impending doom, Teit recounts, this woman advocated a rejection of all settler goods and behaviours as well as a "great war against the whites to drive them out."¹²⁴ While she apparently did not gain much of a following, her prophecies concerning the coming settlers demonstrate the ability of Interior Salish prophetic movements to take on new elements.

By the 1830s, as Spier contends, the prophetic movements had also become Christianized.¹²⁵ Wickwire notes there were reports at the time that some among the Interior Salish were praying on bent knee, making the sign of the cross, and singing Christian hymns.¹²⁶ Through contact with Catholic Iroquois, fur traders, and missionaries – not to mention information and religious icons distributed through the Interior Salish's extensive trade and kinship networks - they learned more and more about this belief system. Christianity's belief in Armageddon, which the missionaries emphasized in their teachings, would have likely seemed immediately compatible with the Interior Salish's prophetic doctrines.¹²⁷ After the 1872 earthquake, there is one documented instance where the local missionaries may have supported

¹²³ Teit, "Salishan Tribes of the Western Plateaus," 292.

¹²⁴ Teit, "Salishan Tribes of the Western Plateaus," 292.

¹²⁵ The origin of these Christian elements has been a topic of debate among scholars. For the purposes of this study it is simply important to note that they all appear to have contributed to Interior Salish knowledge of Christianity.

¹²⁶ Wickwire, introduction to *Write It on Your Heart*, 19. There is certainly evidence of this in Baudre's letter to D'Herbomez, 28 December 1872. ROMBC, UBCL.; and Grassi's letter to Giorda, 10 November 1874. PNSN.

¹²⁷ The Catholic and Protestant ladders were frequently used by missionaries at the middle of the nineteenth century in the region. Both prominently featured images of judgment day in an effort to scare indigenous peoples into converting to the missionary's denomination. For more information on the use of ladders in this region, please see: Vecsey, *Paths of Kateri's Kin*, 312-315; and McNally, *The Lord's Distant Vineyard*, 61-63.

the Interior Salish millenarian belief. Baudre, in a letter to D'Herbomez after the earthquake, reports: "Two Indians from Similkameen told me that the priests of Callville [Jesuits at Colville] announced that the end of the world was not far off. They came to ask me what I thought about this."¹²⁸ While these Jesuits may have made this announcement as a means of scaring some Interior Salish into conversion or "encouraging" backsliders to return to Christianized modes of living, they may have inadvertently supported pre-existing Interior Salish prophetic movements instead.

By the summer of 1873, when Chief suepEq :e'n and the Kalispel were praying, there are indications that similar movements were surfacing around Interior Salish territory. In a letter dated May 28, 1873, Baudre reported that there were a significant number of Interior Salish in attendance at the Feast of the Ascension: "We had Indians from Kamloops, Similkameen, Soyoos Lake, all the Indians from Pentekten [Penticton] and from Head Lake [Head of Okanagan Lake]. There was no disorderliness, precisely, but it was not hard to tell that piety was not the only reason for such a large gathering. They danced..."¹²⁹ I would argue that Baudre's instincts were correct and that this large group had congregated to engage in a prophetic movement rather than attend the Feast of the Ascension. This seems possible for several reasons. Firstly, as can be discerned from the Okanagan Mission correspondence, it was unusual for these groups to meet at the Okanagan Mission at this time of year. Normally a large group might congregate at Easter or Christmas – two of the major feasts on the Catholic calendar – but generally at that time the Interior Salish groups mentioned above would be

¹²⁸ Baudre to D'Herbomez. 24 January 1873. ROMBC, UBCL. "Deux sauvages venus de Semeelkameen [Similkameen] m'ont rapporté que les prêtres de Callville avaient annoncé que la fin du monde n'était pas loin. Ils sont venus ici pour me demander ce que je pensais à ce sujet."

¹²⁹ Baudre to D'Herbomez, 28 May 1873. ROMBC, UBCL. "Nous avons eu des sauvages des Kamloops, de Seelmkamen, Soyoos Lake, tous les sauvages de Pentekten, et de Head Lake. Il n'y a pas eu de désordres précisément; mais il n'a pas été difficile de deviner que la piété n'était pas le seul motif d'une si nombreuse réunion. On a dansé, on a fait des courses de chevaux."

engaged in spring seasonal activities in their own territories. Furthermore, according to the Oblates' correspondence it was unusual for the *Secwepemc* from Kamloops and *syilx* from Osoyoos to go to the Mission. It was generally the missionaries from Okanagan Mission who would make the trip to Osoyoos and Kamloops several times a year – not vice versa. Secondly, it does not seem as if this gathering was related to socio-economic pursuits: usually the Interior Salish connected to the Okanagan Mission gathered later in the summer at Osoyoos or Kettle Falls for the salmon runs to socialize, trade, and stock up on provisions for the winter months. Finally, Father Baudre's use of the word "désordre" (or "disorderliness") was a euphemism for any non-Catholic behaviour of which he disapproved. As mentioned above, this included Interior Salish dancing, as well as anything he felt was related to "tamanouas" or antithetical to his Catholic teachings. While Baudre may not have known exactly what he was looking at, he very well may have been observing a prophetic movement at the Mission.

There were other more direct descriptions of prophetic activity among the Interior Salish after the earthquake. On October 4, 1873, for example, the *Walla Walla Union* published a story about a prophet in the Lake Chelan area:

There is a prophet risen among them [Chelan], who says he has been commissioned by the Great Spirit to go out and preach to the natives.... He had some important revelations to make. The Indians collected far and near to hear him. Some went as much as 60 miles to hear their prophet. It is to be hoped that his disclosures will profit all the surrounding tribes.¹³⁰

A year later, on December 27, 1873, the same newspaper published an article about a prophet by the name of Patewie, who was apparently "holding forth on the Wenatchee [River]," preaching to the Moses-Columbia and other Interior Salish groups.¹³¹ According to the article's

¹³⁰ *Walla Walla Union*, October 4, 1873.

¹³¹ "The Indian Prophet," *Walla Walla Union*, December 27, 1873. I have not been able to find any references to "Patewie" in the secondary literature.

author, Patewie “exhorts his hearers to quit gambling, stealing, lying, and drinking whisky. The earthquake and his teachings have caused many of the several tribes to mend their ways and lead more exemplary lives.”¹³² Interestingly, in the preceding accounts, the authors see the prophets as supporting the colonial project of indigenous “pacification.” In the 1920s, however, Jack Splawn, an elderly settler who was working as a cowboy at the time of the quake, told a *Wenatchee World* reporter that immediately after the earthquake he encountered an “old Indian with his blanket wrapped around him” who told Splawn that the earthquake was a warning to the “paleface ... with their forked tongue, religion, and fire water.”¹³³ While the author’s tone and diction are reminiscent of the portrayal of indigenous peoples in old Hollywood Westerns, the underlying message is clear: the earthquake signalled an impending judgment of all and disbelievers – especially non-indigenous people – would be found wanting and punished accordingly.¹³⁴

As the nineteenth century progressed, the prophecies increasingly included anti-settler messages and by the time of the 1872 earthquake, they had become a central element of the Interior Salish’s prophetic movements. By then they were fighting to protect their land and resources from settler governments eager to marginalize indigenous peoples in the Northwest and re-populate the landscape.¹³⁵ The American government, in the months leading up to the 1872 earthquake, had arbitrarily created the Colville Reservation and had begun attempts to push various Interior Salish groups off their land and onto this new reservation. Clara

¹³² “The Indian Prophet,” *Walla Walla Union*, December 27, 1873.

¹³³ “Jack Splawn’s Story of the Snake,” *Wenatchee World*, June 15, 1922.

¹³⁴ The nature of punishment, according to Spier, differed slightly according to group. Among the Interior Salish generally, though, disbelievers would be turned into “birds, rocks, and other non-human things” (12).

¹³⁵ For an overview of the settlement process in British Columbia and Washington Territory please see the following two works: Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002); and Brad Asher, *Beyond the Reservation: Indians, Settlers, and the Law in Washington Territory, 1853-1889* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1999).

Covington, a *senx^wya?lpitk^w* elder, told Father Twohy in the 1980s that “Some of the Indians described [this] as the end of their world,” speaking to a time of crisis that might signal approaching apocalypse.¹³⁶ Throughout 1874, Baudre wrote letters to D’Herbomez about the “stirrings of revolt” among the *syilx* in British Columbia, who resented settler incursions on their land and a provincial government that completely disregarded their interests.¹³⁷ By August 28, 1874, he wrote to D’Herbomez that the local *syilx* had come to him and “said that God had given them the earth that the whites had stolen from them [and] they wanted it back.”¹³⁸ Grassi, the Jesuit missionary working among the Chelan, noted a similar sentiment among them. One Chelan man told Grassi that “I have found out that after your departure from Mitgan, you went to Nesquali and that you told the Chief of the Americans that you had tried again to win over the Cilans, but that if you had not succeeded, he would have sent soldiers.”¹³⁹ The man then reminded Grassi that “God had given them their land” and accused him and the other missionaries of being “the precursor of the whites who would come to hunt them from their land.”¹⁴⁰ By the 1872 earthquake, the Interior Salish were finding that protecting their rights to their lands and resources was proving difficult.

¹³⁶ Twohy, *Finding A Way Home*, 24.

¹³⁷ Baudre to D’Herbomez, 17 February 1874. ROMBC, UBCL. “les bruits de révolte parmi les Indiens.”

¹³⁸ Baudre to D’Herbomez, 28 August 1874. ROMBC, UBCL. “le bon Dieu leur avait donné la terre que les Blancs leur ont volée, ils voulaient la reprendre.”

¹³⁹ Grassi to Giorda. 10 November 1874. PNSN. “ho saputo che dopo tua partenza del Mitgan sei andato a Nesquali, e che hai detto al Capo degli Americani che tu avresti tentato un’altra volta di guadagnare i Cilan, ma che se non avresti riescito esso avrebbe mandato soldati.”

¹⁴⁰ Grassi to Giorda. 10 November 1874. PNSN. “Dio aveva loro dato la loro terra”; “il precursore dei bianchi che sarebbero venuti a cacciarli dalla loro terra.”

Some Interior Salish have signalled an ongoing connection between the 1872 earthquake and colonialism in their stories.¹⁴¹ In the early 1980s Robinson told a story to Wickwire that she recorded and then published under the title, “These Cattle, They Come Out From the Lake.” In Robinson’s account, it is a “moonlight night” and some “Indians camp” “close to the mountain” near Palmer Lake. “Some of them go to bed already” when “they heard some cattle./They were bawling/ along the shore.” This is puzzling to them, Harry says, since “there is no cattle in that area.” Furthermore:

it [the sounds of the cattle] seems to go to the east, like,/ that way./ But they all sand, you know,/ they all sand, soft ground along the shore./This end./So, in the morning, the next morning,/ they thought maybe they should see the tracks/.... Anyway they went over there/ and then they could see the tracks./ All the tracks just look like they coming out from the lake [moving] toward the east [and] it looks like the bull was fightin’ [because] ... they make the ground – stir it up.¹⁴²

There are many similarities between this story and what we know of the 1872 earthquake. First of all, Palmer Lake, the setting of Harry’s story, is just northeast of Lake Chelan, where seismologists believe the epicenter of the quake was located.¹⁴³ Therefore, if someone had been standing at Palmer Lake it would have felt like the earthquake was moving from west to east. I also think it is possible that the phantom cattle in part represent an Interior Salish memory of that earthquake. Their “tracks” could be the physical effects of the earthquake on the landscape: landslides, fissures, and other environmental changes – as outlined above – appear frequently in contemporary reports. Furthermore, Harry’s mention of cattle connects easily to one settler’s memory of the 1872 earthquake. In 1922, Henry

¹⁴¹ I have relied heavily on Julie Cruikshank’s work to inform how I approach indigenous stories. In addition to *Do Glaciers Listen?* I used *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 1990).

¹⁴² The previous two quotes are taken from: Harry Robinson, “These Cattle, They Come Out From the Lake,” in *Living by Stories: A Journey of Landscape and Memory* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2005): 211-214.

¹⁴³ Bakun et al., “The December 1872 Washington State Earthquake,” 3239.

Livingstone told a *Wenatchee Daily World* reporter about his experience of the quake.

According to him, he was working alongside several indigenous people in a surveying party east of the Cascade Mountains. After the earthquake his indigenous colleagues spoke to him in the Chinook trade jargon: “‘Mesatchee skockum moos-moos mesatchee menoloose Siwash,’ meaning ‘mad bulls down in the earth, these will kill all the Indians.’”¹⁴⁴ Cattle are non-native species to the region, and were not introduced until settlers came into the region for farming and ranching. It is interesting that the indigenous peoples told Livingstone that there were “mad bulls down in the earth” and that Harry talks about the cattle in his story as mysterious and potentially destructive agents considering this colonial context. While Harry’s story may be about the earthquake, it also seems clear that it is a commentary on changing local ecologies brought about by colonialism.¹⁴⁵

The prophetic movements that arose after the 1872 earthquake had roots in Interior Salish worldview and religious practices. However, like the Interior Salish themselves, these movements were adaptable, absorbing Christian and anti-colonial elements as they came into contact with Christian teachings, missionaries, and land-hungry settler governments. The Interior Salish’s increasing struggles with colonial forces were, as Clara Covington noted in 1980, an indication that the destruction of this world was at hand. To the Interior Salish at the time of the 1872 earthquake, these conflicts combined with epidemic disease and ongoing aftershocks would have made prophetic movements intended to hasten the renewal of the earth – a world without settlers – even more attractive.

¹⁴⁴ “When a Mountain Slide Once Dammed the Mighty Columbia,” *Wenatchee Daily World*, June 15, 1922. I verified the original translation using Charles Lillard’s lexicon in *A Voice Great Within Us: The Story of Chinook* (Vancouver: Transmontanus/New Star Books, 1998).

¹⁴⁵ I would like to thank Dr. Coll Thrush for pointing out that cattle were introduced by settlers to the region and highlighting this as a potential analytical avenue.

IV. Conclusion: A Legacy of Indigenous Persistence and Renewal

Harry Robinson, without my originally intending it, has become central to this project and so it seems only fitting that it conclude with him. Throughout the writing process, I found myself going back to his stories and re-reading Wendy Wickwire's reflective and personal introductions to the collections. In the decade or so Robinson and Wickwire worked together to record his stories, they developed a close friendship and it is clear in her introductions that she admired him. In the time that I have spent researching and writing this paper, I have likewise come to have a deep appreciation for Robinson's wisdom, humour, and his talent as a storyteller.

I have also become aware of the similarities between the way he lived his life in the twentieth century and the way the Interior Salish responded to the 1872 earthquake twenty-eight years before he was born. Like them, Robinson's life experience was not limited to what some non-indigenous people might consider a "traditional" way of life: his family members were seasonal agricultural labourers; he worked on, and later owned, ranches in the interior of British Columbia; and he loved attending rodeos on both sides of the international border.¹⁴⁶ In many ways, he was both a "cowboy" and an "Indian."

His religious beliefs similarly defied easy categorization. He and his wife, Matilda, were married by a priest in 1924, and, when talking to Wickwire about his work as a rancher over his lifetime, he emphasized that he had not missed a single feeding, not even on Sundays.¹⁴⁷ Throughout his life though, he also recognized the importance of *sumix* and whenever he could he "attended all-night traditional Okanagan winter dance ceremonies from Penticton, British

¹⁴⁶ Wickwire, introduction to *Write It on Your Heart*, 11-14; and Wickwire, introduction to *Nature Power*, 13.

¹⁴⁷ Wickwire, introduction write, to *Write It on Your Heart*, 13; and Wickwire, introduction to *Living by Stories*, 20.

Columbia, to Omak, Washington.” This active life was interrupted in the mid-1980s when he developed a painful leg ulcer. To cure himself, he employed several “Indian doctors” in both the Similkameen Valley and in Coeur D’Alene, Idaho. While clearly favouring what he called “Indian ways,” he was also willing to explore other treatment options from Chinese and Western medicines.¹⁴⁸

In 1872, the Interior Salish also turned to their “Indian ways” to respond appropriately to the earthquake. They called on their *sumíx*, danced out their power at *snyx^wám*, and reaffirmed spiritual relationships by observing specific protocols. I would argue, moreover, that a central part of the Interior Salish’s “Indian way” is the flexibility, adaptability, and individual autonomy they demonstrated after the earthquake. By drawing upon all the resources available to them in an effort to restore spiritual balance, they were honouring this Interior Salish way of knowing and being in the world.

Looking at Robinson’s life, it is clear that this worldview has persisted in many ways. His stories also demonstrate that a century after the earthquake Interior Salish cosmology and Christianity continue to co-exist. In one story, Robinson uses the terms “God,” “Chief,” and “Creator” to refer to the same being. In another one, God sends an Angel to speak to Coyote. Finally, in “Prophecy at Lytton,” God teaches a boy and his grandmother how to pray, talks of heaven, and turns a quilt of magpie and blue jay skins into a large spotted rock. In this story, as its title suggests, God foretells the coming of settlers but reassures the Interior Salish that the land will remain theirs. This prophecy and others also speak to the continued importance of revelatory addresses to the Interior Salish.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Wickwire, introduction to *Nature Power*, 13-15.

¹⁴⁹ Harry Robinson, “Coyote Gets a Name and Power,” *Write It on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller* (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 1989), 53; Harry Robinson, “Coyote Makes a Deal with

The story behind “Prophecy at Lytton” also demonstrates how non-indigenous people have struggled with notions of “authenticity” since the time of the earthquake. In the introductions to Robinson’s stories, Wickwire details how when she first heard them she put stories like “Prophecy at Lytton” aside, considering them anomalies. Through her years of working with Robinson, however, she came to the conclusion that it was the stories recorded by Franz Boas, Charles Hill-Tout, and other salvage ethnographers at the turn of the twentieth century that were incongruous. In their efforts to “purify” Interior Salish stories they had extracted references to anything they felt was non-indigenous. They wanted to get at the “unsullied,” pre-contact past of indigenous peoples. What they found instead were people who wanted to discuss politics, carried guns, and practised indigenized forms of Christianity. To accede to contemporary non-indigenous expectations of what an “Indian story” should look like, these ethnographers erased unwanted aspects from the indigenous accounts they published. Until Wickwire puzzled over these references in Robinson’s stories – and found ethnographic field notes that mentioned guns and God - she accepted the original published accounts as accurate portrayals.

As Wickwire’s experience illustrates, our assumptions often blind us to what is actually happening in a story, a source, or a society. Unchecked, the expectations we bring to our research can lead us to see things – words, actions, events - as unimportant or unconnected. This can, as in the case of the 1872 earthquake, make scholars overlook the human dimensions of environmental phenomena. It can also mean that static notions of indigeneity are allowed to continue in scholarly works, public discourses, and legal cases, to the material and psychic harm of indigenous peoples. Instead, we need to stay open to the possibility of alternative

the King of England,” *Living By Stories: A Journey of Landscape and Memory* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2005), 66; and Harry Robinson, “Prophecy at Lytton,” *Write It on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller* (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 1989), 187.

understandings. To do this requires confronting our expectations by diligently seeking out new sources and asking different questions of the ones we already have. By listening carefully and often to the stories around us we can unsettle our own assumptions, open up new areas of inquiry, and even new ways of doing history. As Robinson wrote in a letter to Wickwire, though: "Takes time. Then you will see."¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Wickwire, introduction to *Living by Stories*, 19.

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