



SIGNS OF WATER: COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON WATER, RESPONSIBILITY, AND HOPE

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ISBN 978-1-77385-235-5

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Indigenous Stories and the Fraser River: Intercultural Dialogue for Public Decision-Making

Marcella LaFever, Shirley Hardman, and Pearl Penner

Isabel: How in the name of George and the dragon can someone come along, bend over, pick up a river, and carry it off into the distance away over yonder as if it were a sack of potatoes? Hmm? Can you tell me that Annabelle Okanagan of Kamloops, B.C.?

Annabelle: We are not allowed to fish the waters of that river anymore, are we now Isabel Thompson of Kamloops, B.C.? Not as of yesterday, Wednesday, the twenty-fourth of August, 1910 at ten past eleven. And if that's not taking the river away from us, then tell me Isabel Thompson of Kamloops, B.C., please tell me what is?

—Thomson Highway, *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout*

On December 15, 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released its final report (Honouring the Truth) and calls to action related to Canada's responsibility to engage in measures for reconciliation related to the oppressive legacy of colonization (Calls to Action). The calls to action are addressed to all sectors of Canadian institutions,

governing bodies, and citizens in the areas of child welfare, health, language and culture, the justice system, business, public service, and education. These calls include actions related to a public intercultural dialogue such as a commitment to “promote public dialogue, public/private partnerships, and public initiatives for reconciliation” (p. 10) and “meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects” (p. 14).

Colonization of the Americas and the accompanying attitudes that viewed Indigenous peoples as sub-human is a legacy that continues to divide and oppress peoples through practices of racism and prejudice (Miller, 2011). The negative effects of Indian Residential Schools, where Indigenous children were taken from their families and sent to institutions that were meant to rid them of their culture and where they often suffered abuse and even death, are a part of history that Canada is only starting to acknowledge and come to terms with (Canada’s residential schools, 2015). The truth and reconciliation process in Canada is meant to begin a wholistic healing between communities and lead to the breaking down of barriers to relationship building. A sustained public dialogue that is built to include participatory practices of Indigenous peoples is essential to truly engage in this process.

Previously, in 2010, the government of Canada initiated an inquiry into the declines of Sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser River (Cohen Commission Inquiry) and called for those who had a stake in Sockeye salmon population management to give evidence (Terms of Reference, 2010). Eight of the twenty-one groups granted standing represented twenty-eight-plus First Nation councils, bands, and Indigenous organizations (Clarkson, 2012; Participants, 2010). The purpose of our research is to investigate the use of storytelling as a culturally distinct communicative act (Mendoza & Kinefuchi, 2016), particularly as a communicative act for Indigenous communities in Canada and specifically in British Columbia (Harvey, 2009). Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) states that “The acts of reclaiming, reformulating and reconstructing Indigenous cultures and languages have required the mounting of an ambitious research programme, one that is very strategic in its purpose and activities and relentless in its pursuit of social justice” (p. 142). The use of Indigenous methodologies

in investigations of intercultural public dialogue and decision-making is not new (LaFever, 2008). However, Indigenous storytelling has not been explored as a way of changing participatory expectations.

The intent of this project is to contribute to the body of research on ways that dominant culture members can change their conceptions of what participation for Indigenous communities in public dialogue and decision-making means. When peoples do not feel that they are heard on issues of public interest, especially when the method of public consultation does not fit with cultural practices for participation, society misses out on important contributions to the public discourse (LaFever, 2011). Building on these understandings, this project seeks to determine how Indigenous storytelling was used, to what extent, in what forms, and to what purpose as part of the submissions by Indigenous¹ groups to the Cohen Commission hearings. Answering these questions was vital for answering the ultimate question: Were Indigenous stories heard and understood in ways that demonstrated a direct impact on the recommendations contained in the final Cohen Commission Inquiry report?

The researchers in this project see the telling of stories as particular types of communicative acts that both create and are born from particular cultural world views (Bourdieu, 1991). When cultural groups and individuals interact (e.g., in the context of public dialogue), world views often clash as expectations and practices of communication differ. The following section explores the concepts of intercultural communication and storytelling, with particular focus on North American experiences of Indigenous peoples.

Intercultural Public Dialogue

Indigenous communities around the world face historically negative conditions in their pursuit of economic and community development activities. A major challenge, therefore, is to facilitate increased representation of marginalized community members in public dialogue about community development. Public dialogue in North American society is seen as a way for all citizens to engage in democratic processes (LaFever, 2011). When citizens engage with each other in making decisions about their communities, they are participating in and creating the meaning of democracy.

For the purposes of describing intercultural dialogue, Buber's (1972) definition is the most appropriate because it emphasizes dialogue as embedded in social context. Buber argued that "meaning" constructs not only the interpersonal relationship but also the societal institutions that govern human action. Dialogue, as Buber defined it, is a genuine attempt to create something new. Community development is a process of making decisions about social structures, and community requires the development of long-term relationships. It is for these reasons that the Buberian definition of dialogue underpins the present study and its exploration of intercultural dialogue in public participatory processes.

Based in the knowledge that narratives have an impact on public policy development (Crow & Janes, 2018) and despite some history of the Canadian government asking for Indigenous peoples to tell their stories as part of government consultation, such as in the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry (Scott, 2012), little research has focused on adapting public dialogue routines to accommodate practices that vary from those of the dominant culture and, in particular, research on the dynamics of using Indigenous storytelling as a communicative practice in contexts of public dialogue and decision-making.

Story and Storytelling as a Communicative Act

Story and storytelling have long been studied and theorized in many academic disciplines, e.g., anthropology, sociology, and psychology. In the field of communication, this research comes by way of the study of rhetoric (the art of persuasive language) and the concept of narrative scholarship. Burke (1966) defined humans as symbol-making animals where symbols are the tools that allow us to create stories that give order to human experience. Bormann's (1972) concept of symbolic convergence explains how communication creates groups connected by emotions, motives, and meanings through the sharing of narratives. Building on the work of these two scholars, Fischer (1986) describes humans as *homo narrans*, indicating that all forms of human expression and communication are ultimately created in stories. A communicative definition of story sees stories as a way of ordering and presenting a view of the world through a sequential description of a situation involving characters, actions, and settings. Further, Sunwolf and Frey (2001) list five functions for stories used

in communication: ways of connecting people, ways of knowing, ways of creating reality, ways of remembering, and ways of visioning the future. These theories help to inform how stories, storytelling, and contexts of public dialogue are connected.

In thinking about contexts of public dialogue, there is an interesting relationship between the topics people focus on in contemporary communities and the topics communities considered important to discuss about their historical past. Stories told in a community are cultural constructions and provide a richer understanding of fundamental cultural issues (Clarkson, 2012). This understanding may be intuitive for the participants in a particular culture, but is not necessarily obvious for an outsider. Our interpretations of these issues are also culturally constructed (King, 2005). As Cruikshank (1987) states, the concern for interpreting stories is not with determining “truth value” or with “getting the facts straight,” than with asking how our ideas about “truth” and “facts” are constructed in the first place.

An example of community and cultural constructions is captured in Jo-Ann Archibald’s (2008) telling of “Searching for the Bone Needle.” She states that Eber Hampton’s story took on integral meaning for her and that she sought and was granted permission and encouraged to adapt the original story to suit her own cultural context. Archibald the trickster was renamed Coyote (old man coyote). Others close to Archibald, or those with shared cultural experiences, will recognize the significance of Archibald’s choice: that coyote is not only as he appears in the current story—but is the collection of all of the antics described in the multitudes of stories in which coyote makes appearances. To know about coyote and understand coyote’s role in particular stories, the listener necessarily connects coyote to his history and in many instances to his reputation. For Archibald, she tells her reader that she chose coyote “because Coyote in all his/he/its forms has become my trickster of learning” (p. 35).

Colonizers have long considered storytelling as a part of Indigenous oral history to be mere myth, superstition, and perhaps entertainment (Smith, 1995; Thompson, 1929). However, stories are a powerful means of expression and fortunately Indigenous scholars have themselves emphasized and explained their cultural significance (Abel, 1993; Archibald, 2008, Basso, 1996; Cajete, 1994; King, 2016). Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999)

reiterates that Indigenous stories “are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generation will treasure them and pass the story down further” (p. 144), and explains further that “familiar characters can be invested with the qualities of an individual or can be used to invoke a set of shared understanding and histories” (p. 145). Stories are used to reinforce socially beneficial behaviours and remind us of, or teach us who we are. Stories are used as tools to educate and to heal individuals and social relationships (Hardman, 2015/2016). Stories connect individuals to the land.

The Fraser River, the geographic focus of the Cohen Commission Inquiry, is the heart and lifeblood of the Stó:lō (people of the river). The unsatisfying relationship between First Nations peoples and the Canadian government on many issues is every day presented in abundantly clear reporting in the newspapers, on the radio, and on television (Gleeson, 2019; Moore, 2019). Recognition of Aboriginal rights and title to land and resources are major concerns for the Stó:lō who have never signed treaties with past or present governments. Successful Stó:lō leaders today spend much of their time negotiating these rights on many different levels. In the face of being able to achieve such independence through self-determination, Stó:lō leaders are also deeply engaged in trying to gain economic independence for their communities.

Stories are used to illustrate the history of places/territories and culture. Stories from the peoples of what is now called the Fraser River are such “living voices of its Peoples and their cultural, spiritual, and contemporary relationships” (Armstrong & William, 2015, p. 1). As might be expected, the significance placed by Stó:lō peoples on the Salmon is captured in their storytelling. The Stó:lō, and other First Nations along the Fraser River, have origin stories (Sxwóxwiyám) that explain the beginnings of the Salmon and how they came to populate the Fraser River and its tributaries. Recently the Fraser River Discovery Centre (2014) recorded two versions of the Fraser River Salmon origin stories. Dr. Sonny Naxaxalhts’i McHalsie shares this up-river Stó:lō origin story alongside Larry Grant who reveals the Musqueam origin story about the Salmon people.

Stories within communities are revered as Indigenous ways of knowing, an integral part of finding out and passing on knowledge about how the world works (Cardinal, 2004; Cruikshank, 1987; Deloria, 1999; Goulet,

1998; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). When looking at stories as a way of knowing, it is important to recognize how stories function as ways to illustrate history, to describe lives and the places where people lived, and to acknowledge the many ways that humans create linkages. To this end we not only sought to identify stories told at the Cohen Commission Inquiry, we wanted to know why these particular stories were told, and if these purposes for storytelling were acknowledged.

Methodology

Materials from the Cohen Commission Inquiry hearings (2012) include evidentiary documents and transcripts. We extracted each record/presentation submitted by an Aboriginal group or individual. In total we identified 125 Indigenous submissions over the course of the commission proceedings. There were nine during the opening hearings (June 2010), ten in public forums (August–October 2010), ninety-five during the evidentiary hearings (October 2010–September 2011), and eleven during the closing hearings (November 2011). Once files were prepared (i.e., relabelled and saved in pdf format), we used NVivo qualitative research analysis software for coding.

All files were renamed using a label for the type of hearing (Opening=OH, Public=PH, Evidentiary=EH, Closing=CH), the date of the submission, and the name of the presenter. Occasionally the presenter was a lawyer who was speaking or tabling a document on behalf of an Aboriginal group, or reading a written submission from a First Nation member.

The future of the Stó:lō is intimately tied to the future of the salmon and we, as researchers, felt Stó:lō story forms were an important place to start in this project. The initial scheme for (de)coding² was based on Sqwelqwel, oral narratives relating to personal history, and Sxwôxwiyám, oral histories that describe the distant past. These are the two types of traditional Stó:lō stories (Stó:lō Heritage, 2003).

Secondly, we (de)coded the two types of stories by looking for themes that identified how and why a particular story was told. We noted commonalities and differences between stories, ways that stories were used within the larger context, citation of the origin/keeper of the story, and prefaces or prologues to using a story.³

After completing the second step of (de)coding, we recognized that while the themes we identified were relevant, this categorization did not do an adequate job of answering the question regarding their purposes of use. Subsequently we re-(de)coded all stories using Tuhiwai-Smith's (1999) *Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects* (Appendix A). We recognized in using her work that participating in public dialogue to preserve a way of life is a social justice issue for the Indigenous people who have depended on the gift of the salmon for thousands of years.

Lastly, we conducted an analysis of the final recommendations contained in the Cohen Commission Inquiry report to see whether the purposes of the stories we identified were reflected in the recommendations.

Findings

Out of all the Indigenous submissions, eighty-eight of them included at least one story told by approximately forty speakers.⁴ Within the submissions, seven Sxwôxwiyám were told, although recording the number of Sqwelqwel became unwieldy and we concentrated rather on identifying examples from our two forms of secondary (de)coding (thematic and the use of Tuhiwai-Smith's work).

Sxwôxwiyám

Sxwôxwiyám (stories of long ago) were used only occasionally during formalities of introduction at the beginning of the hearings (the gift of salmon from the creator) and to place stories of the salmon within various territories represented at the hearings. These included stories from the Haida, Laich-Kwil-Rach, Secwepemc, Stó:lō, Nlaka'pamux, and Tl'azt'en. For example from the 13 December 2010 transcript, Chief Charlie from Sts'ailes (Chehalis; Stó:lō territory) relates:

in the beginning of time when the world was first created, between the sun and the moon, when those feelings and emotions came together, we were all equal and the same and through evolution from that time, some took different shape and different form. Some became the winged, some became the four-legged, some became the plant people and the root people, some became the ones that swim in

the rivers and the ocean and some became human. There was an agreement in time that all our relations, all living things, they would give themselves to us as humans because we were the weakest. They would give themselves for food, shelter, clothing, utensils and for medicine. And all they asked for in return was to be respected and to be remembered; so when the salmon return in the beginning of the year, we have a ceremony to give thanks and gratitude to the salmon people for returning and giving themselves to us again. It's a part of that agreement of paying respect and giving gratitude.

For the Sts'ailes people and the Stó:lō peoples the story that Chief Charlie shares is referred to as a Snoweyelh or "our laws." The teachings contained in the story provide a road map of how Stó:lō must live as Stó:lō peoples. When the fish cease to exist, the people also cease to exist.

As a Stó:lō one knows that when we fail to follow the teachings there are consequences. It is not a quaint superstition but rather an intrinsic part of who we are as Stó:lō peoples.
(Swelchalot personal correspondence)

Additional origin stories also conveyed such things as territorial description and fishing agreements. For example, the story of Lhílheqey (Mt. Cheam) is that she is the only one of the Stone People who volunteered herself to be transformed to stone. She is called Mother Mountain, she is sacred, and she vowed to look after the Stó:lō people and their greatest resource, the salmon. Towering over the upper Fraser River, whatever she looks upon is part of Stó:lō territory. These themes and many more are also reinforced through the personal, family, and community stories, the Sqwelqwel.

Sqwelqwel

Sqwelqwel was the main form of Indigenous storytelling used in the Cohen Commission hearings, and a majority of Indigenous submissions (81/125) included a form of Sqwelqwel. These stories might be a

personal experience, a story about family experiences from the past, or a story passed down across generations about a particular community. The following example contains all three of these themes, moving the narrative from the past, to the present, to questions about the future (statement read on behalf of Harvey Humchitt, Sr.):

Sockeye salmon, like many of our natural sea resources, is very important to the Heiltsuk. We are known as the ocean-going people or the salmon people. I have seen the abundance of the sockeye in the 1960s where there were millions and millions of returning spawners reduced to just a handful of salmon. I have witnessed the flourishing salmon industry going from thriving communities to ghost towns. We are concerned that the loss of the sockeye salmon will change the way of life for the Heiltsuk. When I was a little boy growing up in Namu, I would go fishing with my dad and never thought there would be a day when we would have to worry about the salmon. Today, you look at the mighty Fraser and wonder whatever happened. How did we get to the state we are in and how much more can we do to the sockeye. What about our grandchildren and what will they have if we lose our salmon? We have always been taught that we need to take care of our natural resource and by doing that nature will provide for you. (10 November 2011, Ming Song, Heiltsuk Tribal Council)

This piece touches on several themes: how environmental change that turns thriving communities into ghost towns has an impact on the use and importance of salmon culturally for future generations and the value of the responsibility to take care of the environment. Based on our first type of secondary (de)coding, we explore these themes and others in the next section.

(De)coding by Theme

In this section, we highlight six themes most closely related to the salmon, fishing, and the river: (a) the use and importance of salmon culturally,

socially, and as sustenance; (b) values; (c) territorial description; (d) environmental change; (e) oral histories proven by science; and (f) fishing/harvesting methods. The stories told always covered several of these themes. Subsequently we felt it is not appropriate or useful to pull items out of context. In offering examples here, we provide a full story and then highlight the themes demonstrated within that story, eventually capturing several examples of all the themes.

Use and Importance of Salmon Culturally, Socially, and as Sustenance

While all of the stories we include tell of the importance of salmon culturally, the story below gives very specific examples regarding how native fish relate to daily life:

There are ceremonies for many, many different things: for death, for life, for change of life, for weddings, for namings. There's all kinds of ceremonies that go on where we would have salmon that is served to the people because salmon is such a vital part of who we are as a people and we were supposed to share the wealth of our land ... what we're supposed to share. It's really difficult to explain but there's one example I have of how it becomes medicine, becomes soul food My grandmother was very, very ill and she was not able to keep things down and it was going on three weeks, four weeks, and she was getting very fragile and frail ... but she kept saying that she was wishing for sturgeon soup. So finally I was able to find a chunk of sturgeon and I brought it to my grandfather, on my dad's side. And my grandfather cooked some soup for her. I picked it up later and brought it to my grandmother and she ate the soup. Had about three or four feeds of it. And then she got better. She started eating again and started carrying on again and she was quite well again for some time. (13 December 2010, Chief Charlie, Chehalis)

Essential to ceremony throughout all aspects of community life, the needs and wellness of a single person become an expression for the whole. This

story is also an excellent one to highlight the value of sharing, not only between individuals, but as a governance system that sustains everyone. Salmon is equated to medicine as sustenance of the soul; not as a drug that cures us, but as healing for the spirit.

Values

Sharing is clearly a value expressed in the previous story, but here is an example of this next theme that is perhaps more subtle:

One night when my grandfather and I were fishing, he lost his trunk key. I think he locked it in the trunk, and we were supposed to cut the nose and fin off the fish, and the knife was in the trunk. And so we just put the fish in the sack and put them in the back seat and we were going to do it when we got home. But Dave Teskey was at the entrance to the bay when we were pulling out. And he stopped us to ask us how many we got, and he looked at them and said, why are they in the back seat? And we said, well, we locked the key in the trunk and the knife's in the trunk. And he said, oh, so they're not marked. And we said the knife's in the trunk and there's nobody else down here, eh. So he pulled them all out, and he marked them himself with his own knife and put them back in the sack and then sent us on our way. We had a pretty good relationship with him. (12 May 2011, Grand Chief Ken Malloway, Stó:lō)

So many stories are about generations of families fishing together and we cannot skip over the importance of hearing about the value of relationships within families, in communities, and with contacts outside the community, as in this encounter with a Department of Fisheries official. The meaning of this story, however, goes much deeper than valuing relationships between people; it evokes the disconnection between systems of governance where the colonialist government structure requires the fins of fish to be cut to prove that they are legally caught. Circumstances here depend on individual integrity and the character of people involved to see

beyond the rule book. Implied in the story is that the result could have gone in a very different and negative direction as they all too often have.

Territorial descriptions

As in the story above, family relationships are touched on in this next story, but it goes further to describe in detail the waterways as geographic features of Pilalt territory, and how fishing is governed by family histories of fishing in particular places as the knowledge of those places is passed along from generation to generation.

For our history, our tribe, in particular, the Pilalt Tribe, I think we believe a lot in kinship ties [and the relationship to] ... the waterways that we used, prior to contact. We had a territory that sustained our lifestyle and so we go right from Hunter Creek, which is just in between Popkum and Hope, down just west of Chilliwack, which is the Halal Tribe and all through that area along the Fraser River. We have several fishing areas. Number one, we do our main fishing in Cheam, around the Cheam Beach and in that area from Jespersion Road to Hunter Creek We have family sites in Yale, as do other families from the Stó:lō territory. I also am fortunate that myself and my direct descendants have fishing areas up in Union Bar, which is just above the Hope Bridge. My husband is from the Union Bar Reserve. And other members of our family ever since I can remember have fished up there and I think Kat described it as the Alexandra Bridge. I call it Spuzzum. (13 December 2010, Councillor Quipp, Cheam)⁵

Values and waterways as territorial description were themes that we identified in this story. This next story uses these themes as well and speaks more specifically to the theme of environmental change.

Environmental change

Environmental changes prompted the enactment of the Cohen Commission Inquiry and came at a critical juncture, although Indigenous peoples had been pointing out environmental change for a long time already:

As one of our elders up in Canim Lake said, “Salmon is our firstborn child.” ... We’re related to all living beings. And the problem is that we ought not to focus just on a particular species, but what we ought to be focusing on is the interconnectedness between the species, between us and the species, between the environment and the species that we’re concerned with. That is traditional ecological knowledge. It’s a life-lived experience through observation as well. We worked hard, for example, in trying to maintain the Deadman River where the farmers went in and cut down all the trees right up to the edge of the river ... [What] that led to was the warming of the water, which harmed the fish. So we had to negotiate with the farmers, say, “Look, we want to try to—20 feet back we’ll fence off the riverbank on each side and we’ll re-vegetate it so that the vegetation could grow over and cool down, keep the water streams cool.” And also, bears go in and eat the salmon and take it out and help fertilize the riverbanks and help maintain the vegetation over the stream banks, particularly the spawning grounds—a lot of places now have cabins and houses and the bears can’t go over there and help re-vegetate and maintain a healthy habitat, ecosystems ... the clear-cut logging in the mountains has led to siltation of the spawning beds, which has caused serious harm. (14 December 2010; Dr. Ignace; Skeetchestn)

It was difficult to pick a single story to represent the environmental change theme such as the one from Mr. Alexis (Tl’azt’en) who tells how people used to talk about walking across the backs of the salmon to cross the river. We chose this one because in addition to describing change, it also relates those changes to the science of the water temperature and the ecosystem

that includes the important role of the bears. This story also describes efforts that were made to work with neighbours, and to communicate to build relationships with neighbours for everyone's benefit.

Oral Histories Proven by Science

Science as a tool of confirmation is something that also became a theme of these stories, not only because science is what government decision-makers value but, as we demonstrate later in the third coding, because it is a way of celebrating Indigenous knowledge.

Archaeology plays a big part in supporting oral histories and the following two examples provide evidence about fishing sites, ecosystems, types of fish as food sources, use of an ocean economy, and habitation of the land:

Our history goes back millennia. Couple of years ago, in one of our fishing sites on Stuart Lake, a historical fishing site that our people used to gather and to do the salmon fisheries, there was an archaeological dig there [at that time]. And they dated the artefacts there to be back to 12,000 years. So that's one of the areas that our people used to converge onto to do their traditional winter fisheries for salmon. The pictographs on the rock bluffs of Stuart Lake date back about 30,000 years. And the pictographs themselves depict the animals and the fish that we utilize throughout the systems in the Carrier—Carrier Nation territories. (14 December 2010, Mr. Alexis, Tl'azt'en Nation)

Within this story are also expressions of value in gathering to work together as community to harvest fish and record pictographs for communication.

Fishing/Harvesting Methods

Gathering to fish as a community is an important part of a method of harvesting, but many stories provided much greater detail about particular methods, how they related to particular sites, and how and why methods changed over the years to conform to colonial governance. In this story we

also see how the value of sharing, respect, the importance of communication are all a part of the process of fishing:

In my community, we have 150 community members that live on the reserve, and about that much off the reserve, because the size of the reserve is very small In the immediate area just below the reserve, you can throw a rock across the river. It's incredibly narrow. This gave excellent [place] to hold our salmon when we fished. [One time] we're having too much fun We had 250 salmon. You can only pack 15 to 20 up the hill at a time, and it is well over an hour to get up top. It is steep. It is a hard, hard climb. At that time, we were still using baskets with a head strap. So at nine years old, I was able to pack 20 salmon up that hill and do it five times a day My grandmother used to always tell me that there are certain times that we'd go fishing ... she would wait until the mock orange blossoms came out on the trees, on the bushes, then she would say, "Now we're going to go fish spring salmon." I asked her, "How come? There's fish in the river right now. I see them when I walk down there. I can see them swimming by." She said it's because those fish belong to those people up there, respecting the northern tribes and those people that actually owned that fish. That was part of a universal sharing formula that was communicated between nations, respecting each other and the fish resource. (14 December 2010, Chief Sampson, Siska)

While this section has not provided an exhaustive explanation of every story or theme that we noted, we feel that the examples give a good snapshot of themes contained in the whole body of the stories. These themes provide a good grounding in what the Cohen Commission Inquiry wanted to learn about: communities, environmental changes, and fishing practices. However, we also felt that we did not have an adequate description of the purposes that Indigenous groups and individuals wanted to achieve by conveying these particular stories. Subsequently we reviewed all the

stories with an emphasis on why groups and individuals chose particular stories and ways of telling those stories.

(De)coding for Purpose

To do a better job for looking at purpose through an Indigenous world view lens, we re-coded all the stories using Dr. Linda Tuhiwai-Smith's (1999) work on Indigenous methodologies (Appendix A). We found that five of Tuhiwai-Smith's projects (testimonies, storytelling, representing, protecting, and negotiating) encompassed all the stories within the broad context of the hearings themselves. Participation by Indigenous groups and individuals in presenting to the Cohen Commission embodied these processes. Presentations were *testimonies* that used forms of *storytelling*. All submissions were *representing* the voice of Indigenous communities to a decision-making body. Participating in the hearings also involved *negotiating* in that storytelling in testimonies acted strategically towards long-term survival. These stories can also be seen as acts of *protecting* because the overall goal of telling these stories was not only to protect the salmon, but life itself. The central teaching of the Stó:lō snowoyelh (laws), "S'ólh Téméxw te íkw'élò. Xólhmet te mekw'stám ít kwelát. This is our land. We have to look after everything that belongs to us" (Stó:lō Heritage, 2013, p. 1) reinforces that salmon are not just a natural resource, but integral to sustaining communities, customs and beliefs, art and ideals, and sacred sites.

In addition to the five contextual purposes, we identified eleven more of the projects (Indigenous community objectives for participating) that were directly represented through the stories: claiming, celebrating, remembering, Indigenous processes, intervening, connecting, envisioning, reframing, Indigenous governance, naming, and discovering the beauty of Indigenous knowledge. Again, while we only provide one example of a story related to each project here, the stories often encompass several projects.

We did not locate Tuhiwai-Smith's remaining nine projects in the overall context or in the particular stories told; these projects were not within the scope of these particular hearings (revitalizing/regenerating, reading, writing/theory making, gendering, restoring, returning, networking, sharing, and creating). For example, the purpose of stories was passing on knowledge outside of Indigenous communities, not within

their own networks; and while Indigenous language was used in the stories, the purpose for including language was not primarily to increase language survival.

Following are each of the purposes we identified and a story that demonstrates that purpose.

Claiming: histories making assertions about rights and dues (to tribunals, courts, and governments about territories and resources, or about past injustices). In this example Larry Grant asserts a right to maintain a thriving, long-established culture based on the generosity, wealth, and economic relationship that his Musqueam ancestors enjoyed and shared at the time they welcomed Europeans to their shores.

[The Musqueam people] were here to greet the Spanish Captain Narvaez and the English Captain Vancouver to be greeted to this territory when they first came. As my ancestors did, I also want to raise my hands in welcome to everyone here today at this Commission hearing. They greeted the strangers on those ships and many of them brought fish forward, fish to give, fish to trade. It was a major, major part of our culture. And we are the people that have lived on this delta, which is now called Metro Vancouver, for 9,000 years and have lived in Musqueam continuously for 4,000 years; ... for the 9,000 years up until colonization it sustained us, it sustained our culture. And with the introduction of colonization and industrial fisheries it's been depleted in a short century. Industrial issues, it's not really what it's about for us because 85 percent of our diet prior to colonization was salmon or other fish product and today we are lucky if we can get one salmon for the whole year per capita. If the salmon disappear our culture disappears in that—a big portion of our culture disappears. (15 June 2010, Larry Grant, Musqueam)

Celebrating: accentuates the degree to which Indigenous peoples and communities have retained cultural and spiritual values and authentically

resisted colonialism. Here Rod Naknakim reminds the Commission of Inquiry that despite the injustice of having cultural practices outlawed by an invading government, the culture is still strong and sustaining practices are intact.

We, despite the potlatch being prohibited and outlawed, until '72 we still potlatched right through, my grandfather on my father's side particularly. He used to have—he used to have big speakers outside his house. He had a big house, and he'd have hymns playing, but inside he'd be potlatching with the elders. And we've been able to keep this alive amongst our people. But there always is salmon part of the potlatch, you know, to feed. But more than that, there's songs. My brother's wife is a twin, and she—she owns a salmon dance with her twin sister. Because that's what we do is, you know, give that to the twins. (15 December 2010, Rod Naknakim, Laich-Kwil-Tach Treaty Society)

Remembering: connecting bodies with place and experience of a painful past and people's responses to that pain. This story from Chief Sampson lays out in detail the devastating and continuing impact of colonial practices on communities.

Sitting down at the river with my grandfather before he passed away and he talked about Nlha7apmx people and he talked about what he remembers and what he was told by his grandparents of the past. For example, even right in my area, there's the Siska Indian Band, there's the Skuppah Indian Band, and there's the Kanaka Indian Band, but prior to that, it was just the Skuppah. But because they—at least this is the way he understood it . . . because they were a powerful group and they controlled such a productive piece of the river, that it was then easier for the department to split that community into three and create three communities with three sub-chiefs that would then play a part in the divide and conquer, where they would segregate the communities

into numbers, this band being bigger than this other band, and they getting more resources through the Department of Indian Affairs, further to fragment the nation. (14 December 2010, Chief Sampson, Siska)

Indigenist processes: privileging of Indigenous voices that counters negative connotations such as primitive, backward, and superstitious. As did Larry Grant, President Guujaw confirms and emphasizes that a well-organized system of commerce has always been a way in which communities thrived from the salmon.

Commerce is an ancient thing on the coast. It isn't something that started up with fishing licenses. Our people fished and traded and did all those things for thousands of thousands of years amongst the different nations and amongst ourselves. There's people who specialize in different kind of fishing and people who provided for other people with other—that had other things to trade, and it's just normal course of events that commercial fishing would be a way that our people would make a livelihood. (15 December 2010, President Guujaw, Haida Nation)

Intervening: the process of being proactive and of becoming involved as an interested worker for change. In addition to reiterating intimate knowledge of the patterns of the salmon, Rod Naknakim tells how Indigenous communities and individuals have not been complacent in working to manage fishing practices, but have been highly involved in wanting commercial management to be done right.

[My grandfather] tells me the story when him and Tommy Hunt went to see B.C. Packers and to shut down the herring industry, and it did get shut down for 20 years, because they were fishing it out. And with the help of the company, they were able to persuade DFO to do that. Then in I think it was '80s, when we put the ribbon boundary in, in Johnstone Strait. They wanted to close us down, but we convinced DFO

we can stay open and still fish if we marked off certain areas in Johnstone Strait that we wouldn't fish in. We still don't fish there today, and we're the ones that initiated that effort ... it's not the easiest place to fish because of the strength of the tide ... you could lose your net, if you fish in the wrong place or the wrong stage of the tide. And the timing of the set is all the difference in the world on whether you're going to get any fish at all. My grandfather always amazed me on how well he knew the water, and when the fish were coming and how many And our guys, they got to know which run was which just by looking at the fish, the size generally, and sometimes the spots. But what my grandfather was famous for was predicting the size of the run coming in. And he'd often get into fights with DFO. He'd be in their office telling them to open it, there's a big run coming, and quite often he was right. That amazed me. (15 December 2010, RodNaknakim, Laich-Kwil-Tach Treaty Society)

Connecting: linking people to each other, to lands and their place in the universe as related to issues of identity and place, to spiritual relationships and community well-being. The story told here by Dr. Ignace is rich in all the purposes expressed in this project. The relationships of individuals are not given merely as protocol, but as a way of connecting responsibilities to community; to having been asked to witness; to knowing where you come from; and acknowledging those who are keepers of the history.

My mother's mother was Meléni Paul and she's from Kamloops. And her husband is the son of Chief Edward Eneas. And Chief Edward Eneas' wife was Sulyen, who was also a medicine woman. She was a medicine woman—the daughter of a medicine woman, Miliminetka (phonetic), meaning medicine water. As well as that, she had a brother and an uncle, Jimmy Antoine (phonetic), who was chief, and Joe Tomah, who was also a chief. And Joe Tomah was one of the chiefs among our Nations here that met with Sir Wilfred Laurier in 1910 ... and we made an offer to Canada back

then, back then in 1910. They told it and we still abide by that Sir Wilfred Laurier memorial. They entered into our homeland and became guests, although uninvited guests in our house, that they wished to be brothers with us. And as such, that we were prepared to offer up to Canada half of our homeland, land, water, timber, everything. What is ours will be yours and what's yours will be ours. But there was a provision in it—a relational provision in it that we must help each other to be great and good. (14 December 2010, Dr. Ignace, Skeetchestn)

Envisioning: using strategies that ask Indigenous peoples to imagine a future where they rise above present-day oppression and recognize the power that Indigenous peoples have to change their own lives and set new directions. In telling this story, B. Gaertner demonstrates that Indigenous peoples do imagine a better future for the generations to come and one that includes a return of the salmon. They also know what it will take.

Another story that I hear often at the meetings on the Fraser River of the Indigenous women who are representing the upper reaches of the Fraser River who have for centuries relied on what are called the early Stuarts salmon and they come to the meetings now and want to make sure that we all know that there aren't fish for their families, there aren't fish to can, there aren't fish to dry, and there aren't fish to freeze. It's a difficult picture to imagine those differences and it's difficult to imagine Elders who are not having salmon to get through the winters and what that means when they contemplate their children and their grandchildren in this watershed. Finally, I want to end with the teaching from an Elder and I think that this should inspire our work also, and that is that the salmon will not return in abundance, she told me. Remember, the salmon will not return in abundance until human beings stop fighting and arguing about them. (16 June 2010, B. Gaertner, First Nations Coalition)

Reframing: taking greater control over the ways in which Indigenous issues and social problems are discussed and handled and what it means to be Indigenous (e.g., asset rather than deficit). Chief Charlie reframes the activities of seasonal economies and accompanying ways of life from something not good enough, to one that is healthy, uplifting, a contribution to community, and a necessity.

I'm a fisherman. I've been fishing most of my life, since I can remember. I go out on the water and it—the actual practice of fishing—is a medicine. So for me to go out on the water it's medicine. If anyone—if anyone—if you have different gifts or different hobbies or different things that you're good at, and when you do —the reason why you have that hobby, whatever you're good at, you do that because it's peace of mind. It's medicine for you. It's a way to clear your mind, clear your spirit. And you do that and you make things with your hands. For fishermen, it's the same thing. Hunters, they describe it in a similar way. People that play sports do all these different things the same way. That's the same thing for fishermen. (13 December 2010, Chief Charlie, Chehalis)

Indigenist governance: process of extending participation outwards through reinstating Indigenous principles of collectivity, public debate, and value systems geared to meet contemporary social challenges without imposing particular types of governmental systems based in colonialist practices. Chief Charlie's story, here, continues in reinforcing the reframing above and extends to explaining orally and culturally transmitted laws that direct how the people should live without the devastating effects of imposing a system from outside.

Going back to the kind of traditional laws of our peoples, what we call snowoyelh, everyone is born with a different gift My Uncle Buster said, "You're born with a gift. Everybody's born with a gift. That gift becomes your job. That gift becomes your place in your community." And so if you

were the hunter and you went out hunting and you provided meat for those in your village and your community, and maybe you weren't the fisherman. So when it was the fisherman's turn to go out and catch fish, he brought you fish. Maybe he was gifted at working with his hands and working the cedar, working with wood. In exchange, they would share with each other their different gifts for survival. Same with spiritual people. A spiritual person might not have the time, energy, or whatever, to go out and to hunt or to fish or to work with their hands. And so if I go and look for help from a shxwlem, a way of thanking that person for carrying their gift in a good way, I'll bring them something that I do. So I'm a fisherman. I'm going to bring them canned fish, I'm going to bring them smoked fish. I'm going to bring them whatever I have as a way of thanking them for the gift that I've been blessed with, thanking them for their gift in looking after me. And so, yeah, those traditional laws, our social laws, need to be our social laws. (13 December 2010, Chief Charlie, Chehalis)

Naming: restoring the world by using the original Indigenous names for the landscape, as well as in the naming of individuals so that the histories are carried in the names. Place names are certainly not a mandate of the Cohen Inquiry, but the details and naming given here by Grand Chief Terry relay not only an expectation that places will be known by the names used in Indigenous communities, but explain that communities know their territory, the landscapes that are their responsibilities to look after.

The Bridge River is in the northern sector of the St'at'imc country, and above us would be the Pavilion people. That would be the northernmost reaches of the St'at'imc or up in and through into the northern territory then of the Secwepemc There are seven communities that are directly located in and around the area of our community, and I think that the Xaxli'p or the Fountain people are

across the river from us on the Fraser. Just south of us would be the people we call the Tit'q'et or the Lillooet, and also Sekw'el'wás or Cayoose. Over the—over the mountain is Lake—Seton Lake, and there is the Seton people that live in that area. (14 December 2010, Grand Chief Terry, St'at'imx)

Discovering the beauty of Indigenous knowledge: uncovering Indigenous knowledge systems alongside Western science and technology to work for Indigenous development that recognizes values related to ethics, relationships, wellness, and leading a good life. The detail of this story explains very clearly how a particular fishing practice, based in a particular Indigenous knowledge system, has worked for a very long time to manage the fishery throughout numerous communities.

Our people had the special person with a special gift that knew the dialects of the people along the river and communicated. They call this person the messenger or the natanayani (phonetic) in our language. And these people communicate to see the conditions of the runs and to see if there's abundance or not. And once a decision is made to fish based on the abundance, the hereditary system kicks in. Our hereditary chiefs from the different clans; in our territory we have four different clans: the Lusilyoo, the Lhts'umusyoo, the Granton, and the Lohjeboo. They call all our head chiefs and these are the people that decide whether there's going to be fisheries or not. (14 December 2010, Chief Thomas Alexis, Tl'azt'en Nation)

Looking for themes was an important step in mentally sorting through these stories, but the eleven projects we identified from Tuhiwai-Smith's work helped us to look and listen more closely from an Indigenous world view, and led us to a place where we could start to answer our third research question about the impact of Indigenous storytelling on the final recommendations of the Commission.

Stories and the Final Recommendations

Chapter 2 of Volume 3 of the final Cohen Commission Inquiry report (Recommendations, 2012) contains 75 recommendations for changes to protect and revive the health of the river and the Sockeye salmon fishery. We firstly sorted the recommendations by inclusion of the terms First Nation(s) and Aboriginal. These are the terms that Judge Cohen used to distinguish these stakeholders from other parties giving testimony. Twelve out of the 75 recommendations include the term First Nations or include extensive discussion referring to the terms First Nations/Aboriginal. The term First Nations is used distinctively in the report from “stakeholders,” i.e., as First Nations and stakeholders.

In the next section, we focus on the twelve recommendations that contain lengthy discussions of First Nation fisheries and connect them to five overall aspects of the report:

- authority for oversight (Recommendations 1, 39, and 63)⁶
- salmon farming vs. wild salmon (Recommendations 7 and 16)
- fish data and economic impact (Recommendations 25, 31, and 35)
- economic and socio-economic impacts (Recommendations 36, 37, and 38)
- conservation and fishing practices (Recommendations 39 and 40)

Drawing from the report, we define these aspects in the following ways. *Authority for oversight* speaks to who has the responsibility to protect Canada’s fisheries resource. Second, while *salmon farming* refers to the commercial enterprise of growing salmon outside of their natural environment, *wild salmon* is about the natural cyclical process of salmon returning from the ocean to rivers and streams where they were spawned. *Fish data* involves statistics and counting of salmon for tracking and predictive planning. *Economic and socio-economic impact* is about the integral effect of salmon on culture, communities, and livelihoods and, lastly,

conservation and fishing practice looks to the past, the present, and the future of sustaining and improving salmon populations with the capacity to harvest for a variety of purposes.

Authority for Oversight

In his discussion of the recommendation, Judge Cohen refers to already-established policies and related reports. In relation to authority for oversight of the salmon fishery, he does not diverge from seeing the Canadian government and specifically the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans as having ultimate decision-making power. However, regarding conservation of Fraser River Sockeye specifically, he states that the British Columbia government must be involved. Judge Cohen acknowledges that “aboriginal fisheries organizations expressed a desire to participate in the management of the fishery at the highest levels” (p. 8) but wanted/needed to build more technical capacity.

Judge Cohen emphasizes that despite ultimate authority being with the federal ministry, First Nations communities must continue to play a “pivotal role” (p. 8) because of important contributions and perspectives they bring. He specifically recognizes that there are “constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights” (p. 9) with unique priorities, but also highlights that conservation is the responsibility of the government and not that of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal users. The discussion also notes that many existing policies and practices have created an expectation for shared management authority and many Aboriginal groups assert a right to manage the fishery. In light of his reassertion of the government’s right as the ultimate decision-making body, Judge Cohen ends the discussion by “strongly encourag[ing] consultation, co-operation, and collaboration” (p. 10) with First Nations.

Farmed Salmon vs. Wild Salmon

As in the authority for oversight section, Judge Cohen refers to existing policies regarding both salmon farms and oversight of wild salmon issues. Most of the discussion regarding fish farms and the connection to First Nations is prefaced by recommendation #3 that fish farms should not be part of the mandate of DFO but rather regulated as an industry and as a product. However, Judge Cohen then discusses more extensively the

implementation of the Wild Salmon Policy and affirms that First Nations should have input into siting of those farms in recommendation #16, because current policy did not take into account conflicts with wild salmon migration routes.

Further, in the Wild Salmon Policy, Cohen expresses no confidence that implementation will be successful unless the funding model changes and is directed towards an “integrated strategic planning process” (p. 14) that provides for input from, and funding for First Nations in regards to involvement in management processes. The collaboration within this integrated planning process, Cohen notes, is in addition to the constitutionally mandated duty to consult First Nations. Also, essential to the planning process, as Cohen describes it, is decision-making transparency through “annual public implementation progress reports” (p. 15). He emphasizes that this transparency is particularly important for providing a basis for the decision when input from stakeholders and First Nations is not incorporated into final decisions.

Fish Data and Economic Impact

First Nations’ involvement in numerical counts of fish is primarily discussed by Cohen in relation to selective fishing (avoiding non-targeted fish and releasing those that are caught unharmed), fishery monitoring (including catch reporting), and stock assessment (population dynamics and forecasting). Cohen received qualitative catch assessments from DFO testimony that indicated reports from First Nations fisheries as being good and fairly reliable with 90% of the catch accounted for, while commercial and recreational catch estimates were fair and reliability medium to good.

Cohen’s recommendations regarding both selective fishing and catch assessments were that count systems should be enhanced for accuracy with more specific statistical measures and, in addition, that commercial and Aboriginal economic opportunity fishers should contribute equally to the “cost of catch monitoring, subject to any accommodation required in support of an exercise of an Aboriginal right” (p. 36). The recommendations also included language about enforcing penalties for non-compliance and for reporting illegal harvest counts that, from the discussion, were aimed primarily at the commercial fishery.

In regards to stock assessment, Cohen notes in the final paragraph of the discussion portion that “because escapement enumeration and other stock assessment activities require hands-on participation and occur in the traditional territories of many First Nations that have a historical connection to the Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery, I support the suggestion that DFO encourage the involvement of members of such First Nations in these activities” (p. 37), in particular with counting adult salmon that make it past the fishery to their spawning grounds. Both access to fish quantity as well as the time labour of count involvement have economic as well as socio-economic impacts.

Socio-Economic Impacts

In addition to Recommendation #35 regarding monitoring, as noted above, three recommendations, numbered 36–38, are even more specific to the connection between economic and socio-economic impacts. These areas of impact are related to not only food but also sustaining/reclaiming culture.

According to Cohen’s summary, “Food, Social, Ceremonial” (FSC) fishing had historically been operationalized by DFO, in light of no specific legal or operational definition, as priority access allocation to Fraser River sockeye salmon (after conservation). At the time of the report, Cohen notes from testimony heard that DFO considered “group’s population, recent FSC harvests, harvest preferences, and availability of fish species in the area,” while First Nation testimony stated the considerations as being “preference in fish species, the breadth of species available, access of other First Nations to the species, and the status of fish resources” (p. 38).

Cohen summarizes that when no agreement on the quantity and conditions could be reached, “the FSC allocation was determined by DFO.” He closes the discussion with a statement that in his view, it is “important that First Nations actively assist DFO in reaching appropriate FSC allocations by providing DFO with information on the unique aspects of their culture that are relevant in deterring their FSC needs.” Recommendations in relation to FSC include DFO coming to a better definition of FSC and negotiating agreements with specific First Nations by encouraging them to provide information on practices, customs, and tradition relevant to sockeye salmon use.

The third recommendation related to socio-economic impacts looked at the move away from the catch as much as you can to the assigned catch share system and the desire of DFO to further this “share-based management” for the commercial fishery. The assigned shares could be either individual quotas (IQ) or individual transferable quotas (ITQ), but the testimony from First Nation submissions that Cohen cites indicates

expressed concern about moving to an ITQ system for salmon fisheries because they say the move to ITQ in other fisheries had led to permanent change without adequate consultation or consideration of First Nations’ rights and interests. They want to discuss overall allocation policy before DFO makes decisions on share-based management. (p. 39)

The recommendation on this point sets a timeline (approx. one year) for DFO to complete its analysis of socio-economic implications for implementing various models, to decide which was preferable, and to implement that model.

Conservation and Fishing Practices

Conservation of both salmon and salmon habitat, and sustainability of the fishery, were the major impetus for the formation of the Commission. The final two recommendations we highlight here that include discussion of First Nations testimony are numbers 39 and 40. The first asks DFO “to conduct the research and analysis necessary to determine whether in-river demonstration fisheries are, or are capable of, achieving tangible conservation benefits or providing economic benefits to First Nations in an economically viable or sustainable way” (p. 41). The second determines that DFO should “should develop its future policies and practices on the reallocation of the commercial Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery (including allocations for marine and in-river fisheries) in an inclusive and transparent manner, following a strategic and integrated planning process” (p. 43).

These two recommendations are tied together in that testimony given by First Nations regarding in-river demonstration fisheries (allocating fish for economic/commercial purposes to First Nations farther upstream), since they provide “employment, training, and economic opportunities

that may not otherwise be available ... opportunities to those who are often the poorest of the poor” (p. 41). At the same time Cohen notes that he has doubts that these fisheries meet the objective of DFO “to address conservation concerns associated with marine mixed-stock fisheries and to provide economic benefits to First Nations” (p. 40).

In this section, we have been able to provide only a snapshot of the recommendations in which First Nations interests are specifically named or where First Nations were a large part of the discussion leading to the recommendation. This information underpins, in the following section, the discussion of our third research question regarding whether the stories told by Indigenous participants are evident in the final recommendations.

Discussion

Answering the first of our research questions was a relatively simple task as we began to read the Cohen Commission transcripts. Yes, stories were used and by many participants. Forty presenters representing Indigenous groups used stories in a total of 88 out of 125 oral submissions.

The next question about type of story was also relatively easy to answer by using Stó:lō story types as the framework. The dominant type of story used related to personal, family, and community histories. However, stories from long ago were evoked in special circumstances during formalities of introduction at the beginning of the hearings (the gift of salmon from the creator), and to place stories of the salmon within various territories represented at the hearings. These tellings reinforced the extent to which First Nations in the entire Fraser Valley eco-system honoured the role of the salmon in their world views.

To answer our question as to why particular stories were told, we (de) coded all the stories twice. First, we looked at the six themes we discussed in this paper: the importance of salmon, cultural values, territorial descriptions, environmental change, oral histories confirmed by science, and fishing practices. Second, we found eleven of Tuhiwai-Smith’s projects reflected in the stories the presenters chose to convey: claiming, celebrating, remembering, Indigenist processes, intervening, connecting, envisioning, reframing, Indigenist governance, naming, and discovering the beauty of Indigenous knowledge.

As to whether or how the told stories connected to the final recommendations of the report, we first note that underlying the use of the term First Nation(s) throughout the final recommendations is a recognition by the Commission that First Nations are distinct from any other type of contributor to the hearings. This certainly reflects the stories told as they are distinctive in their content and from their defining of place that is particular to the territories of the First Nations presenters. In this way, Judge Cohen also recognizes the importance placed on salmon.

However, one information-conveying practice throughout the recommendations is that the term *First Nations* is almost always paired with those who are referred to as stakeholders (26/38 times in the first 30 recommendation discussions), which ultimately detracts from recognizing the distinct and cultural importance of First Nations. This pairing negates story purposes such as claiming, celebrating, connecting, and naming.

To better illustrate how the importance of the distinction is lost when First Nations is always paired with the term stakeholders, we can look to the Salmon origin stories that were shared. For example, when Chief Charlie from Sts'ailes starts the story with the words "in the beginning of time when the world was first created" this is not a mere storytelling device, but the statement that when the fish cease to exist, the people also cease to exist. Commissioner Cohen, however, in persistently pairing First Nations and stakeholders in the recommendations has not identified the salmon as anything other than an economic tool, as it is with any other stakeholder. Chief Charlie conveys from the story that "There was an agreement in time that all our relations, all living things, they would give themselves to us as humans because we were the weakest. They would give themselves for food, shelter, clothing, utensils and for medicine." These are not economic tools but rather life itself.

Additionally, the recommendations do not generally distinguish between individual First Nations and how their interests may be different in different territories. For example, recommendation #36 states, "Following consultation with First Nations, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans should articulate a [singular] clear working definition for food, social, and ceremonial (FSC) fishing," but then does ask in recommendation #37 to "encourage the [individual] First Nation to provide DFO with information on its practices, customs, and traditions that is relevant in determining its

food, social, and ceremonial needs.” There is a tension between these two recommendations that does not get away from seeing economic gain and cultural reliance as the same thing. When we look to the example from Siska Chief Sampson, who told the Commissioner how “My grandmother used to always tell me that there are certain times that we’d go fishing ... she would wait until the mock orange blossoms came out on the trees, on the bushes ... I asked her, ‘How come? There’s fish in the river right now ...’ She said those fish were for other people upriver,” we recognize that this was part of a sharing formula that respected both humans and fish. There are relationships and responsibilities that are hard to contain in a single definition or a fish count.

The importance of relationships among First Nations, within communities, in families, and even with DFO officers or the B.C. Packers is evident in the stories, as for example the stories of Rod Naknakim and Ken Malloway that tell about sharing salmon runs and consulting together about when to fish. These stories of relationship are reinforced in Cohen’s discussion of the fish count accuracy being better from First Nations fishers, but subsequently ignored in Recommendation #31, which states that both commercial and Aboriginal economic opportunity fishers should contribute equally to the “cost of catch monitoring.” The stories were consistent with other evidence that demonstrated a differing cultural world view, including value placed on responsibility to care for the salmon, but this was not reflected in the recommendation.

Finally, we add here comments about the language Commissioner Cohen used in describing First Nations’ involvement in future directions of the fishery as not fully recognizing the possible purposes of the stories told. For example, in the discussion of Recommendation #1, he uses the words “expressed a desire to participate in the management of the fishery,” when story after story told of centuries of Indigenous peoples paying attention to management of the fishery, and goes on to say they “ought” to, rather than must, play a pivotal role (p. 8). He also states that it is not within the Commission’s mandate to “assess the merits of such claims” (p. 10), but that he “encourages” consultation, co-operation, and collaboration by DFO, without suggesting whose mandate it might be to determine a right to management. All of these instances show a consistent use of grammatical qualifiers: words or phrases that, in these cases, decrease the impact

of what is being expressed. Other examples of qualifying language were found in repeated calls for creating process that provide for “input” (p. 14, p. 22), “inviting response” (p. 15), “may have ... an obligation to consult” (p. 16), and “encourage the involvement” (p. 37) of, from, and with First Nations. This language reflects making opportunities for consultation, but not for cooperation, a future that was envisioned in the story offered by an Elder and conveyed by B. Gaertner.

Conclusion and Implications

In attempting to connect the findings here to the task of responding to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we reflect on what Senator Murray Sinclair (the chair of that Commission) said in noting that reconciliation will only happen if Canadians, as a country, agree to and are committed to the project in all sectors of society. The calls to action ask Canadians to promote public dialogue, public/private partnerships, and public initiatives for reconciliation and engage in meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with projects. This means being fully engaged in a respectful communication relationship.

Meeting the Commission’s calls to action will only be possible if the people of Canada are communicating in ways that are understandable for each other. For non-Indigenous Canadians, this means listening more and listening in different ways than in the past. Listening in different ways to stories of Indigenous peoples’ experiences with the systems of child welfare, education, health, justice, and other public services. Listening in different ways to stories about the importance of First Nation languages and culture. And listening differently to stories that express the values that are the lifeblood for Indigenous communities when engaging in business.

Stories form a vital part of public dialogue; they are used to both provide information and accomplish specific purposes on behalf of Indigenous communities that reclaim culture and reframe negative views that contribute to the oppression that Indigenous peoples experience. Such purposes demonstrate the strength, values, and knowledge that will contribute to the revival and resurgence of the salmon. One immediate implication that ties the stories to the Cohen Commission Inquiry recommendations is

that those who testified have already given the requested “information on [First Nation] practices, customs, and traditions that [are] relevant in determining ... food, social, and ceremonial needs” and have provided the basis for “a [singular] clear working definition for food, social, and ceremonial (FSC) fishing.” The stories are here. How many times do they need to be told? It is the hearing that needs to change.

This project has potential for application across a broad spectrum of contexts. Knowledge about public participation and social inclusion among dominant and co-culture groups (i.e., First Nations in the Fraser Valley) can be used to have a positive impact on communities where Indigenous groups have not been heard or consulted by the newcomers in their territories. Tuhiwai-Smith’s projects are just one way to start thinking about a new way of listening.

The five recommendation themes we chose to explore in this chapter were those most directly related to the spirit of the People of the River, the salmon. These themes about the use and importance of salmon, values that guide interaction, the prominence of waterways in territorial description, stark stories demonstrating environmental change, the pride of telling how oral histories have been confirmed by science, and the array of and changes to fishing methods start to provide a wholistic picture of lives and communities. The stories that talk about fishing methods, and the resulting changes and impacts on practices, could be a future project itself. The stories that we included in this work only introduce the possibilities for learning how to listen to stories in a public dialogue context.

Linda Tuhiwai-Smith did not develop her list of twenty-five projects as an analysis tool, but we are grateful for her list because of its contribution to helping us understand something about the purposes of using particular stories at the Cohen Commission Inquiry. Presenters had relatively little time to convey thoughts and feelings about something so vital to the survival of their cultures, and they chose to tell these particular stories. We can hear these stories as demanding social justice rather than conveying historical and cultural information.

To echo the words of Thomson Highway’s fictional character Isabel Thompson, yes, it is possible to “come along, bend over, pick up a river, and carry it off into the distance away over yonder as if it were a sack of

potatoes.” Listen to the stories of cultures different from your own with a different ear.

NOTES

- 1 In this paper we primarily use the term Indigenous when referring to individuals and communities who inhabited the land before colonizers invaded it. Other terms such as First Nation, Métis, Aboriginal, Native, and Indian are used when found in source materials or when government documents refer to them as legal designations.
- 2 As we engaged in our analysis of stories, we came to recognize that the use of the academic and methodological term “coding” forced us into a non-Indigenous world view of creating non-fluid/binary categories within which to place our understanding of stories. We explored other ways of being able to talk about the process from a more Indigenous world view and decided to work from a definition of communication that highlights all communication as already “coding” cultural meaning. Therefore, this spurred us to think about what we were attempting was rather a “decoding” of the meaning of oral histories within an Indigenous context.
- 3 When using stories from the transcripts in this paper, our goal was to keep the words true to the way they had been originally transcribed. We did, however, correct spelling of names and words from Indigenous languages that were recorded phonetically in the transcript whenever we could.
- 4 The researchers acknowledge that we may have missed some speakers/stories due to the extensive number of transcripts we analyzed.
- 5 While this is a beautiful description of colonial place names that define the territory, Councillor Quipp takes time to *name* her fishing place—something that comes up in the coding of the 25 projects.
- 6 Numbers associated with particular recommendations (Appendix B)

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Appendix A

“Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects” (from Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, Chapter 8)

Claiming = histories making assertions about rights and dues (to tribunals, courts, and governments about territories and resources or about past injustices)

Testimonies = a formal way of giving oral evidence of collective memory

Storytelling = individual oral histories that contribute to a collective story of place, beliefs, and values connecting the past to the future

Celebrating survival/survivance (survival and resistance) = accentuates the degree to which Indigenous peoples and communities have retained cultural and spiritual values and authentically resisted colonialism

Remembering = connecting bodies with place and experience of a painful past and people’s responses to that pain

Indigenist processes = privileging of Indigenous voices that counters negative connotations such as primitive, backward, and superstitious

Intervening = the process of being proactive and becoming involved as an interested worker for change

Revitalizing and regenerating = actively engaging in increasing language survival through widespread use (education, broadcasting, publishing, and community-based programs)

Connecting = linking people to each other, to lands and their place in the universe as related to issues of identity and place, to spiritual relationships and community well-being

Reading = critical review of “history” and the Indigenous presence in the making of that history

Writing & theory making = employing writing in a variety of imaginative, critical, and functional ways

Representing = being able as a minimum right to voice the views and opinions of Indigenous communities in various decision-making bodies through the politics of sovereignty and self-determination

Gendering = challenging gender role expectations that were put into place from the patriarchal perspectives of colonizers to include full participation of women in political decision-making

Envisioning = using strategies that ask Indigenous peoples to imagine a future where they rise above present day oppression and recognize the power that Indigenous peoples have to change their own lives and set new directions

Reframing = taking greater control over the ways in which Indigenous issues and social problems are discussed and handled and what it means to be Indigenous (e.g., asset rather than deficit)

Restoring = a wholistic approach to problem solving that restores well-being spiritually, emotionally, physically, and materially through healing rather than punishing, and through community appropriate policies and programs

Returning = returning lands, rivers and mountains, artifacts, and resource gathering places to their Indigenous owners; connecting individuals with their communities and birth families

Democratizing and indigenist governance = process of extending participation outwards through reinstating Indigenous principles of collectivity, public debate, and value systems geared to meet contemporary social challenges without imposing particular types of governmental systems based on colonialist practices

Networking = building knowledge and data bases on the principles of relationships and connections so that information is passed quickly throughout Indigenous communities, including the

ability to establish trust with participants by clearly stating their positioning and their purposes

Naming = restoring the world by using the original Indigenous names for the landscape as well as in the naming of individuals so that the histories are carried in the names

Protecting = defending and preserving people, communities, languages, customs and beliefs, arts and ideals, natural resources, sacred sites, and more through a variety of means including alliances, charters, and conventions, etc.

Creating = transcending the basic survival mode by using resources and capabilities to create and be creative in order to rise above circumstances, to dream new visions, to preserve old ones, and to foster invention, discovery, and simple improvements to peoples' lives

Negotiating = thinking and acting strategically to recognize and work towards long-term goals for survival

Discovering the beauty of our knowledge = uncovering Indigenous knowledge systems alongside Western science and technology to work for Indigenous development that recognizes values related to ethics, relationships, wellness and leading a good life

Sharing = collect and share knowledge among Indigenous peoples, communities, and across the world; demystifying knowledge and information and speaking in plain terms to the community.

Appendix B

List of recommendations specifying First Nations (from Cohen Commission of Inquiry Final Report, 2012)

1) In relation to Fraser River sockeye, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans should follow the principle that the minister is the ultimate authority in decisions about conservation, fisheries management (subject to the Pacific Salmon Treaty), and, within areas of federal jurisdiction, fish habitat. DFO should consistently reflect this principle in all its agreements and processes with First Nations and stakeholders.

7) The new associate regional director general responsible for implementation of the Wild Salmon Policy should, by March 31, 2014, and each anniversary thereafter during implementation, report in writing on progress in implementation of the policy, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans should publish that report on its website. Each annual report should invite responses from First Nations and stakeholders, and all responses should be promptly published on the DFO website.

16) After seeking comment from First Nations and stakeholders, and after responding to challenge by scientific peer review, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans should, by March 31, 2013, and every five years thereafter, revise salmon farm siting criteria to reflect new scientific information about salmon farms situated on or near Fraser River sockeye salmon migration routes as well as the cumulative effects of these farms on these sockeye.

25) Within 30 days of the minister of fisheries and oceans approving the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP), the Department of Fisheries and Oceans should make public the rationale for the harvest rules set out in the Fraser River Sockeye Decision Guidelines section of the IFMP.

31) The Department of Fisheries and Oceans should ensure that all Fraser River sockeye salmon fisheries are monitored at an enhanced level (achieving catch estimates within 5 percent of actual harvest, with greater than 20 percent independent validation). To meet this objective, DFO should

- enforce penalties for non-compliance with catch-reporting requirements,
- confirm the role of fishery officers in reporting illegal harvest numbers to fisheries managers and establish a system to incorporate such numbers into official catch estimates,
- establish a program for independent catch validation,
- provide sufficient and stable funding to support enhanced catch-monitoring programs, and
- treat commercial and Aboriginal economic opportunity fishers equally regarding any requirement of fishers to contribute toward the cost of catch monitoring, subject to any accommodation required in support of an exercise of an Aboriginal right.

35) The Department of Fisheries and Oceans should support the involvement of members of First Nations in escapement enumeration and other stock assessment activities in their traditional territories.

36) Following consultation with First Nations, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans should

- articulate a clear working definition for food, social, and ceremonial (FSC) fishing, and
- assess, and adjust if necessary, all existing FSC allocations in accordance with that definition.

37) In the context of negotiating an agreement with a specific First Nation, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans should encourage the First Nation to provide DFO with information on its practices, customs, and traditions that is relevant in determining its food, social, and ceremonial needs.

38) The Department of Fisheries and Oceans should, by September 30, 2013, complete its analysis of the socio-economic implications of implementing the various share-based management models for the Fraser River sockeye fishery, decide which model is preferable, and, promptly thereafter, implement that model.

39) The Department of Fisheries and Oceans should conduct the research and analysis necessary to determine whether in-river demonstration fisheries are, or are capable of, achieving tangible conservation benefits or providing economic benefits to First Nations in an economically viable or sustainable way before it takes further action in expanding in-river demonstration fisheries.

40) The Department of Fisheries and Oceans should develop its future policies and practices on the reallocation of the commercial Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery (including allocations for marine and in-river fisheries) in an inclusive and transparent manner, following a strategic and integrated planning process such as Action Step 4.2 of the Wild Salmon Policy.

63) The Department of Fisheries and Oceans should not include in fishing licences a clause that allows for retention of “mortally wounded” Fraser River sockeye salmon.