

**NAVIGATING INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP IN A SETTLER COLONIAL WORLD:  
RON AND PATRICIA JOHN 'COME HOME' TO STÓ:LŌ POLITICS**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the evolution of Stó:lō Leadership in the Fraser Valley from the seventies to the nineties, with a focus on Chawathil First Nation (located near Hope, BC). Through a combination of archival and oral history research, I attempt to close the gap in the literature about the post second world war generation of Stó:lō leaders by analyzing the leadership styles and choices of two leaders from Chawathil First Nation, Patricia and Ron John. While the previous generation of Stó:lō veterans is well studied, little has been written on Patricia and Ron's generation, despite their experiencing significant historical events such as the civil rights movements, contemporary assimilation attempts, globalization, and the Constitution Express. To identify the leadership characteristics of their generation and understand their decision-making process, I analyze Patricia and Ron's life stories through the lenses of post-colonial theory, ethnohistory, and community-engaged research. The results of this analysis suggest that this generation's hybridity and continuation of earlier leadership practices, such as the role of task-master of early Stó:lō leaders (si:yam), enabled them to successfully navigate both the western and the Stó:lō worlds. From this study a model of Stó:lō decision-making process emerges in the shape of a Stó:lō loom, holding key Stó:lō leadership principles and providing meaning and context to Pat and Ron's decisions as band manager and Chief of Chawathil First Nation.

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## DEDICATION

*To Pat and Ron. Thank you for your kindness, patience, and wisdom.*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**AANDC: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada**  
**AFN: Assembly of First Nations**  
**AIM: American Indian Movement**  
**ATBC: Allied Tribes of BC**  
**BC: British Columbia**  
**BCIHA: British Columbia Indian Homemaker Association**  
**BCTC: British Columbia Treaty Commission**  
**CAIC: Chilliwack Area Indian Council**  
**DIA: Department of Indian Affairs**  
**EFDC: East Fraser District Council**  
**FN: First Nation**  
**IA: Indian Agent**  
**INAC: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada**  
**LIC: League of Indians of Canada**  
**NAIB: North American Indian Brotherhood**  
**NCAI: National Congress of American Indians**  
**NCC: Native Council of Canada**  
**O.M.I: Oblates of Mary Immaculate**  
**RCAP: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples**  
**RPM: Red Power Movement**  
**SRRMC: Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre**  
**SNC: Stó:lō Nation Canada**  
**STC: Stó:lō Tribal Council**  
**UBCIC: Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs**  
**VA: Veterans Affairs**

## INTRODUCTION

But for sure, I think we've had previous lives; because Ron's modesty, his history, his charisma, runs from the headwaters of what we call Stó:lō [Fraser River]. My history runs from the head waters of the Columbia River. And so, when you look at the two great watersheds, when we really pray for all our relations, that's our embrace. That's a long ancestry. Long ancestry. So, when I first came here [Chawathil First Nation], it was coming home.<sup>1</sup>

This master's thesis emerged from an oral history project I conducted during the 2017 Ethnohistory Field School in Chilliwack, British Columbia (BC). This field school project was a biographical analysis of two prominent community elders and leaders, Patricia and Ron John, in relationship to their community, Chawathil First Nation. Building upon that study, this thesis aims to provide some insight into the leadership of Stó:lō leaders of the Fraser Valley in the period from 1970 to 2000. This thesis seeks to fill the gaps in the academic literature on Indigenous leadership for this time period. It also seeks to assess the degree to which Indigenous political leaders from what is known as the silent generation (born between 1925 and 1945) followed or departed from the patterns and expressions charted by *Indian Act* Elected Chiefs who were returning Second World War veterans.

### **Historical Questions and Gap in the Literature**

There is an extensive literature written about Second World War veterans and how they were able to adapt and become successful by using their transferable skills from the army into administrative jobs. However, little has been written about the following generation of leaders, who were not directly affected by the trauma of the war. This thesis aims to close this gap and explore the specificities of some of the leadership styles in use among Stó:lō leaders between 1970 and 2000. Grand Chief Ron John (Oyeysek in Halq'emeylem) was born in 1937 and rose to leadership in his thirties. He was elected in 1976 at the head of Chawathil First Nation, near Hope (BC). Ron John explains and acknowledges that his role as a leader in the community cannot be understood outside the context of his relationship with his spouse, Patricia (who also goes by Pat); as a result, I posit that using a biographical study that approaches leadership from the perspective

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia John, *Interview by author at the Chawathil Band Office*, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

of a married couple can provide insights lost on those who studied individual male leaders outside of their social networks and collective affiliations.

I attempt to assess the extent to which Stó:lō leaders expanded or departed from earlier, pre-nineteenth century notions of leadership, determine whether there was a mixing of identity as a result of contact and whether the introduction of the *Indian Act* and Christianity compromised the notion of si:yam, a Halq'emeylem term that can be loosely translated as leader. I also try to analyze the extent to which the issues facing leaders in the 1970s-1990s were different or similar to those of si:yam in the nineteenth century. Using the concept of hybridity, I ultimately try to understand the way Ron and Patricia John negotiated leadership in a post-World War Two context, in a time period marked by significant constitutional changes, civil rights movements and globalization.

### **Thesis Statement**

Despite being born and raised several hundred miles away from the Fraser Valley in Native American communities connected to the Columbia River in southern Washington State, Patricia John is not (as an outsider might expect) considered an “immigrant” to, or an outsider within, her husband Ron John’s Fraser River Stó:lō community. Indeed, in addition to being recognized as an integral component of her husband’s formal political leadership within the local First Nation and the broader Stó:lō supra-tribal nation, she has become a recognized leader in her own right especially in cultural spheres within those communities. I argue that Ron and Patricia’s leadership can be best understood when it is situated outside of the *Indian Act* election system and instead nested back within the traditional Coast Salish notion of “siya:m” leadership – where elite wealthy family members married exogamously from outside their own community, women relocated to live in their husbands’ communities and leadership was typically expressed and exercised within specific spheres of expertise (what anthropologist Jay Miller refers to as “task masters”<sup>2</sup>) and such leadership was necessarily dependent upon networks of social support (such as exist between a married couple). This interpretation is not to suggest Ron and Patricia were simply returning to or reviving a traditional form of leadership that had been eclipsed (indeed there are important differences in the way they have exercised leadership compared to siya:m during the early to mid-nineteenth century), but rather their expression of leadership was adaptive and hybrid in ways that

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<sup>2</sup> Jay Miller. “Back to Basics: Chiefdoms in Puget Sound.” *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 2 (1997): 375–87.

have not been appreciated by outsiders and that contribute to the scholarship on Indigenous political leadership.

In this thesis, I also argue that between the 1970s and the 1990s, Stó:lō leaders, who belonged to the silent generation, were additionally part of what post-colonial scholar Homi Bhabha might have called a hybrid generation. They drew on indigenous and western traditions as they faced the obstacles they encountered during a period marked by major Constitutional changes, the rise of civil rights movements across North America, and continued attempts at assimilation from the federal government. In time periods when they benefitted from community support, they would use a more transformational, collaborative, and democratic leadership style, leading primarily by example, in the way that pre-contact si:yam used to do. However, in times of community dissent or tensions, or in times of confrontation with government officials and other political opponents, Stó:lō leaders sometimes chose to use a more direct, pragmatic or authoritarian style, making their leadership highly dependent on context.

Ultimately, I am situating Ron and Patricia into the watershed collective identity, and I suggest a possible modelling of late twentieth century Stó:lō leadership based on the model of a traditional Stó:lō loom, which contains and articulates some core principles and notions of Stó:lō leadership that were shared in interviews with multiple Stó:lō si:yam, Chiefs and Grand Chiefs. Beyond the analysis of their stories, I think this understanding of Stó:lō leadership could lead to new ways of writing historical biographies by incorporating indigenous worldviews to contextualize participants' life stories in a way that understands them in a culture-specific context.

### **Historiography**

This project emerges from the works of several corpora of literature: the scholarship surrounding Stó:lō culture and society, including ethnohistory on this topic, works on Indigenous leadership and veterans, the impact of residential schools, and lastly, new biography. My analysis first builds on the works of several generations of anthropologists, historians, ethnographers and ethnohistorians who focused on Coast Salish histories and cultures. Starting in the nineteenth century, Franz Boas (1858-1942),<sup>3</sup> who was considered the father of American anthropology and

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<sup>3</sup> Franz Boas, *Indian Legends of the North Pacific Coast of America* (Vancouver: Talon Books Ltd, 2002), and *Indian Tribes of the Lower Fraser River* (London: Spottiswoode, British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1894), 454-463.

ethnologist Charles Hill-Tout (1858-1944)<sup>4</sup> were among the first to contribute to scholarship on North-West Coast cultures. They were followed by anthropologist Diamond Jenness (1886-1969)<sup>5</sup>. While the earliest scholars of this field produced a substantive amount of work about Coast Salish cultures, their studies and methods were criticized by later scholars (for instance, due to their view of indigenous people as “primitive”, their preference of testimonies from high-status males as opposed to common, lower-status individuals, and the power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee), who progressively chose to merge principles of anthropology and history together and use other research techniques, striving to be more respectful of their research participants and of the cultures they wished to learn more about. In his work, anthropologist Homer Barnett (1906-1985), showed the first signs of merging anthropology with history.<sup>6</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century, anthropologist Marian Smith (1907-1961),<sup>7</sup> historians Wayne Suttles (1918-2005)<sup>8</sup>, Wilson Duff (1925-1976)<sup>9</sup> and Jay Miller,<sup>10</sup> ethnographer Oliver Wells (1907-1970)<sup>11</sup>, followed by historian Bruce G. Miller,<sup>12</sup> anthropologists Crisca Bierwert,<sup>13</sup> Julie Cruikshank,<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Hill-Tout, *Salish People, Volume 3: The Mainland Halkomelem*, ed. Ralph Maud (Vancouver: Talon Books Ltd, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Diamond Jenness, *Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, Anthropology in British Columbia Memoir No. 3 (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1955).

<sup>6</sup> Homer Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1955) and *Indian Shakers: A Messianic Cult of the Pacific Northwest* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Marian Smith, *Unpublished Fieldnotes* (London, GB: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1945).

<sup>8</sup> Wayne Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays*, (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987), “Central Coast Salish” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, edited by William Sturtevant (Washington: Smithsonian Institute.)

<sup>9</sup> Wilson Duff, *Fieldnotes, Notebooks 1-7* (Victoria: BC Archives, Royal British Columbia Museum, 1950), *Indian History of British Columbia: the Impact of the White Man, Anthropology in British Columbia, Memoir No. 5*, (Victoria: Provincial Museum of BC, 1977) and *Katzie Ethnographic Notes & The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, (Victoria: Province of British Columbia, 1986), *The Upper Stalo Indians: an Introductory Ethnography*, Master’s Thesis, The University of Washington, 1952, 81.

<sup>10</sup> Jay Miller, “Back to Basics: Chiefdoms in Puget Sound.” *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 2 (1997): 375–87.

<sup>11</sup> Oliver Wells, *the Chilliwacks and their Neighbors*, ed. Ralph Maud, Brent Galloway and Marie Weeden (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> Bruce G. Miller, *Be of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008) and “Discontinuities in the Statuses of Puget Sound Salish Grandmothers in Myth and Message”, in *American Indian Grandmothers. Traditions and Transitions*, edited by Marjorie M. Schweitzer, 103–24 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Crisca Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River: Coast Salish Figures of Power* (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Julie Cruikshank, *Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues, Canadian Historical Review* 75, no 3 (1999): 403-418.

Pamela Amoss,<sup>15</sup> and Jo-ann Archibald,<sup>16</sup> really started laying down the foundation for what would become north-west coast ethnohistory. Ethnohistory can be defined as an interdisciplinary field aiming to find and interpret what is relevant for the culture under consideration and to “understand the history of the people with whom we research from their own perspective so that they can be heard, seen, and understood on their own terms and not merely in relation to colonial identities and forces.”<sup>17</sup> Similarly, New Ethnohistory:

[...] aims to resolve the key academic tension revolving around the imbalance between the two parts of that awkward compound ethnohistory. It recognizes that the real dilemma has been researchers’ lack of methodological preparation at integrating the methods and insights of ethnographic study into those of the historic analysis, and vice-versa. [...] One of the key thrusts in the new ethnohistory is the respect it accords differing world views. Less an exercise in cultural relativism than in finding cultural relevance, ethnohistorians are now expected to step into a world view that does not necessarily “make sense” to them and do their best to see how it makes sense according to rules of others.<sup>18</sup>

This movement led to the even more recent emergence, in the last fifteen or twenty years, of community-engaged research. Scholars like historians Keith Carlson<sup>19</sup>, John Lutz<sup>20</sup>, archeologist Dave Schaepe<sup>21</sup> and elder and si:yam Naxaxalhts’i (Sonny) McHalsie,<sup>22</sup> made significant contributions to ethnohistory and community-engaged research. Community-engaged research is

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<sup>15</sup> Pamela Amoss, *Interweaving Coast Salish Cultural Systems: Collected Works of Pamela Thorsen Amoss*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform; Memoir edition, 2017), “Coyote Looks at Grandmother: Puget Sound Salish Grandmothers in Myth and Message”, in *American Indian Grandmothers. Traditions and Transitions*, edited by Marjorie M. Schweitzer, 79–102 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), “Coast Salish Elders”, in *Other Ways of Growing Old: Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Stevan Harrell, 227–61, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), “Cultural Centrality and Prestige for the Elderly: The Coast Salish Case”, in *Dimensions: Aging, Culture and Health*, edited by Christine Fry, 47–63 (New-York: JF Bergin Publishers, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> Jo-Ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Keith Carlson, John Lutz, David Schaepe, Naxaxalhts’i (Albert Sonny McHalsie), *Towards a New Ethnohistory: Community-Engaged Scholarship Among the People of the River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, John Lutz, and David Schaepe, “Turning the Page: Ethnohistory from a New Generation”, in *The University of the Fraser Valley Research Review*, volume 2, issue 2. (Burnaby: University of the Fraser Valley, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Major books by Carlson cited in this thesis include: Keith Thor Carlson, *Orality and Literacy: Reflections across Disciplines*, (University of Toronto Press, 2011), *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), “*Call Me Hank*”: *A Stó:lō Man’s Reflections on Logging, Living, and Growing Old* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), “*I Am Stó:lō* :” *Katherine Explores Her Heritage* (Chilliwack: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 1998), *You Are Asked To Witness: The Stó:lō In Canada’s Pacific Coast History*, (Chilliwack B.C.: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 1997). Other articles used in this thesis are listed in the bibliography section.

<sup>20</sup> John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Dave Schaepe, Rock Fortifications: Archaeological Insights Into Precontact Warfare and Sociopolitical Organization Among the Stó:lō of the Lower Fraser River Canyon, B.C., in *American Antiquity*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Oct., 2006), pp. 671-705.

<sup>22</sup> Naxaxalhts’i (Sonny) McHalsie, “We Have to Take Care of Everything that Belongs to Us”, in *Be of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish*, edited by Bruce G. Miller, 82-130 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

a type of research striving for a more equal and respectful relationship between the interviewer and the participants of their research. It focuses on projects identified as important by the communities involved and developed from the beginning to the end with their ongoing consent. Researchers are held accountable and are expected to respect and follow specific cultural protocols, and to “give back” to the community with a final research product delivered at the end of the research process in compliance with community wishes.<sup>23</sup>

Within the realms of New Ethnohistory and Community-Engaged Research, my analysis is more particularly situated within the works of Smith and Carlson, who have separately argued that large super watersheds such as Puget Sound and the lower Fraser River serve as the basis of supra-tribal Coast Salish identity, which in turn provides opportunities for situationally operationalized expressions of supra-tribal political authority.<sup>24</sup> It is within this context that I look at the notion of “si:yam”. Twentieth century ethnographers such as Jenness, Barnett, Duff, Hill-Tout, and Suttles have pointed out that the halq’emeylem term “siya:m”, although often translated as “chief”, nevertheless carries significant differences in meaning from this term. According to Suttles, siya:m was a way to address people of higher status who knew their history.<sup>25</sup> For Duff, prior to the colonial era, there had been no “chiefs”, but “leaders” called siya:m.<sup>26</sup> Hill-Tout suggested the term “director” noted the Coast Salish leaders were “generous, liberal, and kind-hearted, and looked well after the material comforts of the tribe”.<sup>27</sup> Barnett similarly noted the following:

These head men are commonly called chiefs by observers on the North-west Coast. It is important to note, however, that the Coast Salish disavow the implications of the term as they have come to know it through government administration. They say that they had no chiefs, and rightly too, if by that we mean the incumbent of an office. The notion of an office, in the sense of a functionally defined position, was almost nonexistent in comparison with that concept among the Nootka and Kwakiutl. There was no feeling that a house implied a chieftainship as we feel that a state implies a ruler; depending upon their personal attributes, several men—two, three, or four—in the same house might be entitled to the honorific hegus or siem. For convenience, we may translate this as chief; the Stó:lō switch between such equivalents as “gentlemen,” “hightone men,” “smart men,” and “real men”.<sup>28</sup>

The concept of traditional leadership, si:yam, was compromised by the implementation of the *Indian Act* of 1876, which introduced the notions of band council and chief. In addition, the

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<sup>23</sup> Carlson, personal communications, 2016-2018.

<sup>24</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 39-40.

<sup>25</sup> Suttles, “Private Knowledge”, 499-501.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson Duff, *Unpublished Field Notes*, (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1950-1978), 179-183.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Hill-Tout, *Salish People, Volume 3*, 44.

<sup>28</sup> Homer Barnett, “The Coast Salish of Canada”, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 40, no. 1, 1938, pp.129-130. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/661796>.

Roman Catholic Durieu reduction system imprinted itself onto Stó:lō society and political leadership in the late 19th century. It was a handmaiden to the *Indian Act* system. The Durieu system, which created a “model reduction” of villages organized around a Church and Temperance Societies led by watchmen, led to the creation of so-called “Church chiefs”. They denounced people drinking alcohol or having loose morals per Christian standards and operated within the context of “Indian Courts” that created divisions within Stó:lō society and also affected notions of leadership.<sup>29</sup> My research, while focusing on this recent history, is therefore, also poised to contribute to the ongoing debate over the extent to which the expressions of “traditional” leadership described by Jenness, Barnett, Duff, and others (discussed above) were or were not already affected in profound ways by Salish people’s encounters with colonial forces. As a result of those colonial forces, including smallpox, the fur trade, colonial impositions, labor restrictions, and loss of access to traditional lands and resources, everyone who was a leader had to compromise and adapt. Among these leaders were the indigenous veterans who took part in World War Two.

My analysis is thus additionally situated within the robust historiography examining the effect of military service on indigenous leadership post-world war two, where the argument has been made (and broadly accepted) that Indigenous men’s experiences in the Second World War not only served to motivate them into taking up leadership positions within their communities, but informed the way they then expressed that leadership (i.e. administratively). In terms of general scholarship on indigenous soldiers and veterans, Robert Innes argued that the Second World War carried little or no influence on Saskatchewan Indigenous People’s political consciousness, but that rather, it emerged from a longer historical leadership tradition. He states that in the immediate post-war period, veterans dedicated their time and resources to readjusting to civilian life, and frequently left their communities; thus, they could not participate much in the political life and remained passive for most of the 1940s, while most Indigenous leaders had not taken part in the Second World War.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Scott Sheffield posited that World War Two Indigenous veterans suffered many obstacles after the war, including significant difficulties obtaining their benefits, and for the most part returned to previous colonial structures, which they had somewhat escaped

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<sup>29</sup> Carlson, “Family Cohesion and Colonial Atomization: Governance and Authority in a Coast Salish Community”, *Native Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (2010)

<sup>30</sup> Rob Innes, “‘I’m On Home Ground Now. I’m Safe’: Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans in the Immediate Postwar Years, 1945–1946.” *The American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 3 and 4, pp: 685–718, 2004.



during their time in the army.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, throughout the post-war period veterans had very limited resources to gain importance in politics and most leaders of Saskatchewan tribal organizations, who were often veterans of the Great War, had however not taken part in World War Two. He also notes that some skills such as administrative skills, gained in the army were transferable into society. The main text written specifically on Stó:lō soldiers and veterans was Carlson's chapter "Stó:lō Soldiers, Stó:lō Veterans", where he described Stó:lō participation in the World Wars, how Stó:lō soldiers and veterans were discriminated, as well as the reasons of Stó:lō people for enlisting.<sup>32</sup> Building on these works, this thesis aims to assess whether the following generation was able to transcend these difficulties experienced by World War Two veterans, and whether they used traditional notions of si:ya:m to overcome those difficulties.

The theoretical notion of hybridity as articulated in the post-colonial scholarship of Homi Bhabha also informs my analysis of Stó:lō leadership. In the *Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that colonial powers used mimicry as one of their main assimilation tools. By encouraging indigenous people to mimic traits of western civilizations deemed favorable by the colonial authorities, while simultaneously blaming and punishing the colonized for not being authentic enough, colonial authorities attempted to undermine their leadership to successfully assimilate them.<sup>33</sup> This colonial strategy of creating "mimic men" also led to the emergence of hybridity in which the colonized developed agency in ways that the colonizer did not anticipate. Such techniques were used on the Stó:lō, and the reactions of their leaders to colonial mimicry provides an insight on Stó:lō leadership of the time.

There has been an extensive literature written specifically on female contributions to indigenous political and economic life throughout the colonization of America, specifically in the Great Lakes region. Susan Sleeper-Smith's biography of Marie Rouensa is a good illustration of Nick Salvatore's argument that doing a life history of an individual can shed light on the broader social issues of a time.<sup>34</sup> Sleeper-Smith's striking account of how Rouensa secured power in her community by using her conversion to secure economic resources and political power illustrates

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<sup>31</sup> Scott Sheffield, Scott Sheffield "Veterans' Benefits and Indigenous Veterans of the Second World War in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States." *Wicazo Sa Review* 32, no. 1 (2017): 63–79.

<sup>32</sup> Carlson, *You Are Asked to Witness*, 125-138.

<sup>33</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New-York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001.

gender dynamics in the time of the fur trade and show that there is already a strong literature on female contributions to Indigenous political life. Similarly, Brenda Child looked at the lives of Ojibwe women through oral interviews to uncover more about cultural persistence in Ojibwe History<sup>35</sup>. Carol Devens looked at female reactions to the Missionization of Indigenous lands in the Great Lakes region by the Jesuits, thus shedding light on the roles and contributions played by Indigenous women in History, and what were their perspectives and reactions, thus bringing these women and their histories to the foreground. Applying these reorientations towards women's roles in biography to the Coast Salish studies assists me in highlighting Patricia's contributions to the political life of the Fraser Valley against the background of Stó:lō notions of siya:m. Other important contributions from historians who highlighted the effects of European colonialism on western Canada and more particularly on women are Sarah Carter's study of the consequences of the imposition of polygamy on indigenous women,<sup>36</sup> Adele Perry's exploration the impact of British imperialism and colonialism on British Columbia,<sup>37</sup> Andrea Laforêt and Annie York's study on the history of the Fraser Canyon,<sup>38</sup> and Jean Barman's history of British Columbia.<sup>39</sup>

Relevant works on indigenous civil rights movements in British Columbia include works written by Harold Cardinal,<sup>40</sup> the lawyer and activist who opposed the *White Paper*, George Manuel,<sup>41</sup> the activist and seer who inspired Patricia and Ron, as well as his son, Arthur Manuel,<sup>42</sup> and Sarah Nickel, who has written extensively about the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).<sup>43</sup> These works help contextualizing their political actions as well as the historical events that Patricia and Ron were involved in, such as the Constitution Express of 1981. Some of the

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<sup>35</sup> Brenda Child, *Holding Our World Together : Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*. Penguin Library of American Indian History (New-York: Viking, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous. Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915*, (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1858-1871* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2001).

<sup>38</sup> Andrea Laforêt and Annie York, *Spuzzum: Fraser Canyon Histories 1808-1939*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999).

<sup>39</sup> Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: a History of British Columbia*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society: the Tragedy of Canada's Indians*, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2013, originally published in 1969).

<sup>41</sup> George Manuel, *the Fourth World: an Indian Reality*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974).

<sup>42</sup> Arthur Manuel, *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015).

<sup>43</sup> Sarah Nickel, *Assembling Unity: Indigenous Politics, Gender, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2019), *United We Stand, Divided We Perish Negotiating Pan-Tribal Unity in the Union of BC Indian Chiefs*, PhD Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2015.

authors from the Indigenous Renaissance era whose writings influenced the civil rights movements that have informed BC indigenous activism such as the Red Power Movement (RPM) and the American Indian Movement (AIM) include Vine Deloria Jr,<sup>44</sup> Josephy Jr, Joane Nagel and Troy Johnson.<sup>45</sup>

There are some other works cited in this thesis that do not belong to the aforementioned categories, but that have still significantly informed this thesis. In terms of New Biography, this community project builds on Nick Salvatore's argument that using analyses of people's lives can provide important insights on the relationship between an individual and the society surrounding them, thus shedding light on a society and its history as a whole. However, he stresses the importance of being rigorous and not limiting oneself to the study of professional or social life; rather, Salvatore encourages the study of an individual's personal life as well, in order to tease out their uniqueness and complexity.<sup>46</sup> Last but not least, the section on residential schools and the sixties scoop was built on the works of John Milloy,<sup>47</sup> J.R. Miller<sup>48</sup>, Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Frey.<sup>49</sup>

### **Project Description and Methods**

My methods are ethnohistorical and community-engaged in nature: this oral history project is at a crossroads between the disciplines of anthropology and history and is part of a continuing research relationship with members from the Chawathil first nation. This project relies primarily on oral interviews with Patricia and Ron John, as well as conversations with other community members, elders, and knowledge keepers of Chawathil who have known Patricia and Ron. These include Grand Chief Clarence (Kat) Pennier, Chief Clem Seymour, Sonny McHalsie, Chief Rhoda Peters, Barb Chapman, Rita Peters, Rita Petes and Ida John. These interviews are complemented by archival documents, including previous interviews, video recordings of documentaries,

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<sup>44</sup> Vine Deloria Jr, *Custer Died For Your Sins: an Indian Manifesto*, (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

<sup>45</sup> Josephy Jr, Joane Nagel and Troy Johnson, *Red Power: American Indians' Fight For Freedom*, (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

<sup>46</sup> Nick Salvatore, "Biography and Social History : an Intimate Relationship", in *Labour History*, Nov 2004, Issue 87, p.187-192.

<sup>47</sup> John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

<sup>48</sup> J.R. Miller, *Residential Schools and Reconciliation: Canada Confronts Its History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

<sup>49</sup> Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Frey, *Stolen From Our Embrace: The Abduction of First Nations Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities* (Madeira Park: Douglas and McIntyre, 1998).

conference speeches and Stó:l̓ Nation meetings, photographs, and press clippings. I completed a first set of interviews with Patricia and Ron during the ethnohistory field school of May 2017, and I conducted a second set of more focused interviews in January 2018.

During my eight interviews with Patricia John and Grand Chief Ron John and my nine interviews with Ida John, Albert McHalsie, Chief Rhoda Peters, Chief Clem Seymour, Grand Chief Kat Pennier, Barb Chapman, Rita Petes and Rita Peters, I used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. This format aimed to enable the interview to unfold as a more natural dialogue, and to give more freedom and flexibility to my interviewees to lead the conversation where they saw fit. The semi-structured interviews also enabled me to realize patterns in the narratives of Ron and Patricia John, and thus to realize that the way they shaped their own life stories resembled the structure of a Stó:l̓ weaving loom.<sup>50</sup> All my interviews were recorded using a professional recorder, and, in some cases, backed up by a second recording on my phone. Building on Salvatore's work described above, I aimed not to limit my study to confirming or contesting factual information pertaining to the lives of Patricia and Ron John. Instead, I looked at their life stories as a way into understanding Stó:l̓ leadership in the Fraser Valley from 1970 until now. The scope is not limited to their political involvement, but also looks closely at their private lives to uncover more about the relationship between their private lives and their leadership choices.

To give the participants space to express themselves, I tried to mostly rely on the silent probe. The silent probe can be defined as using pauses and silences in a conversation to encourage the interviewee to keep talking by relying on a person's instinct to filling the silence. This probing method has been recognized as efficient and respectful during indigenous interviews; indeed, according to McHalsie and Siyemches [Frank Malloway], silence plays an important role in Stó:l̓ storytelling. In terms of the interpretation of the research results, I am following the principle of shared authority<sup>51</sup>. To avoid the problems posed by the western notion of as-told-to biography such

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<sup>50</sup> While making final revisions on my thesis, I came across a recent publication by Pamela Amoss that similarly applies the symbolism of the loom to understanding Coast Salish culture. While there was no copy I could consult in local libraries to see exactly how the weaving metaphor was used in Amoss's work, the fact that the loom was used by other scholars strengthens the applicability of my own loom metaphor. Publication information on this book is as follows: Pamela Amoss, *Interweaving Coast Salish Cultural Systems: Collected Works of Pamela Thorsen Amoss*, (Journal of Northwest Anthropology, 2017).

<sup>51</sup> Stacey Zembrzycki, Sharing Authority with Baba, *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* Volume 43, Number 1, Winter 2009.

as its linear format,<sup>52</sup> I have chosen to “round the angles” of my research methods with indigenous methods applied to the ethics. I try to follow McHalsie’s notion of approaching research with “a good mind”<sup>53</sup> as well as the storytelling basket teachings described by Jo-Ann Archibald: respect, reciprocity, responsibility, reverence, holism, interrelatedness and synergy.<sup>54</sup>

As far as my archival research is concerned, I have gathered archival materials at the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre (SRRMC),<sup>55</sup> as well as the Coqualeetza Educational Centre. These archival materials include photographs, transcripts of past interviews and notes I took on video and audio recordings. I have also consulted copies of press clippings from the *Chilliwack Progress* and *Indian World*, forty years of Oblates Reports from the Catholic Oblates of Saint-Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.),<sup>56</sup> field notes from Marian Smith,<sup>57</sup> Indian Affairs Documents,<sup>58</sup> and a two pages document written by Patricia John.<sup>59</sup> These archival documents complement the oral history by providing checks on memory, creating a chronology and providing critical perspectives not always found in interviews. They also assisted in assessing the accuracy and the relevance of my findings.

### **Positionality**

I came to this project as an outsider, and I was an outsider on multiple levels. I am neither Stó:lō, nor am I a member of any Indigenous group. I am also not a Canadian: I was born and raised in the French Alps, and only moved to Canada in 2011. It follows that English is not my first language. French academia has different practices and codes, and part of the learning process I underwent in this master's' degree was learning how to adjust my writing style and structure to Canadian standards. Finally, I am also an outsider to the discipline of History. My undergraduate

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<sup>52</sup> Donald Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge*, place unknown, Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 232 pages, 2003.

<sup>53</sup> Albert McHalsie, “Chapter 3: We Have to Take Care of Everything That Belongs to Us”, in *Be of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish*, by Bruce Miller, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008.

<sup>54</sup> Jo-Ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> The SRRMC contains the Stó:lō Archives Centre, and it was the place where I conducted most of my archival research.

<sup>56</sup> O.M.I., *Missions de la Congrégation des Oblats de Sainte-Marie Immaculée, 1861-1914* (Paris : Typographie Hennuyer et Fils, 1861-1914).

<sup>57</sup> Marian Smith, *Unpublished Field Notes, 1845-1988*.

<sup>58</sup> Record Group 10 Indian Affairs (Library and Archives Canada).

<sup>59</sup> Patricia John, “Oyeysek”, Unpublished text, date unknown.

degree was an Honors Bachelor's of Arts with a double major in Canadian and Aboriginal Studies, with a heavy focus on political science and indigenous law, with only a couple of history courses. After graduating from the University of Ottawa, I spent two years working for a West Coast anthropologist. This interdisciplinary approach and lack of formal training in history are reflected in the questions I ask, my writing style, my methods and my conclusions. When doing ethnohistory, I tend to lay heavily on the anthropological side of things.

I first entered the Stó:lō world in May 2017, during the one month-long Ethnohistory Field School led by Dr Carlson, Dr Lutz and Naxaxalts'i. Over the span of several decades, Dr Carlson has built long-lasting relationships with the Stó:lō people, which facilitated the development of research relationships between his students and community members. In addition to daily seminars about Stó:lō culture, part of the field school was to work on a project identified as important by Stó:lō communities. The one I was assigned was to write a short biography about Patricia and Ron John. I first went to visit Patricia and Ron at the Chawathil Band Office with two other field school students, Davis Rogers and Gordon Lyall. This first meeting was informal. We brought small gifts for Pat and Ron, as per Stó:lō protocol when seeking advice and guidance from Elders. I then went back to Chawathil FN for more interviews. I also interviewed other community members, whose names had been suggested by Ron and Pat or by SRRMC staff, after contacting them over the phone to arrange the visits. The final project was reviewed and approved by Patricia. After consulting with Dr Carlson, Patricia and Ron, I decided to change my MA thesis topic to what it now is, as I found that a twenty-five pages paper could not possibly do justice to the incredibly rich, interesting and complex lives of Pat and Ron. At the end of the Field School, as a way to thank the community, the field school students organized a thank you potlatch, during which we gave gifts to the community members who had hosted us and had generously taken the time to answer our questions during the interviews. Our 2017 class was lucky to witness the Field School being given the name Xwelalamstoxes, "He/She is Asked to Witness", a process suggested two years prior by Grand Chief and former Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, Xwelixweltel Steven Point.<sup>60</sup> The final product that the community received was the short biography, as well as a poster highlighting the major life events of Patricia and Ron John, which at the time of writing, is on display at the band office for community members to consult. Copies of the interview tapes

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<sup>60</sup> Carlson and al., *Towards a New Ethnohistory*, 2.

and paper were sent and stored at the SRRMC, available to community members for consultation. After the field school I stayed in touch with Patricia through email and social media in order to keep her informed about the development of the thesis.

I went back for a second set of more focused interviews on Stó:l̓ leadership in February 2018. This second set included more interviews with Patricia and Ron, as well as interviews of Grand Chiefs Kat Pennier, Clem Seymour. On January 18th, 2019, I returned to Chawathil First Nation to give a presentation on the thesis to about twenty community members. I explained the current state of the research, my interpretations, and conclusions. At the end, community members, including Patricia, Ron, Diane John, and Sonny McHalsie, provided their feedback as well as suggestions for changes that could be done, and they eventually gave their approval of the project. Their suggestions for changes have been incorporated into the final draft of the thesis. I also sent the notes and slides to Patricia to be shared with the community. Sonny McHalsie, a respected Elder and Leader of the Stó:l̓ community, subsequently provided further feedback during a second presentation in January 31st in Saskatoon, with follow-up comments on the Loom Model. As a consequence, this thesis has been developed in various stages in consultation with the community and was adjusted accordingly to reflect their wishes. The final text is a product of community-engaged research.

I will conclude this discussion of positionality by stating how this outsider status ending up being, in some ways, an asset rather than an impediment. Sometimes being an outsider to a topic can be a source of insights or different perspectives. There is a substantive discussion in this thesis about the importance of ancestries, mountains, watersheds, spirituality, and language. My relationship with Patricia and Ron grew organically through our discussions of our respective ancestries, and we bonded over our relationships to our respective environments. My father is a mountain guide and a professional alpinist; this was a strong influence in how I approached this research. From a very young age, he taught me the names and stories of mountains, animals, and plants, what they can be used for, and how to survive in potentially dangerous environments, as well as the crucial importance of protecting our land. Ron's experience in the mountains and Patricia's explanations on the importance of watersheds resonated with my own experiences in ways that are a fundamental part of the human existence and which transcends borders and history. Although in my culture we do not have places of power, I was fortunate to be part of a family that

gave me the opportunity to experience the indefinable feeling of peace that comes from the solitude and beauty of the mountains, and to appreciate how one's environment can contribute to one's vision, worldview, ideals, and spirituality. This was something I really wanted to focus on when looking at Pat and Ron's leadership, and in the spirit of Xwelalamsthoxes ("he/she is called to witness), the name of the Ethnohistory Field School, in this thesis my goal is an attempt at witnessing and honoring the relationship between Pat and Ron's leadership and their environment.

### **Critical Perspective**

Working with living people presents the challenge of being respectful of their lives, feelings and experiences while maintaining a professional, critical and historical attitude towards the data. This challenge brings the question of how should I, as a scholar in training of European descent, navigate the complex issues of potentially conflicting versions of a person's life story? To which extent should I acknowledge, incorporate and listen to people who were Ron's and Patricia's political opponents? One issue that comes to mind is the consultant who is said to have faulted and cheated Patricia and Ron while they were trying to establish their fish farm. Would interviewing this person offend Ron and Patricia, would it tarnish their story? To solve this type of issues, I relied on my archival sources partly to assess the veracity of historical events, but I especially relied on the Coast Salish epistemology to assist me in the interpretation of events. The Coast Salish notion of "private knowledge"<sup>61</sup> for example, suggests to me that one should acknowledge the Coast Salish tradition to belittle and challenge the oral traditions coming from competing families, so this is an important point to emphasize when I present conflicting versions of events from Ron's political opponents. I try to present different versions of the events, while maintaining Ron's and Patricia's story at the core of my analysis.

To maintain a critical approach to the object of study and avoid writing hagiography, I have attempted not to limit my interviewees to people who were close to Patricia and Ron. I also interviewed non-related members of the community who may have diverging opinions from them, for instance Rita Petes and Chief Rhoda Peters, the current elected chief of Chawathil, who was Ron's political opponent and ultimately defeated him in elections during the 1990s. Another tool that I used to avoid the pitfalls of hagiography while maintaining the respect owed to Coast Salish

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<sup>61</sup> Suttles, Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes among the Coast Salish1. *American Anthropologist*, 60: 497-507, 1958.



elders is using Alessandro Portelli's idea that disagreeing with an interviewee instead of listening blindly is actually a form of respect when working in Ethnohistory.<sup>62</sup>

A thesis of this length under the constraints of a master's program could not pretend to pursue every avenue of information on a topic. In my research I heard glimpses of critical perspectives from people who hinted at having some issues with Ron's decisions, which appears to indicate a lack of absolute consensus on his decisions. However, the individuals concerned did not state whether the issues they took with Ron were personal or whether they had to do with his political choices. I tried multiple times to follow up with the individuals concerned, but since they did not seem to want to elaborate and I didn't want to pressure them, I did not press the issue further. In the last lines of an interview transcript about Stó:lō leadership, an individual hinted at having rethought his decision of supporting Ron as chief of Chawathil but did not specify the reasons for this change in perspective. I think that when taking into consideration these individuals' choice not to tarnish Ron John's reputation, one should keep in mind that reputation and prestige play an important role in Stó:lō Leadership. The fact that these individuals chose not to be specific in their criticism when there are several historical examples of Stó:lō people calling out leaders for their actions, can perhaps be seen as an overall appreciation for what Ron's accomplished, despite personal differences on certain politics that can be set aside in the grand scheme of things. Ultimately, Ron and Pat are human beings with positive qualities as well as shortcomings. However, since this thesis focuses on understanding how Stó:lō leaders achieved success, dedicating too much time - and space - to their shortcomings would fall outside of the scope of my analysis.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

The first chapter explores the evolution of Stó:lō leadership from pre-nineteenth century notions of si:yam to the beginning of modern Stó:lō political history in 1906 with the Delegation to London, as well as the impact of smallpox epidemics and Stó:lō leaders' reactions to colonialism during this time period. It provides definitions of pre-contact Stó:lō leadership and explains how this leadership became compromised by the implementation of the Indian Act of 1876, which

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<sup>62</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "Chapter 4: Trying to Gather a Little Knowledge: Some Thoughts on the Ethics of Oral History." *In The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*, 55-71. (Madison: University of Wisconsin), 1997.

introduced the notions of band council and elected chief, and of the Roman Catholic Durieu reduction system, handmaiden to the Indian Act, which created Temperance societies led by Watchmen or Church Chiefs. The chapter establishes that Stó:lō leaders emerged from this century as hybrid leaders, having incorporated elements of western leadership to si:yamship to successfully navigate the issues and challenges of their time. While this chapter focuses on the nineteenth century, it is still about Patricia and Ron as it presents elements of early Stó:lō leadership that have persisted and remained relevant until and beyond their time. The second chapter analyzes the ambivalent attitudes of Stó:lō leaders towards western settler colonialism and modernity from 1906 to 1974 (the year of Ron John's Coming Home), in particular within the context of the rise of civil rights movements and globalization in North America. During this century, indigenous people across the Americas organized politically into pan-Indian organizations to counter colonial institutions and fight for their rights. This chapter delves into the genesis of modern BC Indigenous organizations such as the Native Indian Brotherhood and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and explores the history of the two main Stó:lō political organization, the Stó:lō Tribal Council and Stó:lō Nation. The chapter also provides an overview of the early lives of Patricia and Ron John from the 40s to the early 70s, and it explains how their ancestries, worldview, and early experiences shaped their vision, leadership style and decision-making process. Finally, the last chapter examines the specificities of the leadership of Patricia and Ron John at the head of Chawathil First Nation. It explains how they overcame hardships and achieved success in a time of significant constitutional changes, and presents a tentative, flexible model articulating important Stó:lō concepts of leadership to explain the specificities of Stó:lō leadership in their time period and si:yam's decision-making process: the Loom Model.

## CHAPTER 1

# FROM SI:YAM TO INDIAN ACT CHIEF AND CHURCH CHIEF, FROM XA:LS TO CHICHEL SI:YAM: STÓ:LŦ SUPRA-TRIBAL LEADERSHIP IN THE TIME OF COLONIALISM

You know, we learn about how it is we exist in this territory. We learn about some of the things that happened to our people. You know, from the beginning, we learn about how Xa:ls has travelled throughout the territory and going meeting people and, uh, some of those people would challenge him on his powers, and he would turn them into stone. And leave those landmarks as a lesson to us today and the other people that come after us that there are lessons to be learned. If you're not going to listen or you're not going to be a good person, then you can be turned into stone, and you're there forever. So, you know, so that happened throughout different parts of the territory. And he left some other landmarks as well. Some of the animals and, I guess the other part is the cedar tree and the many uses it has for us in terms of our ceremonies, and its uses for us, so. Those kinds of stories our people need to hear more about.<sup>63</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

From Xa:ls (the Transformer) to Chichelh Siyam (the Creator), expressions and figures of leadership among the Stó:lŦ have known major transformations throughout the colonization of S'ólh Téméxw. To understand the historical context from which Stó:lŦ forms of political leadership from 1970 to the 1990s have emerged, it is useful to review the evolution of Stó:lŦ leadership from the pre-colonial notion of “siya:m” (respected one), to more colonial-era notions of *Indian Act* Chief and Church Chief, in order to provide a historical background for the later leadership evolutions that took place in the second half of the twentieth century and contextualize the leadership of Patricia and Ron John. This chapter demonstrates that although the term of “siya:m” continues to be used today when referring to ancestral or hereditary leaders, the meaning behind the word has shifted in the wake of the missionization of Stó:lŦ society and the implementation of the *Indian Act*, which were adopted, rejected, or transcended by different segments of the Stó:lŦ people and caused tensions within Stó:lŦ society.

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<sup>63</sup> Chief Clarence (Kat) Pennier, “Swoxwiyam”, *Sq'ewlets: a Stó:lŦ-Coast Salish Community in the Fraser Valley*, accessed January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, <http://digitalsqewlets.ca/swoxwiyam/index-eng.php>.

The chapter first presents an overview of the characteristics of pre-nineteenth century Stó:lō culture, society, kinship and governance structures, starting with the worldview and cosmology informing Stó:lō leadership, with the Transformers, Xexa:ls, as the first models for Stó:lō leadership. It then delves into the Stó:lō kinship system and how the Fraser Watershed informs Stó:lō leadership through those kinship and ancestral connections. This brings us to the organization of Stó:lō society, its hierarchal structure, and the role and duties of si:yam and other leaders within this society. The following part of the analysis focuses on the academic debate about the degree to which Stó:lō leadership was centralized or decentralized before and after contact, that is to say, whether the Stó:lō had a centralized power, with one si:yam uniting all the nations behind him (or her), whether on the contrary, Stó:lō society was made of a variety of si:yam sharing power amongst them, or whether Stó:lō society followed a different model with complex dynamics of shifting powers. On a more micro level, I then present historiographical definitions for Stó:lō leaders, what values they were expected to follow, what their duties and responsibilities were, before providing some examples of prominent si:yam and going over some of the challenges they had to negotiate, such as warfare and smallpox epidemics.

The second part of the chapter describes the multiple levels on which the colonization of S'ólh Téméxw happened, starting with the Oblates, whose stated primary objective was to Christianize the populations of the New World. They did so by founding Temperance societies, led by Watchmen or Captains, who are commonly referred to as “Church Chiefs”, whose role was to ensure their fellow community members followed the principles of the Bible and abstained from drinking and practicing polygamy. These attempts at Christianization were further cemented by the imposition of residential schools, briefly mentioned in the present chapter, but will be more thoroughly described in Chapter 2. This section ends with a post-colonial analysis of missionaries techniques and how they were akin to what can be referred to as techniques of “colonial mimicry”, the reactions of Stó:lō leaders to the missionization, the rise of the Plateau Prophet Movement, Shakerism and other forms of religious hybridity, and missionaries’ efforts to encourage Stó:lō leaders to partake in boxing and logging.

The third and last part of the chapter delves into the political assimilation of Stó:lō society through the imposition of the *Indian Act*, which banned the Potlatch for a time, and imposed the band council and reserve systems on the Stó:lō. The chapter ends on the historical event that arguably cemented the rise of modern BC indigenous political organization and launched Stó:lō leadership into the twentieth century: the 1906 delegation to London, England.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF PRE-NINETEENTH CENTURY STÓ:LŌ CULTURE, SOCIETY, KINSHIP AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

### **Worldview and Cosmology Informing Stó:lō Leadership: Xexa:ls as the First Leaders**

Coast Salish society, kinship and governance structures are distinct from Canadian settler societies, and they also carry significant differences from other West Coast Indigenous cultures. The Stó:lō are Coast Salish; their traditional territory, currently occupied by the Xwelitem – settler Canadian society -, extends along the lower Fraser River, and is referred to as S'ólh Téméxw, *Our Land* in Halq'emeylem, the Stó:lō language. The world of the Stó:lō was shaped by the transformations of Xexa:ls, the Transformers. Xexa:ls also shaped the political consciousness of the Stó:lō by literally transforming the world and turning it into its current permanent form: the expression “our constitution is set in stone” illustrates the importance of the Transformers for Stó:lō leadership and of the role their transformations played in Stó:lō political institutions<sup>64</sup>. Stone, either as rocks or mountains, carries a strong meaning in Stó:lō culture: a rock on the Fraser River (today called Lady Franklin Rock), used to be a powerful shaman. T'xwelatsé, one of the ancestors of the Chilliwack Tribe, is a man who was turned into stone. Coquihalla Rock was the birthing place of the Water People. Xexa:ls (or Xa:ls, from xa:xa, sacred or taboo) were, in some ways, the first leaders the Stó:lō have known. They were powerful, supernatural leaders deeply connected to the sacred world, who led the Stó:lō through their transformations (which were sometimes used to punish and show an example), modifications of the landscape, and spiritual connections to the land.

### **Stó:lō Kinship and How the Fraser Watershed Informs Stó:lō leadership**

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<sup>64</sup> Andrée Boisselle, “Our Constitution is Set in Stone: Looking at the Transformers Stories Through the Lens of Law”, 2010, Retrieved online from the Sto:lo Research and Resource Management Centre: [http://www.srrmcentre.com/pdf/Library/Boisselle\\_2010\\_Our%20constitution%20is%20set%20in%20stone.pdf](http://www.srrmcentre.com/pdf/Library/Boisselle_2010_Our%20constitution%20is%20set%20in%20stone.pdf).

Stó:lō is the Halq'emeylmem word for the Fraser River, and it is also how Stó:lō people refer to themselves: people of the river, which testifies to the importance of the Fraser River for Stó:lō political identities.<sup>65</sup> While they are currently comprised of twenty-four nations, individual identities used to be inscribed in a larger supra-tribal system connected by the large watersheds of the region. Here are some of the characteristics of this larger social, cultural, and political system. Distinct from some other Northwest coast cultures, the Stó:lō's kinship system has been described in the anthropological literature as being characterized by patrilocal residence patterns among the elite, bilineal descent of hereditary rights, and leadership that provided opportunities to both men and women and that was typically confined to specific realms of responsibilities (task masters).<sup>66</sup> Women exercised a significant degree of political influence, but family heads were male. Some family rights and property could only be passed down via the women's lines, such as the swaixwe masks, which were the property of female family members.<sup>67</sup> Polygamous marriages were key in maintaining peaceful diplomatic and economic relations across S'ólh Téméxw. In terms of pre-contact economies and natural resources, salmon has historically played an important role for the Stó:lō, and each family owned specific fishing spots along the Fraser canyon. Leaders derived some of their influence from their ability to provide, and this meant being able to be a good fisherman and having ties to fishing spots. Having a polygamous system enabled leaders to have ties to other fishing spots, increasing their ability to provide for others and thus maintaining their family's prestige and influence. This ties into the idea of Coast Salish Collective Consciousness.

Collective Consciousness is a concept that was introduced by French sociologist Emile Durkheim, and it can be defined as “the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society [that] forms a determinate system with a life of its own.”<sup>68</sup> One of the most distinctive features of Coast Salish Collective Consciousness is the expression of watersheds as the “best indicators of collective identity and co-operative political action”<sup>69</sup> and

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<sup>65</sup> Schaepe, “Stó:lō Identity and the Cultural Landscape of S'ólh Téméxw” in Miller, *Being of Good Mind*, 155.

<sup>66</sup> These cultural traits have been well documented by multiple scholars, including Barnett, in *the Coast Salish of British Columbia*, Smith's Field Notes, Duff's Master's thesis, Suttles' *Coast Salish Essays* and Carlson's *the Power of Place, the Problem of Time*.

<sup>67</sup> Barnett, *the Coast Salish of Canada*, 130.

<sup>68</sup> See Emile Durkheim, *De la Division du Travail Social* (Paris : Félix Alcan, 1893).

<sup>69</sup> Carlson, *personal communication*, December 2018.

as a factor in shaping reactions to aggression by other first nations groups. The implications of the importance of watersheds for Stó:lō identities and historical consciousness have been explored by Carlson, who listened closely to the way Stó:lō people spoke of their collective identities. He additionally drew inspiration from the earlier observations of Smith. Smith highlighted the importance of “river-based tribal associations” and explained that “[it was from the] geographical concept of drainage system that the Coast Salish derived their major concept of social unity”.<sup>70</sup> Carlson later argued that super-watershed-based identities are for instance expressed through the conception of the territory of the Xwelmxw people, the central Coast Salish, as a “four-pointed star with each of the four major water-systems – the Strait of Georgia, Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Fraser River – constituting one of its points”. Carlson adds that the Salish Sea and the Fraser River can be perceived as extensions of each other. Thus, the interconnected watersheds of the region link tribes together to occasionally create a transcendent supra-tribal identity and collective consciousness that occasionally becomes mobilized to meet perceived political or economic needs.<sup>71</sup>

### **Social Classes among the Stó:lō**

On a more micro level, prior to the two smallpox epidemics of 1782 and 1862 that decimated up to 90% of the Stó:lō population<sup>72</sup>, Stó:lō society was organized into several social classes. According to Carlson, prior to colonial times, Stó:lō society was divided into three groups: the hereditary *smela'lh*, “worthy people” who knew their history, their ancestral ties and the exploits of their ancestors, and who represented the most numerous class; the *s'téxem*, “worthless people”, poorer people who discursively were described as people who had lost or forgotten their history; and finally *skw'iyéth*, the slaves, who were the least numerous class.<sup>73</sup> Suttles observed that Stó:lō families would compete with each other for status and influence; as a consequence, they sometimes attempted to undermine other competing families' prestige by using rumors and gossip as a way to undermine people's credibility, hence the importance of witnesses in ceremonies to witness the feats of community members. Carlson has shown that structures in Stó:lō society have been impacted by the major

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<sup>70</sup> Smith cited in Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 39.

<sup>71</sup> Carlson, “We Could Not Help Noticing The Fact That Many of Them Were Cross-eyed': Historical Evidence and Coast Salish Leadership”.

<sup>72</sup> Carlson, *You Are Asked to Witness*, 37.

<sup>73</sup> Carlson, *You Are Asked To Witness*, 89.

shifts of population caused by the smallpox epidemics and cultural genocide perpetrated by the Xwelitem.<sup>74</sup>

Ethnologists and historians have used several models to describe the organization and structure of contact-era Stó:lō society according to the aforementioned classes. One of the most widely used model is Suttles' inverted pear model, which shows the stratification of the various social classes of the Coast Salish, with the minority slave population appearing at the bottom, the more prominent middle-class in the middle, and the smaller but still significant elite class at the top, thus forming a model in the shape of an inverted pear.<sup>75</sup> This model has been criticized by Miller, who asserted that such a model does not contain room for more subtle expression of distinct ranks and names within the highest classes.<sup>76</sup> Schaepe has presented an alternative model based upon archeological evidence from the 400 years immediately preceding contact, which is essentially an inversion of Suttles' inverted pear model – a pyramid.<sup>77</sup> Stó:lō elder Grand Chief Siyemches Frank Malloway, has similarly argued in favor of a pyramid for the early and post contact eras, but has challenged the metaphorical meaning of the symbols suggesting it is better understood as an arrowhead, which shows the chief moving forward in front of a community that follows.<sup>78</sup>

This class system found physical expression in villages made of long houses. Archeological records and oral tradition suggest that long houses belonging to prominent families would be longer, made of better material, usually cedar planks, and located in favorable locations to protect them from raids, usually at the center of the village. Meanwhile, long houses belonging to lesser families would be located on the extremities of the village, more vulnerable to outside attacks, and be made of less durable material, such as bark. The inside of long houses was similarly organized according to rank: more prominent family members, such as si:ya:m, would have their sleeping quarters in the back of the long house, where they would be better protected, while slaves would sleep in the colder and more

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<sup>74</sup> Carlson, *the Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 113-154.

<sup>75</sup> Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays*, 12.

<sup>76</sup> Miller, "Back to Basics", 378.

<sup>77</sup> Schaepe, "Crossing the Theoretical Contact Barrier in S'ólh Téméxw", 5-6.

<sup>78</sup> Bierwert, cited in Schaepe, *Tracery in the Mistlines*, 264-276, cited in Dave Schaepe, "Crossing the Theoretical Contact Barrier in S'ólh Téméxw", 5-6.



vulnerable areas, by the door. Immediate relatives, such as a man, his wives and children would have their own cooking fires, qweld'ali, and separated from other family members by temporary mats that could be moved to make more room during ceremonies taking place inside the long house. While hierarchy was a prominent characteristic of pre-nineteenth century Stó:lō leadership, some evidence suggests that the degree of centralization or decentralization of Stó:lō leadership appears to have been flexible to a certain extent and determined by exterior factors.

### **Centralization or Decentralization of Stó:lō Leadership**

Defining the roles and responsibilities of Stó:lō leaders requires estimating the degree of power they held, whether this power was shared between several leaders, and assessing how large of a population would follow them, that is to say, determining the degree of centralization or decentralization of Stó:lō governments. Several scholars have attempted to assess whether Stó:lō groups tended to follow one leader or whether each group had their own separate leaders. In her book *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River*, Bierwert explores the idea that Coast Salish society is today ironically becoming more decentralized due “to a marked variation of treaty status”, that is to say, due to a lack of legal uniformity across Coast Salish territories in terms of place in the treaty process (i.e, Island Coast Salish people having signed the Douglas treaties vs the Stó:lō currently being in the negotiation process),<sup>79</sup> and to changing economic circumstances, with for example the introduction of currency, welfare and unemployment.<sup>80</sup> But there is a lack of academic consensus regarding the degree of centralization or decentralization of Coast Salish society prior to contact.

The smallpox epidemics also appears to have caused a lack of historical evidence to make assertive statements on Coast Salish leadership pre- contact.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, in his article “We Could Not Help Noticing the Fact That Many of Them Were Cross-eyed”, Carlson provides an overview of the historiography pertaining to the degree of centralization or decentralization of Coast Salish society, and draws somewhat different conclusions from Bierwert.<sup>82</sup> According to

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<sup>79</sup> Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 18-29.

<sup>80</sup> Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 29.

<sup>81</sup> Carlson, “We Could Not Help Noticing the Fact that Many of Them Were Cross-Eyed: Historical Evidence and Coast Salish Leadership,” in Whitney Lackenbauer and Myra Rutherdale, eds., *Roots of Entanglement: Essays in Native-Newcomer Relations in Honour of J.R. Miller* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 337-372.

<sup>82</sup> Carlson, “We Could Not Help Noticing the Fact that Many of Them Were Cross-Eyed”, 19.

him, the answer is most likely a continuum between the two, and that the Coast Salish society was able to move from one to the other depending on the needs of the time. However, due to the lack of data, Carlson ultimately argues that due to the massive disruption and destruction of historical evidence caused by smallpox, academics are unlikely to ever find a definite answer.

### **Ethnographic Definitions of Stó:lō Leaders**

It is within this social context that Stó:lō leaders exist. Stó:lō leaders, called *siy:am*, were respected members of society, who frequently came from the most prominent families of the highest class, and who knew their history. Ethnographers, anthropologists and historians have suggested multiple definitions and identified several prominent characteristics to the Halq'emeylem word “*siya:m*”, which describes what can be loosely translated in English as “leader”.<sup>83</sup> Hill-Tout listed the following moral traits as characteristics that a good *si:yam* needs to possess in order to be recognized as a leader: generosity, liberalism, kind-heartedness, and ability of looking well after the material comforts of the tribe.<sup>84</sup> Rather than using the term “chief”, Hill-Tout compared the heads of tribes to “directors”, “overseers” and “fathers” of the tribe. Duff wrote that prior to contact era, there were no chiefs but “leaders” called *siya:m*.<sup>85</sup> In his thesis, Duff argues that *si:ya:m* were heads of their family groups, that their position was based on prestige, thus often making them “village leaders” and granting them enough power to “suggest and exhort others to take action.”<sup>86</sup> Several authors noted that not all leaders were *si:yam*, and that different leaders may have played different roles. For instance, the other term *sxwsiya:m*, a ‘wealthy man with property’, refers to a *si:yam* having rights over specific fishing and hunting sites.<sup>87</sup> Duff then notes that *si:ya:m* were ranked in ascending scales, with major Stó:lō *si:ya:m* being those of Langley and Yale. He, however, makes an important distinction between: *si:ya:m*, who hold their power and prestige from their ability to maintain peace, and “warriors”, *ska'yicat*, who were war leaders or “mean hot-

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<sup>83</sup> The word “*siya:m*” has been rendered differently in various orthographies. For instance, Wilson Duff used to spell it “*sie'm*”. In an attempt at coherence, I will use the now widely accepted spelling from the practical Halq'emeylem orthography adopted by the Coqualeetza Education Centre in the 1980s and spell the word “*siya:m*” throughout this essay. The plural form of *siya:m* is *si:ya:m*.

<sup>84</sup> Hill-Tout, *Vol. III: the Mainland Halkomelem*, 44.

<sup>85</sup> Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians*, 81.

<sup>86</sup> Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians*, 181.

<sup>87</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 283.

headed men”<sup>88</sup>, and who “could not be trusted”.<sup>89</sup> This is where Stó:lō models of leadership differ from the European ones: whereas in European leadership, State rulers almost always hold executive powers and control armies, Stó:lō leaders were expected to be moral entities who should seek to maintain peace and avoid war. In terms of the transmission of leadership power, Duff writes that due to the absence of formal office and position, a si:ya:m would choose a successor for their names and would train them. Indeed, Duff pointed out that a leader could transmit his name to a successor but had no office or position that they could pass on. In most cases, a si:yam’s successor would be one of his sons or nephews. Finally, Duff notes that “the Chilliwack had a more formalized pattern of tribal leadership than the Tait”, which group historically lived in the region upriver of Agassiz. Indeed, among the Chilliwack each village had one main leader, the “**lesie’meit**”, whom everything happening in the village had to be reported to and who was expected to take command in wars on top of other war leaders, but who was also expected to “be of good character and friendly with everybody”, and whose successors were almost always one of their sons.<sup>90</sup>

Barnett similarly stressed the importance of morality and prestige among Coast Salish si:ya:m, who had to lead by example and inspire people to follow them through a form of informal power.<sup>91</sup> Barnett also highlighted the importance of the lack of formal position or office for leadership and suggested possible translations of si:yam as “gentlemen,” “hightone men,” “smart men,” and “real men”, which he deems more accurate than “chief”.<sup>92</sup> For Suttles, “siya:m” was a way to address people of higher status, whether they were male or female.<sup>93</sup> More recently, Miller described si:ya:m as “task masters” who had to display “personal dignity, open-handedness, restraint, wealth, and a knowledge of traditions” while being “kind and considerate with its own, but [...] haughty with outsiders”.<sup>94</sup> Adding nuance to Barnett and Duff’s definitions, according to Miller, leaders i.e. task masters could be women. While I am not aware of

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<sup>88</sup> Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians*, 181.

<sup>89</sup> In his master’s thesis, Duff spells the Halq’emeylem word for war leaders as “ska’yicat”.

<sup>90</sup> Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians*, 183.

<sup>91</sup> Barnett, “The Coast Salish of Canada”, 129-130.

<sup>92</sup> Barnett, “The Coast Salish of Canada”, 129-130.

<sup>93</sup> Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays*, 177.

<sup>94</sup> Miller, “Back to Basics: Chiefdoms in Puget Sound”, 381.

the existence of any female si:yam prior to the twentieth century, nowadays this title is also widely used for women, such as Evangéline Pete, Ron's grandmother. Women played many important leadership roles, such as in the transmission of swaixwxe, in maintaining diplomatic ties across the canyon and in the economy, as healers, as gatherers, and as dispute resolvers. As these different leadership roles indicate, si:ya:m were not the only type of leaders. Carlson argues that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, leadership responsibilities were not only incumbent to *siya:m*, but were actually divided between four types of leaders.<sup>95</sup> In addition to “political” siya:m, who provided leadership in dispute resolution and regulated access to family owner resources, other leaders included the *shxwla:m*, who provided leadership in important areas of health care, the *stomex* (similar to the *ska'yicat* cited by Duff), who provided leadership in organizing and executing raids and counter raids. Finally, the *tewit* provided leadership in aspects of resource procurement relating to hunting. Si:yam, therefore, was a title of respect bestowed on anyone who had a leadership role in society and who was respected.

Pat and Ron John grew up in a world where all these definitions, histories, and memories were shaping and informing people's lives. They have very kindly shared with me their own definition of Stó:lō leadership. Ron has emphasized several times during our interviews that to him, being a good leader means “doing good for the people”, “looking after the people”, making sure that there is no abuse in the community, that the children are taken care of.<sup>96</sup> Patricia stated that in the old times, si:yam did not have office, that they won because they cared for the people, because they led in a good way.<sup>97</sup> Both of them stressed the fact that a si:yam is the one who speaks publicly, who makes the voice of their people heard.<sup>98</sup> All the definitions above seem to hold some principles in common, Stó:lō leadership valued certain moral principles, and Stó:lō leaders could lose their power if they lost the respect of the population they led as a result of immoral conduct.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Carlson, *You are Asked to Witness*, 91.

<sup>96</sup> Ron John, *Interview by author*, Chawathil Band Office, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>97</sup> Patricia John, *Interview by author*, Chawathil Band Office, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>98</sup> Pat and Ron John, *Interview by author*, Chawathil Band Office, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>99</sup> Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians*, 183.

## **Examples of Individuals Called si:y:am**

Stó:lō History, Oral Tradition and records obtained from Xwelitem explorers are full of examples of prominent si:y:am who are known to possess these virtues, and they reveal detailed information on pre-WW1 Stó:lō leadership. Some include account of influential, prominent, more “centralized” leaders, for instance Chief of the Ackinroe, Chief Pierre, Chief Lquitum, as well as chiefs with lesser geographical influence. Ron and Patricia John, the two Elders who are at the core of this thesis, have shared with me the name of Leaders who have inspired them, and who they think are examples of good Si:y:am. Locally, they cited Ron’s great-grandfather Pierre Ayessik (1854-1934), whose name Ron inherited, The Honourable Steven Lewis Point, Chief Archie Charles, Grand Chief Clarence (Kat) Pennier, and P.D. Peters (as well as his ancestor Oscar Dennis Peter), whom they described as being very intelligent. When talking about these Si:yam, Ron and Pat describe them as “strong”, “intelligent”, good at taking care of the people, and good at speaking in public.

Although there is no consensus about whether colonialism inevitably resulted in either the centralization or decentralization nature of Stó:lō structures of governance, we can conclude from the historical documents cited above that the characteristics of a “traditional” siya:m were mostly based on his moral character, whether he was charismatic, had prestige, wealth, was wise, intelligent and capable of leading men and providing for his people. He was a “worthy” and valued member of society. Ceremonies such as the potlatch and winter dances were used to ensure the transmission of names and titles and the passage through major life stages of young leaders and were thus crucial in maintaining a succession of virtuous si:yam.

## **Impact of the Two Smallpox Epidemics on Stó:lō Leadership**

Starting in the 1700s, a series of significant historical events strongly impacted Coast Salish leadership, the majority of which being directly or indirectly linked to colonialism. In 1782 and 1862, years of the two aforementioned smallpox epidemics, as well as other diseases brought by Europeans (such as measles, influenza, mumps, tuberculosis, venereal diseases), wiped out a significant portion of Coast Salish society. However, there is no consensus on the amount of population loss these epidemics caused. The most conservative estimates of the damage caused

by the 1782 smallpox epidemic reported a loss of population of 62%,<sup>100</sup> while others estimated this loss could have amounted to 90% of the population.<sup>101</sup> Oral sources among the Stó:lō also indicate high numbers of population loss, with Albert Louie of Chilliwack asserting in 1965 that the disease killed half of the population, and Pierre of Katzie's 1935 assessment that three quarters of the Stó:lō died from smallpox.<sup>102</sup> Without individuals to pass on certain traditions, the smallpox epidemics caused the disappearance of certain roles in Coast Salish society. Due to the death of shamans, knowledge keepers and political leaders, certain traditions and cultural practices were compromised. Consequently, Coast Salish society was profoundly changed due to this massive loss of population, and Stó:lō people were forced to find ways to adapt to these changes.

The epidemics may also have affected Stó:lō forms of governance, for instance by affecting the degree of centralization of Stó:lō leadership. Some archeological and historical evidence, such as fortifications in certain parts of Coast Salish territory, and records of the existence of a strong leader, such as the Chief of the Ackinroe, capable of mobilizing Coast Salish forces to react to exterior threats, seemed to indicate the presence, at certain moments, of a centralized form of government. However, sixteen years after Fraser's encounter with Chief of the Ackinroe, explorers did not seem to have encountered any individual with claims to or expressions of centralized leadership among the Stó:lō. In addition to the two smallpox epidemics, intertribal warfare and conflicts were one of the major historical events of the nineteenth century that contributed to evolutions in the roles and conceptions of Stó:lō leaders.<sup>103</sup>

### **Intertribal Warfare and Conflicts: Another Challenge for Stó:lō Leadership**

One of the ways in which BC Indigenous Nations reacted to the massive population loss caused by the epidemics was intertribal warfare, adding to the previously unexperienced pressures Stó:lō leaders and their communities had to face. To compensate for their population losses, some communities engaged in inter-community conflicts and raids to capture slaves and women from other nations.<sup>104</sup> These inter-tribal warfare and conflicts, often exacerbated by the

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<sup>100</sup> Carlson, *You Are Asked to Witness*, 37.

<sup>101</sup> McHalsie, "We Have to Take Care of Everything that Belongs to Us", in Miller, *Be of Good Mind*, 107.

<sup>102</sup> Carlson, "'We Could Not Help Noticing the Fact that Many of Them Were Cross-Eyed', 17.

<sup>103</sup> For more information on intertribal warfare among West Coast people, please consult Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 134-143.

<sup>104</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 134-143.

pressures inherent to the colonization of indigenous lands, added significant stress on Stó:lō communities. “Coastal Riders”, often coming from the Kwakwaka’wawks communities and other groups from Vancouver Island, would reach Stó:lō territory by canoe, sometimes pushing Stó:lō people to retreat further inland. Among other factors, such warfare seemed at least partially aimed to solve the problem of population loss caused by the smallpox epidemics. The Lekwiltok would often raid the Stó:lō to bring slaves and women to their communities. In reaction, the Stó:lō would lead retaliation raids. This context made the role of war chiefs or war leaders described above crucial.

Based on the above analysis, pre-contact Stó:lō leadership relied primarily on hereditary statuses, family connections tied to the watershed of the Fraser River and the possession of a certain number of virtues and abilities within a complex social structure. Now that we have outlined these characteristics, we can delve into how Stó:lō leaders reacted to the arrival of Christian Missionaries, who were determined to convert the Stó:lō, turn them away from the Transformers and instead turn them to the Great Chief in the Sky, Chichel Si:yam. The Christian missionaries brought their own ideas of leadership, and those influenced the Stó:lō.

## THE COLONIZATION AND MISSIONIZATION OF S’ÓLH TÉMÉXW

### **Goals and Conversion Techniques of the Oblates of St-Mary Immaculate**

The first real directed efforts to transform Stó:lō leadership by outsiders came in the aftermath of the establishment of fortified trading posts (Fort Langley: 1827, Fort Yale: 1848) and of the subsequent discovery of gold in the Fraser Canyon in 1858, when the catholic, French-speaking Oblates settled in the Fraser Valley in the Hope to convert the Stó:lō.<sup>105</sup> It is in this context of change and political instability that the missionization of Stó:lō territory by the Oblates took place. The Oblates used multiple strategies to convert the Stó:lō to Catholicism and in the process to co-opt and partially transform systems of leadership. Some of these conversion techniques had been used successfully among eastern and central indigenous groups. These strategies included encouraging the settlement of indigenous people around newly built churches, perceived protection from outside enemies due to the inter-tribal

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<sup>105</sup> Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 18-19.

influence of the priests, promises of Heaven. All these techniques used by both the missionaries and by the Canadian government worked alternatively to undermine and enhance Indigenous agency and leadership in complicated ways.<sup>106</sup>

In order to learn about Stó:lō culture, develop contacts in the communities and convert Stó:lō people to Christianity, Father Fouquet, the first missionary to settle permanently among the Stó:lō, learned *Halq'emeylmem*, the Stó:lō language. He decided to use this newly developed knowledge to promote what he saw as priorities that were in the Stó:lō people's best interests.<sup>107</sup> With well intentioned, sometimes sincerely appreciated, but always paternalistic, motivations, Father Fouquet founded "Sobriety" or "Temperance" societies to "assist" the Stó:lō siya:m resist the corrosive vices associated with western society (alcohol, prostitution, etc) , and then identified Stó:lō individuals willing to work within a priest-led Church system as "captains" or "watchmen", whose role was to "ensure good Christian behavior", for instance by denouncing people drinking alcohol, organizing potlatches or practicing pre-marital sex. This early structure of watchmen and captains mark the beginning of a long series of changes encouraged by Christian missionaries, indicating the rise of a different kind of Stó:lō leadership.

### **Church Chiefs and Temperance Societies: Oblates Attempt to Transform the Stó:lō by Targeting their Leadership**

The Oblates reports, made of letters of missionaries tracking their progress and making reports to higher Catholic authorities back in Montreal or France, are a useful source of information on the techniques used to influence Indigenous leadership, on the reaction of local indigenous groups throughout the world, and to a minor extent on the consequences for Stó:lō society. These reports reveal the efficiency of such a technique: one writes that numerous indigenous people visited the Oregon and British Columbia Missions, that "over one third of these great nations have been shaken/moved off in the first few months",<sup>108</sup> and that "the Chiefs

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<sup>106</sup> Carlson, *You are Asked to Witness*, 95.

<sup>107</sup> Carlson, *You are Asked to Witness*, 96.

<sup>108</sup> R.P. Durieu to T.R.P. Supérieur Général, 1 September 1860, in *Missions de la Congrégation des Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Tome Premier, 1862, Marseille, page 123. " Plus d'un tiers de ces grandes nations se sont ébranlées dès les premiers mois". Our translation.



punish all those who drink [thanks to] a poor catholic priest”.<sup>109</sup> In another letter, Father d’Herbomez cited a letter from Father Grandidier, who rejoiced at having “taught a lesson” to a si:yam by humiliating him. Grandidier begged another family in the community for food, thus revealing the “lack of hospitality” of the Si:yam, who in turned had to organize a feast for the priest and publicly offer his apology.<sup>110</sup> The watchmen emerged as a new form of leaders within Stó:lō society, and came to be known as “Church chiefs”: Christian individuals with a significant degree of power due to their association with the Church, and who often clashed with si:y:a:m and other “traditional” leaders. Stó:lō people then had to choose which chiefs to follow depending on their beliefs and familial ties; this accentuated tensions and fractures in Stó:lō society. The missionization of the Stó:lō led to a partial loss of hereditary status in Stó:lō society. However, as we will see in the third chapter of this thesis, there sometimes was some overlap between *Indian Act* Chief, Church Chiefs and Hereditary chiefs, making for interesting case studies in hybridity about Stó:lō leadership. For instance, Ron John was both a hereditary Chief and si:yam, but also an *Indian Act* Chief who was reelected for several mandates. Ron John’s ancestor, his great-grandfather Pierre Ayessik, was both a Church Chief and a hereditary si:yam.

### **Imposition of Monogamy and Consequences for Stó:lō Leaders**

Another aspect of the missionization that affected Stó:lō leadership was the Church’s influence on Stó:lō marriage: Christian priests started forbidding people from practicing polygamy, and were assisted in this task by *the Civilization Act*, which became applied in BC starting in 1871.<sup>111</sup> Stó:lō polygamy helped maintaining peaceful diplomatic relationships throughout the region, as well as maintaining property ties and fishing rights in the canyon. The imposition of monogamy would make it more difficult for Stó:lō leaders to maintain inter-communal relationships. In times of war, elites could not arrange multiple marriages for their

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<sup>109</sup> R. P. D’Herbomez to T.R. P. Supérieur Général, 20 May 1861, in *Missions de la Congrégation des Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Tome Premier, 1862, Marseille, page 174. «[...] les chefs punissent tous ceux qui s’énivrent [...] A qui, je le demande, est dû ce changement ? Au zèle et aux efforts persévérants d’un pauvre prêtre catholique ». Our translation.

<sup>110</sup> Charles Grandidier, O.M.I. to R. P. D’Herbomez, O.M.I, 22 May 1861, Fort Hope, in R. P. D’Herbomez to T.R. P. Supérieur Général, 20 May 1861, in *Missions de la Congrégation des Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Tome Premier, 1862, Marseille, 177.

<sup>111</sup> On the impact of the imposition of monogamy and western standards of marriage on Western Indigenous groups, see Carter, *the importance of being monogamous*, 103-147 and Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 97-123. For specific information on the importance of Stó:lō polygamy, see Carlson, *the Power of Place*, 30, 49, 123.

sons as ways to forge peace and to secure access to distant food resources. While monogamous marriage may have come with some benefits for certain individuals, for example limiting jealousy and competition between co-wives, Stó:lō leadership would lose a crucial diplomatic and economic tool: polygamous marriage, which, as we explained earlier, was an important tenant of Stó:lō leadership.

### **Hybridity and Mimicry as Strategies Employed by the O.M.I?**

Bhabha define two useful concepts to understand the techniques the strategies of colonial power (mimicry) and the inevitable outcome of colonial relationships (hybridity):

[...] the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject to a difference that is *almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both "normalized" knowledges and disciplinary powers.<sup>112</sup>

Bhabha further theorized that colonial mimicry was used by both the colonial governments and by the Church as a strategy of colonial power: the colonized people were encouraged to mimic the colonizers.<sup>113</sup> However, their results could never be enough, so they receive no approbation from the colonizing society. On the other hand, the colonizer also shames them for not being “authentic” enough.<sup>114</sup> These colonial techniques were used by both the Oblates and by the Canadian government, and it was yet another factor that strongly impacted Stó:lō leadership during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Stó:lō leaders were expected to “mimic” Euro-Canadian leaders, displaying characteristics of leaders praised by western societies such as being monogamous and sober, while at the same time maintaining Stó:lō “authenticity” to be considered legitimate in their interactions and decisions. As we will see in the following chapter, residential schools were also a tool to encourage young Stó:lō

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<sup>112</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 121-131.

<sup>113</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*,, 121-131.

<sup>114</sup> For example, there is at least one instance that I am aware of where Oblates became suspicious of a West Coast man of mixed ancestry for being too “civilized” in O.M.I, 1964, Snohomish Mission chapter.

people to mimic the nurses and priests who ran the school in order to become good Christians.

While they were expected to mimic their colonizers, the Stó:lō and other colonized indigenous people were also punished for performing this new role too well, as they would be dismissed as too inauthentic to claim their Stó:lō identity, status or rights if they mimicked successfully their oppressors, making mimicry a very dangerous and effective tactic to destabilize indigenous forms of leadership. Faced by the pressure of the church, some Stó:lō leaders fell prey to the colonial strategy of mimicry with the result of cultural hybridity as a result. One of the ways in which priests, residential schools and *Indian Act* elections impacted Stó:lō leadership through hybridity and mimicry was to highlight the idea of “achieved” status as opposed to hereditary or “ascribed” status.<sup>115</sup> Colonization sought to undermine the hereditary chiefs so that they could not co-opt, and they did this in part by emphasizing the possibility of class mobility (at least rhetorically): individuals who were stexem or slaves in the pre-contact system had little or no avenues for expressing leadership. However, as residential school alumni and as converts, they could become Church Chiefs and *Indian Act* chiefs. This was a significant change in Coast Salish society and one that was both disruptive and oppressive for elites just as it was potentially liberating for lower status people.

### **Reactions from Stó:lō Leaders**

Far from being passive victims to colonial strategies like mimicry, several Stó:lō leaders reacted in complex ways to colonialism in order to protect their interests and those of their people. One of the best historical examples of hybridity in the face of colonial strategies of mimicry is found in Grand Chief Pierre Ayessik (1854-1934), Ron John’s ancestor. Ayessik was both a si:yam and a Church Chief. Being converted to Christianity granted Ayessik quite a bit of authority among converted Stó:lō and settlers, and he often used this influence to advocate on behalf of his people. On July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1874, Pierre Ayessik signed a petition to Lieutenant-Colonel Powell on behalf of other leaders from the Fraser River to question the small size of lands allocated to the Stó:lō and to ask for a more adequate size of reserves,

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<sup>115</sup> Carlson, *Personal Communication*, October 2018.

specifically 80 acres per family, instead of the 20 or 30 acres originally planned by the government.<sup>116</sup> This petition is recognized as “the first extensive organizing effort made by the different Indian groups of British Columbia against the policy of ignoring our title to the land.”<sup>117</sup> Following the events of the celebrations for the Queen’s Birthday between 1864 and 1876, Chief Alexis Squiteelanoo of Cheam, and chief Pierre Ayessik “increasingly assumed roles as supratribal leaders”.<sup>118</sup> Pierre Ayessik and Alexis Squiteelanoo thus set a historical precedent for the Stó:lō: by writing formal petitions and advocating on behalf of the Stó:lō as a group, they laid the foundations for later Stó:lō political actions, such as the 1906 delegation to London and Ron John’s participation in the Constitution Express. In 1914, Ayessik signed another petition as a representative of his people, this time for the preservation of Stó:lō fishing rights when the Hell’s Gate Slide occurred, and the Fisheries Department attempted to stop all Indian fishing in the Fraser Canyon.<sup>119</sup>

Pierre Ayessik’s example shows us how the influence he gained in part through his status as Church Chief gave him the authority and credibility to interact and negotiate with western colonial institutions, while at the same time maintaining the characteristics, duties and responsibilities of a si:yam. Beyond hybridity, one can also find a poignant example of ambivalence in this letter: he and other chiefs maintained that despite conforming to the instructions of the colonial authorities, learning how to become farmers and being willing to take on farming duties, their communities faced starvation as they were not granted suitable lands for agriculture, while their white neighbors were provided with arable farmlands and farming equipment. While Ayessik chose to engage with aspects of the colonial system, the reactions of Stó:lō leaders were as numerous as there were Stó:lō leaders, as each leader would find individual ways to react to the situations and circumstances they were encountering based on their own upbringing, community, experiences of leadership and personal circumstances. The emergence of Stó:lō prophets would bring yet another additional layer of complexity to these various responses to new forms of leadership on S’ólh Téméxw.

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<sup>116</sup> Pierre (Peter) Ayessik, *Letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Powell, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1874*, Indian Affairs, RG 10, Volume 1001, Battleford Agency T-1455, pp.10-11, retrieved online from: [http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac\\_reel\\_t1455/1001?r=0&s=6](http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_t1455/1001?r=0&s=6).

<sup>117</sup> Manuel, *the Fourth World*, 81.

<sup>118</sup> Carlson, *the Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 235.

<sup>119</sup> *Letter from Chief Pierre Ayessik and other Stó:lō Chiefs to the Chilliwack Progress*, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1914, 3.

## The Emergence of Stó:lō Prophets and Religious Hybridity

Although Christianity was for the most part imposed on indigenous people, it is important to remember that throughout the 1830s, prophets emerged within Stó:lō territory, bringing prophet dances to the Stó:lō, and that some of these prophets gained inspiration from Christianity. For instance, the Plateau Prophet Dance and the Smohalla Plateau Cult contributed to the creation of Indian Shakerism, Patricia John's religion. While some segments of the Stó:lō population welcomed the arrival of missionaries in the Fraser valley, for instance with the rise of messianic Plateau Prophets, other segments of the communities decided to resist against the western religious influence, for instance by continuing to practice Stó:lō rituals, organizing secret potlatches or speaking the language in secret. During one of the guided tours organized by Albert McHalsie during the Ethnohistory Field School, we learned that some rituals are still kept secret today, in an attempt to protect and preserve Stó:lō sacred practices. As a result of the missionization movement, certain practices transcended both Christianity and the old ways, merging beliefs and practices from both. This created a context for the emergence of the *Indian Shaker Church*. Bierwert writes that what characterizes Stó:lō religious life today is its diversity within each different reserve and among individuals: the same individual can take part in Christian life on Sundays and during the summer, in Shakerism in the spring, and in Long House rituals during the winter.<sup>120</sup> Given the importance of the spiritual roles of si:yam that we describe earlier, this individual freedom and flexibility which inevitably leads to hybridity in each of the traditions seem to reveal not only a union between two traditions that transcended the trauma of colonization, but also the ability of Stó:lō leaders to adapt to major changes in their systems of governance.

Regardless of the Church's goal to repudiate and replace Xe:xals and Chichelh Si:yam, many Stó:lō came to express a hybrid faith where Xa:ls become the little Christ and Chichel Si:yam became God.<sup>121</sup> Some Stó:lō came to re-conceptualize Stó:lō cosmology to make it fit Christian religions by interpreting pre-contact religious or cosmological figures within Christian contexts. Inevitably this resulted in a reconceptualization of aspects of leadership as well. Xexals

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<sup>120</sup> Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 12.

<sup>121</sup> Amanda Fehr, "A Subversive Sincerity: The I:yem Memorial, Catholicism, and Political Opportunity in S'olh Téméxw", in *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press), 2017, 61 and 71.

were thus given a slightly different expression as Little Jesus, and Chichel Si:yam as the Abrahamic God. Instead of being the “ultimate si:yam” displaying all qualities associated with si:yamship, this new God operated within a system where avoiding sins was necessary for salvation, and where non-christians and sinners were punished by hell. By encouraging this reconceptualization, making an abundant use of Temperance Societies and banning the potlatch, Christian churches complicated and undermined the transmission of titles, names and ties to fishing spots for leaders. Moreover, they attempted to reshape leadership with Christian values by emphasizing “achieved status” as opposed to “ascribed status”, in the way ordinary people can become Saints through their embracing of the Christian faith and principles.<sup>122</sup>

### **Encouragement by O.M.I for Stó:lō Leaders to Take Part in Logging and Boxing**

Beyond this cosmological reconceptualization, the Church also focused on encouraging Stó:lō men to take part in logging in the wage labor economy and logger sports as another way to emphasize achieved status over ascribed status;<sup>123</sup> this inevitably resulted in hybrid responses from Stó:lō leaders. Two Ethnohistory Field School alumni, Chris Marsh and Colin Osmond, explored the historical expressions of masculinity in Stó:lō physical activities, respectively boxing and logging. Chris Marsh describes boxing as a “trickster tale”: while this sport was initially encouraged by missionaries and European officials as a tool of assimilation of European values and ideals of masculinity, Marsh suggests that boxing also had the counterbalancing effect of empowering Stó:lō boxers and their families, by reinforcing relationships between grandparents, parents and children, by providing youth with the means to fight off racist bullies, and by offering a healthy alternative to drugs and alcohol.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Osmond noted that “turning trees into social power is something traditionally Stó:lō”: as such, while earlier scholars inscribed the Stó:lō logging industry as a direct consequence of colonization and assimilation, the testimonies gathered by Osmond rather suggest that the Stó:lō “felt that by taking up the occupations of their ancestors, working hard, and using the forest to provide for their families,

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<sup>122</sup> The O.M.I describe the practice of translating major prayers into Coast Salish and other Indigenous languages in order to ease the catechization of Indigenous people throughout their reports. For more information on this topic, see O.M.I Missions Reports, years 1862-1864.

<sup>123</sup> While it was not absolutely necessary to be of good lineage to become a si:yam, favorable family lineage was an asset. What the Church was offering in theory was an easier path to higher status.

<sup>124</sup> Chris Marsh, “Totem Tigers and Salish Sluggers: a History of Boxing in Stó:lō Territory, 1912-1985”, in *Towards a New Ethnohistory*, 191-214.

they were not necessarily working in ways that were in opposition with Stó:lō tradition and spirituality”. Where the missionaries and officials were encouraging the Stó:lō to mimic their behaviors, it appears that the Stó:lō reacted to the tensions between tradition and colonialism by finding ways to adapt to social changes and thrive. While missionaries wanted to limit both the political and religious influence of Stó:lō si:yam by coopting them to fit their beliefs and agenda, some Stó:lō si:yam who did choose to convert to Christianity and who learnt English were able to use the colonial strategy of mimicry against their colonizers to resist and to gain influence among settler society in order to advocate for Stó:lō rights. Young Stó:lō men used these sports to find new avenues to develop, maintain and hone their leadership skills: by taking part in sports and physical employment became a continuity of pre-contact practices such as hunting and fishing. For instance, being proficient in sports and work such as logging, boxing and canoe racing became ways for young Stó:lō leaders to illustrate themselves. We will see in our third chapter how Ron John, in addition to his political actions, was also a leader in terms of his hunting, trapping, fishing and logging activities, and he expressed a sense of pride at being able to perform well in these areas.<sup>125</sup>

Oblates worked to emphasize “achieved status” as opposed to “ascribed status” as a way to undermine the leaders they could not co-opt, but they were not the only settler organization to do so, as can be seen with the implementation of the *Indian Act* by the Federal Government in a further attempt to assimilate the Stó:lō and obtain their lands by undermining their leaders. But of course, both “traditional” Stó:lō and Catholic western society were mixtures of achieved and ascribed status.

## ASSIMILATION POLICIES: HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WORKED TO UNDERMINE STÓ:LŌ LEADERSHIP

### **Implementation of the *Indian Act***

Beyond the missionization of S’ólh Téméxw, Stó:lō leadership was equally affected by the assimilationist policies of the Canadian government, and by extension, by the individual

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<sup>125</sup> Several field school papers from the Chilliwack Ethnohistory Field School have been written on this topic; the papers of Davis Rogers, Colin Osmond and Chris Marsh are particularly relevant to the topic of sports and how it relates to Stó:lō leadership.

Indian Agents who travelled to S'ólh Téméxw and settled on Indigenous reserves. The most significant piece of governmental legislation that affected the Stó:lō was *the Indian Act (1876)*, which emerged from the *Gradual Civilization Act* of 1857 and the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* of 1869. The *Indian Act* was implemented and consolidated in 1876, and has since undergone multiple changes due to its numerous amendments. Indian Policy has long been assimilationist, assuming that to become functional members of Canadian society, indigenous people had to renounce their traditions and cultures. Sir John A MacDonald has for instance stated that “The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change.”<sup>126</sup> This policy thus treated Indigenous people as culturally and sociologically inferior to their colonizers, and one of the ways in which they worked with the missionaries to assimilate the people they deemed inferior to them was through a ban on potlatching, making the effective transmission of the titles necessary to the transmission of hereditary titles for Stó:lō leaders impossible.

### **Ban on Potlatching**

Potlatching was outlawed in an amendment of *the Indian Act* in 1884, and the majority of the Stó:lō opposed this ban.<sup>127</sup> The ban on the Potlatch led to difficulties of transmission of codes and titles of leadership that were necessary to the maintaining of si:yamship. This ban came to reinforce the policies implemented by the Church. In fact, the first man to be arrested following the implementation of this law was a Stó:lō man from Chilliwack named Bill Uslick.<sup>128</sup> Bill Uslick had been witnessed by an Indian Agent giving away “almost all of his wealth” in a potlatch ceremony in January 1896. As we have seen earlier, potlatching was a central pillar of Stó:lō social, ceremonial and spiritual life. With the ban on the Potlatch, it would become more difficult for the Stó:lō to practice their rites of passage, pass their names

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<sup>126</sup> John A Macdonald, 1887, cited in Erin Hanson, “the Indian Act”, *Indigenous Foundations UBC*, accessed April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018, [http://Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the\\_indian\\_act/](http://Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_indian_act/).

<sup>127</sup> Several chiefs, including Pierre Ayessik, signed a petition asking for a ban on Potlatching. Ayessik’s reasons for doing so are unclear. It is possible that he did so out of Christian conviction, but it is also possible that he was in favor of the ban to protect Stó:lō women. Indeed, after the beginning of the Gold Rush, some Indigenous women from the West Coast were sold as sex workers to white men in an attempt for lower class individuals to afford potlatching, and thus achieve a higher status. Some of these women ended up contracting diseases and passing away. Some evidence for this can be found in Lutz, *Makúk*, 179-181. To read the petition, see Carlson, *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Atlas*, 183.

<sup>128</sup> Carlson, *You are Asked to Witness*, 99.



publicly from one generation to the next, celebrate the achievements of the members of their societies, redistribute their wealth, maintain their families' prestige, get married according to their traditions and share their *sxwoxwiyam* (myth-age history) and *sqwelqwel* (true news from recent ancestors). All these elements were crucial to ensure the designation of suitable successors to current *si:yam*.

### **Reserve Policy**

The Indian Act also forced indigenous people to move to reserves, which affected Stó:lō notions of Place, ability to maintain their ancestral practices, benefit from their natural resources, and maintain their connections to one another. Prior to the creation of the *Indian Act*, Stó:lō territory was perceived as a star-shaped world interconnected by rivers, trails, and by *spiritual tunnels*, with the Fraser watershed acting as a form of supra-tribal identity.<sup>129</sup> The land simultaneously possessed and conveyed a sacred meaning through places of power: mountains, rivers and stones all had stories linking their origins to shamans, women, men and powerful beings.<sup>130</sup> For instance, Patricia John shared with me that it is from logging in the mountains that Ron obtained his spirituality.<sup>131</sup> Despite the existence of inter-tribal conflicts, families had specific property ties to fishing spots along the Fraser canyon, which were passed down matrilineally from generation to generation. Although Governor James Douglas had attempted to protect Indian lands from encroachment, for instance by arranging 14 treaties with Vancouver Island Chiefs between 1850 and 1851, Joseph Trutch, chief commissioner of lands and works, “determined the limits of reserves by the needs of competing others”, and thus restricted areas reserved for Native people to only ten acres per person. By 1867, the Stó:lō reserves were reduced by 92%.<sup>132</sup> Coupled with the influence of Christian missionaries, the reserve policy had the effect of forcing Stó:lō people out of their Long Houses, and into smaller, nuclear families houses, causing deep social changes.

The encroachment of settlers on Stó:lō lands was further impacted by a tragic loss of salmon as a consequence of the construction of the Canadian National Railway in the summer of 1913, and by the drainage of Lake Sumas in the 1920s to create farming opportunities for

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<sup>129</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 37-57.

<sup>130</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 7-34.

<sup>131</sup> Patricia John, *Interview with author*, January 2018.

<sup>132</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 175.

returning WW1 veterans, which we will explore in further detail in the second chapter. However, the best agricultural lands were saved for Xwelitem, while the Stó:lō had to log down forests and had but very little access to farmable lands.<sup>133</sup> These created significant obstacles that Stó:lō leaders had to negotiate, while at the same time, the Indian Act worked to in ways to compromise their powers. Indeed, another provision of the *Indian Act* implemented democratic elections on reserves, creating another type of Chiefs: Indian Act Chiefs. These democratic elections would be held every two years; the short length of the mandates of chiefs would make it difficult for leaders to introduce and implement long-term initiatives to improve the future of their communities. The introduction of democratic elections on Indian reserves also sparked tensions and divides on reserves. Chief Douglas, from Cheam, explained that some people among the Stó:lō felt marginalized by the selection process and the governing system, and that even the more hereditary and custom communities could not function in a way consistent enough with pre-contact traditions.<sup>134</sup> For instance, conflicts between the Stó:lō Tribal Council and Stó:lō Nation resulted in extreme difficulties to solve conflicts in ways coherent to Stó:lō pre-colonial leadership. The reserve policy and implementation of band elections thus caused lasting consequences for Stó:lō leadership by creating tensions and divides within different families and segments of Stó:lō societies, and pushing the Stó:lō to lands where they faced significant difficulties to survive, thus creating new and complex challenges for Stó:lō leaders to face in a context where their leadership was already significantly undermined.

### **Other Ways in Which Early Indian Polices Affected Stó:lō Leadership**

The *Indian Act* also created divisions in Stó:lō society and leadership by differentiating between Indigenous people having *Indian Status*, and those exempt from it. Until 1985, Indian women who married non-Indigenous men lost their status, and consequently also lost their right to live on reserve, be buried on reserve, maintain their rights to education, and share their status with their children. Similarly, as we will see in Chapter 2, the men who served in the Great War would lose their Indian status and become “enfranchised”. This further contributed to a loss of population – on the papers of the Indian Agents -, thus diminishing the power of the

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<sup>133</sup> Ayessik, *Petition to Lieutenant-Colonel Powell*, 10-11.

<sup>134</sup> Carlson, “Familial Cohesion and Colonial Atomization”, 1-42.

Stó:lō and their abilities to react to the racist policies of the Department of Indian Affairs.<sup>135</sup> Along with Indian Status, came band memberships, which assigned each Stó:lō person to a specific reserve, thus limiting their mobility, ability to visit relatives, freely move across their territory to enjoy their natural resources.<sup>136</sup> A striking recent example of the legacy of tribal conflicts created by the Indian Act is the Stó:lō-Yale conflict: the *Indian Act*'s subsequent creation of bands and elected chiefs created inter-tribal conflicts between communities fighting for lands and resources. This further worsened the capacity of Stó:lō to track their belonging to family lines of si:yam, and made descendants of si:yam unable to rise in leadership.

Not directly caused by Indian Policy but still a result of decisions made on a federal level, the creation of the border between the US and Canada following the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel arbitrarily separated cohesive indigenous groups in administrative groups that was not coherent with their notions of nationhood and cultural identities. From then onward, despite logistic and administrative difficulties caused by the invented border and customs, indigenous groups across the border kept influencing each other in ways coherent with trans-border indigenous identities.<sup>137</sup> This is also true for the Stó:lō, who have frequently cooperated with other Coast Salish groups according to the Coast Salish supra-tribal identity discussed at the beginning of this chapter, such as the Quinault First Nation, where Patricia is from. Stó:lō leaders would then have to adapt to this new artificial boundary to maintain ties to other Coast Salish groups.

## CONCLUSION: THE 1906 DELEGATION

The assimilationist mind frame enforced and implemented by the *Indian Act*, politicians and missionaries took many forms, and had profound and often unanticipated impacts on the way Stó:lō people exercised leadership. The missionaries' and Indian Agents' goal was explicitly to undermine the Stó:lō leaders they could not co-opt to further their assimilation agendas. They did so by attempting to use strategies of mimicry and by creating new avenues for lower class individuals who embraced their cause to "achieve" the status they aspired to

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<sup>135</sup> Carlson, "Familial Cohesion and Colonial Atomization", 24.

<sup>136</sup> Carlson, "Familial Cohesion and Colonial Atomization", 19.

<sup>137</sup> King, "Borders", 1163-71.

instead of being subjected to “hereditary” status, limited by their ancestry line, family history and social class.

In this changing historical context increasingly affected by settler colonialism, Stó:lō leaders were far from being passive victims of the *Indian Act*. Rather, they were actors of change who reacted in different ways to the presence and actions of the colonizers. Historical examples of leadership shed light on the principals that informed siya:m and leadership in a modern context. For instance, Stó:lō chiefs allied themselves to other British Columbia Chiefs to protest the colonization of their lands and the assimilationist policies of the Canadian government. In 1872 in New Westminster, a rally of Upper Stó:lō Chiefs protested the loss of their lands; in 1874, they organized an assembly of Chiefs who wrote and brought their grievances to Israel Powel, Indian Commissioner at the time.<sup>138</sup>

In 1906, a delegation of Coast Salish chiefs traveled to London to speak to King Edward VII to hold the Canadian and British Columbia governments accountable for promises made earlier by the British Crown through the governor of British Columbia at the time, James Douglas. The delegation was comprised of three Salish Chiefs: Cowichan Chief Charlie Isipaymilt, Squamish Chief Joe Capilano and Shuswap Chief Basil David, who were accompanied by their Stó:lō translator, Simon Pierre. They sought to affirm their political presence, repeal the ban on the potlatch and hunting regulations imposed on BC First Nations, and obtain the recognition of their Aboriginal Rights and better access to their resources. The movement was ultimately unsuccessful, but it marked not only the beginning of modern BC Indigenous Organizations. It also demonstrated how Stó:lō leaders using colonial tools to advance their own political agenda. Stó:lō leaders entered the 21st century as having learnt to use the colonizers’ tools (the written language, the use of the media, and authority as Church chiefs to gain influence and recognition) as complements to their own skills, in order to fulfill the roles si:yam were expected to play. As skilled diplomats, Stó:lō si:yam of the time proved that they had the ability to navigate both the western and the Stó:lō worlds, and that they were ready to travel internationally to solve international conflicts with the Canadian Government.

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<sup>138</sup> Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 23.

Although their fifteen minutes encounter with the King ultimately proved unsuccessful in that it did not lead to any concrete measures by the Crown to reinforce these earlier promises, the meeting marked the beginning of new avenues for Salish leaders to affirm their visions, goals and ambitions for their peoples. After their return to S'ólh Téméxw, the Chiefs, particularly Chief Capilano, engaged in numerous visits to various BC First Nations to share reports of their meeting with the King. These talks between leaders of BC First Nations gradually revealed the need for more formal intertribal alliances in order to negotiate with western structures of power and assert their rights to the land they had been living on since time immemorial. In 1909, an assembly in Victoria, mostly held by Coast Salish leaders, created the Indian Rights Organization. Yet, at the dawn of the First World War, the Conservative federal government chose to create a Royal Commission to examine the issue of Indian reserve lands. This led to a final phase of “outright land appropriation”, which resulted in the loss of 47000 acres for Indigenous people living in southern British Columbia.<sup>139</sup>

With time, BC and US based Indigenous organizations came to influence what leadership meant for the Coast Salish, and these movements were in turn, heavily influenced by Coast Salish notions of leadership. These tensions between pre-colonial notions of leadership, the cultural genocide perpetrated by Xwelitem and colonial concepts of Church Chief and Indian Act Chief became the background for two wars that would have an important impact on Stó:lō leadership. The First World War brought a series of changes to Stó:lō leadership, including veteran demanded progressive amendments to *the Indian Act* and the recognition of the role played by Stó:lō veterans. How did Coast Salish structures of power change as a result of the two World Wars?

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<sup>139</sup> Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 23.

## CHAPTER 2

### AMBIVALENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS WESTERN SETTLER COLONIALISM AND MODERNITY: OBSTACLES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR STÓ:LŦ LEADERSHIP FROM 1906 TO 1973

#### INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented some of the major characteristics and definitions of early Stó:lŦ leadership and outlined some of the major pre-twentieth century events that shaped or affected it, such as the implementation of the *Indian Act* in 1876 and the religious colonization of S'ólh Téméxw by Christian missionaries. This chapter focuses on the period between 1906 (the year of the King's Delegation to London mentioned above) and 1973, which was not only the year preceding Ron John's "Coming Home" and George Manuel's publication of "the Fourth World", but also the same year as the Occupation of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement. The chapter explores the foundational years of Ron John's life, who grew up in the forties and fifties, and came to age in the sixties, amidst the rise of civil rights movements and the height of the Sixties Scoop. These foundational years help contextualize the political choices he made after he was elected Chief of Chawathil First Nation in 1977.

This chapter argues that Stó:lŦ leadership in that time period was in large part focused on the negotiating of a societal ambivalence with western settler colonialism and modernity. During this time period marked by the rise of civil rights movements and by an economic, cultural and technological globalization, Stó:lŦ leaders chose to draw from tradition while also engaging modernity and colonial institutions. After exploring the intricacies of Stó:lŦ leaders' decisions in the aftermath of the conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century, this chapter analyzes how Stó:lŦ leaders, building on the achievements of the 1906 delegation and the rise of civil rights movements, created modern Stó:lŦ political organizations. The last section of this chapter presents the foundational years of Patricia and Ron John and describes their early leadership experiences that would shape their future leadership choices, such as Ron's experiences helping

elders, spending time in the forest and taking control of his own destiny by running away after his experience in residential school.

## COMING HOME: STÓ:LŦ LEADERSHIP AND THE GLOBAL CONFLICTS OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

### **Stó:lŦ Leadership in the World Wars**

Due to governmental policies, Indigenous people were not allowed to volunteer during the first half of the Great War, so only indigenous people who had become disenfranchised – who had abandoned or had lost their Indian status to become citizens - were able to volunteer, and they did so en masse.<sup>140</sup> By 1915, Indigenous men became allowed to volunteer in the war, but since Status Indians were exempted from the war, only those willing to fight joined the ranks. Stó:lŦ soldiers such as Wesley Sam, Charlie Fisher, Harold Wells and others distinguished themselves during the Great War. When World War Two was declared, thinking that the exemptions from WWI would apply, numerous indigenous people felt betrayed by the Canadian government when they realized that this would no longer be the case.

In addition to the Stó:lŦ experiencing the Great War differently from other indigenous groups due to their own cultural specificities and colonial history, their experience of its aftermath was similarly defined by the characteristics of their leadership, culture and colonial experience. In the previous chapter, we saw that Stó:lŦ society made a distinction between si:yam, respected and diplomatic leaders relying on their wisdom, connections, prestige and wealth to lead, whereas stoméx were aggressive warriors who came to be less respected as the need for aggressive warriors diminished after the coastal raids came to a stop. This led to difficult situations for the Stó:lŦ who volunteered in the major conflicts of the twentieth century. Since Stó:lŦ culture historically had an ambivalent attitude towards warrior culture, Stó:lŦ soldiers had to compromise their values to be respected by their Canadian peers, but would often

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<sup>140</sup> Carlson, *You Are Asked to Witness*, 128.

feel isolated when they came back to their home communities.<sup>141</sup> By the 1945's, "stoméx warriors no longer had a respectable place within Stó:lō society". However, if stoméx were still held as a respectable role in Stó:lō society, Stó:lō veterans would have been treated with a greater understanding and consideration when they came home, and returned to positions of power and responsibility, instead of being treated as outcasts and being pushed to the margins of Stó:lō society. Patricia provided a chilling assessment of the situation of Stó:lō veterans when they came home to Chawathil, comparing their treatment to the one experienced by returning Vietnam veterans:

“[...] those veterans that served, they came home to the most shocking treatment. They couldn't shop in town. They couldn't believe (...) their families, even going down in Chilliwack and here buying groceries. It was at a point when the people themselves didn't like what the government was doing, and they weren't agreeing to that difference of natives and non-natives, and they were putting food out, and they knew the natives were going hungry, that they weren't being treated right, so they were putting baskets of food down so they could take care of their families. It was terrible. And that was the reality of the post-war time, post World War Two. I think it was like when Vietnam vets had come home, I think you can make the same equivalent impacts and put that on Red Man, put that on the indigenous communities and families, you know the whole reprimand.<sup>142</sup>

Having to reconcile conflicting notions of leadership was not the only difficulty faced by returning Stó:lō veterans: at the time, the *Indian Act* contained several assimilation measures affecting indigenous veterans. The *Indian Act* of 1876 contained provisions of compulsory enfranchisement for indigenous soldiers having served in the Canadian Armed Forces, despite few indigenous people being willing to give up the rights guaranteed by their Indian status.<sup>143</sup> As a result from the large numbers of band members being forced to give up their status by their personal circumstances, factors outside of their control and/or governmental pressure, tensions arose within Stó:lō communities, exacerbating tensions created by the introduction of the band membership system.<sup>144</sup> Similarly to the other soldiers who fought in the Great War, Stó:lō soldiers also suffered from shell shock, shrapnel wounds and other physical and mental traumas caused by the atrocities of the Great War. When prompted about the impact the conflicts of the twentieth century had on Stó:lō leadership, Grand Chief Clarence (Kat) Pennier made the following assessment:

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<sup>141</sup> Carlson, *You are Asked to Witness*, 133-134.

<sup>142</sup> Patricia John, *Interview by author*, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>143</sup> See Manuel, *Unsettling Canada*, 23-24.

<sup>144</sup> Carlson, *You Are Asked to Witness*, 128-136.



Well, you know, our people, whether they went to war in the first, the second, it separated them to their families. And when they returned to their families, probably there would be not much communication about what happened over there or what happened over there, and it created I guess... alcohol is there in the people, same as in the residential school process. It created a lot of alcoholics 'cause we wanted to drown our sorrows and forget what happened to us. It had a great big effect on our social life and created violence against women and our families and all that kind of stuff. So, you know, it did have an impact on us. I guess it went about the last 30, 40 years ago, when we started honoring our veterans by putting a cenotaph over there in Coqualeetza and having an annual gathering recognizing all the ones that went and served the country.<sup>145</sup>

This assessment by Grand Chief Kat Pennier illustrates the magnitude of the impact both World Wars had on the Stó:lō people, which exacerbated the intergenerational gap created by residential schools and the various traumas caused by centuries of colonialism. The two World Wars amplified the effects British and French colonialisms had on Indigenous people. However, compared to Sea Bird Island, one of the major Stó:lō reserves on the Fraser, few of the band members of Chawathil First Nation took part in the wars:<sup>146</sup>

I don't think that change happened. Because back in those days, we were completely isolated here, so [we] weren't aware of many things that were talked about or acted upon outside the reserve. We were pretty well locked in here.

Based on this assessment by Grand Chief Ron John, Chawathil First Nation seems to stand out as somewhat of a statistical outlier from the main narrative of returning indigenous veterans becoming political leaders when they came home from the war. P.D Peters was disabled and already of a certain age when Canada became involved in the Great War, and Ron John was too young to take part in the Second World War. As a result, they did not become leaders as a result of their military involvement, although both leaders had to face the federal government's inability to assist indigenous veterans' return to a suitable life after the wars ended. On the contrary, not having been involved in an armed conflict may have played in their favour, since they would not have had to compromise the values of a si:yam by becoming soldiers. Indeed, by not having fought in the war, they did not risk being associated with the negative characteristics attached to the notion of stéxem. Being cleared from this association and stigma, it would make it easier for them to display qualities traditionally associated with si:yam and build their leadership from there. However, both John and Peters had to find ways to face the consequences

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<sup>145</sup> Grand Chief Clarence (Kat) Pennier, *Interview by author*, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018.

<sup>146</sup> Ron John, *Interview by author*, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

the interwar period, continuing assimilationist policies and WW2 brought to Chawathil First Nation.

### **Aftermath of the Wars, and Veterans' Struggles**

On a national scale, Indian policy during the 1920s was largely driven by assimilationist ideologies.<sup>147</sup> Attendance of residential schools was made mandatory, and the *Indian Act* now included a provision stating that Status Indians were not allowed to raise money or hire a lawyer to pursue land claims.<sup>148</sup> This new provision would make it increasingly difficult for Stó:lō leaders to assert their claims to their ancestral homeland. The federal government policies of the interwar period also led to the drainage of Sumas Lake, a lake that carries a strong spiritual importance for the Stó:lō. Si:yam take their spiritual power from places of power such as Sumas Lake, and with the destruction of this lake also came a loss for Stó:lō leadership, for generations to come.<sup>149</sup> While the Stó:lō had to face the loss of the lake, they did not get any benefit from the newly obtained farmland: the majority of veterans who benefited from this measure and obtained the newly drained lands were Xwelitem. This event tragically echoes the petition written by Ron John's ancestor Pierre Ayessik to the governor general on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1874, in which he lamented the irony of the Xwelitem having forced the Stó:lō into residential schools to teach them agriculture, for later leaving them no farmable land and pushing them to heavily timbered forest, leaving them unable to cultivate any crops, making them dependent on their white neighbors for food.

During the immediate postwar years, returning indigenous veterans had to spend time readjusting to civilian life and coping with the trauma they faced on the front in communities that were frequently ill-informed about the reality faced by soldiers in Europe and Asia. Some veterans also chose to spend some time outside of their home communities. During the 1950s however, veterans had more of an opportunity to get involved politically in and outside of their home communities. In addition to being confronted to the stigma associated with stéxem preventing them from accessing positions of leadership upon their return, Stó:lō veterans also

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<sup>147</sup> Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, 298.

<sup>148</sup> First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), "1920-1927 Indian Act Becomes More Restrictive", <http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/IRSR11-12-DE-1920-1927.pdf>.

<sup>149</sup> Laura Weylick, Stó:lō Ethnohistory Field School, 2017.

had to deal with major difficulties in obtaining their veteran benefits, which made their return to civilian life even more difficult.<sup>150</sup>

## THE RISE OF POLITICAL INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES: INDIGENOUS RENAISSANCE, DECOLONIZATION AND CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

### **Social Context of the 1960s and Indigenous Renaissance**

While the challenges (and opportunities) associated with modernity and settler colonialism in the twentieth century did contribute to the mobilization and organization of indigenous people into modern political organizations, it has also been argued that “very few [indigenous] organizations owe their formation to returning Aboriginal veterans”.<sup>151</sup> As we have seen, these events encouraged greater cooperation between different nations who previously had conflicts. The first such organization in Canada, the League of Indians in Canada (LIC), was created by Mohawk veteran Fred Ogilvie Loft in 1918 in order to grant indigenous people the possibility to vote without becoming enfranchised and regaining control over bands’ finances and lands.<sup>152</sup> In addition to the wars, during the time period that later came to be known as the Aboriginal Renaissance (1960-1980s),<sup>153</sup> the history behind the gradual organization of Canadian indigenous groups into activist political organizations became greatly intertwined with similar movements in the United States, and both carried influences from international civil rights and decolonization movements, including the Black Power Movement, Yellow Power Movement, Chicano Movements, as well as second wave feminism. The 1960s, sometimes referred to as “the Indigenous Renaissance” – marked a turning point for Indigenous People in both the United States and in Canada due to a constantly growing body of Indigenous literature and political

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<sup>150</sup> Carlson, *You Are Asked to Witness*, 132-134.

<sup>151</sup> Robert Innes, 2004. “‘I’m On Home Ground Now. I’m Safe’: Saskatchewan Aboriginal Veterans in the Immediate Postwar Years, 1945-1946.” *The American Indian Quarterly* 28 (3 and 4): 685–718, *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/aiq.2004.0098.

<sup>152</sup> Dickason, *Canada’s First Nations*, 299.

<sup>153</sup> The concept of “Aboriginal Renaissance” was coined by either Vine Deloria Jr or Kenneth Lincoln, depending on the sources. It is important to note that the term of “Aboriginal Renaissance” is problematic, as it conveys the idea that Indigenous cultures were dead prior to these decades, while Indigenous literatures simply started to be known by a wider audience when Indigenous authors started using the printed word as a new source of literary transmission beyond oral tradition.

actions from indigenous groups. At the time, tensions between the US government and Indigenous groups came to a turning point, which resulted in the shift from the Termination Policy (aimed to assimilate indigenous groups) to the Self-Determination and Relocation Policy.

### **Impact of the Red Power Movement on Canadian Indigenous Organizations**

In the late fifties and early sixties Stó:lō leadership was still dealing with the negotiations of the challenges brought by the reserve policy, the *Indian Act* and the aftermath of the Second World War. Several segments of Stó:lō society were growing increasingly discontent with the Federal and Provincial Governments; meanwhile, further south, in the United States, indigenous people started coming together to counter the assimilationist policies of the US government, thus progressively paving the way for pan-Indianist ideologies to start developing. The Red Power Movement (RPM) emerged during the 1960s, and was influenced by other Civil Rights Movements in the United States, such as the Black Power Movement, the Yellow Power Movement, and the Chicano Movement. The RPM used to encompass several US Indigenous organizations, including the American Indian Movement (AIM), calling for more rights and greater self-determination for US indigenous people. Contrary to other civil rights movements, it did not only use peaceful methods such as sit-ins, as its members sometimes engaged in civil disobedience and confrontational techniques, for instance during the occupation of Alcatraz (1969-1971) and the occupation of Wounded Knee (1973). Prominent Indigenous leaders who distinguished themselves within the AIM were Sacheen LittleFeather and Russell Means. During the 45th Academy Awards of 1973, Sacheen LittleFeather refused Marlon Brando's Oscar in his name, after the actor had decided to reject the award due to the Wounded Knee Incident and the treatment of Native Americans in the film industry.<sup>154</sup> Unfortunately, LittleFeather was only given a single minute to give her speech, so she had to give a press conference afterwards. In Canada, Mohawk activist Richard Oakes played a central role in the American Indian Movement.

But another technique used by the AIM was its use of the media. Journalistic mediums had known major developments during the first half of the twentieth century, thanks in part to inventions such as the radio (1894), the television (1927). Indigenous leaders frequently chose to

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<sup>154</sup> Neil Diamond, Catherine Bainbridge, and Jeremiah Hayes, *Reel Injun*, 2009. Documentary.

use the media strategically, while simultaneously denouncing the impacts of stereotypical depictions of indigenous people in mainstream media. By creating largely publicized events, leaders from the AIM were able to draw attention and support to their cause, a technique that would become popular among other indigenous movements, including the ones from BC, as can be seen with the example of Gustafsen Lake.<sup>155</sup> The next chapter will show how later leaders like Ron and Pat chose the media as a strategy to spread awareness to the issues faced by the Chawathil community, and to protest some of the government's actions. Arthur Manuel, the son of famous activist George Manuel (1921-1989), beautifully summarized the influence the American Indian Movement and anti-colonial literature would come to have on his generation:

“While my father and his generation were working with the National Indian Brotherhood, my generation was pursuing the struggle in our own way. Many of us were steeped in the radicalism of the day; the writings of anti-colonial activists from around the world drew us in with their calls for an end to world domination for the white race. Native youth of my generation were also profoundly affected by the rise of the American Indian Movement in the United States. AIM provided a kind of romantic outlaw image that was irresistible to younger people.”<sup>156</sup>

Arthur was born in 1951. It is possible – perhaps even likely – for this “romantic outlaw image” to have originated in the clichés used in Hollywoodian cinema. This would mean that leaders of the AIM and other similar movements would have reclaimed these colonial depictions. Beyond grassroots activism, the Aboriginal Renaissance was also an intellectual movement, which built upon global decolonization and postcolonial literatures during and after the decolonization process of African and Asian nations between 1945 and 1960, in part building on the writings of thinkers such as Vine Deloria Jr, whose books *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* and *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, became influential for indigenous activists of since generation.

### **The Influence of Second-Wave Feminism on Stó:lō Leadership**

Another movement within the Civil Rights Movement that influenced indigenous leadership at the time was second-wave feminism. Indigenous women such as Rose Charlie, who was among the founders of the Indian Homemaker Association of BC, author Maria Campbell,

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<sup>155</sup> Although it was outside the scope of my analysis, more information can be found in Sandra Lambertus, *Wartime Images, Peacetime Wounds: The Media and the Gustafsen Lake Standoff*, 2004.

<sup>156</sup> Manuel, *Unsettling Canada*, 38.

May Two-Axe Earley, Nellie Carlson of Saddle Lake, Sandra Lovelace<sup>157</sup>, Jenny Margetts and Monica Turner, all carried a significant impact in the following decades, and carried an influence with female Stó:lō leaders as well, as can be seen through the foundation of the BC Indian Homemakers' Association in 1969. In S'ólh Téméxw, women started being able to operationalize the title of "si:yam," which was most frequently granted to men in the sphere of politics typically dominated by males. Evangéline Pete, Grand Chief Ron John's relative, became one of these female Stó:lō leaders to gain this recognition.<sup>158</sup> Since women were crucial to the maintaining of inter-tribal ties across the communities of the Fraser Valley prior to colonization, this "feminine factor" represented both a continuation with pre-contact Coast Salish female leadership roles, while also benefiting from a Northwest Coast cultural exchange, as northern groups such as the Tsimshian and Haida opposed patrilineal and patriarchal notions imposed by *the Indian Act* by reclaiming the legitimacy of their matrilineal descent systems.<sup>159</sup> While the several feminist waves have sometimes faced criticism among indigenous activist groups (for instance due to a lack of intersectionality in the first two waves), women becoming able to run for council and vote encouraged indigenous women to assume positions of leadership. For instance, the late chief from Chawathil Peter Dennis Peters explained how Pierre Ayessik's daughter, Adelina Lorenzetto took on his business after he became too old to work.<sup>160</sup> Overall, the rise of second-wave feminism in Stó:lō communities led to more formalized political roles for women, who started (or perhaps resumed?) being able to achieve the status of si:yam in parallel to women being able to run for Chief in band council elections, marking fluctuations in gender and leadership roles in Stó:lō communities during this time period.

### **Genesis of the Allied Tribes of BC**

In British Columbia, the first major indigenous rights organization was created in 1915, just one year after the beginning of the Great War, under the influence of Haida leader Peter Kelly, and Squamish leader Andrew Paull, who was from Vancouver. Their organization, named the Allied Tribes of British Columbia (ATBC), aimed to pursue aboriginal land claims in BC and

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<sup>157</sup> Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, 303.

<sup>158</sup> Amoss, *Remembering the Sacred Time of Elders*, 28-29.

<sup>159</sup> It must be noted that while most Northwest Coast descent systems were matrilineal in nature, they can still be qualified of patrilineal, as political decisions were mostly made by males.

<sup>160</sup> Peters Dennis Peters, *Interview by Larry Commodore*, July 21, 1985. Interview transcripts available at the SRRMC.

to increase the size of reserves. Although this organization later dissolved, Paull would later become involved in the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, before leaving this organization and founding the North American Indian Brotherhood (NAIB) in 1948. NAIB was founded only two years after the Association of Saskatchewan Indians, an organization that was founded partly thanks to the influence of returning World War Two veterans. Ron John's predecessor at the head of Chawathil FN, Grand Chief Peter Dennis Peters, recalled how for his grandfather Dennis S. Peters, and himself, the formal meetings between BC leaders was an important part of being a chief in that age.<sup>161</sup>

### **Impact of Federal Policies on Indigenous Activism**

In 1969, Jean Chrétien and Pierre Elliott Trudeau attempted to pass an assimilation bill which later came to be known as the *White Paper* of 1969. The *White Paper* suggested a dismantlement of the Department of Indian Affairs, as well as the abolishment of Indian Status and treaties. This bill caused a massive outrage among Canadian indigenous groups, as it was perceived as yet another attempt to assimilate indigenous people into western Canadian society. The following year, Harold Cardinal, president of the Indian Association of Alberta, wrote the influential book that later came to be known as the Red Paper: *the Unjust Society*, which called for the end of assimilationist policies in Canada.<sup>162</sup> The ideas expressed in *The Unjust Society* sparked the creation of several indigenous advocacy groups throughout the nation. In British Columbia, these advocacy groups materialized with the radicalization and the politicization of the BC Indian Homemakers' Association, and the creation of the Union of British Columbia Chiefs (UBCIC).<sup>163</sup> Grand Chief Peter Dennis Peters (1912-1994), Ron's predecessor at the head of the Chawathil Band Council, was one of the founding members of the latter organization, thus creating a stepping ladder for the voice of the people of Chawathil to be heard. These groups were then able to pressure the local provincial government to negotiate and sign modern land treaties in British Columbia, which later became known as the BC Treaty Process. Indeed, the Government of the Colony of British Columbia had failed to sign treaties with local indigenous groups, maintaining a status quo making it difficult for the Stó:lō to access berry picking sites, as well as traditional fishing and hunting grounds. As these were crucial activities for si:yam to

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<sup>161</sup> Peter Dennis Peters, *Interview with Larry Commodore*, 1985. Interview transcripts available at SRRMC.

<sup>162</sup> Cardinal, *The Unjust Society*, 146 pp.

<sup>163</sup> For information on the creation of the UBCIC, see Nickel, *Assembling Unity*, 2019.

fulfill their role of task masters and providers, this undermined their ability for their to maintain and affirm their leadership. Confronted with these challenges, Stó:lō leaders decided to join forces amongst themselves and with other BC First Nations Chiefs, and created the first modern BC Indigenous Organizations in an attempt to oppose these assimilation policies.

### **Genesis of Modern Stó:lō Political Organizations and their Evolution**

Modern Stó:lō Political Organizations provide interesting insights on the evolution of Stó:lō leadership in the second half of the twentieth century. The contemporary pan-tribal Stó:lō political organizations emerged from a backlash against the Federal Government's *White Paper* policy in 1969.<sup>164</sup> As a result of the gradual organization of modern Stó:lō organizations, in 1977, 24 Stó:lō governments signed the Stó:lō Declaration; eighteen years later, 21 of them would later enter the British Columbia Treaty Process as Stó:lō Nation. Two main organizations emerged as a result of the White Paper Policy: the Fraser East District Council (FEDC) and the Chilliwack Area Indian Council (CAIC),<sup>165</sup> which later became today's two main Stó:lō political organizations: Stó:lō Nation Canada (SNC), and Stó:lō Tribal Council (STC), to which Chawathil FN belongs. These organizations are responsible to deliver administrative, health and cultural services to the first nations they represent, and they act as the main entities representing the Stó:lō in the BC Treaty Process. The SNC and STC have a history of merging into one entity then separating during political disagreements, testifying both to a certain flexibility and continuation of the centralization/decentralization continuum described in Chapter One, but also to the divisive aspect of colonialism, which created tensions between the communities as a continuation of the "divide and conquer technique".

The War Council, a political entity made of respected leaders and si:yam, stands out as an interesting organization that evolved from early notions of Stó:lō leadership, most likely from the time when stéxem were still considered prominent leaders with an important role, while paradoxically having evolved in a way that has very little to do with actual warfare, according to Grand Chief Ron John, who used to be Grand Chief of the WC. The War Council appears to have been primarily a negotiating entity used as a last resort when all other means of negotiation

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<sup>164</sup> Carlson, *the Power of Place*, 13-17

<sup>165</sup> Martin Hoffman, "A Meeting of the Minds': Stó:lō Political History, 1969-1989", Ethnohistory Field School Paper, 2011, retrieved online from [http://web.uvic.ca/stolo/pdf/Hoffman\\_Political\\_History\\_2011.pdf](http://web.uvic.ca/stolo/pdf/Hoffman_Political_History_2011.pdf), 3.



with the federal and provincial levels of government have failed, for instance when the Stó:lō decided to communicate their discontent with the Yale Treaty.<sup>166</sup> According to *Chilliwack Progress* articles and to my conversations with Patricia and Ron John, some of the leadership techniques used by the War Council included direct action, large protests and civil disobedience. However, Patricia and Ron were understandingly reluctant to share too much information on the War Council. This can be explained by the importance for the Stó:lō to protect a central organization with a sensitive mandate from being undermined by settler actions, which as we have seen, had proved to be very corrosive of Stó:lō leadership practices and values throughout BC history. In any case, the War Council appears to be a hybrid structure that blended elements of political leadership and elements of warrior attitudes from larger Pan-Indian movements, thus reconciling to an extent the separation of roles between si:yam and stéxem from earlier Stó:lō governance structures as a strategy to more effectively address the issues posed by settler colonialism.

Modern Stó:lō organizations testify to the resilience and adaptability of Stó:lō leaders in the face of colonialism. While they emerged primarily as a reaction against Federal policies such as the White Paper and had to fit within the systems implemented by the Indian and the Reserve Policy, they mostly built upon earlier, pre-contact Stó:lō modes, structures and systems of governance. Within this context, Si:yam, Church and Indian Act Chiefs are able to come together when needed to serve their Stó:lō communities and find direct solutions when other types of negotiations fail.

## **Conclusion**

This era saw the emergence of a new generation of leaders who had experience with the intellectual and political tools and structures of the colonizers, were steeped in their own traditional cultural leadership traditions, were inspired by decolonizing and civil rights movements elsewhere, and were transformed by second wave feminism that opened opportunities for female voices that had earlier been too often relegated to the margins. These

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<sup>166</sup> Jennifer Feinberg, “United Stó:lō call for war council”, *Mission City Record*, Nov. 30, 2011, retrieved online from <https://www.missioncityrecord.com/news/united-stolo-call-for-war-council/>.

indigenous organizations channelled indigenous frustrations with the treatment they received from the Canadian state and society.

The ideals and visions expressed by the leaders of these social and cultural movements not only led to the creation of modern political organizations in British Columbia, but they also largely informed how Stó:lō leaders perceived western cultures, technologies and economies as corrosive of their own. But it appears that these reasonable concerns are also mitigated by the pressing needs to maintain a competitive edge in a competitive political environment, leading to a certain ambivalence of attitudes towards these elements of western cultures and their impacts on Stó:lō culture, society and leadership. It is in this context that Patricia and Ron came of age: respectively born in 1942 and 1937, they grew up in this changing world and came of age at the time when civil rights movements became major vectors of change. Understanding their early leadership experiences helps contextualizing the decisions they made throughout the seventies and the nineties.

#### AT THE SOURCE OF TWO WATERSHEDS: FOUNDATIONAL YEARS, 1937-1974

### **Introduction**

When asking Patricia and Ron about their stories and their leadership, they would both frequently mention Ron's "Coming home", and how important this event was to Ron's life. Coming home has been a central anchor in Ron's and Pat's lives. It appears to be comparable in importance to the central bar of Stó:lō wooden looms: throughout our interviews, the strings of their narratives frequently converged and returned to this theme. It seemed to be the main motor, the main source of energy that kept pushing them forward while bringing them back to what truly mattered to them. Clearly, this "coming home" informed many of their leadership choices. But what exactly did Ron come home to? What made possible his initial departure, and his coming home? How was Patricia able to transition so well from her community of Quinault to Chawathil? What did their leadership grow roots from, and how did it react to both Stó:lō practices and colonialism? To answer these questions, we must go back to the beginning of Ron's and Pat's life stories.

## **Ron's Ancestral and Familial Relations**

In the Coast Salish world, ancestral spirits are regarded as strongly influencing the present, and occasionally spirits from one generation are understood to be reincarnated in the present.<sup>167</sup> Patricia and Ron both believe that they have met in previous lives. When Patricia says that they have had previous lives together, and that they have long ancestries tied to the watersheds, she situates their current lives' actions in three ways: in continuation with actions from past lives, in relationship to their ancestors, and in the context of a specific environmental landscape where every mountain, stone, and river has a story. Although Patricia and Ron did not state under exactly what circumstances they met in the past, one way to understand this past meeting or reincarnation is through McHalsie's notion of "Shxweli", which, as we will see in further detail below, can be roughly translated as "ancestral connection," "spirit," or "life force".<sup>168</sup> So to understand their lives, it is necessary to keep in mind their life events are not separate from their lines of ancestors, but that they are a part of a larger net, of a larger tapestry where their ancestors' narratives, *sqwelqwel* ("true news", events that happened in the human era and involving somewhat recent ancestors) and *sxwoxwiyam* (stories of the myth age, origins and Transformers stories), are all intertwined.

In this life, Ron was the second of six children. He was born in Chawathil, BC in 1937 according to the Gregorian calendar. His great-grandfather, Pierre Ayessik, was a well-known and respected Church Chief of the Stó:lō, who was understood as coming from a prestigious lineage. As we saw in our previous chapters, Ayessik used his status as a Church Chief to act as an advocate for the Stó:lō and wrote several petitions to protect the rights of his people. Ron's mother, Evangéline Pete, was also well-respected in the community; several community members spoke eloquently of her while I interviewed them. Evangéline Pete was one of the female Stó:lō leaders who obtained the status of si:yam thanks to her wisdom and leadership. Evangéline's sister was the grand-mother of the current chief of Seabird Island, Chief Clem Seymour.

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<sup>167</sup> For explanations on Stó:lō beliefs about "shxweli", the life force/vitality/spirit/soul of people, and on reincarnation, see Old Pierre, in Diamond Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1955), edited by Wilson Duff, pp. 47 and 89.

<sup>168</sup> McHalsie, "We Have to Take Care of Everything that Belongs to Us", in Bruce Miller: *Essays on the Coast Salish*, 2009, page 103.

Ron had his first son with Freda Commodore; the child was named John (date of birth unknown).<sup>169</sup> He was later involved with a woman named Diane. In 1954, he got married to Ervina Lewis. Ervina and Ron had four children: Gloria Rose, Veronica Grace, Ronald Irving and Peggy. Ron's first wife once shot Ron in the chest allegedly by accident. Ervina tragically died in a car crash on September 18, 1960 along with two other people who were in the same car. Only Ron survived the accident. Losing his wife was a traumatic event, and being a single father to four children made his ability to provide for them a crucial necessity. This ability and responsibility to provide would in time come to reinforce his responsibilities as leader of the Stó:lō and nourish his leadership abilities.

### **Patricia's Ancestral and Familial Relations**

Patricia, who also goes by Pat and Pattie, was born in Tulalip, Washington in 1942, and raised by the sea, in the nearby town of Taholah, on the Quinault reservation, having the tides "as her teachers". During our interviews, Patricia explained that she has ancestral ties to the Columbia River, which empties into the Pacific Ocean near present-day Astoria, Oregon, just two hours' drive south of the Quinault reservation, which is where she gets her ties to the Columbia River and where her childhood teachings are based. Pat's father was a Blackfoot man from Montana. His name was Charles Owens. Her mother was Lydia Cultee, from Quinault, and she was a residential school survivor. Her great-grandfather was Charles Cultee, one of Franz Boas' informants, who also lived on the Columbia River<sup>170</sup>.

Pat was raised by her grandmother, Ancy Hyasman, an interpreter and basket weaver, who used her brothers' canoes to carry news among the Quinault people.<sup>171</sup> Ancy Hyasman was also a devout Shaker. Shakerism is a religion that emerged around 1882. This religion mixed elements of Christianity and pre-contact Indigenous beliefs and practices.<sup>172</sup> Shakerism allowed women to play important leadership roles within the Church, and it placed a strong emphasis on communality and equality of the sexes. These early experiences shaped Patricia's spirituality, her conception of gender roles and leadership beliefs and practices.

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<sup>169</sup> SSRMC Genealogy Office, *Descendant Chart for Ronald Gregory John*.

<sup>170</sup> Patricia John, *Interview by author*, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>171</sup> *Interview with Patricia John* by Koni Benson. May 26, 1998, Stó:lō Nation Office, 9:30-11:00 am.

<sup>172</sup> Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia*, 99.

Prior to marrying Ron, Patricia was married twice. She first married Jack Pallock, and had one son with him, Jason. She later married to Duane Fousie, with whom she had three children: one daughter, Tandi, and two sons Darren and Duane. Patricia did not provide an explanation as to what happened to her first two spouses during our interviews, but divorce is a possibility.

Ron comes from a very reputable lineage, and both he and Pat were raised with strong family values that placed great importance on community relations. These community relations would play an important role in Ron's early experiences of leadership as we will see in the next section.

### **Ron's Early Leadership Experiences: From Escaping a Residential School to Becoming a Successful Logger, Hunter and Trapper**

During his youth, Ron spent a lot of time helping Elders, doing special chores for them such as splitting firewood, or packing and carrying their groceries.<sup>173</sup> These chores were some of his earliest memories of his childhood in Chawathil, and they played an important role in teaching him the importance of respecting one's Elders and community members. Throughout our interviews, Ron would frequently mention that his leadership choices were based on "doing good for the people", which seems to indicate these early experiences assisting others laid a strong foundation for his future leadership philosophy. Ron's leadership philosophy is also influenced by the time Ron spent in residential school. To contextualize Ron's experience in residential school, it is essential to briefly remind the reader the purpose of these schools and the impact they had on Indigenous communities.

Residential schools are perhaps the most significant factor brought by Christian missionaries that worked to shape the way leadership was understood and expressed in Stó:lō society. There were two main residential schools that Stó:lō children were forced to attend: St. Mary, a Catholic school located in Mission, BC, which was founded by Oblate Florimond Gendre in 1863 and closed in 1986, and Coqualeetza, run by the Methodists in Sardis. Children were sometimes sent to other places far from their homelands in Alberni, Kamloops, Kuper Island, Lytton and Sechelt. Like elsewhere in Canada, the children who attended the residential schools in Mission, Sardis and other British Columbia town were victims of terrible mental, emotional,

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<sup>173</sup> Patricia John, *Stalo Nation News*, June 1977, number 21.

physical and sexual abuses. Grand Chief Ron John, as a pupil of St Mary's residential school, witnessed these events:

Oh... It affected me so darn bad, I couldn't continue on with my education. I left school two times. The last time I came out, I refused to go back, and that's when I took off to the States. I was only twelve years old. The school, to me, was very racist, and very offensive to kids. I've seen children get almost sexually molested. They would, um... I've seen the leaders come behind him and rubbing their stuff against him, you know, and doing things like that. And I've seen them take children into their room and closing the door, and we don't know what happened back there, but it seems likely they were getting molested too. So, schools, I hated the schools for all the things I'd seen happen, and I couldn't continue on with my education. So that's when I left school, I went, I took off, I was only twelve years old, I went to Vancouver and caught a train to Seattle. And I went working down there, and I was only twelve. So, schools are a bad memory to me.

Looking at the types of individuals who led these schools – thus providing a model to their young pupils of what a leader should be - the content of textbooks used at the time, and the leadership skills taught to the students provide a portrait of the type of leadership the schools' administrations sought to imprint on indigenous children. For instance, the principal who ran St Mary at the time Ron John attended it, Father John Hennessy, is a telling example of the type of leader young pupils were expected to follow. He was a celibate priest for whom the biggest sins were gambling, drinking, and eating meat on Fridays, and who, by his own admittance, knew very little about native cultures, traditions, and practices. Some students did recall positive experiences. However, physical punishments and humiliation of children who spoke their languages or “misbehaved” were common practices used by the nuns and priests of the school, and sexual abuse was rampant. It appears that although students reported having an easier time after his arrival, Father John Hennessy took little initiative to remedy the various abuses faced by the pupils, and instead placed greater emphasis on their perceived salvation through assimilation and understanding the superiority of European systems of governance.

As a Catholic school leader, Hennessy was for the students the example of the type of leaders western organizations expected them to be: a pious and celibate leader imposing catholic teachings and precepts from above within a rigid hierarchic structure, and who gained his position of authority from the Church.<sup>174</sup> By encouraging their pupils to model the examples provided by the nurses and priests who ran the schools, in order to become “productive” members of society according to western standards, capable of farming, and raising Christian children in a Christian household, residential schools can be understood as products of colonial mimicry that aimed to

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<sup>174</sup> Carlson, *Personal Communications*, 2019.

create good Christians and workers according to western standards. In the case of the Stó:lō, an ambivalence can be found in that reserves were frequently built in areas unsuited for agricultural purposes (such as Chawathil First Nation), so residential school alumni were not only deprived of the important knowledge necessary to thrive in Stó:lō society, but also unable to survive in the western world.

The main activity Ron was assigned fell under the category of “Gardening and Manual Labor”.<sup>175</sup> This is in line with the stated assimilationist goal of residential and industrial schools, which heavily relied on student labor and aimed to turn indigenous children into efficient farmers as opposed to fishermen, hunters and gatherers. The imposition of manual labor on male students by the Church sought to enforce the idea of farming and related activities as the most suitable form of activity for men, as opposed to “uncivilized” activities where si:yam would normally exercise their leadership, such as hunting, fishing and harvesting. However, these skills ended up having the unintended result of providing leadership opportunities to young Stó:lō men, by reinforcing the providing role of si:yam and encouraging self-sufficiency, which is also an important skill in the Stó:lō world.

Residential schools would in time, teach Stó:lō children that they could ascend through society through obedience to Christian principles and morality, become Church chiefs independent from belonging to a particular lineage, and that leading by punishment and fear was more efficient than leading by inspiring respect, imparting wisdom, and displaying their generosity through potlatching. Ultimately, the schools sought to emphasize the possibility of “achieved status” as opposed to “assigned status”. They attempted to assimilate the children and show them that they could ascend in society by being good Christians, and even, eventually, become Church chiefs, thus becoming able to “achieve” their status in Stó:lō society, instead of being subjected to the hereditary “ascribed” status imposed upon them at birth.<sup>176</sup> To do so, the residential school priests

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<sup>175</sup> St-Mary Quarter Reports, 1949-1951.

<sup>176</sup> This could be perceived as hypocritical given that European societies – the Catholic Church in particular - had class divisions at the time, but the implementation of the roles of Watchmen/Captains still became a non-negligible incentive for Stó:lō people to convert to Christianity. While the Church was openly against slavery, it was common at the time – and widely ignored by the Church - for factory workers in England to work long days in situations akin to slavery, so dismantling the Stó:lō system was more a matter of dismantling Stó:lō structures of power than it was an attempt at freeing oppressed people. Were colonial authorities interested in treating the Stó:lō as equal, they would have “converted” the Stó:lō hierarchal system into the European one and would have subsequently treated si:yam as equals, as elite members of the gentry. People like Ron for instance, would have become wealthy

and nuns encouraged the pupils to “mimic” their own behavior by using a system heavily based on physical punishment for disobedience.<sup>177</sup> As we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, in Stó:lō society, hereditary status was important, and power belonged to those of reputable lineages who displayed wisdom and led by example. Leadership by punishment and fear represented a significant departure from the notion of si:yamship. Stó:lō pupils reacted in multiple ways to this imposition of Christian activities of leadership. Some accepted the advantages these activities and newly acquired status brought. Others, like Ron John, opposed them by running away, showing that this system was not efficient at achieving its assimilations due to people resisting it after suffering from the abuse. Others, would use the advantages brought by the western school system strategically to further the goals of their community: for example, by learning how to write and read in western schools, Patricia became able to read legal documents, write newspaper articles, and advocate publicly in court and in the media for Stó:lō rights, thus leading in a hybrid way.

Ron attended the St. Mary's Indian Residential School in Mission, British Columbia, where he witnessed the sexual, physical, and psychological abuse inflicted by the priests upon Indigenous children. Patricia later described the residential school system as a genocide.<sup>178</sup> In 1948, at only twelve years old, Ron ran away from the Mission residential school to escape the violence of the priests who were running the school. Following the train tracks, he walked all the way back to Chawathil, a distance of approximately 75 kilometers, taking ownership for his own destiny and demonstrating a lot of faith in what he knew was right or wrong. His running away from the school demonstrates how at twelve he had confidence in his abilities to tell right from wrong. It is likely that this ability and confidence emerged from his early leadership experiences with his elders.

As a young man, Ron frequently engaged in sports and physical activities. He won multiple awards in logging competitions, especially in categories that tested strength such as cable splicing contests. His late father had passed in a train accident when Ron was around fifteen or sixteen years old; consequently, Ron helped his mother by applying the teachings he had learned from his

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landowners. Instead, the settlers' goal was to dismantle Stó:lō structures of power and reinsert them at the bottom of society as manual workers and laborers.

<sup>177</sup> The list of these punishments can be consulted in the hallway of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, where it is kept reminding people of the treatment of Stó:lō children by the school.

<sup>178</sup> Patricia John, *Interview by author*, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.



elders to become a fisher, hunter, and trapper.<sup>179</sup> At seventeen years old, in 1954, Ron fished at Ross Lake. Ron later inherited multiple fishing sites along the Fraser River, but in 1997, had only one left, just across Chawathil. According to the definitions we have seen in our first chapter, owning a food resource site makes him a *sxwsiya:m*, a ‘wealthy man with property’.<sup>180</sup>

In addition to his fishing and hunting solidifying his ability as *si:yam* to provide for others in his community, the forest solidly grounds Ron’s early experiences on a spiritual level. He hunted around Dog Mountain, where he also trapped weasel, ermine, mink, marten, otter, and raccoon. Ron described great feelings of peacefulness and serenity when hunting on that mountain and a feeling of spiritual connection to it.<sup>181</sup> During one of our last interviews, Patricia explained that Ron takes his spirituality, his power from this mountain. When asked about Ron’s views on spirituality, if he followed Christian or *Stó:lō* teachings, Patricia described a hybrid interpretation of divinity grounded in Places of Power that was not mutually exclusive of Christianity or *Stó:lō* spirituality.<sup>182</sup>

But [what] I hear from his experience is the strength and solace that he could take when he was [a] logger up there in the mountain. And there came a truth I think to Ron. I think even though there’s ideas of “he’s killing the trees”, “what you are doing”, you know, “that helps us breathe, that helps our animals”, but yet he needed to put food on the table, you know, for his family. He became a very accomplished and strong logger, a rigger. [...] He didn’t have a calculator, paper and pen or anything. It was a natural thing. But the spirituality and Christianity was the strength that he knew if there was a place of strength, if there was the respect of the water that he had, there were just things that were natural in spirituality. He is not one to go out, fall on his knees and pray the Creator, you know, and do the rosary, or sing his spirituality to take his prayers before he drinks that water. It’s just, it happens. There is this appreciation. That’s what I see, why I think it’s confusing to try to respond Christianity vs this spirituality. [It’s the way] you’re raised, your teachings, your life experience.

The importance of this mountain to Ron can be understood by the aforementioned notion of “*shxweli*.”<sup>183</sup> According to McHalsie, places have power, and mountains have stories narrating their origins: they are ancestors turned into stones, even though sometimes these stories got lost to time in part due to the smallpox epidemic of 1782. But Ron holds a spiritual and ancestral connection to the Mountain behind Chawathil, and this mountain is part of his watershed-based identity.

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<sup>179</sup> *Stó:lō Nation Traditional Use Study*, Transcript. *Interview of Ron John by Sally Hope and Val Joe*, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1997, pages 21, 32.

<sup>180</sup> Carlson, *Power of Place, Problem of Time*, 283.

<sup>181</sup> *Stó:lō Nation Traditional Use Study*, Transcript. *Interview of Ron John by Sally Hope and Val Joe*, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1997, page 22.

<sup>182</sup> Patricia John, *Interview with author*, January 31<sup>th</sup> 2018, *Stó:lō Nation Office*.

<sup>183</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, “We have to Take Care of Everything that Belongs to Us”, 85.

Ron's relationship to this mountain can also be situated within the Stó:lō phrase S'ólh Téméxw te it'kwelo. Xyólhmet te mekw' stám ít kwelát", which McHalsie translates as "This is our land, we have to take care of everything that belongs to us".<sup>184</sup> Ron's relationship and responsibility towards this mountain is expressed through the use he makes of the land and his protection of it. So in addition to the practical aspect of using his logging job in the wage labour economy to provide for his family, there was a very strong spiritual element to it, which intertwined older notions and values of si:yamshp with spirituality and practical considerations. This importance of ecological sustainability stemming from his early leadership experiences in the forest would in time become a long-lasting theme in his career as chief of Chawathil First Nation. These logging activities were further complemented by his job as councilor of Chawathil First Nation. In 1956, at nineteen years old, Ron was elected councilor of Chawathil First Nation. This job as a councilor gave him the opportunity to develop his political and leadership skills and helped him prepare him for his future job as chief.

Ron then left to Washington State to provide for his family, first working in Seattle as a garbage-man and for thirteen years working as a logger for an indigenous owned company on the Quinault reservation.<sup>185</sup> Washington State provided him with both a familiar and unfamiliar world: Coast Salish men were frequently employed in the logging industry, providing them with better economic opportunities than in their home communities, so he had the chance to connect with other people from a similar cultural background. Working in the forest was something he was accustomed to, that was part of his culture, and that gave him a sense of pride. At the same time, this was his chance to explore larger cities like Seattle while still providing for his family. He quickly became very proficient at his job and rose to the rank of rigger, being in charge of the most difficult task: climbing to the top of large trees and setting the hooks and pulleys to fell them. The nature of this job was very dangerous, and as a rigger, he was responsible for the safety of the loggers working under him. This early experience greatly informed his leadership style: due to the abundance of work for loggers in BC and in Washington state, loggers could very easily quit their job in search of a new one if they happened to be dissatisfied with their superior. As a result, Ron had to be both very diplomatic and use a more democratic leadership style to keep his coworkers satisfied, while at the same time, being more authoritative when need be to get the job done and

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<sup>184</sup> Idem.

<sup>185</sup> Patricia John, *Stalo Nation News*, June 1977, number 21.

ensure the safety of his team. He thus learned how to negotiate complex leadership tasks and maintaining a balance between different leadership styles. It also provided him with a strong, no-nonsense work ethic which he would frequently use as a Chief. But his experience as a logger in Washington was not only memorable on a professional level. It is also during his time as logger in Quinault that Ron met a Coast Salish lady named Patricia Owens.

### **Where Two Rivers Meet: Patricia and Ron's First Meeting**

Ron and Pat first met in Washington, when Ron was working there as a logger. Pat was celebrating a recent professional success: she “had just successfully competed with four people for a comprehensive employment training project”,<sup>186</sup> when Ron invited her to go dancing. Pat recalled how much he later impressed her during a strength contest where he was splicing cables with his bare hands. Pat and Ron got married a year after their first meeting, in a shaker ceremony - at Pat's request, by a priest who was not ordained. Together, they had five children: Emerald Bernadette (born October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1975), Ronnetta Evangéline (born October 12<sup>th</sup> 1976), Ronald Patrick (born February 4<sup>th</sup> 1978), August Paul (born February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1979), and Lydia Mae (February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1979).<sup>187</sup>

These early experiences, such as helping elders, hunting, logging, and fishing for Ron, and ocean and Shaker teachings for Pat, were crucial in their development as young adults to prepare them for their “coming home”, and to become successful leaders. Their cultural upbringing was anchored in the notion of watersheds. As I will show next, Ron had to travel to the United States to meet Patricia, and to take some geographical distance from Chawathil to gain new learning experiences and perspectives about his community to have his relative be able to ask him to come home. Through coming home, he returned to the source of his ancestry and was able to initiate positive changes for his community and culture. As for Patricia, she was able to transfer and find a continuation in her ties from the Columbia River to the Fraser River thanks to the ancestral teachings she received in Quinault, thus helping her successfully integrate into her new community by her husband's side, when the time came for them to “Come Home”, and return to Chawathil First Nation, when Ron was designated by Grand Chief Peter Dennis Peters as his successor.

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<sup>186</sup> Patricia John, *Interview by Author*, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>187</sup> SSRMC Genealogy Office , « Descendant Chart for Ronald Gregory John ».

## CONCLUSION

The post-World War Two era was a complicated and difficult time for Stó:lō leadership. Not only did Stó:lō leaders have to negotiate the challenges brought by war traumas and difficulties for indigenous veterans to access their benefits, but they also had to re-define what it meant to be a leader as a result of the historical gap between the notion of si:yam and the renewed relevance of war heroes after a long period during which warriors were perceived in a negative light. The sixties were marked by strong reactions from Indigenous people against the Federal Government's assimilation policies, in particular with the White Paper. Partially influenced by blossoming indigenous written literatures, and by major social rights movements in the United States, such as the RPM, AIM and second-wave feminism, BC First Nations started organizing themselves into larger political entities in an attempt to counter these policies. For the Stó:lō, this concretely meant a renewal of supra-tribal leadership, via organizations like Stó:lō Nation Canada, Stó:lō Tribal Council, as well as the UBCIC, which re-affirmed relationships that had been undermined by the reserve policy. Ultimately, beyond the difficulties brought by the conflicts of the twentieth century and the social movements of the sixties and early seventies, post-war era Stó:lō leaders had to negotiate the potential corrosiveness of western communication technologies on Stó:lō society and traditional culture. As a result, Stó:lō leaders remained skeptical of western technologies and culture, even when wanting to embrace and engage them, for instance with their use of mainstream media to raise awareness of the issues facing Stó:lō communities, to obtain funding or put pressure on the Federal Government. This can be perceived both as a continuation of the pre-nineteenth century diplomatic role of si:yam, as well as a hybrid response to colonialism. These ambivalent attitudes towards western settler colonialism and modernity combined with these newly created political organizations paved the way for Stó:lō leadership to find avenues of expression on a larger scene at the national level, as we will see in our next chapter through the example of the Constitution Express.

## CHAPTER 3

# STÓ:LŦ LEADERSHIP FROM THE 1970s TO THE 1990s: THE LEADERSHIP OF PATRICIA AND RON JOHN

### INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters have sought to historicize the main developments of Stó:lŦ leadership in the Stó:lŦ Valley prior to Ron's first mandate as Chief of Chawathil First Nation. I have defined some of the key characteristics of Stó:lŦ hereditary leaders, called *si:yam*, and contextualized the rise of Church Chiefs and *Indian Act* Chiefs. I then described the consequences of the twentieth century conflicts on Stó:lŦ Veterans and communities before exploring the effects that globalization, western communication technologies and the civil rights movements had on Stó:lŦ leadership, as well as the ways in which Stó:lŦ leaders chose to respond to them. This chapter aims to identify the characteristics of Ron and Pat John's leadership, to assess the extent to which the structures of traditional culture remained intact or if the *Indian Act* and the establishment of Church Chiefs significantly shaped them. I argue that Pat and Ron's leadership decisions were based on hybrid responses to the political, legal, and economic events their community experienced. These responses were built on a continuation of earlier Stó:lŦ leadership practices and principles, as well as on innovative solutions. The first section discusses their "coming home" to Chawathil First Nation, and the choices they made as leaders. The second part explores their cultural involvement in the community and presents community understandings of their leadership, and I also explain what their leadership choices teach us about Stó:lŦ leadership in their time period. I analyze the data presented to identify the key characteristics of Pat and Ron's leadership. I draw on interviews with other Chiefs and Grand Chiefs of the Fraser Valley in order to contextualize and historicize these characteristics and attempt to draw some conclusions on Stó:lŦ leadership in the Fraser Valley from the 1970s to the 1990s. Lastly, I present a potential and flexible model to represent the main tenants of Stó:lŦ leadership in their time period, which I call the Loom Model. This model is inspired from a traditional Stó:lŦ Loom. As we will see, it situates Stó:lŦ leadership in the larger Coast Salish Collective Consciousness anchored in the large watersheds of the region and in the Stó:lŦ notion of *Shxweli*. It also articulates the main values and principles of decision-making of *si:yam* in

relation to the Seven Feathers of Reconciliation, describes the relationships between si:yam and community members, and portrays the unique contributions of specific si:yam to their community.

## COMING HOME: POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

### **Introduction**

“Coming Home” is one of, if not the, most central theme in Ron’s and Patricia’s lives. Throughout our encounters, Ron, Pat and other community members frequently returned to this notion of coming home, just like a string of wool is repeatedly brought back to the central pole of a Stó:lō loom. What was the significance of this “coming home”? As we saw in Chapter 2, the notion of “Coming Home” entered popular vocabulary as a result from the two World Wars, where coming home was a significant event for the soldiers who had fought on the front, and who were not certain to see their families ever again. This expression carried a strong meaning, and it appears that even if Pat and Ron did not fight in the war, returning to Chawathil was a choice they had to take seriously, as they would be responsible for the well-being of an entire community.

In 1974, Stó:lō Grand Chief Peter Dennis Peters designated Ron as his successor at the head of the Chawathil First Nation, the small first nation community a few minutes’ drive away from Hope, BC. One day in 1974, during Patricia’s first visit to Chawathil, accompanying Ron, Grand Chief Peter Dennis Peters asked Ron if he was ready to come home and become Chief. So, in November 1976, Ron and Pat both returned to Chawathil, along with their five children.<sup>188</sup> Ron John was unanimously elected Chief Councilor and Band Manager on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1977. Sonny McHalsie shared that this story was the first thing that came to his mind about Ron’s life story, and this is also how Ron began to narrate his life story as well. Similarly to Ron’s early leadership experiences, “coming home” would become a central notion that would inform many of his leadership choices, which he had to make in difficult times.

### **Historical Context of Ron’s Coming Home**

The years immediately preceding Ron’s first mandate as chief were a time of numerous political and social changes, which brought complex challenges for Stó:lō leaders to negotiate. The

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<sup>188</sup> Sonny McHalsie, Interview, 2017-06-02, [00 :34] and Patricia John, *Stalo Nation News*, June 1977, number 21.

sixties were a difficult time for indigenous communities around Canada, as they were marked by the infamous Sixties Scoop. As many as 20 000 Indigenous children were removed from their families, who were deemed incapable to care for their children in large part due to a racial and cultural chauvinistic bias on the part of social workers. These social workers then placed the indigenous children in non-indigenous families, who were perceived as more suitable.<sup>189</sup> The three BC Indian Hospitals (the Nanaimo Indian Hospital, the Coqualeetza Indian Hospital in Sardis and the Miller Bay Indian Hospital in Prince Rupert) were used to conduct scientific experiments on Indigenous children - under the pretext of healing them from tuberculosis while many were actually healthy- leaving many malnourished, paralyzed and psychologically scarred by the physical and sexual abuse they suffered there.<sup>190</sup> The Sardis Indian Hospital operated from 1941 until 1969. This series of events amplified the intergenerational trauma brought by residential schools, which were still operated at the time. As I mentioned earlier, in 1969, Jean Chrétien had just introduced the *White Paper*, an assimilationist policy aiming to dismantle the Indian Act, eliminate Indian status, the department of Indian Affairs and convert reserves into privately owned land. The *White Paper* led to national backlash from Indigenous people around the country, and ultimately resulted in the creation of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), whose goal was to oppose this policy. 1969 was also the year of the creation of the BC Indian Homemaker Association (BCIHA), arguably the heart of female Indigenous leadership in BC. During that time, the two main Stó:lō organizations, the Stó:lō Nation and the Stó:lō Tribal Council, also underwent a series of splits and reunions caused by political differences. It is in this changing historical context that Ron became Chief and that Patricia became band manager in the late seventies. But while it may be somewhat easy to picture Ron's return to his community, it is not as simple to imagine how Patricia managed to move to this new place, which despite still being Coast Salish, was full of people she did not know and to whom she would have to prove herself. How did Patricia so successfully transition to her new community?

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<sup>189</sup> Crey and Fournier, *Stolen From Our Embrace*. 952.

<sup>190</sup> For testimonies on survivors' testimonies on their experience at Nanaimo Indian Hospital, see Laurie Meijer Drees, *The Nanaimo* and Charles Camsell "Indian Hospitals: First Nations' Narratives of Health Care, 1945 to 1965", *Histoire sociale/Social history* Volume 43, Number 85, Mai-May 2010, retrieved online from <http://muse.jhu.edu.cyber.usask.ca/article/399645> and Laura Meijer Drees, *Healing histories : stories from Canada's Indian hospitals* (Calgary: the University of Alberta Press), 2013.

## **Patricia's Integration in the Chawathil Community**

As we saw earlier, Coast Salish identities are strongly anchored in supra-tribal watershed-based identities. Patricia, being from Quinault First Nation, was able to use her ties to the Columbia watershed to successfully integrate within the Chawathil community by transferring the teachings and wisdom she gained in one watershed to the other: she learned the Stó:lō language, Halq'emeylem, embraced the importance of the watershed and fought for her new community through the protection of the people, the land, and the language. Through these watersheds connections and networks, by moving to Chawathil Patricia was also spiritually and relationally coming back to her own home, so she was not only an outsider to the community, but one of their relations.

The current chief of Chawathil, Chief Rhoda Peters, shared this heartfelt description of how Patricia successfully integrated herself into her new community:

Pat and Ron were gone for years and then when the highway came through and PD, our Grand Chief was getting on with years, he wanted to retire, Ron had moved back about that time. [...] and then when he came back, things were gonna change, because we now had the highway, he had a house [...], so they made a home, and being young, and ambitious, and him knowing the land I think really helped and you know his heart, you know, being here and growing up here, and remembering everything, I think really helped with a path that we move forward, and Pat, bless her heart, she [...] moved up here and just embraced Chawathil, embraced our community, embraced the people, embraced our Stó:lō, the language, and just became one of us so easily. [...]

To Chief Peters, Ron and Pat each brought a unique skillset that complemented each other and made them successful:

But, he, I think really helped the community because of this knowledge of the land and the history here, and Patty, like I said, just embraced everything up here, and her kids were in school, she worked for the community, worked at the band office, and she is still working today. And I think she has a heart, she knows the language, she knows how to speak, so I think we are very fortunate to have her in this office.

Pat's willingness to adapt, work hard and learn Halq'emeylem also contributed to her gaining the respect of the community. Her eloquence and the qualities described above by Chief Peters also appear to be a demonstration of qualities of si:yam that are still valued in Stó:lō communities today. Chief Peters also described Pat's eagerness to be involved in community projects and her distinctive contributions:

And if anything is going on, if we need her to sit and assist, she is more than willing to do that. And sometimes, if we are having a meeting and she is passing through, then she says "oh, what's going on here?", and then will say something like "oh, can I sit here?", and we're not going to tell our elders "no", so she comes and she sits in, and brings her flavor to the table, and brings her heart and her mind to the table. And every time she gets up and speak, we ask her to speak, you know, [...] she does it from the heart. And she doesn't hold back, and



she has such a gentle way about her. She cares about the people as any of our elders. [...] You couldn't help but love her.<sup>191</sup>

To hear this from Ron's political opponent really testifies to the extraordinary human skills and qualities that Patricia displayed while she started building a life for herself and her family and Chawathil. It speaks to her qualities as a hard-worker, dedicated and passionate woman who had a gift for politics. These leadership skills would prove to be very useful for both her and Ron, as the couple had to face difficult events when they returned to Chawathil and had to fight legal battles with AANDC and the Seventh Day Adventists.

### **Opposing the Scoundrels: Legal Battles with AANDC and the Seventh Day Adventists**

The first two years of Ron's first mandate proved to be challenging, as he and Pat encountered significant tensions with AANDC and the neighboring chapter of the Seventh Day Adventists of Hope. Exploring the manner in which they chose to negotiate these conflicts, and contrasting it to how earlier Stó:lō leaders chose to deal with their own political opponents provides some interesting historical context to Ron's leadership. When Patricia and Ron came home, their priority was to improve and increase the housing of the community. Although they ultimately succeeded, the completion of this goal was compromised by conflicts with AANDC and the Seventh Day Adventists. Prior to their return, the community had suffered from a lack of adequate and sufficient housing. Ron made building more housing a priority, unlike his predecessors who focused on other aspects of economic growth. At the time, there were only around 200 people living on the community. Many of the houses were overcrowded and in poor condition. Pat and Ron started building new dwellings in 1977. Ron was able to secure funds by threatening not to sign the papers needed for the construction of the highway across the reserve, and by making the Seventh Day Adventists and lease holders who had defaulted on their payments pay what they owed to Chawathil. By building more and higher quality housing, Ron and Pat encouraged Stó:lō people to move back from nearby cities and communities to Chawathil. Although the population subsequently kept growing until reaching 618 inhabitants as of March 2017, the integrity of the reserve land was permanently compromised, due to the Seventh Day Adventists illegally using part of the reserve's lands and building a trench, which emptied the neighboring Kakamlatch

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<sup>191</sup> Chief Rhoda Peters, *Interview by Author*, May 2017. This quote was originally much longer with more praise, but was shortened for the sake of conciseness. Full interview recordings can be obtained at the SSRMC.

creek<sup>192</sup>. This trench caused the disappearance of all the coho salmon in the area, who relied on this creek as their main resting spot in the region.<sup>193</sup>

In addition to the Seventh Day Adventists, Pat and Ron also had to confront an Indian Agent, Earl Backman, who obtained part of the Chawathil reserve, Schkam, through what Patricia describes as “bringing deceiving papers” to the previous chief, Grand Chief Peter Dennis Peters, which contained terms different from the ones agreed upon verbally:

PJ: (...) So, we came up with a problem, the first year of Ron’s leadership: the Seventh<sup>th</sup> Day had been approved to be put in the eastern, the back, north eastern end of our Chawathil reserve, our reservation boundary. “How did that happen?”, Ron says. (...) And we learned to do the research, we learned to find the papers, and of course it was INAC. (...) What that AANDC, that INAC worker brought was deceiving papers that were official papers, that was supposed to say this is on behalf of Chawathil, the chief (P.D. Peters) does agree and his council supports this. But back then the agent would say verbally what this was, but written it was deceptive. Because the property that the Seventh<sup>th</sup> day got was for like a dollar or five dollars a year so they could access through the reserve. The second parcel we found was that AANDC, the same guy, brought to our trusting chief, Peter Dennis, and said “oh this oil company they need to plant some equipment, do research, but they’ll only use eight or ten acres, so that’s what you’re signing chief”. But what this paper was: a full surrender to Skam, which is our North Reserve, which left Pete and his families only eight or ten acres where their current houses were.

It took two years for Pat and Ron John to regain possession of Schkam, but they were ultimately successful:

We found that. So, we tore a feather, Ron confronted Bachman, he was just absolutely evicted and denied access and service to us. We launched a caveat, we launched cases that put a stop. It took two flipping years to desurrender. But that’s what that guy had done. (...) the Seventh<sup>th</sup> Day has continued to violate their presence. (...) But anyway, we got Bachman out, we got Skam back, it just took a belabored love of determination to get that done. It’s... but Bachman had done things from Sumas, you know, just throughout his term. I don’t know if it will ever truly be disclosed, the damages that had happened with these little false papers that he was bringing to local leaders. It was sad, yes. (Patricia John, *Interview by Author*, January 31th 2018)

In addition to what she described above, Patricia also stated that on the original papers was the signature of a woman from Chawathil who supposedly acted as a witness for the land transfer. However, this woman was in labor on that day, and could not possibly have been present at the time of the signature, which further added to the testimony that the acquisition of Schkam 4 was unlawful and based on forgery. Pat and Ron won both of these cases in court, proving that the actions of both Earl Backman and the Seventh Day Adventists were unlawful.

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<sup>192</sup> Kakamlatch creek is called sqémelwelh in Halq’emeylem.

<sup>193</sup> Patricia John, *Interview by author*, January 31th 2018, Chawathil Band Office.

However, these were not isolated events in settler colonial history in the Fraser Valley. Indeed, the actions of Bachman and of the Seventh Day Adventists are part of a larger trend of settlers acquiring indigenous lands with unlawful means.

These actions are particularly reminiscing of three infamous British settlers: land surveyor Joseph Trutch, his friend and colleague Chief Commissioner of Land and Works Colonel R.C. Moody, and Samuel Geer. Exploring the reactions of Stó:lō leaders of the time and comparing Pat and Ron's actions with them provide a tool of analysis to assess their reactions and gauge whether they continued or departed from earlier leadership practices. In chapter 1, I presented literature demonstrating how land surveyor Joseph Trutch completely disregarded Governor James Douglas' recommendations, how he diminished the size of Stó:lō reserves by 90%, and also used the Alexandria Suspension Bridge that he had built with the help of Captain John Swalis, to coerce local indigenous people to pay a toll to travel on the river using their canoes when navigating underneath the bridge, without actually using it.<sup>194</sup> Trutch's friend Colonel Moody, who shared his disdain for Governor Douglas' indigenous origins, similarly contributed to settler encroachment of indigenous lands by enabling his friend to carve huge chunks of land for himself in S'ólh Téméxw, specifically in Hope, the town located a few minutes from Chawathil First Nation.<sup>195</sup> Finally, Samuel Geer, an impoverished British settler who famously opposed colonial authorities on multiple occasions during the Gold Rush and had all charges against him dismissed over twenty times, even shot an indigenous person in what some would refer today as "defending their property", which he had also acquired unlawfully, as he had not purchased in due form the land he built his house on.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> For more on the life of Captain John Swalis, see Carlson, *the Power of Place, the Problem of Time, 198*, Dallas Joshua Posavad, *The Chief of Chilliwack: Ambition, Religion, and Coercion in the Life of Captain John Swalis*, Ethnohistory Field School Report 2013, retrieved online from [https://web.uvic.ca/stolo/pdf/Dallas\\_Posavad%20Chief\\_of\\_Chilliwack.pdf](https://web.uvic.ca/stolo/pdf/Dallas_Posavad%20Chief_of_Chilliwack.pdf), and *Indigenous Writers and Christianity in Canada, the US and Peru, Select Case Studies from Across the Hemisphere*, Master's Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Retrieved online from <https://harvest.usask.ca/bitstream/handle/10388/ETD-2016-02-2430/POSAVAD-THESIS.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>195</sup> Carlson, "Joseph Trutch: Corruption, Racism and Political Intrigue on Canada's Pacific Coast", *Seven Nights of Historical Villainy*, Presentation at the Hose and Hydrant, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018, Saskatoon, SK.

<sup>196</sup> Laura Ishiguro, "What the scoundrel says: white lies, settler power, and an absurd history of British Columbia", *The 43rd Annual Qualicum History Conference*, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Parksville, BC".

These three men, two of whom have been referred to as some of “Canada’s Worst Villains”<sup>197</sup> all have in common one thing: an absolute disregard for Stó:lō land rights and sovereignty. While Captain Swalis (whose name means “getting rich” in Halq’emeylem”<sup>198</sup>) eventually chose to oppose colonial powers when he became democratically elected at the head of the Soowahlie reserve, he was neither a hereditary chief nor a Catholic Church Chief, but a Methodist who had been arbitrarily appointed Chief of the newly created Soowahlie reserve by Joseph Trutch, showing that in addition to Stó:lō sovereignty over their lands, colonial powers often showed little respect for their political agency as well.

So, how did the leaders of the time react? Those who opposed Captain John’s appointment

“manoeuvred to displace [him] and transform their hereditary status into government-recognized chieftainship. The Catholic Priests worked with those who identified themselves as the hereditary elite in their efforts to consolidate political power. It was at the priest’s behest that a senior official in the Lands and Works Department took the maps away from Captain John and his fellow Methodist chiefs, and gave them to those men the Catholic priests identified as the true hereditary chiefs – though what process or criteria the priests used is unclear. Before the transfer, the official altered the maps so they contained only the Catholic chiefs’ names.”<sup>199</sup>

Other leaders, like Ayessik, also used western avenues of communication to oppose settler encroachment, as can be seen from his petitions. In both cases, Stó:lō leaders were forced by the circumstances to leave the ultimate decision in settlers’ hands. Stó:lō leaders continued reacting in various ways to settler encroachment until the present time. Ron and Pat also had to face similar situations to those encountered by Ayessik and Cpt. John, and the leadership techniques they used sometimes continued and sometimes departed from earlier leadership techniques employed by their predecessors.

In their encounters with Earl Backman and the Seventh Day Adventists, Pat and Ron chose to use public speaking and newspapers interviews to spread awareness on the situation, publicly confronting the culprits, outright threatening them not to sign documents they wanted, getting into a verbal altercation, shunning them out of the community, and going through the

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<sup>197</sup> Carlson, “Joseph Trutch: Corruption, Racism and Political Intrigue on Canada’s Pacific Coast”, *Seven Nights of Historical Villainy*, Presentation at the Hose and Hydrant, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018, Saskatoon, SK.

<sup>198</sup> The fact that “getting rich” seems to have been used as a derogatory term for this leader seems to point towards a shift in attitudes of the Stó:lō regarding the acquisition of wealth by leaders from a positive thing (gathering wealth to redistribute it) to a negative, undesirable trait associated with greed.

<sup>199</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 195-198.

courts to settle the issue. This represents an interesting combination of early leadership practices (diplomacy when possible, direct action when other means have failed), and the modern use of the court of law. They also demonstrate a strong sense of agency and a confidence in themselves to take the matter into their own hands. This indicates that Pat and Ron’s leadership choices were highly context-based, and that they responded in hybrid ways to difficult situations. Pat and Ron were not only political leaders however but also keen business leaders.

### **Leaders and Businesspeople: Economic Endeavors**

Pat and Ron did not stop after launching and completing their housing project. In addition to increasing the housing of Chawathil, they wanted to improve it: during Ron’s term as Chief, they secured access to electricity, plumbing, running water, a fire hall, and phones.<sup>200</sup> Ron and Pat also wanted to improve the employment situation of the reserve, bring the community back together and “improve people’s confidence in their work”. Throughout the years, Pat and Ron worked with the council and community partners to initiate several economic ventures, the most prominent one being the construction of a vegetables farm and a fish farm producing rainbow trout. In 1976, Pat and Ron started envisioning a fish farm to create more economic opportunities for their communities, while encouraging traditional forms of sustenance like fishing and to “[keep] the community pulling together”.<sup>201</sup> After completing a feasibility study in 1979, and holding several meetings with the band council and the community, Pat and Ron initiated the construction of the fish co-op and agricultural farm in March 1980.<sup>202</sup> The fish farm, containing twenty-one raceways, opened in 1981, and it soon started producing rainbow trout. The farm gained visibility on June 1984 when Ron presented BC Tourism Minister Claude Richmond with a box of rainbow trout from the Chawathil Fish Farm during his tour of the Fraser Valley.<sup>203</sup> The fish farm was pretty successful for a while, and even hit 3% of British Columbia sales around 1982.<sup>204</sup>

The creation of this farm came at a time of tensions between Stó:lō fishermen and the provincial government. Bierwert provided the following assessment of the situation in 1982:

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<sup>200</sup> Patricia and Ron John, *Interview by author*, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>201</sup> Suzanne Mason, “Farm, Fish Co-op gives reserve new impetus”, *Chilliwack Progress*, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1981, page 6.

<sup>202</sup> Suzanne Mason, “Farm, Fish Co-op gives reserve new impetus”, *Chilliwack Progress*, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1981, page 6.

<sup>203</sup> Robert Brown and Peter Hammond, “Richmond’s Tour Could Benefit ‘Rainbow Country’”, *Chilliwack Progress*, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1984.

<sup>204</sup> Patricia John, *Interview by Angélique Tardivel*, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017, [10:30].

[There was a] “sting” operation mounted by provincial fishery officials in the summer of 1982. New, big-time buyers appeared to cut into an established black market for Indian-caught salmon, but the bucks turned sour. In early 1983 fishery officials traveled from reserve to reserve in the valley, issuing arrest warrants and impounding vehicles that had been used to transport fish to the new buyers. By a peculiar twist of fate, the officials’ move came on a day already scheduled for a regional workshop in the Constitution Express. Stó:lō leaders and attorneys were already assembled as outraged fishermen appeared at the forum that morning. The NC chiefs’ lawyers were able to set up procedures and communications to consolidate the cases instantaneously. Most of the cases were handled as a package and dismissed because of the entrapment involved; every case was eventually thrown out.<sup>205</sup>

Bierwert concluded that this event consolidated the UBCIC Chiefs continued loyalty among the Stó:lō people. Despite this improvement in the relations of the Stó:lō with other BC Chiefs, these tensions with the government became a significant obstacle to the economic success of the fish farm. Unfortunately, the fish farm eventually had to close due to a marketing issue involving the consultant the Chawathil First Nation had hired. While from a business standpoint, the fish farm was strictly a failure, it became apparent through our conversations that Ron, Pat and the community have a very different perception of the fish farm’s legacy. For Chawathil, the fish farm was a significant mile stone in the economic development of the reserve, and it was a proof that small first nations are capable to reaching sales records with limited resources. While the day-to-day operations of the farm have ceased, the infrastructures are still in place, and Pat and Ron have plans to re-open the farm as a shrimp or small fish farm in the future. Ultimately, the closure of the fish farm is perhaps more an indication of the wider failure of colonial institutions to encourage and protect small indigenous business than it is indicative of professional failures on behalf of Pat and Ron.

In addition to the fish farm, Ron and Pat also initiated the construction of a food co-op, a new building for the Chawathil Band Council, as well as a daycare for children of the first nation. This helped create jobs on the reserve, including research, administrative, sales, agricultural and social positions. During our interviews, Ron explained that what made him so successful is “doing things for the people”. His achievements were recognized by the community in a traditional and private ceremony, where he received the honorary title of Grand Chief along with Chiefs Clem Seymour, Steven Point, Doug Kelly, Kenny Malloway, and Joe Hall, thus proving that he was not only an elected chief, but also a si:yam, and one able to lead the War Council.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Bierwert, *Brushed with Cedar*, 26.

<sup>206</sup> Grand Chief Clarence (Kat Pennier), *Interview by author*, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018.

## **Elected Chief of Chawathil FN, Grand Chief of the War Council**

Ron and Pat were both very politically active: while still working as a logger and hunter, Ron was Chief, and Pat was the band manager. Ron was an active member of the BC Indian Brotherhood (BCIB) and one of the chiefs of the War Council. The War Council is a group of Stó:lō Chiefs and Leaders who are called as a last resource by Stó:lō communities to settle the matters when negotiations (for treaties, land claims and indigenous rights) fail. Grand Chief Clarence (Kat) Pennier shared the following information regarding the functioning of the War Council:

Oh yeah, that was another experience. Because one of the things we talked about is we always have to do four things: we do things politically, we do things legally, we do things media wise, and we do things on the ground. So, we set up the War Council and part of our responsibility was just to talk about are we going to do. Our government is not listening to us, not taking us seriously. Well, you know, during the Oka crisis when they were having their big fight in Quebec there, a number of us set up information blockades on the freeways, highway number 7 you know, just to bring awareness to the people that we support each other across this country, and other demonstrations like that, just to bring awareness to the general public that we are serious about the issues we bring to the government. It wasn't really a war council but you know, but it was just a good way for us to sit down together and to set up some activities we need to do, because we are not a war people. It's not part of our culture, a part of who we are, part of the past we have. But it was an interesting time.<sup>207</sup>

The fact that Grand Chief Kat Pennier stressed that the leaders of the War Council were not “warriors” in the military sense of the term is a direct reflection of the assessment made in Chapter 1 that si:yam were not military leaders, and were instead supposed to lead gently by earning the respect of their people. This testifies to Ron John's ability to lead in continuation with pre-contact notions of leadership, but it also shows that si:yam from his generation came up with inventive solutions to the challenges of their time. They were able to build upon earlier leadership structures and values, transform and adapt them to meet the needs of their time, which speaks to the uncommon aptitude of Stó:lō leadership to reinvent itself in time of needs, while remaining faithful to its principles. The War Council can be considered a leadership structure characteristic of Stó:lō leadership in the 1970s and the 1990s.

This role in the War Council led Patricia and Ron to get involved in various forms of direct actions for the rights of their community. For instance, as head of the War Council, Ron took a stance in the conflict between the Stó:lō and the Yale First Nation in November 2011. For several

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<sup>207</sup> Grand Chief Clarence (Kat Pennier), *Interview by author*, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 (10:00).

decades, the Stó:lō and the Yale fought over fishing rights in the Fraser Canyon, the Yale claiming they are a distinct people deserving to sign their own treaty negotiations, the Stó:lō claiming that the Yale belong to the same political and cultural group.<sup>208</sup> The area of land that the two communities were mostly interested in was a stretch of the Fraser canyon called the Five Mile Fishery, going from Yale to Sawmill Creek. In a press release, Stó:lō Tribal Council (STC) Chief Tyrone McNeil stated that the Stó:lō community asked both the STC and the Stó:lō Nation to “kick into gear the Stó:lō War Council headed by Grand Chief Ron John to come up with a plan to defend Stó:lō rights to their land and their fishery in the Fraser Canyon in the face of the Yale treaty.”<sup>209</sup> According to the same article from the *Chilliwack Times*, Ron John stated that by endorsing the Yale Treaty, “they [the BC Treaty Commission] gives the impression that they don’t respect Stó:lō rights and interests in the Fraser Canyon.”<sup>210</sup>

### **Characteristics of Ron’s Leadership Style**

The way Ron led the War Council appears to have been mostly based on communal, collaborative decision-making primarily informed by Indigenous Knowledge, and coupled by the understanding of the western education system and modes of governance he acquired during his time in residential school. This hybridity enabled him to efficiently lead in both the indigenous and the western worlds. While Ron preferred to use peaceful methods of negotiations such as public speaking and organizing protests, he did not hesitate to be firm, use civil disobedience and hire lawyers to file lawsuits when necessary to protect the Stó:lō ancestral rights guaranteed by treaties. This could have in part been influenced by his experience as a rigger in the logging industry. As a rigger, he was at the top of teams of people doing very dangerous work. He had to be very assertive to make decisions to get the work done efficiently and safely. Beyond the more authoritative style of leadership that one would expect from leaders in such a dangerous work environment, people like Ron would also have had to be very diplomatic and democratic in their approach: due to the abundance of work for loggers in BC and in Washington state, loggers could very easily quit their job in search of a new one if they happened to be dissatisfied with their superior. This can be seen in early video recordings of band council meetings when Ron was

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<sup>208</sup> Rob Smith for APTN National News, “Conflict looms on the Fraser”, video recording, June 26, 2013.

<sup>209</sup> *Chilliwack Times*, “United Stó:lō Rally War Council to Oppose Yale Treaty”, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

<sup>210</sup> *Chilliwack Times*, “United Stó:lō Rally War Council to Oppose Yale Treaty”, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011.



working as a band counselor: he did not hesitate to use direct language and be upfront with what he disliked about people's approaches and choices, while simultaneously making impassioned speeches about his visions for the future of the community, thus inspiring his audience in a more transformational or affiliative style.<sup>211</sup> Using these leadership strategies, Pat and Ron demonstrated a strong leadership and commitment to protect their ancestral lands, with a focus on long-term economic, cultural and environmental sustainability.

Ron and Pat also played a significant role in the Constitution Express of 1980, two trains that Indigenous people across the country took to Ottawa to protest the Constitution of 1982, following the lead of George Manuel, the President of the UBCIC, whom Patricia described as "a seer and a visionary". The Constitution Express was a convoy of Indigenous People who travelled all the way East to Ottawa, New-York (NY) and London (England) to protest the proposed Constitution, due to its lack of inclusion of Aboriginal Rights. This movement was ultimately successful and resulted in the recognition of Aboriginal rights in the 25<sup>th</sup> section of the Constitution.

This event represents the continuity of these Stó:lō practices of diplomacy and public speaking, and taps into the construction of the modern pan-indigenous identity Sarah Nickel describes as a core of the foundation of UBCIC.<sup>212</sup> In a Chawathil Newsletter quoted in an issue of *Indian World*, Ron shared some of his impressions of this trip:

"There were a lot of good speakers, young and old, who came off that train. They went over the proposed Constitutional Resolution and the threat it would have on us. The Elders said how pleased they were that we are now on the right track, and any talks should have our direct involvement. We have to push for recognition of our Aboriginal Rights and self-government, lands and all treaties [...] all the money in the world can never pay back the Natives of this Country, all the natural resources and wildlife it had destroyed or denied us."<sup>213</sup>

In one of our interviews, Ron recalled how he had his own song sung multiple times during the Constitution Express, which was confirmed by Albert McHalsie during our interview<sup>214</sup>. Ron and Pat related several other memorable anecdotes from this trip, including how people in the streets of London would encourage them from their windows, screaming "Go Canada!". The

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<sup>211</sup> For more information on different leadership styles, please read Daniel Goldman, "Leadership that Gets Results", *Harvard Business Review*, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000.

<sup>212</sup> Nickel, *United We Stand, Divided We Perish*, 69-83, 194. To read more on how pan-Indigenous identities informed the creation of the UBCIC, see Sarah Nickel, *Assembling Unity*, 2019 .

<sup>213</sup> Ron John, "In Our Traditional Ways", *Indian World*, 24, April 1981.

<sup>214</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Interview at the SRRMC, 2017-06-02.

movement was ultimately successful, and the federal government ultimately agreed to the demands of Indigenous organizations.<sup>215</sup>

Patricia was involved in multiple actions to protect indigenous lands. In 1980, she played a leading role as a band manager in bringing the Department of Indian Affairs to court after the latter illegally took possession of 133 acres belonging to Chawathil First Nation. She gave a long interview to *Indian World* to explain how the government tricked her people into thinking they were surrendering at most 19 acres while the government took 133 and left them with 12 acres of land.<sup>216</sup> In addition, her work as a historian for the land claims survey was instrumental in documenting the traditional use made of the land by the community members and knowledge keepers of the Stó:lō nation. In the 90s, Patricia used to work at the Stó:lō Nation Aboriginal Rights and Title Department (the precursor of Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre) for the traditional use study of the land under the management of Naxaxalt'si Albert McHalsie. She interviewed people about their use of the land and asked them to indicate on maps their berry-picking sites, trails and other places of importance. The area she was focusing on was “the area behind Chawathil, between Harrison Lake, the Fraser River and Spuzzum Creek”.<sup>217</sup> Beyond simply asking people about their use of the land, she also collected precious information about their life and culture. For instance, in one interview with Rena Point, she gathered information about practices of polygamy in the past.<sup>218</sup>

In terms of long-term environmental protection and sustainable resource extraction methods, they notably protested the construction of the Coquihalla Highway. The Coquihalla Highway was going to be a segment of the Highway 5, located south of Kamloops. My co-interviewer, Gordon Lyall, worked on a project aiming to describe the impact of the Lougheed Highway (BC7) on the Chawathil's community, so we were each other's co-interviewers. From our interviews, I gathered that most of the people we spoke to had had fears of the impact that the highway would have on the community, and they were right: the highway caused many social, environmental, health changes that they have determined served mostly to impact the population negatively. Anticipating

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<sup>215</sup> For more information on the Constitution Express, see George, *Unsettling Canada*, 2015, and Nickel, *United We Stand, Together We Perish*, 265-270.

<sup>216</sup> *Indian World*, « DIA MISMANAGEMENT: Hope Band Fights Back », vol.3 nb. 1, pages 10-11, April 1980.

<sup>217</sup> Sonny McHalsie, Interview, 2017-06-29, [19 :53].

<sup>218</sup> Rena Point Bolton, *Stó:lō Nation Traditional Use Study Transcript*, Interview by Patricia John and Val Joe, June 3d, 1996.

this, Ron and Pat used their skills of eloquence and diplomacy, and strategically chose to use a more transformational approach through public speaking as a tool to inspire people to join their vision of more sustainable long-term choices.

As a consequence, they organized protests against the highway before it was built and during construction and spoke during meetings about the potential dangers it would have. Sadly, the construction of the highway was ordered and complete by 1986. While they were unsuccessful in preventing the construction of the highway, thanks to his previous experience in the logging industry and his negotiation skills, Ron was nonetheless able to use his previous experience, skills and contacts as a logger to secure some economic spinoffs such as a contract for a local indigenous logging company to clear the right of ways, thus securing some jobs for community members and preserving to a degree the interests of the community.

As second example of how Patricia and Ron used a more transformational style of leadership is when Patricia chose to speak on various occasions against the development of the proposed twinning of the Kinder Morgan Pipeline, a 25 kilometers section of which runs through Chawathil Stó:lō's traditional fishing sites.<sup>219</sup> While the original pipeline has been running through Chawathil since the late 1950s, the proposed second line would more than double the amount of dangerous oil passing through her First Nation. She was concerned about the time it would take to first responders to react in case of emergency, denounced the attempts at buying first nations' acceptance of the pipeline, and stated that in her concerns were unanimously shared by the 135 first nations living along the pipeline route in Alberta and British Columbia.<sup>220</sup> Patricia was a woman of her time who knew how to use the media to convey important messages; at the same time, this also represented a continuation of si:yam leadership practices of diplomacy and eloquence to empower communities through speeches.

Still in terms of a long-term vision of a more sustainable relationship to the environment, Patricia expressed a particular concern for the watersheds themselves: "You can't tell me to go elsewhere. Go elsewhere and get your medicine. Go elsewhere and do your hunting. And the spirituality of the watersheds. The water is vital to our practices"<sup>221</sup>, thus reiterating again how

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<sup>219</sup> X.Y.Zeng, "Hope voices concerns, support over pipeline" in the *Hope Standard*, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>220</sup> X.Y.Zeng, "Hope voices concerns, support over pipeline" in the *Hope Standard*, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

<sup>221</sup> X.Y.Zeng, "Hope voices concerns, support over pipeline" in the *Hope Standard*, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

central the watersheds are to the Stó:lō people and to Patricia and Ron themselves. A year before, in June 2015, Patricia was interviewed for the film *Directly Affected*, a documentary aiming to bring the voices of the people affected by the pipelines to light. In a *Hope Standard* article presenting the movie, Patricia is quoted as having given “an impassioned speech about the dangers of the proposed pipeline and the complete disrespect for Mother Earth that it represents, while discussing environmental issues with the existing pipeline”.<sup>222</sup> She is further quoted as having described the construction of the pipeline and lack of meaningful consultation as “legislative violence”.<sup>223</sup>

Whether at the political or social level, “coming home” was a defining moment in Ron’s and Patricia’s lives. It gave them momentum and became a turning point in their *sqwelqwel*, their true story. The notion of “coming home” seems to also be a concept recurrent for other Coast Salish leaders, as others have referred to Ron’s coming home in other interviews, and this term has been used to describe George Manuel’s experience as well prior to his experience in the Constitution Express. Beyond setting the tone for the following chapters of their lives, “Coming home” became a main component of their leadership.

#### “I AM STÓ:LŌ” : WHAT PAT AND RON’S STORIES TEACH US ABOUT STO:LO LEADERSHIP FROM THE 1970s TO THE 1990s

Ron described how a core moment in his life was when he started the process of coming home: he climbed on Lady Franklin Rock, an island on the Fraser River difficult to access and dangerous to climb onto, got up and screamed southward “I am Stó:lō!”, looking in all four directions, as he embraced his identity and culture.<sup>224</sup> Lady Franklin’s Rock was not just any type of rock: it is a Place of Power, a place that underwent a transformation by Xexals. Ron’s leadership is deeply anchored in his identity as a Stó:lō man. It is a hybrid leadership style combining the type of traditional decision-making process of a Si:yam with a hard-working, no non-sense work ethic that he acquired during his time as a logger.

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<sup>222</sup> *Hope Standard*, “Controversial Film Lands in Hope”, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>223</sup> *Hope Standard*, “Controversial Film Lands in Hope”, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>224</sup> Ron John, *Interview by Angélique Tardivel*, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017, [23:45].

Pat's and Ron's leadership is deeply focused on long-term environmental, economic and cultural sustainability. While in the western world, capitalism and environmental politics were represented for a long time as an irreconcilable dichotomy, Pat and Ron's expressed a very practical sense of what it means to preserve the environment, their culture, and engage in what some would call "traditional economies". Naturally following a Stó:lō pre-contact practice of resource extraction primarily focused on harvesting salmon, Patricia and Ron John decided, as a major business venture, to start a fish farm. In addition to the fish farm and their housing project, Ron and Pat secured funds to initiate the construction of several other buildings and enterprises for the welfare of their community: a log building, Te Lsaletset, for the administration of Chawathil, the current Band Council Building, replacing the mobile home used in the past, a community hall, a daycare, a farm and a food co-op.

Pat was particularly active in terms of cultural revitalization, especially in terms of the protection of the Halq'emeylem language. To become fully immersed in Chawathil's culture, she even learned how to read and understand the Stó:lō language, Halq'emeylem. She was a speaker at several conferences, including one in Vancouver, the Native Rights – Language Conference of April 13th, 1985. According to Sonny McHalsie and a picture from the Coqualeetza Archives, "Patricia used to work at Seabird as a storyteller, acting out some of the swoxwiyam stories [...], so she had an interest in the swoxwiyam, the language...".<sup>225</sup>

Pat and Ron were instrumental in the creation of the Telte-Yet days at the Telte-Yet Campsite, (Chawathil Reserve IR1), in Hope. They organized the Telte-Yet games for five years. As for the reason of their creation, Ron John explained:

Well I figure there's some kind of holiday, so we wanted to, kind of means a lot to our First Nations, so that's how that started. To keep our First Nation people. And to participate in different events that usually goes on and, in time they have a park up there.... crowds would show up there goes on up there. That's for ourselves.<sup>226</sup>

The Telte-Yet campsite is located on historical grounds belonging to the Chawathil First Nation, and is known for its remnants of a pit house, and known as the last place where the kidnapped Stó:lō boys saw their homeland after being captured by European miners in the early

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<sup>225</sup> See Sonny McHalsie, *Interview by Author*, 2017-06-02, [35 :05], and Coqualeetza Archives, picture of Patricia.

<sup>226</sup> Ron John, *Interview by Author*, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

1860s. The Telte-yet days included several logging, strengths contests, canoe races, and even included the election of an Indian Princess.

Ron and Pat also initiated a project on Greenwood Island, an Indian Reserve and ancient village site. Their idea was to build a reconstruction of a historical site, including pit houses and long houses, for educational purposes. The project was well on its way before Ron and Pat ran into problems. By the time the site had been cleared and trails built, it became impossible to obtain liability insurance due to the danger of bringing tourists to the island by boat, and the project fell apart.

Pat, a believer in feminine agency, spoke publicly on a number of issues affecting the Stó:lō. For instance, in July 1992, she spoke out against the construction of a race track in the Laidlaw area since it would be “too disruptive of [their] lifestyle” due to concerns about noise and air pollution.<sup>227</sup> Although they did not have legal control over the site, the town administrator of the city of Hope wrote a letter of support for the First Nation community. She would frequently use her knowledge of Stó:lō history, that she acquired through personal research and during her work as Stó:lō Nation to give conferences and interviews. This deliberate choice to use the media as a tool to raise awareness on the concerns and issues facing her community denotes a strong sense of the importance of public relations, which can be perceived as a continuation of earlier si:yam practices of using language and knowledge of history as a tool, with the added contribution of second-wave feminism, making her perhaps what I would call tentatively a “feminist and activist si:yam”.

Several of the community members I spoke to shared heartfelt descriptions of how Pat and Ron were involved in the community, and how meaningful the leadership styles and choices described above were for the community. These statements indicate the depth of respect and appreciation that people in the community have for Ron and Pat. For example, Ida John, Ron’s former sister-in-law, gave this description of their role in the community when they first arrived:

[...]. I think Pat and Ron are really modest about what they’ve accomplished here. I can’t believe, you know, before it was just, the reserve had certain houses, not many, no development on there at all, and because all the people were taken away to residential school, there was no family then, and then, it was just, kind of, you know, going to nothing, there was nothing here, and then when Ron and Pat came in, because Pat became manager right

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<sup>227</sup> Mark Falkenberg, « Indian Band Opposes Race track », in *The Chilliwack Progress*, July 3d, 1992.

on the band, and I just remember so many things, they were getting pipes in for water reservoirs for water [...], that was a big deal, that was a lot of money getting proper septic systems in and all that, it was just amazing. [...]

She then elaborated on their subsequent actions:

We did a forestry plan, that took twenty years as well, and then we had a salmon farm, a fish farm too, that was at the back, because of what happened then. I think it went to the third largest in BC [...] So many things. We had an agricultural farm in the back because we have [a lot] of land here, especially back here. You can grow anything right. So, we had a lot of things happen in a short amount of time. It was just quick. Pat had brought people in to help people upgrade, now those people are working, they've got their degrees some of them, lots of success with that. (...). There's so much more too, so I think they haven't been given their gratitude from people; but they fully deserve because of where we are now. (...) It all stems from that heart right. There's so much more. [Pat and Ron] did a lot.<sup>228</sup>

These descriptions speak not only to what Ron and Pat accomplished, but the means by which they have done it and the personality they display in terms of getting things done. Certainly, I developed the same appreciative and respectful impressions myself. The first time I met her, I was accompanied by my student colleagues Davis Rogers and Gordon Lyall, and she made a strong impression on all of us. Upon our second meeting, she addressed us all by our first names, demonstrating how respectful relationships are formed; she would also remember the dates of events from long ago. Beyond her great memory, she also proved to be an eloquent speaker whose appreciation and engagement towards her community showed clearly through her descriptions of her life. Patricia and Ron still both have plans for the future of the community. During the last interview of my first stay in S'ólh Temexw, when asked about their future projects, they shared some of their ideas. One is reviving the fish farm by replacing the trout with crayfish. Another one is bringing the fruit trees destroyed by the construction of the train tracks and pipeline back. They also highlighted the importance of preserving the Halq'emeylem language.

I asked Ron and Pat what issues they thought were the most pressing for the community. Ron stated that the most important issue was the leadership. For him, "people need to be reminded why they were elected and who they are working for. One or two individuals who are not doing things for the community but for their own need to be reminded of that." He also mentioned the importance of keeping up with new development to be ready for change. He finally stressed that some leaders do not realize that. As for Patricia, the issue revolves around rights and title claims. She stated that "it took twenty-three years to get to the table" in regards to land claims, that "people need to hear about collaborative consent", and that "consent stays with the pressing issues, issues

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<sup>228</sup> Ida John, *Interview by Author*, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

that the TRC is not pressing. It impacts my family. They need to heal. The families need to heal”. Both Patricia and Ron also stated that preserving the environment and the land was of utmost importance. Patricia denounced the consequences of the construction of the Kinder Morgan pipeline on Stó:lō lands and spirituality: “You can’t tell me to go elsewhere. Go elsewhere and get your medicines. Go elsewhere and do your hunting. And the spirituality of the watersheds. The water is vital to our practices”.<sup>229</sup>

### **Si:yam and Indian Act Chief: a Hybrid Type of Leadership**

What can this data tell us about the leadership of Patricia and Ron John? Did they return to pre-colonial notions of Stó:lō leadership, did they instead adopt the practices and values of Indian Act Chiefs and/or Church Chiefs, or did they transcend both? What were the main characteristics of Stó:lō leadership in that time period? An initial step towards answering those questions could be assessing Ron and Patricia’s leadership choices against the ethnographic definitions of si:yam and Indian act chief presented in our first chapter.

In our first chapter, we identified some characteristics of pre-nineteenth century Stó:lō si:yam or leaders as identified by ethnographers: they came from respectable lineages, knew their history, they were wealthy and, wise and highly moral beings respected by their community. They could be demoted from their status if they failed their obligations. As noted earlier, Ron is a direct descendant of Pierre Ayessik, a high-status Church Chief, which makes him a hereditary leader in addition of being an elected Chief. He also claims to have ancestral ties to the watershed of the Fraser valley, thus also situating his ancestral lineage in a geographical framework. He is also related to other elected chiefs in the Fraser Valley, such as Chief Clem Seymour from Seabird Island First Nation via his mother, Evangéline Pete.

In terms of wealth, it seems that Pat and Ron were much more focused on improving the wealth of their community rather than their own, which shows an adaptation of earlier concepts of leadership. They devoted significant amounts of resources to increase the housing of their community and create economic opportunities on reserve. It seems that their personal wealth resided way more on their own gifts and leadership abilities rather than on an accumulation of physical wealth. During a workshop of the Ethnohistory Field School, Laura Weylick,

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<sup>229</sup> Patricia John, Interview with the *Hope Standard*, July 25th, 2017.



Halq'emeylem speaker and teacher, shared the following Stó:lō teaching: “we carry all of our wealth on ourselves”. This seems to indicate that Stó:lō understandings of wealth have shifted from earlier, pre-19<sup>th</sup> century times, from designating an accumulation of physical wealth like copper or blankets, to human gifts like speech and wisdom.

Ron and Pat's leadership can be considered hybrid: they combined elements of western and Stó:lō styles of leadership depending on the conditions they encountered. Their spiritual leadership can also be understood within the notion of syncretism: by blending and transcending the Christian and Stó:lō beliefs systems together and by attending Winter Dances and Shaker ceremonies (the latter religion being itself an example of syncretism), Pat and Ron ultimately define their spirituality in a non-binary manner, in line with their hybrid style of leadership. In our interviews they clearly state that these two belief systems are not antagonistic. Instead, they complement and inform each other. Ron's spiritual strength grew organically from the forest and places of power, it did not solely emerge from an externally prescribed set of doctrines.

From what I witnessed and from what other community members have told me, it appears that Ron and Pat clearly possess virtues important to the Stó:lō to a high degree. They have been praised for their wisdom, their intelligence, and their ability to lead their people and to give them a voice. Several interviewees highlighted their speech and public speaking abilities: they were able to “give a voice to their people”. But in order to understand Ron and Pat's conceptions of leadership, one has to go beyond simply assessing their qualities against literary definitions. During my second round of interviews, when recounting the events described above and answering questions about Stó:lō leadership, it became apparent that the research participants would recurrently use certain words or expressions, pointing to their importance. For instance, in separate interviews, Chief Clem Seymour and Grand Chief Clarence (Kat) Pennier kept referring to the importance for si:yam of “sitting down”, listening, as well as “walking as one”, “having one voice” (Lastemat in halq'emeylem). They identified competition and greed as a main factor in contemporary fractures of Stó:lō communities, thus distinguishing the newer generation from theirs and Ron's. These concepts seem to point to a set of principles of Stó:lō leadership and decision making, characteristic of their generation. I tried different ways to represent these concepts and how they interact with each other, but the one that I found most useful was using a Stó:lō loom as a metaphor.

## **Interpretation**

One way to think of the leadership of Patricia and Ron John is to imagine it as being structured like a Stó:lō loom (see page 98). The following observations on Stó:lō weaving comes from a workshop I saw while studying at the Coqualeetza archives. The traditional weaver used wool and a wooden loom made of two vertical poles and three horizontal bars. These horizontal bars could be moved vertically and temporarily fixed by nails on the vertical bars of the loom. The string is woven up and down, in different directions, but consistently brought back to the central bar.

Before I thought of applying it to leadership concepts, I noticed that Ron's and Pat's narrative patterns reminded me of that Stó:lō loom I saw at Coqualeetza. Just as the strings and the middle bar of a loom is always brought back to the middle, Ron and Pat describe their own story by going in different directions but tending to come back to tying the events of their life histories to the watersheds of the Fraser and Columbia River. In Stó:lō weaving, the central bar – and thus the tapestry – is also moved up to make room for more weaving, just like a river flowing. Pat and Ron's narratives typically converge towards the same story plot, then moving back from it, tending to return to it eventually, creating a beautiful interwoven pattern that is comprehensive and complete. It was water that linked their stories together; the waters of the Columbia River that empties into the Pacific Ocean, near where Patricia grew up, which joined the ocean's tides to become her teachers; and the waters of the Fraser Canyon and the river called Stó:lō, where Ron grew up fishing, and where Pat eventually joined him. Pat described these two great rivers as linking her husband and herself to their ancestors as well as to the previous lives where they had already met each other and been together. Patricia and Ron both expressed that they felt physically and spiritually nourished by rivers and waterways, and they hoped that the Fraser Stó:lō River would be protected for future generations of the Chawathil community. But beyond representing Ron and Pat's narrative characteristics, the loom metaphor also helps explain some of the characteristics of Stó:lō leadership from the 1970s to the 1990s. Indeed, the same concepts became apparent throughout the interviews with Ron, Pat, and other knowledge keepers, and kept appearing throughout the interview process. These concepts seemed to connect to each other. One way to describe the relationship between these concepts is to present these principles of Stó:lō leadership using the figure of the loom as an example.

The tapestry woven on the loom represents the cultural context giving birth to Stó:lō leadership: this is the representation of Coast Salish Collective Consciousness, where the mountains, watersheds, and other places of power play their important roles. It is built by the individual and collective contributions of every Stó:lō leader. The loom itself is made of a frame and of three bars. Each one of the four pieces of wood making up the frame represents the “strength”, “vitality”, the “shxweli”, the spirit of Stó:lō leadership; as Patricia explained, this strength is made of four elements of strength: the spiritual, the mental, the physical and the emotional. The central bar of the loom is the unique contribution that a given leader brings to their community. In Ron’s case, it represents the notion of “coming home”, because this is both a starting point and a central point in the leadership narratives of Coast Salish leaders such as Ron John and George Manuel. This leaves us with the two other bars: one is Lét’syos, the other one Lelt’smat (Lastemat): one mind, one heart.<sup>230</sup>

There can be any number of vertical strings on a Stó:lō loom depending on the desired size of the tapestry, as long as there is an odd number of them. Patricia has expressed the wish that the seven vertical strings of this tapestry represent Seven Feathers of Reconciliation be used, to bring an element of modernity into the model: they are humility, bravery, honesty, wisdom, truth, respect, and love. The horizontal strings are the values and principles deemed important moral guidelines by si:yam. I have included the ones that were shared during interviews with Ron, Pat, Kat Pennier, Clem Seymour and Naxaxalhts’i. Each one of these strings has a specific role or function, and they inform si:yam’s decision making process. It is a flexible system, and the model allows for other principles to be included as well. As of today, I suggest the following for the horizontal strings: having one’s heart in the right place, sitting down, listening, giving a voice to the people, being of good mind, taking care of everything around us, standing up for the people, and doing the right thing for the people.

There is room for several weavers on that Loom Model. Patricia’s taking on the duties of a historian and public relations agent suggests that instead of being the sole leader of the community as the *Indian Act* intended, Ron instead chose to incorporate practices from earlier Stó:lō si:yam (i.e. the role of task-master) into his own leadership style as to act in a more specialized way and

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<sup>230</sup> Patricia John, *Interview by author*, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

share his powers with other leaders. In this instance, Patricia would also be a *si:yam*, a task master responsible for certain duties while Ron and other leaders would exercise their powers in other areas. While they both act together, they also play separate roles: Ron is a task-master providing vision, political strength and economic wealth to the community, while Patricia is a task master in charge of administrative, historical and social duties. In this way Ron and Patricia are able to transcend the limitations of the *Indian Act* system to lead in a hybrid, distinctive Stó:lō way.

Finally, the empty space between the strings are the tunnels dear to Stó:lō culture that enable them to connect with each other across time and space, the way Patricia did when she moved to Chawathil to be with Ron. This space is not empty; this is what the artist and author Bill Reid refers to as “negative space” in West Coast Art. It is as important as what is made of matter. Together, the principles of Stó:lō leadership described above weave the blanket of decisions made by Stó:lō leaders of Pat’s and Ron’s generation.

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps it is the concepts expressed in the Stó:lō loom model together that characterize Stó:lō leadership from the 1970s to the 1990s. Pat’s and Ron’s generation proudly asserted their cultural principles as a positive vector of change. They had to be creative in a period of change and of hardships, and they found strength and inspiration in tradition, while at the same time using the modern tools at their disposal. Since Ron was a descendant of Pierre Ayessik, that he was selected as successor by Grand Chief Peter Dennis Peters, and that according to all the community members and chiefs I interviewed, he possesses all the virtues expected of a “*siya:m*”, and is recognized as such by the community, Ron performed a continuation of pre-colonial Stó:lō leadership values, while at the same time being an elected chief. Ron is both a hereditary leader and a former *Indian Act* Chief. Indeed, he was able to transcend both identities. Was he a Church chief? His running away from residential school as a child and his conflicts with the 7th Day Adventists puts him somewhat – perhaps very much - at odds with the Christian religion. However, as a *si:yam*, as a logger, as a fisher and hunter, he has played an important role in Stó:lō spirituality and ceremoniality in his community. Patricia says that he gets his spirituality from his time spent on the mountain as a logger, from visiting and respecting places of power. As for Patricia, she jokes that she converted Pat to the Shaker religion.

Ron's leadership style was informed by his training with his own elders, his experience as a logger, hunter and trapper, his time in residential school, the beliefs in second wave feminism, female agency and Shakerism brought by Patricia, and by the actions of other prominent Salish leaders of the time, such as George Manuel. His primary focus was long-term environmental, cultural and economic sustainability for his people. His leadership style could be described as a mix of authoritarian, democratic and transformational styles, and he would adapt his reactions to the situations and the people and encountered. His work ethic was primarily informed by pre-19<sup>th</sup> century si:yam values, as well as by the protestant, no-nonsense, results-focused worth ethic he acquired during his time as a logger.

He appears to have shared several priorities and leadership styles with previous Stó:lō leaders, while sometimes taking a more direct approach. For instance, similarly to the si:yam of the 1906 Delegation, he also went East to meet the British Monarch during the Constitution Express. However, while his great-grandfather Pierre Ayessik had chosen to use the written language through petitions to protect the lands of his people from settler encroachment, Ron, to achieve the same goal, did not hesitate to get into a verbal altercation with an Indian Agent, Earl Bachman. This directness may have come from the practical work values he had acquired during his time as a logger, but it is also possible that pre-contact si:yam also had to use more direct techniques in times of community dissent, when facing pressures from outside communities or dealing with an emergency situation. As a result, authoritative decision-making may have represented both a continuation of pre-contact leadership techniques and an innovation based on Ron's personal experience. Some historical evidence points to the latter. The members of the 1906 Delegation had agreed to a fifteen minutes audience with the King, while they were facing a time of severe crisis for their people. At the same time, they were indeed in a foreign land and may have felt that adhering to diplomacy would have increased their chances to reach their goals, where being more forceful with the British monarch would have most likely resulted in antagonizing him.

On his end, Ron sometimes chose civil disobedience, and did not take no for an answer, which was potentially a result from global pan-indigenous collaborations through the UBCIC and the AIM during the 60s and the 70s, at a time where authors like Vine Deloria Jr encouraged more active, direct forms of resistance against the colonial powers. This very direct leadership

style, still informed by what some would refer to as a more collaborative or democratic approach with his fellow band members, and by the pre-nineteenth century eloquence of si:yam destined to inspire others to follow them (a more transformational style), allowed Ron several economic successes in his business ventures, leading to long-term improvements in the economic, demographic and infrastructural wealth of his reserve.



Figure 3.1: picture of a Stó:lō loom, taken from <http://www.stolotourism.com/about>.

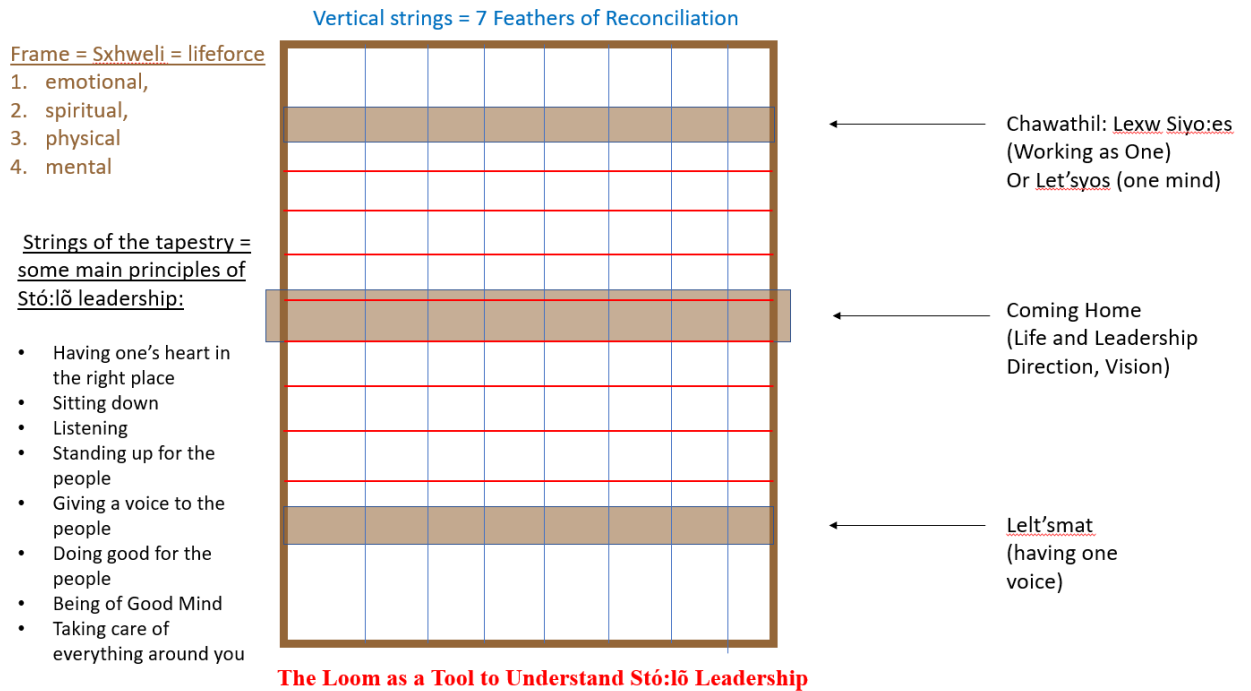


Figure 3.2: Stó:lō Loom as a Model for the Stó:lō Decision-Making Process

## CONCLUSION

Through a combination of ethnohistory, community engaged research, post-colonial theory, and archival research, this thesis aimed to close the gap in the literature about Stó:lō leaders. Indeed, literature on Stó:lō leadership extensively documented returning world war two veterans and the characteristics of their leadership styles, but dedicated little time to the following generation of leaders, the silent generation, who came to age and worked during the 1970s all the way until the 1990s. As a result, this study sought to explore the characteristics of Stó:lō leadership from the 1970s to the 1990s, through the lens of the leadership style and decisions of Patricia and Ron John, who were leaders of Chawathil First Nation during this time frame. Ron and Pat's time was a period marked by several significant historical events, including major constitutional changes, the rise of modern BC Indigenous Organizations, and the introduction of new assimilationist policies, which brought a peculiar set of challenges and obstacles that Stó:lō leaders of the time had to negotiate. They did so by responding in hybrid ways, simultaneously building on earlier leadership structures and creating innovative solutions, as can be seen through the examples of the Constitution Express and the Stó:lō War Council.

In “Orality about Literacy, the ‘Black and White’ of Salish History”,<sup>231</sup> Carlson highlighted the complexity and nuances of the nature of Stó:lō leadership. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish western influences from pre-contact, Stó:lō characteristics of leadership, and Ron John's life story as si:yam and band council chief of Chawathil First Nation appears to validate these complexities. Patricia's assessment of their joint spirituality even appears to question the usefulness of this endeavor, rendering it invalid or, at the very least, obsolete. A better question then, is to identify the characteristics of their leadership in its specific cultural context and look at how it continued or departed from leadership techniques and styles employed by the leaders who preceded them.

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<sup>231</sup> Carlson, “Chapter 2: Orality about Literacy: the ‘Black and White’ of Salish History”, in Keith Carlson, Kristina Fagan and Natalia Khanenko-Friesen: *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 2011, pp 43-69.

## **Summary of the Findings:**

The first chapter provided an overview of existing literature in order to identify the characteristics of si:yam leadership in pre-contact times, and how the religious and political colonialism of S'ólh Téméxw as well as the two smallpox epidemics affected the leadership styles of post-contact leaders. A historical review of the secondary literature on the subject, as well as archival research in Oblates and Ethnographic reports reveals that early si:yam, far from being “chiefs” in the European sense, were instead respected, “worthy” individuals of lineages from the higher classes of Stó:lō society, s'melalh. S'melalh displayed several qualities: wisdom, ability to generate and redistribute wealth. They also inspired people to follow them. One important feature of the quality of si:yam was “knowing their history”, as opposed to members of the lower classes, “worthless people”, s'temex, who had forgotten their history. Two smallpox epidemics caused a massive drop in Stó:lō demographics, causing a loss of knowledge, difficulties to teach the younger generations, and a greater number of inter-marriages across the different strata of Stó:lō society, making it more difficult for people to base accession to si:yamship on heredity. Missionaries hoping to Christianize those they perceived as sinners, and governmental officials charged to implement the *Indian Act* attempted to assimilate the Stó:lō, and to this end often attempted to co-opt si:yam through colonial mimicry. In particular, these individuals emphasized the possibility of “achieved status” over “assigned status”, to make assimilation into western Canadian society a more appealing endeavour than the continuation of Stó:lō practices, deemed unbeneficial and inferior. In return, the Stó:lō often reacted in hybrid ways to these colonial techniques. Indeed, the Salish leaders who took part in the 1906 delegation demonstrated that they were able to preserve their sense of identity and leadership, in particular their diplomatic role, while also displaying the capacity to adapt to the colonizers to re-assert the claims that they had been promised. Similarly, we saw that a petition written by Ron John's ancestor, his great-grandfather Pierre Ayessik, indicated that he used his status as a Church Chief – a converted Stó:lō leader whose role was to ensure his community followed Christian principles – to represent his and other Stó:lō bands in a petition addressed to the Governor, representative of the monarch of England, in order to protest against settler encroachment. This seems to suggest that despite having to use new leadership techniques and hybridity to promote the economic, social, health and cultural interests of their people, post-contact Stó:lō leaders of the twentieth century still maintained a continuation of the qualities of pre-contact si:yam.



The second chapter highlighted the changes si:yamship underwent during the twentieth century. Its first half was marked by the trauma and opportunities brought by the Two World Wars. While the mental, emotional and physical trauma experienced by returning veterans definitely brought an additional burden for Stó:lō leaders to overcome, other pressing concerns had to be negotiated, such as the veterans' benefits crisis and the post-world war encroachment of S'olh Téméxw. However, the twentieth century conflicts also brought some new opportunities, for instance with a greater recognition within non-indigenous Canadian society, and new leadership styles, such as rigid lines of command and administrative skills brought by their time in the army. The wars brought a puzzle for Stó:lō leaders to solve: how could one be a celebrated war hero, used to being treated equally in the army, live between an occidental world that often regarded indigenous cultures as inferior, while also being despised by other Stó:lō for being perceived as an aggressive, "anti-siyam" warrior? These returning veterans appear to have had some success in redefining what leadership means to them, as the return of the use of the "War Council" in a positive light during the second half of the twentieth century to solve conflicts amidst Stó:lō society seems to indicate. The post world war two era was also marked by the rise of the civil rights movements, in particular with the American Indian Movement and second-wave feminism, of the New Deal, and of the counterculture of the sixties, which all influenced Stó:lō leadership of the time. It is also during this time period that logging became a common employment opportunity among the Stó:lō, which represented, for many, a continuation of their work in the forest as trappers, hunters and fishers. Logging and other sports, such as boxing and canoe racing, simultaneously continued and transformed what leadership meant for the Stó:lō.

In the last chapter, two series of semi-structured interviews, combined with archival research focused on Oblates reports, newspaper articles, as well as ethnographic reports, revealed that the main political focus of Patricia and Ron John was the long-term economic, cultural and environmental sustainability for the people of Chawathil First Nation. He and Pat both articulated their actions and visions in the larger context of supra-tribal watershed-based identity and community relations, as well as in the environmental context of Places of Power. This largely informed how they perceived leadership. Ron came of age at the time where the civil rights movements, second wave feminism, and the counterculture of the sixties became increasingly influent, and he took an active part in these social movements that were pushing for greater equality between people. Informed by the time he spent with his elders, the western education he acquired

in residential school at St. Mary in Mission, BC, followed by his professional experience in the forest as a rigger, hunter, trapper and fisher, he developed a style that could be considered both transformational, collaborative and democratic when communicating with his fellow band members, while also being more authoritarian with his endeavours with government officials through direct action, civil disobedience and launching of court cases. This practicality, resilience and determination gave him the opportunity to secure economic success for his community: he was both a businessman and a si:yam.

### **Interpretation and Analysis of the Findings:**

Ron John appears to have maintained a definite continuity with the hybrid techniques, styles and modes of governance of previous si:yam from the nineteenth and twentieth century, such as those who took part in the 1906 delegation and his ancestor Pierre Ayessik, in that he adopted a form of leadership which incorporated and used elements of western modes of governance (use of the written language to secure economic security to his community for instance, running for Chief through the *Indian Act* system), while maintaining the responsibilities, duties and work ethic of a si:yam that was described in our first chapter (diplomacy, wisdom, generosity, generation of wealth within the community). Ron also returned to the earlier role of si:yam as a “task-master” sharing his duties and responsibilities with other si:yam, such as Patricia, in order to lead in a more efficient manner.

Informed by the protestant, no-nonsense culture of the logging industry, he also sometimes chose to adopt a more practical approach than that of the previous, well-studied generation of si:yam. Contrary to his predecessor, P.D. Peters, who rarely spoke to the media, Ron made an extensive use of the press, in a way that can be understood as a continuation of the importance of eloquence and public speaking of pre-nineteenth century si:yam. In addition to this continuation with earlier practices associated with si:yam leadership, Ron’s worldview as a leader seems to have also been influenced by the veterans of the world war, especially given the importance for him of the notion of “coming home”, by the protestant work ethic he developed (or reinforced) as a logger, and by prominent indigenous political activists and thinkers of the sixties and seventies, in particular George Manuel. His wife, Patricia John, carried a major influence in Ron’s leadership: she brought with her elements of Shakerism, second-wave feminism and notions of female agency that largely contributed to carve a place for women in modern Stó:l̓ leadership. While pre-contact

era women would seldom have been able to become si:yam, they nevertheless largely contributed to Stó:lō political and economical life. Women like Patricia helped to close this gap, and this generation of leaders played a major role in encouraging and welcoming Stó:lō women in leadership roles.

Part of Ron John's leadership appears to have also differentiated itself from the previous and following generations of Stó:lō leaders, at least to some extent. While chiefs of the previous generation may have more greatly adhered to the status quo – Peter Dennis Peter did not significantly oppose the actions of the Canadian government -, Ron John would often engage in civil disobedience. Ron and other si:yam of his generation, such as Clarence (Kat) Pennier and Clem Seymour, also appear to perceive significant distinctions between their generation and the following one, in particular in terms of the increased competition for seats on band councils, in a time when heredity is becoming less important and where lineages are becoming more porous with inter-class marriages. In summary, Ron and Patricia's leadership style could be broadly defined as a mix of transformational, collaborative, authoritarian and democratic styles, and as a hybrid form of Stó:lō si:yamship, which reacted to outside factors by rejecting and incorporating some of them, creating a unique strategy to face the issues of their time period. They distinguished themselves from the previous generation by taking part in pan-indigenous movements which transcended British Columbia regional identities, and by the following generation by maintaining limits to the competition brought by the *Indian Act system*.

### **Limitations**

Certain factors limited this research. Many leaders of Ron's generation have passed, and he is one of the last si:yam who worked as a band council chief between the seventies and the nineties. As a result, I could not pretend to be exhaustive and complete a systematic review of the leadership practices of the time for all Stó:lō leaders in the Fraser Valley at the time. Rather, Ron's example provides us with a window to one of the multiple experiences of si:yam. Peter Dennis Peters, Ron's predecessor at the head of Chawathil First Nation, passed a few years ago, so I did not have the chance to interview him to see how he viewed the transition from his mandate to Ron's. While I was originally hoping this would be potentially feasible, I also did not have the occasion to speak directly to his political opponents, such as Earl Bachman or the consultant who worked with Pat and Ron on the fish farm and who allegedly breached confidentiality and non-

competition clauses, which could have brought some interesting additional perspectives on Ron's leadership. The relatively recent happenings of the events involving Earl Bachman are historically too recent for the documents to be released to the general public; as a result, I was not able to obtain Indian Affairs documents pertaining to the land transactions and endeavours of Earl Bachman with the Chiefs of the Fraser River. My own bias as an outsider to the Stó:lō world necessarily limits the capacities of my understanding and analyzing of these issues, as does the limited timeframe I had to complete this research.

### **Relevance of the findings**

Ron John's example provides a useful model for future Stó:lō leaders, who could draw from his successes and difficulties to achieve long-term economic sustainability in the uncertain time of climate change where leaders are called to question their roles and responsibilities as the environmental concerns of their citizens become more pressing. In terms of the scholarly relevance of these findings, my work confirms the importance of situationally operationalized authority in the late twentieth century that earlier scholars had identified in the nineteenth century. I hope that these modest and tentative results will encourage more scholars to explore the specificities of Ron John's generation. Further scholarly enquiry could look at si:yam from other Stó:lō communities, perhaps as a comparative study with Chawathil First Nation.

In any case, it is through their unique relationship to the watersheds, their natural environment, their ancestors and the community around them that Pat and Ron were able to step into a leadership role in a time of significant political, social and environmental changes. Ron and Pat's lives are intertwined with the story of a community they helped blooming, and I hope they get all the credit they deserve.



*Figure A.1: Patricia and Ron John, photograph by Dr John Lutz, May 2017.*

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