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Returning home: heritage work among the Stl'atl'imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley

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This article focusses on heritage practices in the tensioned landscape of the Stl'atl'imx (pronounced Stat-lee-um) people of the Lower Lillooet River Valley, British Columbia, Canada. Displaced from their traditional territories and cultural traditions through the colonial encounter, they are enacting, challenging and remaking their heritage as part of their long term goal to reclaim their land and return "home". I draw on three examples of their heritage work: graveyard cleaning, the shifting "official" / "unofficial" heritage of a wagon road, and marshalling of the mountain named Nsvq'ts (pronounced In-SHUCK-ch) in order to illustrate how the past is strategically mobilised in order to substantiate positions in the present. While this paper focusses on heritage in an Indigenous and postcolonial context, I contend that the dynamics of heritage practices outlined here are applicable to all heritage practices.

Keywords: Heritage; Indigenous; negotiation; colonial encounter; identity

Heritage is strategic, negotiated and in a constant state of flux. Today the word “heritage” is used to describe everything from brands of breakfast cereal to luxury tableware. It is seldom defined and often used unselfconsciously. At its heart the term implies wholesomeness inherited from past generations but vital for present and future generational health.

I started postdoctoral research on the archaeology of movement in the traditional territories of the Stl’atl’limx (also written St’át’imc, pronounced Stat-lee-um) people (an Indigenous group in British Columbia, Canada) naive to the dynamics of heritage – what it really looked like. Research focused on archaeological survey, archival research and documenting oral accounts of a 19th century Gold Rush Trail that traverses their land. I was confronted by the complex overlapping and varied attachments to the road early on as I tried to make sense of why local people referred to the road by different names: Heritage Trail, Wagon Road, Gold Rush Trail. I soon learned that these names emerged through different experiences which – while embedded in the same ground surface – were negotiated in varied ways. The “Gold Rush Trail” was known beyond the community, part of the ‘official’ history of British Columbia; it could bring tourists and thus jobs to the region. The “wagon road” was used by local people and symbolised a time when people travelled and worked together – better times. The ‘Heritage Trail’ is the remembered road – those social relationships embedded in narrative and the material form of the road and the places of significance along its route.

These names are not interchangeable but their meanings do entangle and draw from each other in complex ways. The importance of heritage in this tensioned landscape became apparent when I asked Sydney Hunter, a young member of the Skatin band, what the Gold Rush Trail meant to them. Naively expecting that I would receive an answer steeped in bitterness over the road that brought outsiders and the dispossession of their land, instead the response was: ‘I am proud of the Gold Rush Trail; it was used by my ancestors’ (Sydney Hunter, personal communication, July 2012).

This paper looks more deeply at the complexity of heritage. It explores the inseparable nature of human identity, heritage and social landscape. Heritage is mobilised as part of daily life as we navigate our way in the world and as such, heritage and heritage practices are tensioned and negotiations of what is and is not “heritage” or of “heritage value” are embedded within varying levels of political and social power relationships.

I explore the dynamics of heritage formation in a contested First Nation (Indigenous) landscape in British Columbia, Canada (Figure 1). I focus on how those forced to leave their traditional territories as a result of the colonial encounter are enacting, challenging and remaking their heritage as part of their long term goal to return “home”. Here heritage has weight. Returning home is political—entwined in the land claims process and the need to establish proof of occupancy and use of traditional territories—while at the same time part of creating a sense of belonging and attachment (see Read 1996, 3). It should be noted that while this paper focuses on heritage practices of the Stl’atl’imx people of the Lower Lillooet River Valley, it contributes to broader discussions of heritage as ‘work’ (see below) that are applicable beyond this specific landscape and Indigenous context. [Figure 1 near here]

In this paper the term “heritage” refers to the ‘process of engagement, an act of communication and an act of making meaning in and for the present’; it is the “work” that keeps the past alive in the present and future (Smith 2006, 1). The phrase “heritage work” is used throughout as it highlights the active processes which create and recreate heritage.

I illustrate the active process of heritage formation among the Stl’atl’imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley through three examples: graveyard cleaning, the official versus unofficial heritage of a wagon road, and the place / name of the mountain called Nsvq’ts (pronounced In-SHUCK-ch). While these are discussed individually it is important to note that bodily engagement is an important component of heritage work in all three cases. It is through interaction (sharing, seeing, walking, remembering and cleaning) that meanings are confirmed and new webs of meaning are created (Kopytoff 1986, 67).

The concept of heritage as social action (Byrne, Brayshaw, and Ireland 2001; Byrne 2008; Harrison 2010) is vital to this case study as it accepts that heritage and heritage practices are always drawn on strategically in order to negotiate identities on a local and state/national level. In this landscape where people are physically and culturally alienated from their traditional territories because of the colonial encounter, heritage work is entangled in identity formation, legitimizing claims to land, resources and sovereignty. Political and social power in the present influences this negotiation (Hart 2012). This is clear in the case of a wagon road that runs through the traditional territories of the Stl’atl’imx. “Official” and “unofficial” heritage intersect as power relationships in the present influence how this road is understood, remembered and protected for the future.

Using Harrison's (2013, 4-5) dialogic approach to heritage is especially relevant in this landscape where heritage emerges through the interaction of the human, natural and spiritual worlds. To the Stl'atl'imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley, like many First Nation peoples, the relationships between humans and their landscapes have foundations in what anthropologists have called the Myth Age – the period when the world was made by mythological beings (Suttles 1990, 466). Thus this landscape with its places, names and features provide cues to remember not only the origins of the world but the place of the Stl'atl'imx people in it (see also Oliver 2010, 33). For example, as a focal point in their origin stories, Nsvq'ts has been called upon to do heritage work, 'to keep the past alive in the present and for the future' (Harrison 2013, 4-5).

It is important to understand that to the Stl'atl'imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley spirits are just as "real" as the roads, rivers, trees and people that surround them. Special care is taken (heritage work) to ensure that spirits and spiritual places are treated correctly and that balance among human, natural and spiritual worlds is maintained. As will be discussed, graveyard cleaning includes a series of bodily practices that sustain connections that bind time, place and generations to one another (Byrne 2008; Harrison and Rose 2010, 266).

Land and identity: removal and coming home

The Stl'atl'imx are an Interior Salish people who divide themselves into those of the "upper territory" (including the areas around Lillooet) and the "lower territory" or the Lower Lillooet River Valley ranging from Harrison Lake in the south to Lillooet Lake in the north. This paper focusses on the Stl'atl'imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley who speak the Ucwalmícwts ('oo-Kwale-MEWK) language. They are organised into the Xa'xtsa (pronounced HAHK-cha), Skatin and the Samahquam Nations.¹

Before discussing the heritage practices that the Stl'atl'imx are using to reconnect to their land and the identities born of that land, it is important to provide some contextual background to their colonial experience. Their contact encounter (British and European contact) is not unique among First Nations people in Canada. I focus here on the entanglement of the Stl'atl'imx in the Fraser River Gold Rush (1858-1863) and later the Cariboo Gold Rush (1862-1865) as thousands

¹ In 1980 these three Nations formed In-SHUCK-ch Nation as a means of representing themselves in the land claims process with the Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia. In 2010 Xa'xtsa Nation withdrew from negotiating final agreement as part of In-SHUCK-ch Nation.

of foreigners travelled through their territory along a wagon road to the upper Fraser River and Cariboo regions (Harris 1997, 80).

Many new towns like Port Douglas (named for Governor James Douglas) were established to service the Gold Rush in areas where First Nations villages already existed. Similarly to other First Nations in Canada (and elsewhere), this initial encounter with miners and settlers included growing dependence on the cash economy, access to alcohol and an increase in disease. Archival accounts from the High Sherriff C.S. Nicol (BC Archives, GR-1372, File 1248; DePaoli 2010, 72) describe the effects of alcohol and small pox on the First Nations population. By April 1859 the Xa'xtsa (then known as the Nkúkwtsamc people) were described as being in a 'destitute condition' (*Victoria Gazette* April 14, 1859).

The Pre-Emption Act (1860) changed how First Nations could access their traditional territories. It enabled British subjects to claim up to 160 acres of provincial Crown land in the colony of British Columbia with the possibility of purchasing an additional 480 acres (Harris 1997, 85-86). Not allowed to pre-empt land themselves, the Stl'atl'imx were restricted to newly created reservation lands set aside by the government (Harris 1997, 86). For example, at Port Douglas the First Nation was relocated from the northern side of Harrison Lake to a reserve which was established on the eastern side of town. By 1860 much of the land along the wagon road had been pre-empted by European entrepreneurs who aimed to settle along this route providing supplies to miners.

While the Pre-Emption Act was intended to protect Aboriginal land title from encroaching foreigners, as the number of settlers to the colonies increased government policy shifted. In 1858 the Crown Colony of British Columbia was formed. In 1867 Canada became a Dominion (British Columbia joined Confederation in 1871) and the Crown accepted responsibility for Aboriginal people and the lands that had been reserved for them through the British North America Act (Section 91 (24)). This started a period of coercive tutelage and guardianship where new settlement by foreigners was encouraged and the focus turned to integrating Aboriginal people into "mainstream society" through a "white" education and religion (Dyck 1991, 51; 74-86; McKee 2009, 16).

The Indian Act was imposed by the Federal Government in 1876 and administered "on the ground" by Indian Agents. It set out definitions of what "Indian" meant; who was "status" or "non-status"; what a reserve was; what behavior was permissible on reserve land; how leadership

was chosen and how to gain citizenship through enfranchisement. This Act was devastating to First Nations because it focused on altering identity by changing their relationship with the land, language and traditions and in so doing, identifying with their ancestors.

Through the Indian Act First Nations children were required to attend residential school (Haig-Brown 1993, 31). Many Stl'atl'imx children from the Lower Lillooet River Valley were sent to St. Mary's Mission in the city of Mission over 150 km away. Education started here in 1863 and continued until the late 1970s (Glavin 2002, 11, 88). Removed from their land, language, traditions and family many children who attended never returned to their traditional territory.

Forcibly displaced through residential school or lack of access to employment, education and healthcare, today only 20% of the Stl'atl'imx live in their traditional territories. The majority of members are scattered throughout the Fraser Valley in the cities of Mission, Chilliwack or Vancouver (see Figure 1). Thus an important part of the heritage “work” discussed below includes members learning where ‘home’ is.

As discussed below, land and identity are interdependent and mutually defining. There is a dialogic relationship among physical places, experiences and the individual and collective identities formed through interacting with them. Social landscapes are made up of meaningful “places” formed through human interaction ‘with nature and the supernatural... [People] cognize their experiences by developing spatial referents for their actions through material modification and verbal and metaphoric inscription’ (Zedeño and Bowser 2009, 5). The graveyards, abandoned villages, rivers, land and mountains are all integral elements of the Stl'atl'imx social landscape. Understandings of these places are entangled in the intersection of time, memory and landscape (Van Dyke 2008, 278). As we interact with the world, memories (distant, recent or mythical) congeal in our surroundings—their presence creates eddies which pull on us to pause, remember and forget.

Social landscapes and the physical landscape are not separate entities, but instead feed each other. Thus when the Stl'atl'imx were physically removed from the land, restricted to reservations and forced to attend residential schools, they were pulled from both the physical landscape and the social understanding of their place in that land—those traditions, languages and relationships born of it. Gaining access to traditional land and its resources is therefore

essential for Indigenous peoples to understand their “place” in the world—their cultural identity. As Corntassel (2011, 144) states:

[O]ur people must reconnect with the terrain and geography of their indigenous heritage if they are to comprehend the teaching and values of the ancestors, and if they are to draw strength and sustenance that is independent of colonial power, and which is regenerative of an authentic, autonomous, indigenous existence.

As mentioned previously, three bands make up the Stl’atl’imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley. The Xa’xtsa and the political organization known as In-SHUCK-ch Nation (made up of Skatin and Samahquam bands) are most outspoken about their desire to return to the land and reestablish a sense of identity and belonging. This sentiment is embodied in the Xa’xtsa First Nation Vision Statement which ‘focuses to be the community that our members call home’ (<http://www.xaxtsa.ca/>). Belonging is a feeling that is borne out of memories of past experiences—regardless of whether or not they are imagined, from the distant or recent past. As Lovell (1998, 1) remarks: ‘belonging, with all its pragmatic connotations and potential for tying people to place and social relationships, also evokes emotions, sentiments of longing to be in a particular location’. Belonging and “coming home” are very powerful sentiments which are used by the Stl’atl’imx in the effort to reconnect their people with their traditional territory.

Heritage “work” and identity building

Heritage has become an increasingly important feature in power struggles over land, resources and sovereignty (Smith 2006, 50). In 1982, there was recognition and protection of Aboriginal rights under section 35(1) of the Constitution Act. This made pre-existing Aboriginal title to reserve and traditional lands not subject to treaty in BC a valid legal right (McKee 2009, 9, 28). With this decision many First Nations in British Columbia started the process of engaging the Government in Treaty negotiations. There are currently 65 First Nations in British Columbia that are participating (or have completed) the six stage treaty process (2009, 57-8; <http://www.bctreaty.net/files/updates.php>). In-SHUCK-ch Nation of the Stl’atl’imx are currently in stage 5 (Negotiation to Finalize a Treaty).

Reconnecting with the landscape and creating a sense of belonging is an essential component of heritage as social action especially amongst peoples who have been alienated from ancestral lands. As Gillian Rose (1995, 89) states, identity is connected to place by a feeling of belonging, ‘[i]t’s a place in which you feel comfortable, or at home, because part of how you define yourself is symbolized by certain qualities of that place’. Basso similarly highlights the entwined nature of landscape and identity among the Apache where the ‘landscape in which the people dwell can be said to dwell in them’. For those who have been removed from their traditional territories through the colonial encounter and do not have connections to that place (Harrison and Rose 2010, 258), “heritage work” must be done to build new attachments—to reestablish and “re-place” that landscape so that it may feel like home (Welch 2009, 155).

Byrne, Brayshaw, and Ireland (2001, 67) argue that heritage is deployed regularly as part of the process of identity building and negotiation—we select those parts of our heritage to remember, rework and negotiate. In this way heritage is always social action. Indigenous people who wish to have their traditional lands recognized must increasingly provide tangible proof of their “belonging”. It is this requirement that Byrne (2008, 170) argues prompts the blending of “heritage work” and identity building. Identity and place are entwined through bodily engagement (Ingold 1995, 76; Casey 2001, 684; Hinchliffe and Whatmore 2006; Hodder 2011, 162-4). As will be discussed to follow, visceral acts such as graveyard cleaning afford a powerful means through which to reaffirm, and create new identities.

“Time to go home and visit the ancestors”

I draw on graveyard cleaning as heritage work to illustrate how this bodily practice is both an expression of identity and belonging while at the same time serving to reconnect the dispossessed to their land, identity and ancestors—past, present and future (Byrne, Brayshaw, and Ireland 2001; Harrison and Rose 2010).

Graveyards are places where past and present intermingle and ancestors and the living coexist. For the Stl’atl’imx they are focal points in heritage and identity making and a symbol of home. Elders tell stories of how when they were young those who died while at residential school, working as labourers or housed in tuberculosis sanatoria away from their traditional territories were transported by boat along the Harrison Lake so that they may have a proper burial (Herman Dan, personal communication, July 11th, 2012). Today, while many Elders live

in the city where healthcare is more accessible, some wish to return home to their traditional territories to live their final days.

Every July the Stl'atl'imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley gather in their traditional territories for a two week period to visit and clean the 27 graveyards located both on and off of reserve lands (Figure 2). Most of these are no longer actively used for burial. In many instances grave markers are no longer present—only shallow depressions in the ground surface mark the presence of the graves. Graveyard cleaning includes the manual work of removing debris from gravesites, repairing and painting fences and crosses and cutting tall grass; work which proceeds alongside social and cultural activities such as communal meals, dancing, singing and drumming. [Figure 2 near here]

With permission from the organisers, I was able to participate in graveyard cleaning in 2012. During this three day period I was witness to many discussions among community members about protocol—when it was “safe” to enter and exit graveyards, how and when to wash after leaving the graveyard, how to treat the pictures, flowers and other memorabilia left on graves. There was a concerted effort to remember the “right” way to do things. Following cultural protocols, remembering the ancestors and building community are fundamental aims of grave cleaning (Xa'xtsa Elder Ken MacDonald, personal communication, 2012). Community members are encouraged to participate in graveyard cleaning as a way to learn about their land, ancestors and traditions. The following excerpt from an article entitled “Time to Go Home and Visit the Ancestors” from the *Úcwalmícw Newsletter*, includes words such as “coming home”, “share stories”, “gather”, “ancestors”, “elders”. These highlight the collective and timeless nature of this practice:

Once again it is time for the people to come home and clean and repair the final resting place of our ancestors....If you have never seen the final resting place of your ancestors this would be a perfect time...the elders have plenty of knowledge and welcome interest. We come together to clean and visit graveyards but make time to gather and share stories and have fun too
(Sylvester Sam *Úcwalmícw Newsletter* June 2013)

Engaging in the bodily practice of graveyard cleaning—working together, sharing meals, memories, songs and knowledge—is part of the heritage work contributing to the cultural revival and survival of the Stl’atl’imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley. At the same time cleaning, tending and remembering—connecting the human, nonhuman and spiritual world—collapses time and entwines participants in the genealogy of this practice (see Mills and Walker 2008 for a discussion of connectivity and memory practices).

Heritage work ranges from the mundane organization of meals and fueling of chainsaws to traditional songs, dances and ritualized prayers. This interaction creates and confirms connections between people, place, objects, ancestors and traditions that transcend both time and space. Both Stl’atl’imx and their traditional territories are transformed through this practice (see Byrne, Brayshaw, and Ireland 2001, 67-8 for a parallel case among an Aboriginal community in New South Wales, Australia). Graveyards are “persistent”—places that are visited annually to ‘rekindle memories of experiences lived and to maintain rights and fulfill obligations inherited from the ancestors’ (Zedeño and Bowser 2009, 12).

Graveyard cleaning is a commitment to the past, the present community and their future and thus an essential part of creating a sense of identity, belonging and home. Community member Ken MacDonald has interviewed several Elders about what grave cleaning means—why it is important to their people’s identity. Elder Herman Dan’s videotaped interview was played in 2011 at the annual cultural festival called In-SHUCK-ch Days. In it he makes a plea to his people to come together to clean the graveyards. As seen below, he highlights the connection between the practice of cleaning, working together and keeping traditions alive:

You help us here, when we clean the graveyards. It’s very hard when there’s only a few people helping with the graveyard cleaning. Help each other. Don’t be lazy; don’t be afraid. Help each other! Help one another; help everybody....When we die, that’s where we’re gonna go....A long time ago, we always used to help each other....They don’t do that today. They’re bringing back our traditions and our ways. We almost lost it. You Indians, help us! Bring it back, bring back our traditions and our ways.... (Herman Dan. In-SHUCK-ch Nation interview, 2011).

Zedeño and Bowser (2009, 12-13) usefully remind us that unused or abandoned places are seldom “lost”. As discussed, long abandoned graveyards are still actively entangled in the lives of those who visit the cemetery, remember the place and the people who are buried there. Family bonds between live and dead relatives are recreated through the process of cleaning their graves—propping up the picture frames and bottles, clearing away dead flowers, and washing the headstone of dirt and moss. It is through this intimate entanglement of human, object and spirit that identity is reaffirmed and community bonds are strengthened.

In the following section I explore a second example of heritage as social action through the contested heritage of an abandoned wagon road that cuts through the traditional territories of the Stl’atl’imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley

Negotiating heritage: where the Harrison-Lillooet Gold Rush Trail and Heritage Trail intersect

“Negotiating heritage” refers to the tensioned dialogue between “official” state heritage and “unofficial” local heritage discussed here with regard to a wagon road that bisects the traditional territory of the Stl’atl’imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley (Figure 3). I draw on Harrison’s (2013, 14) use of these terms where “official” practices are those recognized by the State as heritage and are therefore protected through legislation. Unofficial heritage is often absent from legislation, unprotected and include intangible social practices. [Figure 3 near here]

Roads and paths offer a unique means through which to explore heritage practices as they are both the outcome of human engagement with the nonhuman world (that is, dirt becomes compact under feet) while at the same time they influence that very engagement (that is, the compact dirt road is followed). The wagon road is entangled in the natural and nonhuman world—animals consume berries along its banks, heavy rains create washouts, trees fall on its surface... At the same time such roads encourage interaction—they require maintenance, their surfaces afford both movement and pauses in that movement, they connect people and places along the way. Attachments emerge through this interaction (Byrne 2002; Harrison 2004, 3). Connections born of these dialogic relationships have made (and continue to make) the wagon road a focal point for heritage-making in the traditional territories of the Stl’atl’imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley (Harrison 2013, 4).

As discussed elsewhere, the biography of this road is the sum of the relationships that make it up – the actions and interactions of those who built, used, maintained and continue to remember the road (Gibson 2015, 418). The road – its place of significance in this landscape – cannot be separated from these relationships. Many different stakeholders are doing the work of heritage to re-invigorate these relationships and reconnect with the wagon road (see Gibson 2016 in press). I focus here on the Stl’atl’imx and the Provincial Government in the articulation of “official” and “unofficial” heritage.

Background: making the wagon road

The wagon road was constructed by the Royal Engineers in 1859, replacing a pack trail made by miners the previous year. The Stl’atl’imx believe that the pack trail followed a pre-existing First Nations trail. The wagon road provided miners and merchants with a less dangerous route to the Fraser Canyon—the location of the Fraser River Gold Rush (Victoria Gazette, July 24, 1858). The road was divided into three sections—the Douglas Portage (see Figure 3) ran from Port Douglas in the south (mile zero of the road) to Fort Pemberton (current town of Pemberton)—thus traveling through the traditional territories of the Stl’atl’imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley. The Second and Third Portages ran east of Pemberton to its termination in Lillooet—then known as Cayoosh Flat. The Douglas Portage fell out of use as a way to transport supplies to the goldfields in 1865 when a new Fraser Canyon route was opened.

The arrival of thousands of Americans to New Caledonia (the name given by the Hudson’s Bay Company to their fur trade holdings in central and northern British Columbia) in 1858 to participate in the Gold Rush threatened British sovereignty. The colony of British Columbia was established that same year in order to protect British claims to the land. As a result, the relationship between the Fraser River Gold Rush and development of the Province of British Columbia is often highlighted in British Columbia’s history.

As the wagon road fell out of use for the movement of miners and supplies to the Gold Fields in 1865 it became entangled in the lives of the Stl’atl’imx people and their daily movement. In the early 1900s barges regularly transported equipment, groceries and mail via Harrison Lake to Port Douglas to supply a growing number of logging camps in the area (McCombs and Chittenden 1988; Sleigh 1990). Many of the Stl’atl’imx living along the Lillooet River used the wagon road to travel to Port Douglas from their reserves to the north to obtain

their groceries, mail and visit relatives living in the town. In 1953 a new Forestry Service Road was opened which re-routed traffic from the wagon road. At this time the road was abandoned but not “lost”, instead the road again shifted in its meaning and interactions as it became their “Heritage Trail”—a place that through remembering, connected them to their ancestors and the “good times” of yesterday (Zedeño and Bowser 2009, 12-13).

Deploying heritage: making the official “Harrison-Lillooet Gold Rush Trail”

On February 1991 the wagon road was designated as a Provincial Heritage Site by the Lieutenant Governor under the Heritage Conservation Act (1996), Section 4(1)a. As such, it was listed as the ‘Harrison-Lillooet Gold Rush Trail’ from ‘Port Douglas to 29 Mile house’ (Order in Council No. 262). The Order in Council protected all trail segments, including 100 metres to either side, located on Crown land but excluded those on reserve land. It transferred the day to day management of those sections of trail located off reserve to the Forestry Service. Heritage “specialists” created a Management Plan for designated trail sections.

Designating the “Harrison-Lillooet Gold Rush Trail” was part of British Columbia’s identity building project as its heritage status was based on the role the road played in the ‘development of the Province’ (Memorandum of Agreement 1987). As Byrne (2008, 169) and Smith (2006, 52) have shown, heritage may be used as a powerful tool through which to define and legitimize identity. While Smith (2006, 74) reminds us that ‘any heritage site or place will have a range of different meanings for different groups or interests’ in this case the State prioritised the places and traces of the colonial past while giving authority to the role that the Gold Rush played in the history of Canada (Hobsbawm 1993, 13-14; Smith 2006, 50).

As mentioned earlier, attachments to the road are multiple and overlapping. The Stl’atl’imx do not deny that the road was built by the Royal Engineers, nor the role it played in the larger colonial project – including the ‘development of the province’ but as Skatin member Sydney Hunter illustrated so poignantly, the road was both Gold Rush Trail and Heritage Trail at the same time. Its entanglement in the colonial encounter did not detract from its significance as a place of pride – a road used by his ancestors. This designation was so harmful because through prioritising one period in the roads past it denied the significance of alternative connections. “Official” legislation preserved it as a “Gold Rush Trail”, but in so doing reproduced the power relationships embedded in the colonial encounter by allocating the trails management to the

State. As Harrison (2013, 22) remarks, such prioritisation of the colonial past over Indigenous connections to land is common in settler societies where Indigenous occupation is erased metaphorically and/or physically in order to create and reaffirm contemporary national identities (for further discussion of historical erasures see Hart 2012 and Trouillot 1995).

Deploying heritage: making the “Heritage Trail”

While the road fell out of use as a means to travel to the Fraser River Gold fields in 1865, it continued to be used and maintained by the Stl’atl’imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley. The wagon road was part of routine movement from Samahquam in the north to Port Douglas in the south. It is remembered as an entity that connected people physically, socially and culturally while walking, maintaining its surface and camping along the route was part of “taking care” of the land and its people. This is the wagon roads’ ‘unofficial’ heritage:

It [the road] would wash out. They would fix it...tell somebody and they would tell everybody then they all’d go help. They’d help everybody, not like now, eh. You’d get stuck them days, if someone got hungry they’d all get together and bring food to people, if they were hungry. (Elders Frank and Ina Charlie. Personal interview, July 8, 2012)

Those who couldn’t make it down to get their food...we would go by horse me and my brother... Benny...when there was too much snow they couldn’t make it eh, so we would go up there with the food to Skatin by horseback...we delivered groceries that way. (Elders Frank and Ina Charlie. Personal interview, July 8, 2012)

It was a very bumpy road; very big boulders sticking out here and there you know... you could see all the campsites, the old fire places depended on how many families you were travelling with. For that long distance my dad and his brothers, we would sort of all travel together you know.... And another thing that was so good about that, there was even a “get together”

for families, mingling, storytelling, lots of storytelling, lots of teasing, always lots of teasing. (Elder Lyle Peters. Personal interview, July 11, 2012)

As Alice Legat (2012, 175) illustrates in her work with the Dene, it is through movement that people ‘become intimate with locales where one can grow intellectually while travelling under the guidance of predecessors who have both followed and left footprints’. Building, using and maintaining the road was also the means through which to create and sustain a sense of unity, belonging and community; it was how the community knew itself (Byrne 2008, 170). The road was not separate from the world beyond it, but instead tightly integrated as part of the greater landscape.

The work of anthropologist Deborah Rose (Harrison and Rose 2010, 259) among the Indigenous people of Australia provides insight into the holistic nature of heritage in non-western cultural contexts where relationships are timeless and interwoven. Sustaining relationships between past and present life is what she terms ‘action towards care’—walking, observing, visiting sacred areas, making sure that the spirits are taken care of and balance is kept (Harrison and Rose 2010, 258-9).

Views of heritage as dynamic and enacted through bodily engagement are oppositional to the dominant western understanding of heritage outlined in pieces of legislation such as the Heritage Conservation Act of British Columbia (1996) that ‘encourage and facilitate the protection and conservation of heritage property’. Taken one step further such legislation that denies the embodied and active aspects of heritage may in fact limit or deny those processes of heritage formation (walking, camping, building fires etc.) necessary in order to keep the past alive in the present.

When the new Forestry Service Road was opened and individuals travelled that road by car, intimate bodily engagement with the road—those activities that maintained the association between the wagon road, community and identity—ceased and attachment to the trail shifted focus (Byrne, Brayshaw, and Ireland 67-8). The wagon road that was once part of daily practice was transformed into a “Heritage Trail”—a place to remember but not experience (Figure 4).

[Figure 4 near here]

Power and heritage

The wagon road is a contact zone for the construction, and thus contestation, of heritage. The names and use of the names “Harrison-Lillooet Gold Rush Trail” and “Heritage Trail” are evocations of heritage, past and present connections with the road, remembering and forgetting, and are therefore inherently political. Smith and Waterton (2009, 58) provide a relevant reminder to be aware that all negotiations of heritage take place within pre-existing power relationships which underlie definitions of what heritage is, and is not. The heritage of the wagon road is no different.

Because of its ‘multi-faceted, multi-sensual and multi-emotive’ characteristics, heritage will always include dissonance (Smith and Waterton 2009, 57). The Heritage Trail plays an important role in contemporary claims to land and identity. In-SHUCK-ch Nation (the name of those engaged in Treaty, as noted above) aims to regain control of the trail and its management through Treaty. In order for this to take place, they are required by the Provincial Government to document their Indigenous heritage values (areas of heritage value found in connection with the trail) and embed them in their own Management Plan for the trail. Through adhering to these State guidelines they may replace the current “Harrison-Lillooet Gold Rush Trail” designation and protections with *their own*—thereby making their local ‘unofficial’ heritage “official” (Harrison 2013, 160). Both Byrne (2008, 160) and Harrison and Rose (2010, 269) warn against essentialising heritage, converting it from dialogic relationship into static list. The places that make the wagon road significant cannot be separated from the human, nonhuman and spiritual components that intermingled to make them worth remembering in the first place.

Even as the list of heritage values is being created relationships with the road will be shifting, memories will be created, forgotten and made anew. There is uncertainty about the future of the road as current political and economic circumstances influence heritage work. Jobs are necessary to support those community members who wish to “come home” to their traditional territories. There are discussions about how best to market the trail to external interest groups—would the “Harrison to Lillooet Gold Rush Trail” attract more tourists, would highlighting its natural aspects be more beneficial, or do they want tourists at all? Heritage is always a “messy” political business (Harrison 2013).

Making and sustaining attachment: the mountain named ‘Nsvq’ts’

There is a symbiotic relationship among the landscape, place names and the “work” of heritage. Place names keep the past alive in the present—they bind time, place and generations—they are the enactment of heritage. Places and their names anchor humans to the landscape and remind people who they are and who they are not (Mills and Walker 2008). Their form and meaning are inseparable from the culture that made them (Read 1996, 2). Welch’s work among the White Mountain Apache highlights how reconnecting with place names and oral traditions may lead towards regeneration of Ndee – land linkages and the restoration of health and harmony in the community (Welch 2009, 155). In the traditional territories of the Stl’atl’imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley, place names illustrate the connections of people to place. Through creating, using and remembering them, they do ‘social, political and cultural “work” in society’ (Smith and Waterton 2009, 41).

Heritage practices among Indigenous peoples are an increasingly important part of defining and presenting a “legitimate” identity to the State. They are actively ‘engaged in the work of signifying places, deciding what should be done with them, deploying them as identity markers’ (Byrne, Brayshaw, and Ireland 2001, 67; Byrne 2008, 169). This is especially the case in British Columbia where up until 1990 only two treaties were ever signed. The prominent physical and cultural place of the mountain named ‘Nsvq’ts’ (pronounced In-SHUCK-ch) in the landscape has led to its mobilization in aims to reconnect and reclaim land. As will become evident, it is a place that is ‘open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived’ (Nora 1989, 8).

Nsvq’ts (also known as “Gunsight Mountain”) is a prominent landmark in the Lillooet River Valley (see Figures 1 and 5). Its name means “split like a crutch”—a reference to its unique split peak. Nsvq’ts is an integral part of Stl’atl’imx identity where knowledge and identity are integrated and anchored so that it can be remembered (Zedeno and Bowser 2009, 8). Nsvq’ts is a place ‘where environment, people, and meaning converge at multiple scales’ (Zedeno and Bowser 2009, 1). It is part of the origin stories of both upper and lower Stl’atl’imx people, including their Flood Story that explains the distribution of their people throughout the region. The significance of the Flood Story is outlined on the In-SHUCK-ch Nation website where they include a taped and animated version of the story told by Samahquam Elder Laura Purcell (<http://inshuckch.com/about/flood-story/>). In this story a canoe carrying one child from each

family was tethered to Nsvq'ts, the tallest mountain in the region (Teit 1912). While all other mountains were submerged by the rising waters those children in the canoe attached to Nsvq'ts survived and when the waters receded became the ancestors of all the Lillooet people. To those living in their traditional territory, this mountain is a daily reminder of the sacred nature of the landscape, where they came from and, as will be discussed to follow, where they are going in the future. [Figure 5 near here]

In 1980 In-SHUCK-ch was adopted by the Xa'xtsa, Skatin and Samahquam First Nations as their official name in the political arena as they pursued Treaty. This place name was intentionally chosen. The mountain afforded the possibility of both creating a sense of unity, identity and belonging amongst their people while simultaneously communicating that identity in the contemporary political landscape, as the In-SHUCK-ch website states:

We borrowed the ancient name of In-SHUCK-ch from our sacred mountain to identify ourselves in the modern context after we began negotiating a treaty...In-SHUCK-ch Nation takes its name from Nsekets² (Gunsight Mountain) the most important landmark in our traditional territory. This mountain, with its split precipice, was the setting for the famous flood story, which recounts The Flood and the Distribution of the Lillooet People (<http://inshuckch.com/about/where-we-came-from/>)

Through saying its name, remembering and commemorating its position in the physical and cultural landscape—its memory was shared and legacy passed on to future generations (Collignon 2006, 101-11; Gibson 2015). By adopting the phonetic spelling (In-SHUCK-ch) of Nsvq'ts rather than the word itself, they maintained the meanings and connections to the original place name while ensuring that how they identified themselves was easily pronounced, used and remembered. The name “In-SHUCK-ch” resurrected, reshaped and re-inserted Nsvq'ts with all of its cultural significance into their daily lives. Nsvq'ts was ‘simultaneously inherited and reinvented by the living’ (Byrne 2008, 162). In-SHUCK-ch became a way to identify oneself—to show your belonging and link with the ancestral past, as the In-SHUCK-ch Nation website states, ‘In-SHUCK-ch is how you pronounce Nsvq'ts... A person identified as In-SHUCK-ch is

² There are two different spellings for this word (Nsvq'ts and Nsekets), both are pronounced In-SHUCK-ch

an Nsvq'tsmc (pronounced In-SHUCK-ch micw)' (<http://inshuckch.com/about/where-we-came-from/>). It is through such mobilization that Nsvq'ts was woven into new webs of meaning (Kopytoff 1986, 67). The mountain, its name and depiction shifted as people engaged with it in new and varied ways. Such modifications and transitions in heritage are both natural and healthy (Smith and Waterton 2009, 76).

In 2005, Samahquam, Skatin and Xa'xtsa declared In-SHUCK-ch a sovereign nation thus giving it the ability to 'define, exercise and protect the title and rights of the Nation and its membership' (<http://inshuckch.com/governance/>). At this time the In-SHUCK-ch Nation flag was unveiled (General Assembly, Resolution 3). Its emblem, drawn by Willis Peters, depicts Nsvq'ts and the Flood Story (Figure 6 left); it was later described as 'a canoe in the water tied to the In-SHUCK-ch with people sitting in it. This represented our ancestors saved by a warning to prepare for a flood by tying to the highest mountain in the area. We were safe because we were tied to the mountain like we are tied to the land' (*Úcwalmícw Newsletter* March 2011, 2). [Figure 6 left and right near here] The importance of land to their identity and sense of wellbeing is clear in this statement.

In 2011, this emblem was altered (Figure 6 right). In this new version the canoe is empty and the eleven communities are represented by waves that support the canoe. Community member Sylvester Sam explains the reason for this change in an article entitled "A Sign of the Times" in the local *Úcwalmícw Newsletter* March 2011, 2): '[w]e are no longer tied directly to the mountain because we are no longer all tied to the land of our ancestors. In-SHUCK-ch is important, but we need to live alongside non-members and leave the security of the land once in a while if we are to survive'. This statement highlights the changing place of the mountain and their traditional territories in their identity. The image was modified to accommodate the varied relationships of the Stl'atl'imx people to their land while at the same time facilitating the construction of new attachments and new identities through an image which represented this diversity.

The emblem reduces the need for those Stl'atl'imx living outside of their traditional territories to view or experience the mountain called Nsvq'ts for themselves. As Lovell (1998, 1-2) notes, '(l)ocality and belonging may be molded and defined as much by actual territorial emplacement as by memories of belonging to particular landscapes whose physical reality is enacted only through acts of collective remembering'. The emblem of In-SHUCK-ch does

“work” constructing and expressing collective identity today—it marks both official In-SHUCK-ch Nation documentation but also items that are part of day to day life such as t-shirts, baseball caps and shopping bags. The image is intentionally deployed so that it becomes intricately entangled in the lives of the Stl’atl’imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley. While the routine use and presence of the emblem is both a reminder of identity and belonging—knowing who you are and where you come from—it is also a reminder of the need to carry out such heritage work. Maintaining connections among local places like Nsvq’ts, their land and ancestors is vital to establishing and maintaining their presence in their traditional territory and its cultural landscape (Byrne 2008, 170).

Like any place, Nsvq’ts is not static—it has action in today’s world and continues to create meaning in the landscape. This powerful physical and cultural marker is used to create and reaffirm local collective identity while helping the In-SHUCK-ch to position themselves both in their traditional territories but also in the political arena (Smith 2006, 75). Entangled in the lives of the Stl’atl’imx, Nsvq’ts is a focal point in the heritage discourse and will continue to change as the Stl’atl’imx persist in the acts of heritage-making (Harkin 2000, 64; Byrne 2008, 163; Witmore 2007, 197).

It is important to note that while such routine use of the In-SHUCK-ch name and emblem *aims* to create a sense of belonging—a reminder of who people are, where they come from, and where they will always have a “place”—it is not without contestation. Even though individuals may feel a sense of attachment to the place of Nsvq’ts it is not synonymous with feeling or identifying as “In-SHUCK-ch”. I learned this early in my research when I naively referred to an Elder as In-SHUCK-ch I was sternly told ‘In-SHUCK-ch is about treaty, I am Stl’atl’imx’ (personal communication, anonymous, March 2011). Today, the name and emblem of In-SHUCK-ch is increasingly viewed as a marker of difference and division rather than similarity and belonging. In recent communication with the Xa’xtsa Chief and Council I was told that the In-SHUCK-ch Treaty is considered a threat to the future of the Stl’atl’imx people, they do not share or accept the In-SHUCK-ch vision of their future³ (Randel Charlie. Personal communication, November 17, 2016).

³ Statement from Xa’xtsa: We are Xa’xtsa and we are St’át’imc (also known as Stl’atl’imx). We are the original inhabitants of our territories. We are related to all St’át’imc by language and by kinship. The treaty process is an attempt to delineate us and separate us from our lands. The

The heritage discourse that surrounds Nsvq'ts is a useful reminder of how heritage values are ascribed; they are not innate to any particular place or object (Ferguson et al. 2010, 290). In the tensioned landscape of the Stl'atl'imx where claims to land and identity are linked, Nsvq'ts is central to heritage practices that 'build cultural and social affiliation in the present' (Harrison 2004, 15; see also Bender 2001, 4-5; Byrne 2008, 170). Remembering and forgetting, maintaining and creating new connections to Nsvq'ts—heritage work—is a necessary part of creating a sense of belonging among the Stl'atl'imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley (Byrne 2008, 170; Harrison 2008, 182).

Conclusions

I found an editorial written in the *Úcwalmícw Newsletter* (Shawn Gabriel May 2006, 2) by a member of Xa'xtsa First Nation prior to their withdrawal from In-SHUCK-ch Nation and treaty negotiations. Entitled, "Who Am I? What Am I?" the author discusses his Nations' desire to find a traditional name while recounting his confusion over his identity—was he In-SHUCK-ch, Stl'atl'imx, Lil'wat or just Shawn? Asking these questions is part of the practice of heritage—working to create and recreate identity. In this landscape where much of the population was alienated from land, language and traditions reuniting place and people is vital to identity building (Welch 2009, 155).

When In-SHUCK-ch Nation created a "Seven Generations Plan" in 2005 outlining the implementation of the Nation, it was designed in accordance with their circular world view. In this view 'ancestors, those living today, and those yet unborn are all tied together and where we share the earth with all other living things, and non-living things': it acts as a reminder that the future is not only informed, but is strengthened by the past (Seven Generations Plan, Section 2.0 page 6). Within this world view there is an obligation for the living to 'protect the values from the past, in planning for the future in a modern world' (In-SHUCK-ch Nation Seven Generations Plan, Section 2.0 page 6). This protection inevitably includes making choices about which parts

St'át'imc are working together to codify our *nxékmén* (our traditional laws) and our *nt'ákmen* (our way of life) in a constitution. Xa'xtsa is tracing the footsteps of our ancestors throughout our territory in a detailed long-term archaeological project. Evidence is showing continuous occupation of the Lower Lillooet River Valley from ca 6000 years BP. In addition we are finding resource use travel routes and seasonal habitation in mid to high elevation sites throughout our territory. We have never left our *tmicwa* - our land. We may reside outside of our territory for reasons of education or employment but our spirit has never left it.

of the past and present to protect, preserve and pass on to future generations (Smith and Waterton 2009, 76).

This paper has looked at three different ways the Stl'atl'imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley have enacted, challenged and remade their heritage in an effort to revitalize their identity and bring their people “home” to their traditional territories. Graveyard cleaning, negotiating “official” and “unofficial” heritage narratives of a wagon road, and marshaling the physical, cultural and spiritual places of Nsvq'ts are heritage practices embedded within well-established power inequalities. The Stl'atl'imx of the Lower Lillooet River Valley, like many First Nations peoples, must prove their place and use of the land in order to reclaim it. Forcibly displaced through the colonial encounter, heritage practices here are linked to re-establishing a sense of belonging—a connection to the land and its ancestors. Today the strength and power of ancestors and ancestral places continue to be mobilized to fight in courtrooms so that Stl'atl'imx identity and belonging can be respected in the modern State. At the same time Elders such as Herman Dan (2011) “work” to remind community members to help each other remember the way things used to be: ‘We almost lost it. You Indians, help us! Bring it back, bring back our traditions and our ways’.

Figures

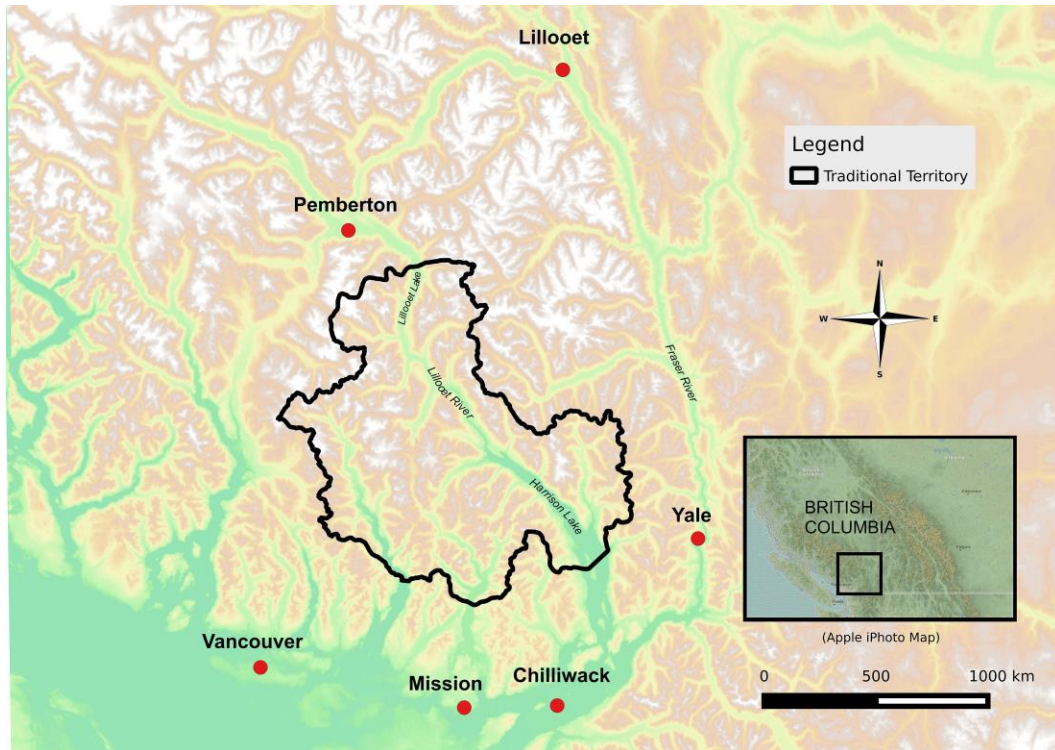


Figure 1. Location of the traditional territories in the context of the province of British Columbia.
Map: Nick Taylor.



Figure 2. Wood carved gate and arch of graveyard entrance built ca. 1905. Photograph: author.

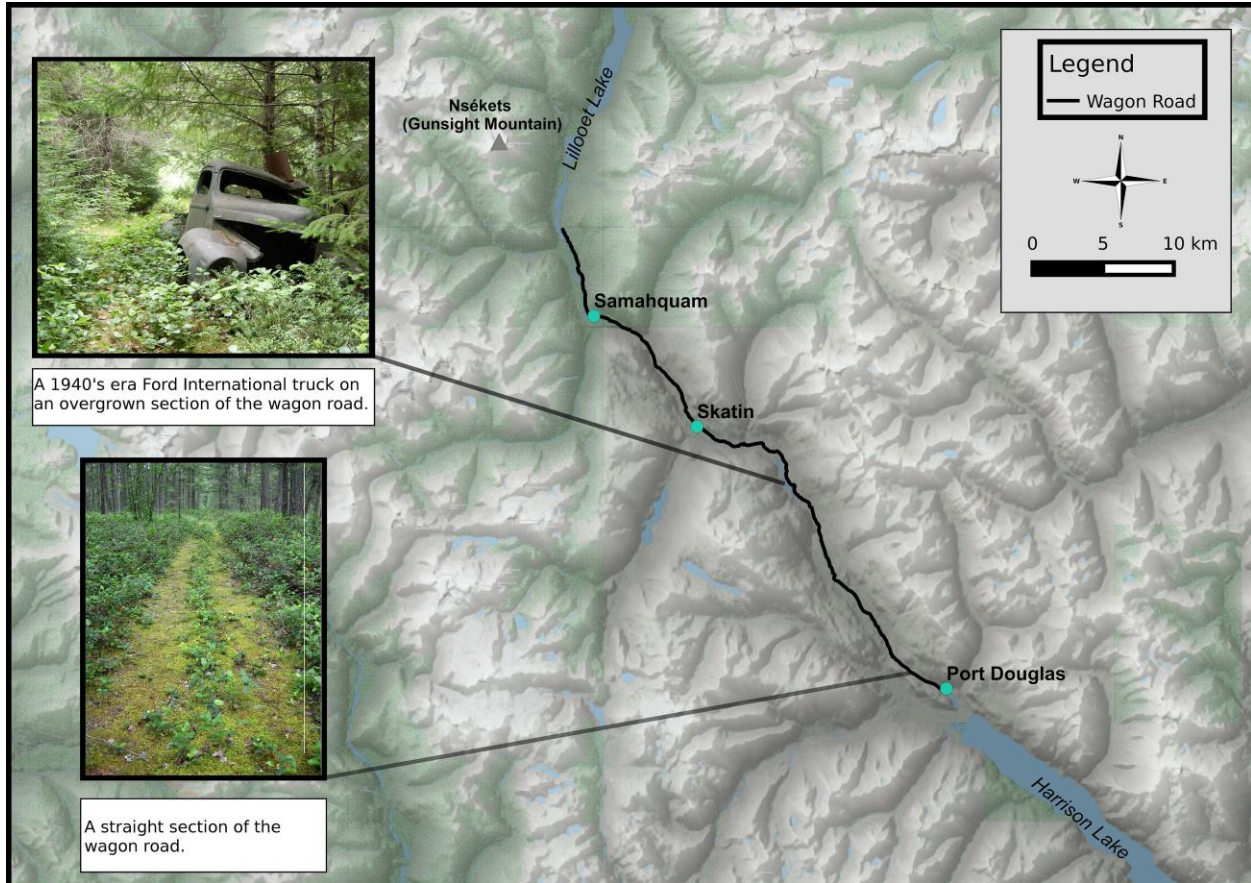


Figure 3. Section of the wagon road known in 1859 as the ‘Douglas Portage’. Photographs of the road today showing its more recent ‘unofficial’ past. Map: Nick Taylor; Photographs: author



Figure 4. Section of the wagon road marked by 'Heritage Trail' sign, looking southwest down the road. Photograph: author.



Figure 5: Nsvq'ts (Gunsight Mountain) with split peak. Photograph: In-SHUCK-ch Nation.

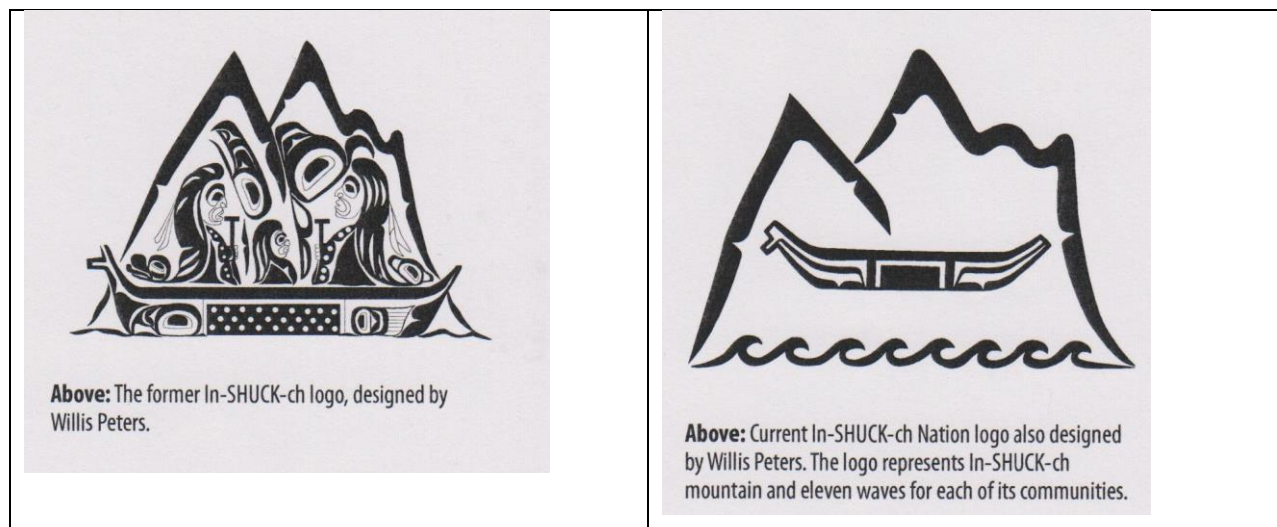


Figure 6: Former In-SHUCK-ch emblem (left) and current In-SHUCK-ch emblem (right).
Ucwalmixw Newsletter March 2011, 2.

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