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Chapter 2

Orality about Literacy: The 'Black and White' of Salish History

KEITH THOR CARLSON

The Great Spirit travelled the land, sort of like Jesus, and he taught these three *siyám*, these three chiefs, how to write their language. And they were supposed to teach everyone how to write their language, but they didn't. So they were heaped into a pile and turned to stone. Because they were supposed to teach the language to everyone and because they didn't, people from all different lands will come and take all the knowledge from the people – because they wouldn't learn to write they lost that knowledge.

Bertha Peters, Stó:lō Salish elder, 1995

Some indigenous histories not only challenge Western chronologies but dispute Western ways of knowing. Indeed, a number of indigenous stories circulating among the Salish people of south coastal and plateau British Columbia challenge us to reconsider both the history of Native-newcomer relations and our understanding of such core concepts as the relationship between orality and literacy, and ultimately, our definitions of indigeneity.

If communication theory and ethnography have interpreted literacy as a force capable of facilitating profound cognitive (and thereby assimilative) change in non-literate people,¹ as a colonial 'weapon capable of inflicting damage' by relocating the sacred from local control and into the public domain,² and more recently as a Western tool sometimes employed by Aboriginal people to preserve their cultural and traditions against colonial assimilation,³ certain Salish stories reveal that other Aboriginal truths regard literacy as something indigenous that was itself once taken away. In addition to Bertha Peters' story of the

transformed chiefs, quoted above, is the 'beginning of time' narrative shared by Harry Robinson, which describes Coyote's 'loss' of literacy, and also the thematically related oral tradition of a contact-era Salish prophet's use of sacred texts (and subsequent alienation by Catholic Church authorities) described by a second, unrelated, Bertha Peters. Considered together, as well as in relation to a countervailing Salish discourse that regards the process of 'keeping writing out' of sacred and ritualized ceremonies as an 'act of integrity,'⁴ these indigenous historical narratives reveal the enigmatic role and place of literacy within Salish epistemology.

Within the oral traditions, literacy sits alternately at the centre of the Salish world and outside of it. It is simultaneously foreign and indigenous, threatening and protective; it is from the past as well as the present, and it looms large in the future. Literacy challenges orality, and therefore Salish notions of self, while at the same time these narratives reveal that literacy is implicitly regarded as something in need of repatriation: a repatriation that, once accomplished, will restore a balance that was earlier disrupted.

No matter how Salish oral histories situate literacy, it is always within a context of power relationships and a discourse that emphasizes the value of innovation and flexibility.⁵ Presented here is a discussion of several Salish oral traditions that strives to situate literacy within an indigenous cosmology and thereby to begin the process of filling a void that Peter Wogan has identified as a serious impediment to our understanding of Aboriginal responses to European contact.⁶ To accomplish this, I attempt to invert the now standard scholarly exercise of trying to determine the effect of literacy on orality, as well as the more recent efforts to assess the degree of 'orality in literature' or the extent of 'literature in orality.'⁷ Instead, I turn my gaze to the indigenous orality *about* literacy.

A stream of scholarship led by Ruth Finnegan suggests that what Walter Ong and others identified as a qualitative cognitive difference between literates and non-literates is better understood as merely a social construct: a product of ethnocentric assumptions concerning evolutionary progress and development.⁸ Support for this position has also recently emerged from historical studies of European literacy. Adam Fox, for example, has argued that pre-modern British ballads such as *The Ballad of Chevy Chase* were much more heavily influenced by literacy than was previously thought, just as early modern British literacy was in fact permeated with orality.⁹

Additionally, while communication theorists no longer necessarily interpret the relationship between orality and literacy within a strictly evolutionary developmental paradigm, suggesting a transition from primitive to civilized, nonetheless it is still a working assumption that orality antedates literacy, and that all historical movements between the two states (whether within cultures or across cultures) is unidirectional, with literacy following orality. Exceptions to this rule, if they existed, would signal a civilization's decay or a culture's decline. Within this context, literacy has been considered as either a gift of enlightenment bestowed upon North American Aboriginal people or as a colonial tool of assimilation imposed upon those same people.

Presented here is an effort to take indigenous historical understanding seriously, not necessarily because it helps to explain aspects of non-Native history but because it destabilizes mainstream understanding of and assumptions about history and therefore creates new starting points for cross-cultural dialogue. All of the indigenous storytellers discussed in this chapter firmly believed that there was a time in Salish history, no matter how fleeting, when at least a few of their ancestors had working knowledge of literacy that preceded, and was therefore independent of, newcomer initiatives and influences. They were literate because powerful forces from the spirit world had wanted them to be literate, and they would become literate again for the same reason. Literacy is not, according to this version of history, something imposed on or introduced to Aboriginal people as part of the colonial process. It is therefore not necessarily assimilative and presumably, therefore, it is not inherently a threat or a challenge to Salish people's sense of self vis-à-vis non-Native outsiders. The non-conformity of these beliefs in relation to Western historical understanding, as well as some contemporary Aboriginal political discourse, suggests a disjuncture between Salish and newcomer ways of knowing, which in turn collectively offer insights into the causes of the misunderstandings that have characterized so much of Native–newcomer relations.

Situating Literacy within a Salish world

It would be misleading to suggest that there was, or is, a 'Salish world' in which political and philosophical ideas were universally shared. The Salish people have never been politically united, and great diversity exists among the speakers of the twenty-two mutually unintelligible Salish languages. Culturally, the greatest division is between the seven

Interior Salish language groups, which occupy the Columbia plateau in British Columbia and Washington (and small portions of Alberta, Idaho, and Montana), and the fifteen Coast Salish language groups whose territories stretch, with interruptions, from the shores of northern Oregon to the mid-coast of British Columbia. Nonetheless, their shared linguistic roots suggest a commonality that is reflected in certain metaphysical beliefs. These are in turn accentuated in those regions where social relations were historically maintained.

The Coast and Interior Salish people of what is now British Columbia (my focus here) have long had significant social interactions. A series of communication corridors linked people east to west across the Coast Mountain range. Marriages aimed at cementing economic benefits and facilitating diplomatic relations were common, and the children of such relations appear to have been anything but systemically disadvantaged.¹⁰ Moreover, even if scholars have failed to make it a focus of research, Aboriginal people identify a Coastal and Interior Salish metaphysical continuum premised on the shifting identity of the 'beginning of time' Transformer figures.

Among the lower Fraser River Coast Salish people (the Stó:lō) the central Transformer character is Xá:ls – the 'Great Spirit' of Bertha Peters' narrative, whom she describes as having travelled Stó:lō territory 'sort of like Jesus.' In other Stó:lō discussions, such as those related to Franz Boas by George Chehalis in 1884, we are told that Xá:ls was the youngest of the four children of Red Headed Woodpecker and Black Bear, who were collectively known as Xe:xá:ls.¹¹ Their home was in the mountains near the north end of Harrison Lake (on the border of a principal travel route between the Stó:lō and the Lillooet Interior Salish people). Red Headed Woodpecker also had a second wife, Grizzly Bear, who was envious of Black Bear. In a jealous rage Grizzly Bear killed both her husband and her co-wife, Black Bear. Fearing for their lives, Black Bear's children set off from their home, and in the process became Xe:xá:ls, the Transformers.

In the Stó:lō histories, Xe:xá:ls are sometimes described in human terms and sometimes in relation to their bear-like characteristics. Together they travelled Stó:lō territory 'making the world right,' that is to say, they transformed people and things into their permanent forms, thereby creating the world we recognize today.

According to widely circulating stories, Xe:xá:ls travelled down Harrison Lake to the Fraser River. There they turned eastward and eventually passed beyond the limits of Stó:lō territory through the Fraser Canyon.

The Stó:lō explain that they know little of the Transformers' activities immediately after they left the coastal region except that they eventually reached the sunrise. Once there, they travelled through the sky with the sun to the sunset, and in the process acquired additional miraculous transformative powers. From the sunset they travelled by canoe eastward, eventually reaching the mouth of the Fraser River, and from there they resumed their journey back upstream. As they travelled east to west across Stó:lō territory and back up the Fraser River they performed ever greater transformative feats, including punishing the three chiefs who refused, or failed, to share their knowledge of literacy. Eventually the X̱e:xá:ls passed through the Fraser Canyon and beyond Stó:lō territory, 'never to be seen again.'¹²

According to some of the Nlakapamux people, who reside in what might be considered the transition zone between coast and plateau, however, X̱e:xá:ls, and in particular the youngest brother, Xá:ls, did not necessarily disappear. Rather, they transformed from bear-like humans into coyote-like humans and became the Interior Salish Trickster/Transformer figures known as Qoa'qLaqal and Coyote.¹³

References to literacy, and in particular the loss of literacy, also feature prominently in the Interior Salish historical transformation narratives, thereby reinforcing the linkages between these two regions and peoples. In speaking with ethnohistorian Wendy Wickwire in the early 1980s, Okanagan elder Harry Robinson explained that near the beginning of time, as God was busy setting the world in order, He revealed literacy to Coyote and Coyote's twin brother. Then began Coyote's problems:

He put the paper on the ground, well, just because he's God. And he find a stone. And he take stone and put the stone on the paper so it wouldn't fly away ... Went up to Heaven ... But these two [twins] still around ... And this younger one, he look at this paper lying there with stone on 'em. He thought, 'I take this paper and I hide 'em ...' And he thinks, 'This paper, He's going to give 'em to my friend because he's the older one. He's going to get this paper not me. And he's going to be the boss. And not me. But I take this paper and I hide 'em ... Tell 'em that the wind blowed.

... And that younger one, now today, that's the white man. And the other one, that's me. That's the Indian. And that's why the white man, they can tell a lie more than the Indian. But the white man, they got that law ... And [God] told him, 'That paper, it'll tell you what to do. But you have to tell the Indians.'¹⁴

As with Bertha Peters' narrative of the transformed chiefs, Harry Robinson explains that it was God's original intention that Salish people be literate. In both accounts, future generations of Salish people are denied literacy; through the failings of their own leaders in the former case, and through the conniving and selfishness of the white brother in the latter. The consequences are profound. Immediately after sharing her transformation narrative with me, Bertha Peters made explicit the ongoing historical significance of the loss of literacy:

When the first white people came, a white man raped this Indian woman. And she got syphilis. Then, when her husband *went* with her, he caught syphilis too. But they didn't know about these sicknesses, and so the man went up the mountain to die. He was laying there naked and a snake came up to him and ate all the sickness off his penis, then wiggled away. Then it ate three types of plants and got well. So the man went and ate the three plants and got well. So they knew a cure for this sickness, but they couldn't write it down, so they lost it.¹⁵

For Bertha Peters, literacy was not necessarily a source of knowledge or power in itself. Rather, it was principally a tool for preserving certain kinds of knowledge that could have assisted Salish people during times of great distress, such as those associated with the arrival of Europeans. White people's mastery of literacy gave them an advantage not only in terms of preserving their own European knowledge but in terms of their ability and propensity to steal and profit from indigenous wisdom. For as Bertha went on to explain, 'This [white] man came to see me and he told me the Indians have a lot to be proud of because there are twenty-eight different types of medicine they use in the hospital which came from the Indians. That knowledge of medicine was taken away from the Indians by the white people because they didn't write it down.'

In a similar fashion, in a follow-up conversation with Wickwire, Harry Robinson outlined the consequences of Coyote's loss of literacy on Salish people in terms of alienated lands and governing authority. Long after Coyote's white twin brother had stolen literacy and moved to Britain, troubles began emerging as a result of the imbalance in the world between the literate white brother's children and Coyote's non-literate children. An 'Angel of God' then appeared to Coyote, bestowed additional powers upon him, and directed him to embark on a mission to England, where 'you and King are going to make a law for the white people and the Indians.'¹⁶

In Robinson's description of Coyote's adventures in London, the king of England is reminded that Coyote too is a king, and that as monarchs they together have the authority to make lasting laws for their two people, and in particular, to regulate relations between the two races. Such laws are necessary, Coyote explains, because the English king's children have started arriving in Coyote's country 'and they don't do good with my children ... They just don't care for them. They just go and claim the land and they just do as they like.' It was a serious matter, Coyote clarified, for when his own children tried to explain to the English immigrants, 'This here is mine,' the English settlers responded with violence and some of Coyote's children were killed.¹⁷ Only a written law could ensure that the two groups of children would 'be good; not be in trouble, not be bad to one another.' Coyote insisted that the two sides would not have to fight if he and the English king 'marked down on paper a law, so it can be that way for the rest of time, to the end of the world. Because that's God's thought, you know.' Coyote wanted the Indian Law, which he referred to as the 'Black and White,' or 'the Indian Law,' to clarify the criteria by which Indian reserves would be defined, to set restrictions on the degree to which white settlement could 'crowd' the Indian reserves, and to entrench guarantees concerning the future inalienability of Indian lands. It was intended, in other words, to codify and regulate Native-newcomer relations.

In Robinson's narrative Coyote is continually stymied by the English king, who seeks ways to escape having to properly fulfil 'God's thought.' In the end, it is only Coyote's mystical ability to reveal to the English king a vision of an impending attack by an indigenous army that convinces the British monarch to agree to put pen to paper and create the document Coyote desires. Indeed, 'Coyote just forced him to do something he don't really like – and that idea is still the same right now ... [and that's why] they always try to beat the Indians, because the king is not really satisfied.'

So difficult is the task of composing the 'Indian law' (and so reluctant, it seems, is the king to work speedily) that the task cannot be completed during Coyote's visit. And so Coyote has to be satisfied with a point-form list and a commitment that 'when I leave you, then you can do the rest. Take your time and do the rest. When you finish, all the paper, that'll be the Indian Law; you give 'em to my children. Not right away, but long time from now ... You gonna give 'em to my children. By this time, my children, they can read. That's *their* law.'

Robinson explains that ultimately, ‘the King, he didn’t make that stuff.’ Coyote and his people had to wait many generations before the English king’s promise was finally fulfilled by one of the his successors – a queen. She was a good woman, according to Robinson, who took the promise of her ancestor seriously. She wrote the Indian Law and made copies, so there were four in all. One the queen kept in her London office; the other three she sent to Canada. Letters were attached to the books requiring that they be deposited in Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Victoria, ‘til the Indians get to be educated so they can read.’ A Salish man named TOM-mah was hired to guide the government official who carried the BC copy of the ‘Black and White’ through the mountains from Kelowna to Hope. Robinson explained that one night while camping the government official opened the Black and White and showed it to TOM-mah. Because TOM-mah couldn’t read the government agent explained to the Salish man the book’s contents. He also showed TOM-mah an illustration in the book – a photograph that showed the king of England in Buckingham Palace meeting with Coyote. TOM-mah told his people what he had been shown, and Robinson had met TOM-mah in 1917, when the guide was more than eighty years old. This, Robinson reasoned, meant that the Black and White was delivered about 1860.

Wickwire’s published version of Robinson’s narrative ends with Robinson explaining that he had himself seen the padlocked book of the Indian Law when he visited Victoria in the company of Aboriginal activists Andrew Paul and Tom Gregoire in 1947. The actual interview, however, goes on to describe how literacy came to the Salish people and how they used literacy to mobilize the power of the Black and White. According to Robinson, as Coyote’s children became literate, they ‘open[ed] the Black and White and read it and ... [thought] for themselves.’ One of the first to do so was a Salish man named Edward Brett. Robinson remembered meeting Brett circa 1947. Brett’s parents had died, according to Robinson, while their son was quite young, and so Brett had been raised at the Roman Catholic residential school in Kamloops. As a young literate man, Brett learned that the Black and White was locked in Victoria. After much difficulty, frustration, and personal financial sacrifice, Brett was eventually able to acquire a 700 page copy of the Black and White from a government agent, and ‘he read that and he knew exactly what it said from the Queen and the King.’¹⁸

Upon returning to his community with his copy of the text, Brett is remembered to have organized study sessions every month or so to allow Salish people from a wide region to congregate to hear him read

and translate a few pages at a time of the Indian Law. In this way, over the course of many months, the people from all around became familiar with the great book and its laws – with the Black and White. They came to know, in other words, what regulations had been established for Native-newcomer relations and were thus able to assess non-Native behaviour in relation to codified criteria. The conclusion was clear: non-Natives could not be trusted. Just as Coyote's white twin brother had stolen literacy, white settlers and the Canadian government were stealing land and Aboriginal people's dignity. For Coyote and his descendants, literacy was the key to accountability and the means of restoring interracial balance.

Throughout Robinson's narrative, literacy is shown to be a powerful force, capable of precipitating transformations in people's lives not unlike the transformative power associated with Coyote. After initially having literacy stolen from them, it is the absence of literacy that sets Native people apart from their English brothers. Coyote's desire to encode, standardize, and make predictable Native-newcomer relations through the repatriation of literacy and the Black and White should not necessarily be regarded as a sign of assimilation or weakness on the part of Salish people. Rather, it speaks principally of the extent to which Salish people perceived differences between themselves and the strangers who came to their lands from afar, while also illustrating that they anticipated a means of peaceful and prosperous relations. Indeed, it illustrates that Robinson considered Salish people and non-Natives to have a shared history of creation. As he explained,

Now, they had them all finished ... that's the Indian Law. That's where the Indian's Law is, in that book. Nothing but the Indian Law and that's what they call the 'Black and White,' because whoever made that law, one he was black and the other was white. See that's the key ... that he was white. And Coyote was black: that was Indian. Black and white. He made that law. That the reason why they called that book 'Black and White.'

Prophetic Salish Literacy

Until relatively recently, it was an academic commonplace to assume that non-literates across time and cultures reacted to literacy in identical ways, in what former US president George W. Bush might describe as 'shock and awe.'¹⁹ A counter-current of scholarship has posited that

what was regarded as universal indigenous amazement was more likely a reflection of Western assumptions and arrogance on the part of literate observers and recorders. So pervasive is literacy's importance as a symbol of Western superiority that, as cultural theorist Michael Harbsmeier has observed, 'only modern European civilization came to make its own ... proper literacy, into the very definition of its own identity against the rest of the world.'²⁰ Along similar lines, Patricia Seed raises the possibility that 'the geographic diversity of reports of native "marveling" over several centuries of encounters with non-Europeans suggests not an implausible similarity among the Ibo, Tupi, Nambikwara, and Karatonga, but rather a historical continuity in Western expectations of the conduct of non-European peoples.'²¹ The narratives of Bertha Peters and Harry Robinson challenge the notions underlying each of these observations in ways with which the existing scholarship on orality and literacy are ill equipped to deal. Their narratives of 'beginning of time literacy' (and in the case of Robinson, literacy's indigenous repatriation) suggest that at least some Salish people believe not only that their ancestors were not necessarily awestruck by the arrival of Western literacy but that they embraced it as part of their own historical identity.

To sift through newcomer biases it is useful, and revealing, to situate the accounts of ancient Salish literacy alongside what on the surface might appear to be rather distinct narratives of nineteenth-century Salish prophesy. For from the perspective of several Salish carriers of historical narratives, Salish literacy before the residential school era was not restricted to the ephemeral encounters of the three transformed chiefs or betrayed Coyote. These Salish histories also tell of pre-contact prophets who, within the context of Bertha's and Harry's accounts, might be thought of as having reacquired literacy directly from the spirit world, and who used this medium to prepare Salish people for the profound changes associated with European colonization.

Tucked away in the British Museum in London, England, are the restricted fieldnotes of the anthropologist Marian Smith, of Columbia University, and those her graduate students, compiled during their summer of ethnographic research among the Stó:lō in 1945.²² A number of the entries were made during conversations with a Mrs Bertha Peters (whom I will refer to simply as 'Mrs Peters,' to distinguish her from the other Bertha Peters referred to above). Mrs Peters described the profound role that prophetic literacy played in nineteenth-century Salish-British relations.

She explained that her 'great-grandfather's great-grandfather' St'a'saluk had been a prophet. In and of itself, being a prophet was not necessarily considered remarkable among Salish people. As the anthropologist Wilson Duff, among others, has documented, Salish individuals with the power to see what was transpiring in other settlements, and who could foresee future events, have a long history that pre-dates European contact.²³ Indeed, among other things they played an important role in advising people about the potentially hostile intentions of those in other settlements. What apparently set St'a'saluk and at least one other nineteenth-century Salish prophet apart from others was less their ability to predict the future than their use of literacy to accomplish this feat. According to Mrs Peters, St'a'saluk acquired from God himself a piece of paper that foretold the future, including the impending arrival of white people. As a result, this paper was so valued that it was passed from 'son to son' and in that way continued to provide a valuable service to Salish people across generations.

Within Salish traditions, not unlike the practice of medieval European magic described by Frank Klaassen (chapter 8, this volume), rituals and incantations were carefully guarded and their secrets passed from mentoring ritualist to novice. Moreover, as in medieval magic, in which utterances in Latin were regarded as especially sacred and invested with power, Salish incantations also tended to be in an esoteric language (often described as 'the old language,' and sometimes as 'the high language'), which only the practitioner and his or her acolytes could understand.

According to Mrs Peters, on the sacred paper that her great-great-great-great-grandfather received from God were 'the fanciest capital letters' that 'only the old man could read.' In addition to foretelling the coming of white people and the imminent arrival of various Western technologies (including light bulbs, cross-cut saws, nuclear family housing, and glass windows), European stock animals, and domesticated fruit and vegetables, St'a'saluk's text taught a special creed to facilitate positive relations between Salish people and the European newcomers. According to Mrs Peters, he told them,

'They will be different. They will be white and they will give you anything you can get from them.' He begged his people, when these people come to be kind to them and treat them like their brother. He even mentioned the stock (animals). This was first time they ever knew how pigs looked like. (He grunted to show them). 'That will be your meat.' He got a sheet of paper.

No one ever saw such paper and it has writing on it. He told them that he got it from God. That is why they had to pray and fast for 40 days. He told them about vegetables. 'And the fruit will be growing outside your places.' On this paper it said you are not supposed to steal or kill anybody.²⁴

The prophet read the special words on the paper and told the people that they should not fear the changes that were coming. Indeed, contrary to most other nineteenth-century North American Native prophecy movements (such as those associated with the Ghost Dance at Wounded Knee or even the neighbouring and historically associated Interior Salish 'Plateau Prophet phenomenon'), in which people were encouraged to reject whites and their new ways, the Coast Salish prophet of Mrs Peters' story encouraged Salish people to join in certain rituals designed to hasten the newcomers' arrival. 'One part of ceremony they danced with their hands over their heads and looking up begging God and the strange people to come,' she explained, and 'this is why he was making them pray, because they wanted these times to come.'

The point behind Mrs Peters' recounting of the prophecy narratives was not simply to show that one of her ancestors was a remarkable man whose prophecies had come true – although this was no doubt one of her motivations. Rather, the significance of the story lay in its power to link indigenous literacy with the alienation of Salish lands by European settlers. As she repeatedly stated to her Columbia University interviewer, the prophet's paper was 'the reason these people here didn't fight for their country when the white people came.'

To the Salish people's chagrin, the prophet's printed word revealed certain truths that ultimately led to their marginalization by the very people the sacred texts had encouraged them to welcome and make room for. Contrary to scholarly orthodoxy, the Native people did not lose their land in large part because they were non-literates who could be easily duped and manipulated by nefarious literate settlers and mendacious colonial government officials, but, ironically, precisely because they were literate! Within Salish historical consciousness the prophet is remembered as having prepared Salish people for the arrival of newcomers who he expected would bring positive change to a chaotic world in the aftermath of a smallpox epidemic. In a manner similar to what Elizabeth Vibert has documented in the context of the Columbia plateau prophecy phenomenon, the Coast Salish prophet was operating in a world devastated by recent smallpox epidemics, when people were desperate for new solutions to new problems.²⁵ Introduced epidemic diseases, which

pre-dated European settlement and the imposition of colonial rule, had resulted in the Salish world being disordered, and (without sufficient context to link the diseases directly to Europeans) the Salish people interpreted smallpox as the product of a disruption in the spirit world: a disruption that needed to be corrected by new transformations not unlike those associated with the corrective transformative work of *Xá:ls*, or Coyote.

While St'a'saluk's prophecies eventually proved correct – white people and their technologies did come – the newcomers themselves ultimately proved a disappointment. As in the Coyote story related by Harry Robinson, the whites who eventually arrived and confirmed the prophecies were not necessarily good people. They were, as one account of the prophet's teachings predicted 'half good and half bad.'²⁶ Unlike St'a'saluk, who was 'good and innocent enough for God to give him that paper,' the white people presumably possessed literacy because they had always had it. As a result virtue was not associated with their use of paper. Mrs Peters explains that St'a'saluk was pleased when white people started to arrive and thus fulfil his prophecy – until some of the newcomers began to challenge the authority and sanctity of his texts:

When Catholic priests came they heard and told Bishop Durieu and he went against it. It was (the paper) handed down from son to son. The paper was put in a little house (miniature) and was put up a cedar tree ... The Bishop took the paper and burned it at Sk'welq. He was telling [St'a'saluk] it was the devil's work. As soon as he saw it, little house and all, he threw it in the fire. [My] mother saw him do it. She was 15 at the time.

So whereas the Salish who listened to St'a'saluk are remembered as not having fought the newcomers for their land because of the will of God as revealed through the prophet's paper, the white settlers ultimately used paper to dispossess Salish people of their land and resources. Where through these narratives Salish literacy is portrayed as legitimate and proper, newcomer literacy is described as illegitimate and corrupt. Just as the white brother stole Coyote's paper, so the prophet St'a'saluk's white counterpart within the Christian faith stole his paper.

The Question of 'Authenticity' in Historical Salish Literacy

Bertha Peters' story of the three chiefs who were turned to stone and Harry Robinson's account of literacy being stolen from Coyote by his

white twin conform to all the standard criteria associated with a genre of Salish narratives commonly referred to by outsiders as ‘legend’ or ‘mythology’ with one exception – they appear to contain post-contact content.²⁷ While non-Natives have generally not been overly concerned with the historical legitimacy of Aboriginal legends and myths (if only because they assume them to be fiction),²⁸ they have been greatly concerned with their ‘authenticity.’ Stories that appear to have been unduly influenced or informed by post-contact European events and issues have long been discarded to the dustbin of scholarly interest. This prejudice applies equally to prophecy stories such as those shared by Mrs Peters in which the assertions of prophetic power are perceived by outsiders as being built upon information acquired in the post-contact era. That is to say, we have grown so accustomed to associating authentic Aboriginal culture with pre-contact temporal dimensions that we have dismissed or ignored Native stories that do not meet our criteria for historical purity. We might proceed, blindly oblivious to what we are missing by applying such ethnocentric, historically deterministic models, were it not that Aboriginal people themselves flatly reject both our model and our criteria. In failing to listen we not only close a door on another way of knowing, we potentially insult the people who share the stories and thereby reduce the likelihood of their generosity continuing.

Like Western scholars, Salish people distinguish between at least two genres of historical narratives, but authenticity is not a criterion used in making that distinction.²⁹ Stories set in the distant past describing both the work of the Transformers or Coyote as they set about ‘making the world right’ by transforming it into its present stable and recognizable form and their efforts to introduce special technical or ritual power to heroic ancestors are referred to in Bertha Peters’ Stó:lō Salish language as *sxwōxwiyám*, and in Harry Robinson’s Okanagan Salish language as *shmee-ma-ee*. In the world of both Bertha Peterses, the other form of historical discourse is called *sqwélqwel*, whereas for Harry Robinson this category of story was known as *teek-whl*. Stories of the second type tend to describe more recent happenings associated with events in the lives of living people or people from recent generations, such as those relating to the prophet St’a’saluk. Both *sxwōxwiyám/shmee-ma-ee* and *sqwélqwel/teek-whl* are considered equally true and real.³⁰ Whatever differences and similarities exist between the two narrative forms – sometimes the lines between the two blur, making categorization difficult – neither *reality* (in the Western meaning of the term) nor *authenticity* is part of the indigenous criteria

for assessing them. There are no authentic or inauthentic *swoxwiyam*, only better remembered/conveyed or less well remembered/conveyed *swoxwiyam*. There are no authentic or inauthentic *sqwélqwel*, only more or less reliable sources of historical information.

Historical accuracy in the Salish world is a matter of great concern – no less so than among Western academics. What is different is the way accuracy is assessed. Among literate Westerners, historical accuracy is measured in relation to verifiable evidence. Footnotes provide the reading audience with a means of assessing the relationship between evidence and interpretation. If a scholarly historical interpretation can be shown to run counter to historical evidence it is regarded as poor history: poor scholarship. The conveyors of poor history in the Western model place themselves in a dangerous situation. If exposed they will be branded either as sloppy academics, or worse, as dishonest ones. Such designations have serious consequences in the sense that they will affect historians' ability to have their work published, and their reputation within academia will suffer. They will be marginalized and ostracized within their profession.

Within the Salish world, by way of contrast, historical accuracy is largely assessed in relation to people's memories of previous renditions or versions of a narrative and in relation to the teller's status and reputation as an authority. In cases of conflicting narratives, discrepancies are as often as not dismissed according to familial alliances and associations, or what Wayne Suttles has informally described as the process of asserting 'My family's history is better than your family's history because it is *my* family's history.'³¹ However, what Wendy Wickwire has described as oral footnotes – the verbal citing of one's sources and authorities – provides the Salish audience with the principal means of assessing a storyteller's legitimacy, and by extension, the legitimacy of the narrative when such matters are being adjudicated among families. That is to say, if the conveyor of a historical narrative is considered to have failed to establish such credentials, the narrative is likely to be regarded as poor history by third party listeners not allied with the teller's family. The Salish conveyors of poor history, like their Western counterparts, face various sanctions for sloppiness and transgression. It is unlikely, for example, that they will be called in the future to share their stories in a public forum, and moreover they will acquire reputations as poor historians: their status will diminish.

Given the common concern over the accuracy of historical narratives, it is not surprising that people in both the Salish and Western worlds

also expressed concern over the consequences of sharing inaccurate or wrong history. In each society, for example, it is understood that poorly conveyed or inaccurate historical narratives pose dangers, not only to the reputation of the speaker but to the listening (or reading) audience. Among Western scholars, this recognition is a relatively recent epiphany, and one related to the recognition of the power that interpretations of the past have to shape the present. This is most apparent among histories written about relatively recent occurrences, and in particular those that discuss violence or exploitation. Nazi history that depicted the German people as not only a betrayed people but a superior race created the context and justification for the brutal conquest of Slavic lands, the occupation of western Europe, and the sadistic execution of six million Jews. In a not dissimilar way, Brian Dippie has shown how a false understanding of Native history allowed American policy makers to embrace a teleological and self-serving notion of the future that in turn justified the physical, social, and economic marginalization of Aboriginal people. Indians were deemed to be a 'vanishing race,' Dippie explains, because history ostensibly revealed their pre-contact civilizations to be inferior and incapable of advancement. Once they had been classified as a historically vanishing people, policies were enacted that actually promoted their political, economic, and cultural disappearance. Unfortunately, it is not only ideologues and self-serving politicians who create dangerous histories. Jeffery Gould has argued that scholars contributed to a perception of Nicaraguan history in which indigenous people were portrayed as having been replaced through the miscegenational process of 'mestizaje' wherein people of mixed European and indigenous ancestry eclipsed Nicaraguan Aboriginal people. With 'real Indians' deemed to have been a casualty of history, contemporary political leaders absolved themselves of responsibility for indigenous people – with tragic consequences.³²

If Western historians are increasingly aware of the dangers of inaccurate or ideologically driven history, Salish historians have long been sensitive to the need to 'get the story right' – even if the consequences of bad history are conceived differently. For the Salish historian, bad history is considered to have potentially tragic consequences for both the teller and the listening audience. Stories about the distant past, and indeed any story that involves deceased people, is regarded as of interest to ancestors in the spirit world. To retell a story is to convene the spirits of the historical actors described. Ancestral spirits, it is believed, are extremely concerned with honour, integrity, and accur-

acy – so concerned, in fact, that they can cause ‘bad things’ to happen when their story is altered or abused. So sensitive are the spirits that many Salish people today are careful not to mention the names of deceased people at night (when spirits are especially active) for fear that either a malevolent, or even an excessively kind, spirit might carry away their soul.

Indicative of the obligation that Salish historians have to maintain the integrity of sacred historical narratives are the protocols and sanctions anthropologist Sally Snyder observed in 1963 among even her supposedly ‘acculturated’ informants – people she described as being ‘compulsive about telling stories “right.”’ As she discovered, ‘If a story was imperfectly recalled it was wrong for [Salish historians] to “guess” meaning, to pad, improvise, paraphrase or omit. It was better not to tell it at all for it was dangerous to omit scenes and to shorten myths. Nubile women in the audience might give birth to deformed children, incomplete or malformed like the abbreviated or truncated story. And shortening myths would shorten the lives of all listeners.’⁷³

Regarded in this light it is difficult to imagine a context in which a Salish person could, or would, intentionally modify a historical narrative pertaining to the ancient transformations, and even more difficult to imagine a context in which the community would allow such an individual to get away with it even if they tried. More to the point, in placing the history of literacy within the context of a sacred narrative – one that from a Salish perspective cannot be easily challenged by either indigenous people or non-Native newcomers and their competing chronologies and interpretations – it becomes sacrosanct. To raise the question of ‘authenticity’ is to challenge not only the narrative but also the ‘truth’ behind Salish ways of knowing. This is not to suggest that outsiders should not ask about authenticity, just that they should be alert to the significance and implications of their questions to Aboriginal people.

Context for Situating Salish Orality and Literacy

Culture binds Salish stories together and provides them with an internal coherence that is not always apparent to outsiders. Salish prophecy narratives, for example, have been examined from a number of perspectives, most notably with an eye to determining whether they were of genuinely indigenous origin or a borrowed reaction to colonial pressures (that is, whether they were ‘authentic’), or, most recently, in relation to

what they say about indigenous beliefs and practices in the face of catastrophic challenges to society such as those posed by smallpox epidemics.³⁴ No one has yet attempted to place the historical actors within a Salish historiography or historical consciousness. Such an approach offers a means of escaping the quagmire of assessing authenticity, while simultaneously elevating the analysis beyond an evaluation of semiotics.

For example, studies of Salish prophecy have avoided the question of the historical reality of the actions and words attributed to prophets. An underlying assumption of these studies is that the prophets were not really prophets; that they could not have known what they claimed to have known in the way they claim to have known it. That is to say, post-Enlightenment Western epistemology does not account for prophetic knowledge, and therefore either the prophets are considered to have acquired their knowledge of Europeans and European ways (including 'mock literacy') from other sources, or the more recent twentieth-century stories about nineteenth-century prophets are not genuinely historical but instead historical fiction designed to serve contemporary purposes. Thus conceived, Mrs Peters' great-great-great-grandfather St'a'saluk could not have had a paper with written text because such things could not have been known to Salish people prior to either direct or indirect contact with Europeans.

But what if the Salish understanding of the historical St'a'saluk departs from the Western understandings an individual? Mrs Peters tells us that the name St'a'saluk was also the name of her grandfather and father, and we know that in Salish society when names are passed on so are essential components of the spirit or soul of the person or persons who previously 'carried' the name. Moreover, as mentioned, Mrs Peters tells us that the prophetic paper was passed from son to son. Thus, it is possible that the prophecies actually emanated from what outsiders might consider to have been a series of people over many years. That is to say, there may not have been one St'a'saluk who uttered one set of prophecies, but a series of St'a'saluks who uttered many cumulative prophecies. I am not suggesting that this was necessarily the case, simply that it might have been, and that questions of authenticity, should we feel the need to continue asking them, might need to be recast to account for different measures of historical accuracy and different definitions of what constitutes an historical actor.

Given such context, perhaps the more interesting question is what these stories collectively or individually say about Aboriginal perceptions

of literacy. For if the above synoptic accounts of ‘beginning of time’ literacy tell us that literacy is part of a broader genre of transformation stories, they only indirectly reveal how Salish people understand the process or act of transformation in relation to literacy itself.

For Salish people, transformation stories are as much, if not more, about creating permanency or stability as they are about documenting the change from one state to another. In the two Bertha Peterses’ language, the verb that has been translated into English to describe the work of the Transformers is *xá:ytem*. This term first entered the popular English lexicon in 1995, when the elders of the Stó:lō Shxweli (Spirit) Language Revival Programme were asked to select a name for the new interpretive centre that was being established at the recently protected site of the transformer rock referred to in Bertha’s literacy narrative. The elders balked at the request, however, explaining that they ‘could not make up a name’ for something that had been made by *Xá:ls*. Instead they suggested that the site simply be referred to as *Xá:ytem*, which meant ‘suddenly and miraculously transformed by *Xá:ls*.’

Both the name of the Transformers and the verb describing the act of transforming are derived from the same proto-Salish root *xá:l*. Interestingly, however, as at least one insightful scholar of Salish hermeneutics has observed, perhaps a better way of thinking of the meaning behind *xá:l* is not to emphasize the act of transformation but the process of ‘marking.’ The Transformers leave their mark on the world through transformations that in turn are then understood and known through the stories describing that act. Considered in this light, the ‘root word *Xá:l* refers to inscription in the widest sense.’³⁵

In terms of helping us understand the meanings embedded in the narratives of both Bertha Peterses, one important context can be derived from the indigenous term Stó:lō people use to refer to literacy itself. During the course of interviews, Stó:lō elders explained to me that the verb *to write* in their language was *xéla:ls*. This is significant for two reasons. First, it reveals that the Stó:lō did not choose to borrow the English or French word for literacy as they did for certain other concepts about which they had no prior knowledge. The Stó:lō word for cow, for example is *músmes*, which is derived from the mooing sound cattle make. Similarly, the word for pig, *kweshú*, comes from the French *cochon*, and *miyúl* from the English *mule*. It is relatively easy, of course, to imagine a world in which knowledge of certain concrete objects does not exist and for which people therefore borrow the word to correspond with the introduced object. It is more taxing to imagine people

not having knowledge of abstract concepts, and so the response to such introductions becomes more creative. While the adoption of an English word should not necessarily be taken as evidence that a given concept did not exist in pre-contact times, the use of an Aboriginal word for an activity or thing that is generally associated with post-contact developments should cause us to reflect on why that word was selected. It should, in other words, provide hints about what pre-existing ideas were used to interpret the introduced phenomenon or idea.³⁶

The choice of the word *xélá:ls* to describe writing is also significant for another reason, for it is derived from the same proto-Salish root for 'marking' as *xá:ls* and *xá:ytem*. To write, in other words, is to engage in an activity of marking that Stó:lō people associate with the actions of the Transformer. Thus the central 'Great Spirit' or *Xá:ls* character in Bertha Peters' narrative was presumably not only punishing the three chiefs for failing to share the knowledge of literacy but was engaged in the act of writing himself. The very act of transforming them to stone was an act of literacy.

A Salish Orality about Literacy

If someone were to create a timeline of literacy for the Salish people living along the lower Fraser River watershed based solely on evidence gleaned from archival records, chances are it would contain very different information, names, and dates from the Salish literacy narratives discussed above. It would probably begin with the establishment of St Mary's residential school in 1862, for it was there, under the watchful eye of Oblate Catholic priests, that Salish students first attended classes to learn their ABCs. By the time Canadian government officials started keeping systematic files on Aboriginal literacy in the region in the 1870s, Indian Agent James Lenihan was able to report that of the 32 girls and 22 boys attending St Mary's, all had 'passed a very credible examination in reading writing [and] grammar.'³⁷ Two years after St Mary's was built a young alumna of that school established, in the village of Cheam in the central Fraser Valley, what is possibly the first Aboriginal-run Western-style school in Canada's Pacific province. There she taught other Salish youths and adults the rudiments of English literacy. Throughout the late nineteenth century the number of literate Aboriginal graduates was augmented by the work of Protestant teachers at the Methodist and Anglican Indian schools built in Chilliwack, Lytton, and Yale and the Catholic school at Kamloops.

Yet against this mid-to-late-nineteenth-century colonial backdrop Stó:lō prophets, possibly including a namesake descendant of Mrs Peters' original St'a'saluk, continued to use a separate, esoteric literature to preach about the future in relation to the past. According to ethnographer James Teit, as late as 1880 a Salish prophet was travelling among Coast and Interior Salish villages preaching from a divinely inspired manuscript that only he could read. This text, an accountant's ledger book containing a series of pencil drawings and repetitive symbols, is now a part of the ethnographic collection of the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa and has been catalogued under the title 'Dream Book of a Stalo Prophet.'³⁸ It does not reflect literacy in a sense immediately recognizable to non-Native outsiders, but a child who glimpsed some of the pages might be forgiven for interpreting the images and symbols as the 'fanciest capital letters.' Moreover, the prophet's literacy was as real and meaningful to his Salish audience as either Bertha Peters' story about the three chiefs was to her or Harry Robinson's account of Coyote's misadventures was to him.

For many, orality is considered the defining characteristic of indigeneity, but these Salish narratives remind us that such a definition perhaps says more about the fact that literacy has for even longer been regarded by elite Europeans as the defining characteristic of Western civilization. All other popular definitions of what it means to be indigenous (to be non-industrial, to have a deep and meaningful relationship with one's local environs, to value collective decision-making processes over hierarchal social and political structures, to be intensely spiritual, and so forth) are products of the same assumption that informed Walter Ong's interpretation of the role of literacy in Western society. Salish oral histories about literacy reveal that to be indigenous is not necessarily to think of oneself and one's history as non-literate.

It was a long-standing assumption of Westerners that to be without literacy was to be without history. The stories told by the two Bertha Peterses and Harry Robinson inject literacy (and therefore history) into the Aboriginal past in a way that they probably believed non-Native listeners would understand. But more important, their stories reveal that literacy was not always interpreted by oral indigenous people in the same way. Their ways of understanding the works of the legendary 'beginning of time' Transformers and influential contact-era prophets indicates that literacy was regarded within the context of earlier understanding of what it meant to inscribe, make permanent, preserve, transform, and reveal.

Salish orality about literacy therefore offers glimpses into Salish historical consciousness. Reflecting on 'the history of active oppression imposed on Native languages and cultural practices,' as well as on the manner in which legal and even ethnographic documents were used to restrict and diminish Native rights, Crisca Bierwert recently observed that 'it would not be a surprise to find "writing" understood as a signifier of domination in a Native American oral tradition.' She notes that among contemporary Salish people on Canada's Pacific Coast, textual and literary representations are largely regarded in terms Walter Ong would have recognized – that is, as 'a weapon capable of inflicting damage.' And indeed, as is revealed through the stories of 'beginning of time' literacy and prophetic literacy, text was regarded as a powerful tool that could be used to undermine, steal, and in other ways diminish not only the sacredness of oration but also the rights of Aboriginal people and their relationship with land and resources. The desire Bierwert observed among many contemporary Salish people to 'keep writing out' of sacred and ritualized ceremonies should indeed be regarded as an 'act of integrity,'³⁹ but so too should the desire to repatriate literacy (as reflected in the Peterses and Robinson narratives) be appreciated as reflecting a countervailing act of historical integrity.

The task now before us is to better understand the tensions between these two positions within Salish society. That is to say, we must begin shifting our focus away from a binary study of Native–newcomer relations (which inevitably assumes that non-Natives are the most important thing in Aboriginal people's lives and history) to one that recognizes the plurality of indigenous voices within Aboriginal communities and the historical consciousness that informs those voices and beliefs.

NOTES

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Lutz, and Jim Miller provided helpful and encouraging comments on an earlier draft.

- 1 For example, Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962); Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Jack Goody and Ian Watt, 'The Consequence of Literacy,' in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1968); Aleksandr Romanovich Luria, ed., *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations*, Michael Cole, trans., Martin Lopez-Morillas and Lynn Solotaroff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Jack R. Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1977); Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982); Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986).
- 2 Crisca Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River: Coast Salish Figures of Power* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 112.
- 3 See David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); also Marie Battiste, 'Micmac Literacy and Cognitive Assimilation,' in *Indian Education in Canada*, vol. 1, *The Legacy*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, and Don McCaskill (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 23–44.
- 4 Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 112–13.
- 5 Even the scholarship emphasizing Salish opposition to literary depictions and representations of their culture contain powerful countervailing stories in which 'literary' options become rationalized as if they are not the only solution, but the best solution, to various orality/literacy tensions. See Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 112–35.
- 6 Peter Wogan, 'Perceptions of European Literacy in Early Contact Situations,' *Ethnohistory* 41, no. 3 (1994): 422.
- 7 Internationally, the best example of enquiry along this path is Adam Fox's *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). In the North American Aboriginal context see J.W. Berry and J.A. Bennett, *Cree Syllabic Literacy: Cultural Context and Psychological Consequences* (Tilburg, Netherlands: Tilburg University Press, 1991); David L. Schmidt and Murdena Marshall, eds., *Mi'kmaq Hieroglyphic Prayers: Readings in North America's First Indigenous Script* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Press, 1995); Jarold Ramsey, *Reading the Fire: The Traditional Indian Literatures of America*, rev. ed.

- (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999); Germaine Warkentin. 'In Search of "the Word of the Other": Aboriginal Sign Systems and the History of the Book in Canada,' *Book History* 2, no. 1 (1999): 1–27; Bruce Greenfield, 'The Mi'kmaq Hieroglyphic Prayer Book: Writing and Christianity in Maritime Canada, 1675–1921,' in *The Language Encounter in the Americas, 1492–1800*, ed. Edward G. Gray and Norman Fiering (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 189–211; Hilary E. Wyss, *Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity, and Native Community in Early America* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000); Margaret Bender, *Signs of Cherokee Culture: Sequoyah's Syllabary in Eastern Cherokee Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). For a New Zealand perspective consult D.F. McKenzie, 'The Sociology of a Text: Orality, Literacy, and Print in Early New Zealand' [1984] in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London: Routledge, 2002), 189–215.
- 8 Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Ruth Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality: Studies on the Technology of Communication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); R.W. Niezen, 'Hot Literacy in Cold Societies: A Comparative Study of the Sacred Value of Writing,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33, no. 2 (1991): 225–45; Kenneth George, 'Felling a Story with a New Ax: Writing and Reshaping of Ritual Song Performance in Upland Sulawesi,' *Journal of American Folklore* 103, 407 (1990): 3–24; Brian Street, *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 9 Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England*.
- 10 For example, Billy Sepass, one of the most prominent lower Fraser River Stó:lō leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, traced his ancestry through his father back two generations to the Colville region of the Columbia plateau.
- 11 These journeys and transformations are summarized and contextualized in Sonny McHalsie, David Schaepe, and Keith Carlson, 'Making the World Right through Transformation,' in Keith Thor Carlson with David Shaege, Albert McHalsie, David Smith, Leanna Rhodes, and Collin Duffield, eds., *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver, Seattle, Chilliwack: Douglas and McIntyre Press, University of Washington Press, and The Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 2001), 1–2. See also discussions of transformer movements as recorded by Franz Boas in *Indianische Sagen von der nordpazifischen Küste Americas* (1985), recently translated into English and edited by Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy, in *Indian Myths and Legends from the North Pacific Coast of America* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2002). See also the narratives translated by Charles Hill-Tout in the collection edited by Ralph Maud as *Mainland Halkomelem* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1977).

- 12 See McHalsie et al., 'Making the World Right through Transformation.'
- 13 Sonny McHalsie, personal communication, May 1999. See also James Teit, *Traditions of the Thompson River Indians of BC*, Memoir no. 6 (Boston and New York: American Folk-Lore Society, 1900).
- 14 Harry Robinson, *Write It on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*, comp. and ed. Wendy Wickwire (Vancouver: Talonbooks/Theytus, 1989), 43–6.
- 15 Bertha Peters in conversation with the author, 20 September 1995.
- 16 Harry Robinson, *Living by Stories: A Journey of Landscape and Memory*, comp. and ed. Wendy Wickwire (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2005). All of the following quotations come from a chapter titled 'Coyote Makes a Deal with the King of England,' 64–85.
- 17 The first documented killing of Okanagan Interior Salish by non-Native newcomers occurred in the early months of the 1858 gold rush, although tensions between Okanagan and HBC employees at Fort Kamloops and Fort Shushwap had periodically grown violent in the years preceding the influx of miners.
- 18 Harry Robinson in conversation with Wendy Wickwire, audio interview, 20 June 1980, copy in author's possession. Edward Brett is described as humble: 'Not a chief, not a councillor; just a band member,' who quietly made the sojourn to Victoria, and ultimately paid more than \$250 of his own money to acquire a copy of the 'Black and White.'
- 19 Jack R. Goody, *Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Jack R. Goody, *Interface between the Written and the Oral*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Jack R. Goody, *The Power of the Written Tradition* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000).
- 20 Michael Harbsmeier, 'Early Travels to Europe: Some Remarks on the Magic of Writing,' in *Europe and Its Other: Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, and Diana Loxley (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), 72.
- 21 Patricia Seed, "'Failing to Marvel": Atahualpa's Encounter with the Word,' *Latin American Research Review* 26, no. 1 (1991): 19.
- 22 Until 2004 Marian Smith's fieldnotes were housed in the archival division of the Royal Anthropological Institute in London, MS 268, unpaginated.
- 23 Wilson Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia*. (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1952); Wayne Suttles, 'The Plateau Prophet Dance among the Coast Salish,' *Coast Salish Essays* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987), 152–98.
- 24 Marian Smith, field notes, box 3:4, no. 2, Royal Anthropological Institute, London.

- 25 Elizabeth Vibert, "'The Natives Were Strong to Live": Reinterpreting Early-Nineteenth-Century Prophetic Movements in the Columbia Plateau,' *Ethnohistory* 42, no. 2 (1995): 197–229.
- 26 Stó:lō elder Robert Joe, recorded in Duff, *Upper Stalo*, 122. Also, personal communication with Welsey Sam (Robert Joe's grandson), aged seventy-four in 1993.
- 27 The anthropologist Wayne Suttles describes Salish myths or legends as being set in 'an age when the world was different, its people were like both humans and animals of the present age, and it was full of dangerous monsters ... [This] age ended when xé'ls [Xá:ls] the Transformer came through the world, transforming monsters and other myth-age beings into rocks and animals, and setting things in order for the people of the present age.' Suttles explains that these stories 'usually told how [a community's] founder [came to find his] winter village or summer camp, where the Transformer gave him technical or ritual knowledge, and where he established special relations with local resources.' Wayne Suttles, 'Central Coast Salish,' *Handbook of the North American Indians*, vol. 7, *The Northwest Coast*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1990), 466.
- 28 By generally I mean historically. A string of recent scholarly studies of Native legends have afforded them due credit as historical sources, even as they recognize the inherent problems of trying to use indigenous histories the way we use Western historical evidence. See, for example, Jonathan Hill, ed., *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Wendy Wickwire, 'To See Ourselves as the Other's Other: Nlaka'pamux Contact Narratives,' *Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 1 (1994): 1–20.
- 29 In my most recent discussions with fluent Halkomelem speakers, a third category of historical narrative has been discussed called *xelth'it*. This too is translated as 'true history.' The context in which this expression is used suggests that it is probably the word applied to a version of historical narrative that has proven more true than another after a council of historical experts has assessed the merits of two or more competing historical discourses.
- 30 Wayne Suttles, 'On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,' *Coast Salish Essays*, 73–99. Also Wayne Suttles, 'Sasquatch: The Testimony of Tradition,' in *Manlike Monsters on Trial: Early Records and Modern Evidence of Bigfoot, Abominable, Snowman, Sasquatch, and Grendel*, ed. Marjorie M. Halpin and Michael M. Ames, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980), 245–54.
- 31 Personal communication with Wayne Suttles, May 2004.
- 32 Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes & U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1982); Jeffery Gould, *To Die in This*

- Way: *Nicaraguan Indian Communities and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880–1965* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998). I am grateful to Jonathan Clapperton for our conversations about the consequences of historical inaccuracies, and for drawing my attention to Jeffery Gould’s scholarship.
- 33 Sally Snyder, ‘Skagit Society and Its Existential Basis: An Ethnofolkloristic Reconstruction’ (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1964), 21–2.
- 34 Leslie Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance, Menasha* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing, 1935); Christopher Miller, *Prophetic Worlds: Indians and Whites on the Columbia Plateau* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985); Vibert, ‘The Natives Were Strong to Live.’
- 35 Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 74.
- 36 Elsewhere I have developed this thesis more thoroughly with regard to Stó:lō verbs associated with various expressions of trade and exchange and their relationship to indigenous concepts of spatial distance. Keith Thor Carlson, ‘Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics,’ *Native Studies Review* 11 (1997): 30–5.
- 37 James Lenihan to the Hon. Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 7 November 1875, DIA Annual Reports, Sessional papers 1876, Library and Archives Canada.
- 38 James A. Teit, ‘Dream Book of a Stalo Prophet,’ Canadian Museum of Civilization, MS VII-G-19M, c. 1882.
- 39 Crisca Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar*, 112–13.

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