Beyond the Water's Edge: Towards a Social Archaeology of Landscape on the Northwest Coast

Jeff Oliver†

Abstract. Recent research into the environmental history of the Northwest Coast has revealed the significant cultural impact that pre-contact and contact period Indigenous communities had on the surrounding landscape. Ethnobotanical, paleoenvironmental, ethnographic, and archaeological approaches have documented the degrees to which people managed ecosystems or otherwise altered the physical landscape in places once considered "wilderness" by newcomers. Less attention has been paid to the ways in which landscapes were socially constructed and how living and working in such places gave meaning to social life at a variety of scales. Drawing from ethnographic, environmental and archaeological evidence, and taking into account how changes in the land would have become entangled within the routines of working the landscape, this article examines and interprets some of the social distinctions that people might have constructed through these places in the past. Two case studies from the central Coast Salish region are examined: first, the social practices and landscape features associated with cedar bark-stripping; and second, gardening traditions in sub-alpine areas of the Coast and Cascade Mountains. The results of this study suggest that we cannot separate economic (or cultural) patterns from the social qualities that are implicated within the practice of landscape modification, and that working and living through such places was socially consequential and bound up with concepts of history, memory, and identity.

Résumé. Des recherches menées récemment sur l'histoire environnementale de la côte du Nord-Ouest ont révélé l'importance de l'impact culturel des populations autochtones sur leur milieu durant les périodes pré-contact et contact. Une approche pluridisciplinaire conjuguant archéologie, ethnobotanique, ethnographie et études paléo-environnementales a permis d'étayer les différents degrés de gestion des écosystèmes par ces populations et de retracer l'altération de ces paysages pourtant considérés comme vierges par les nouveaux arrivants. Les chercheurs ont porté moins d'attention moindre à la manière dans laquelle les paysages furent «socialement construits», c'est-à-dire comment, à différentes échelles, le travail quotidien dans ces endroits donna de l'importance à la vie sociale. S'appuyant sur des données ethnographiques, archéologiques et environnementales, tout en considérant la manière dont les aménagements du territoire auraient été perçus par les populations agissant sur le paysage, cet article examine et interprète quelques unes des significations sociales que les populations de ces régions auraient construites dans le passé. Deux études de cas situées dans la région de la côte centrale de Salish sont présentées. La première porte sur les pratiques sociales et les caractéristiques du paysage associées à l'écorçage de cèdres, la seconde porte sur les traditions de culture des plantes dans les zones sub-alpines de la côte et dans les montagnes Cascade. Les résultats de cette étude suggèrent qu'il n'est pas possible de séparer les modèles économiques (ou culturels) des valeurs sociales impliquées dans les pratiques qui mènent aux modifications du paysage et que travailler, et que le fait de vivre et travailler dans ces endroits a eu des conséquences sociales liées de près aux concepts d'histoire, de mémoire et d'identité.

†Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield, Northgate House, West Street, Sheffield, S1 4ET United Kingdom [jeffryoliver@hotmail.com]

Recent scholarship has brought to light the profound human impact that pre-contact and post-contact Indigenous communities had on the landscapes of the Northwest Coast (e.g., Deur 1999; 2002; papers in Deur and Turner 2005; Gottesfeld 1994; Lepofsky 2004; Mobley and Eldridge 1992; Stewart 1984; Stryd and Eldridge 1993; Stryd and Fedema 1998; Turner 1998; 1999; Turner and Berkes 2006; Turner and Peacock 2005). This research has made some profound and startling conclusions, suggesting that the predominantly wooded mantle of the coast, commonly viewed as "wilderness," was partly a product of human intervention. These observations have helped elucidate the variability of past human-environment relationships by cogently demonstrating the degree to which indigenous labour both managed and shaped the plant-communities and forests of North America's most rugged coast, sometimes over millennia. Significantly, this work has provided much grist for the mill of decolonization because it has given voice to a tradition of land use and land ownership that challenges the stereotypical view that Aboriginal peoples were largely restricted to the water's edge.

Less attention, however, has been paid to the ways in which landscapes were socially constructed or to how living and working in such places gave meaning to social life at a variety of levels. This is a critical issue because it is now commonly recognized that landscapes are not simply outcomes of human impact, but rather lenses through which social worlds are both constructed and contested, particularly at the scale of routine lives (Bender 2001, 2002; Edmonds 1999a, 1999b; Ingold 1993, 2000; Morphy 1995; Oliver 2006; Tilley 1994). While we have learned a significant amount about the ecological and cultural knowledge possessed by Northwest Coast peoples, and how it was put to use in the routine management and harvesting of past landscapes, much of our thinking continues to draw a line between patterns which seem to clearly reflect subsistence and economic activity from those that we more confidently ascribe a social meaning (Edmonds 1999b; Ingold 2000). Indeed, the emphasis of this approach can at times perpetuate a dualism that implicates a separation between the social "place" of village sites and the worked "spaces" beyond the water's edge. In so doing we create a picture where the contingency of social life was expressed and negotiated largely through the conspicuous built environment of the iconic village site, with its clutch of anthropological signifiers—totem poles, winter dances, Big Men, and potlatches, ironically leaving the landscape beyond the water's edge a relatively abstract or static place.

There are two main reasons for this. First, there is much still unknown about the practices of past indigenous Northwest Coast plant-management (Deur and Turner 2005a: 331) and what has been achieved is still at a relatively early stage. Thus far, work has sought in a large part to demonstrate the mere existence of these features rather than to explore more fully the social implications of dwelling in such contexts. Second, and more importantly, due to what is increasingly overwhelming evidence of landscape interaction, much attention has been focused on how the harnessing of natural resources, in addition to a traditional focus on salmon, helped to facilitate the development of social complexity on the Northwest Coast, indicated by socially stratified village sites observed from the ethnographic period (see, in particular, Ames 1994, 2005; Ames and Maschner 1999; Lepofsky *et al.* 2000). While routines of

working the land are crucial to these arguments, they tend to be meaningful only in so far that they represent abstract indicators of social progress.

Although these arguments may appear useful for getting at broader systemic questions, they are far from appropriate for getting at the scales of social life in which past societies experienced and interpreted their world. Addressing this apparent lacuna, this paper draws attention to some of the problems we face with such approaches, but more importantly, by reducing the scales of analysis from more detached discussions of human impact to the particular ways in which people inhabited the landscape, it attempts to shed light on what a social archaeology of managed and modified landscapes might actually look like. Drawing on various lines of evidence from the south coast of British Columbia, the argument develops around two case studies that demonstrate how the experience of patterning and ruptures in the cultural landscape may have been crucial in helping to construct and transform past social worlds.

AN UNTOUCHED WILDERNESS

In reading Bouchard and Kennedy's "Editors' Introduction" to *Indian Myths & Legends from the Northwest Coast* (2002), it is easy to imagine the scenes of animation created during Boas' numerous trips to Aboriginal villages up and down the coast: the inquisitive eyes of children peering out from cracks in plank houses, the gathering of elders around campfires to discuss terms of knowledge exchange, the sense of indifference felt by others to his prying questions or to those who simply wanted to get on with the mending of their fishing nets. Like those anthropologists who followed him, it is without exception that Boas recognized the conspicuous and dynamic place of the village site as the centre of social life.

In stark contrast to this, travelling by canoe through the intricate channels along the coast of British Columbia, Boas painted the surrounding landscape in altogether different terms: "The overwhelming solitude and stillness of the shores, the monotony of the dark pines and cedars, of the channels and of the roaring cascades beget a longing for the sight of human work, of human habitation, that swallows the admiration of the magnificent scenery (Boas 1896: 229).

The idea of the Northwest Coast as wilderness *par excellence* is nothing new. Indeed, since the 18th century when Europeans began to visit its shoreline and to penetrate what was for them its unexplored interior, coastal viewing inspired sublime tropes that mirrored the grandeur of its physical proportions (Tippett and Cole 1979). "Vast" were its mountain ranges, "interminable" were its forests; but crucially, it revealed little in the way of human endeavour. Fifty years on from Boas, little had changed. Anthropologist Phillip Drucker's gaze captured the coastal landscape through a similar frame: "The woods, seen from the water, seem to form an impenetrable mantle over the irregular surface of the land. After one finally breaks through the luxurious growth along the margin, he finds himself in a dark gloomy moss-covered world … It is scarcely to be wondered at, what with the ruggedness of the rockbound mountainous terrain and the dense tangle of vegetation, that the native population for the most part frequented the woods but little (Drucker: 1951: 8–9).

Even in more recent times, commentators on the coast frequently thought the landscape to be "more a backdrop for Native life than a focus of it" (Wagner

1972: 15). Aboriginal peoples, it was believed, were to be found in their settlements on the coastal margins or along major rivers, mere oases of "culture" in an almost limitless wilderness. For example, geographer Phillip Wagner (1972: 15) has said that it is completely "justified" to dispense with "detailed considerations" of the conditions inland because Natives "lived almost entirely on products of the sea itself, the strand and the immediately adjacent forest fringe." Away from villages, the landscape was dominated by ancient stands of old growth forest, places firmly held in the clutch of nature. This is a view further encouraged by the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, within which Indigenous peoples were seen as the "original conservationists … people so intimately bound to the land they have left no mark upon it" (White and Cronon 1988: 417; see also Nicholas 1999). If human culture was synonymous with the visibility of human achievement, specially an ability to harness nature into intelligent and industrious creations, then the coastal landscape betrayed little evidence of it.

Indeed, concerns with this aesthetic frame continue to dominate the world we consume today. A myriad of glossy coffee-table books, calendars, and tourist ephemera help to make the distinction for us by reproducing the idea of the coast, and the Northwest in general, as "primeval" and "untouched" (cf. Crang 1997; Crawshaw and Urry 1997). Within these texts, any references to past or present Indigenous involvement with these places all but disappear to the margins of the page[1] (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The idea of the Northwest Coast as wilderness *par excellence:* the Tantalus Range and Cheakamus River Valley in Squamish traditional territory (Photograph by the author).

A WORKED LANDSCAPE

The notion of wilderness has a well-established pedigree; indeed, it is a concept that resonates deeply with colonial experiences across North America (Cronon 1983; Denevan 1992; Dods 2002). But how we see the world is not always the same and has more to do with conditions of knowledge than any uncontested reality. On the Northwest Coast, as in other parts of North America (e.g., Delcourt *et al.* 1998; Kaye and Swetnam 1999; Nicholas 1999), these assumptions are now being seriously challenged. Scientific examination of pollen and charcoal profiles, and systematic study of archaeological and traditional-use surveys, as well as a renewed scrutiny of the ethnographic record have demonstrated that earlier perceptions were bound up in a kind of cultural myopia (e.g., Deur 1999, 2002; Deur and Turner 2005a, 2005b), and that the so-called "wilderness" was often under some form of "low intensity cultivation" (Deur 1999: 139) or other form of alteration. These contributions have convincingly shown that what Europeans previously took for unbridled "nature," was not uncommonly, in part, a product of human intervention commonly a result of resource procurement or landscape management practices, some of which may date to the early Holocene (Lepofsky 2004).

One of the most ubiquitous tools for shaping the landscape was fire. Low intensity fires were used to manage plant foods ensuring heavy crops by enriching the soil while impeding other vegetation. In drier parts of the coast, such as the rain shadow along the eastern shore of Vancouver Island, a unique ecology of meadows and Garry oak parkland was sustained through regular episodes of landscape burning in order to promote the growth of camas (both *Camassia quamash* and *C. leichtlinii*), a meadow-adapted root food that was harvested with digging sticks (Turner 1999). In certain places, especially where plants grew in abundance, family-owned plots could be marked with sticks, rocks, or even shallow ditches to keep others out (Suttles 2005: 181–187).

Fire was also used as a management tool in less hospitable places often considered marginal to coastal groups. Recent attention has been drawn to sub-alpine regions of the Coast and Cascade mountain ranges where prescribed burning and regular pruning was used to encourage the productivity of naturally occurring berry patches (predominantly *Vaccinium*). Drawing from palaeoenvironmental evidence, ethnography, and features in the form of berry drying trenches in places with extensive berry plants, research suggests a tradition of cultivation (Frank 2000; Gottesfeld 1994; Lepofsky *et al.* 2005), which may have been caught up with other high-elevation activities such as hunting and lithic procurement (Reimer 2000).

Other forms of cultivation were more labour intensive. Techniques including weeding, mulching, tilling, and the application of fertilizer kept family- and village-owned garden plots productive and free of invading pests (Deur 2005: 306; Lepofsky 2004). From Vancouver Island northward, estuarine tidal flats were cultivated into plots of spring-bank clover *(Trifolium wormskjoldii)* and Pacific silverweed *(Potentilla anserine* ssp. *pacifica)*, plants sought for their starchy roots. Frequently, these were grown alongside other root-bearing estuarine plants, including northern riceroot lily (*Fritillaria camschatcensis*) and Nootka lupin *(Lupinus nootkatensis)* (Deur 1999, 2002, 2005). In addition, along the Fraser River and other river valleys, low-lying ground was colonized and worked in strips to encour-

age the growth of wapato *(Sagittaria latifolia)*, another important root that grew in sloughs and ponds, and cranberry bogs *(Viburnum edule)* (Suttles 1955: 27).

The landscape was also shaped in other ways. Forests were not simply the setting for the proverbial hunt: they were systematically exploited for building and weaving materials. Wood and bark from the cedar tree, the "tree of life" (Stewart 1984), provided an unlimited source of workable fibre, the impact of which on the forests of the Northwest Coast is archaeologically unprecedented.[2] Forestry surveys have documented well-preserved chisel marks on moss-covered stumps and logs of western red cedar *(Thuja plicata)*, and occasionally standing trees with entire longitudinal planks pried from their trunks. Log sections were used to provide supporting frames for coastal longhouses, while planks served as a cladding against the elements.

However, cedar trees were most commonly used for their bark. On the north coast, rectangular "bark boards" were stripped from trees for use as roofing material, but far more common are long tapered scars found on the trunks of red and yellow cedar *(Chamaecyparis nootka-tensis)*, evidence of the systematic harvesting of bark for clothing, as well as whole range of material culture forms that were essential to lives of coastal peoples (Stewart 1984; Stryd and Feddema 1998: 4). Significantly, the many thousands of bark-stripped cedar trees that continue to stand in the coastal rainforest can be partly attributed to the fact that Northwest peoples practiced a form of animist relationship with the trees, so bark was always harvested in a manner that would normally ensure their survival (Mauzé 1998; Turner and Peacock 2005: 123–124). In addition, a small part of the number of culturally modified trees must be attributed to present-day harvesting activities, as some Indigenous people continue to collect bark in similar ways (Stryd and Eldridge 1993: 193; Stryd and Feddema 1998: 12).

Far from the primeval hunting chase of the Western gaze, this evidence suggests that the landscape was often a product of cultivation and other forms human impact. It has forced us to rethink certain assumptions, such as the arbitrary line that we draw between hunter-gatherers and agricultural communities and the simple teleology that is presumed to connect one with the other (e.g., Morgan 1877). The coastal wilderness was a way of seeing, framed through the lenses of colonialism and Enlightenment thinking. The forest primeval was seen very differently by Native peoples: for them, "nature" could be worked upon and lived in, in some ways little different from cultural landscapes of the Old World. For the newcomer the problem was that the visual grammar was not a familiar one, and so frequently it was ignored (Dods 2002: 487).

LANDSCAPE: A SPACE OF EXPLOITATION?

The significance of this work has not only started to shape the writing of prehistory but also the current political situation, where First Nations are negotiating to have land claims recognized. However, it is also shaping our understanding of human relationship with the landscape in other ways. Too often, our interpretations operate at a scale that has less bearing on the historical experience of those groups caught up in working the land. This is an important point, because for all of the detail that is starting to be forged into arguments about Indigenous land-use practices, we actually have very little understanding

of how the "material culture" of landscape management—those ecological forms that can be defined as a product of cultural intervention—and the social practices and routines of working that became inscribed within such contexts, helped to reproduce, transform or challenge past social orders.

The stated priorities of this scholarship are varied, and range as widely as the disciplines involved. For some, the aims are for the most part descriptive, if crucial, to our understanding of the very multifaceted nature of prehistoric subsistence economies, which to date have been largely overrepresented by arguments that stress riverine and maritime modes of production (e.g., Deur and Turner 2005b; Stryd and Eldridge 1993; Stryd and Feddema 1998: 4). For others, the focus is on how "ecological knowledge" is learned (Turner and Berke 2006), and how this might be mobilized against the pitfalls of a wasteful, modern consumer society (Anderson 1996). Yet, if a common thread can be found among a majority within this spectrum, then it must settle on the notion that the landscape beyond the water's edge played a critical economic role to the development of social complexity in Northwest Coast cultures, an issue that has dominated our research agendas for some time (e.g., Suttles 1968; see Ames 1994 for a review).

For many, research aims have either focused directly on, or had a passing interest in, how prehistoric peoples harnessed resources in the natural environment and how this was implicated in affecting the "evolution" of cultures from simple egalitarian societies to the socially complex ones witnessed during the ethnographic period (e.g., Ames 2005; Ames and Maschner 1999; Deur and Turner 2005b; Lepofsky *et al.* 2005; Matson and Coupland 1995; Martindale and Jurakic 2004; Prince 2001). In other words, the question has been "how did they finance complexity" (Ames 2005: 74). While it would be unfair to characterize these approaches as homogenous, a central tenet sees the culturally complex societies of the 18th and 19th centuries—those demonstrating institutionalized social hierarchies, and sedentary villages with monumental architecture and large populations—to be correlated in a significant way to forms of environmental exploitation, and in particular the control and intensification of resources. From this perspective, the landscape becomes important mainly as an index for production, the driver that fuels a change in social structure.

These approaches may seem appropriate to general systemic models, but they do not necessarily afford an adequate basis for understanding how past communities inhabited and interpreted their worlds (Edmonds 1999b: 485; Ewonus n.d.). Because the oftendeclared central concern of this research is to seek generalizing models for social change, the routine and exceptional qualities of past lives often fall foul of the voids in its theoretical scaffolding. Through emphasising the landscape as a space of economic activity, we tend to obscure the way in which landscapes were socially meaningful to those who inhabited them. Thus, while rightly pointing out that the landscape is a variable, our interpretations tend to reduce this variability to issues of dietary or medical value, risk buffering, adaptation and labour efficiency, concepts that speak little about conscious human values.

Of course, this does not mean a complete reduction of the landscape to pure Euclidian space. For instance, many have noted the importance of Aboriginal cosmology, totemism, and

animist systems that imbued inanimate objects in the landscape with a sense of conscious being, (Mauzé 1998; Stryd and Feddema 1998; Suttles 1981; Turner and Peacock 2005). Unfortunately, most of this material has tended to remain rather descriptive and abstract, more like a fixed backdrop to social life than a medium for interpreting the world. While these observations may draw our attention to particular meanings, such as taboos, they do not display any real concern for the variability and texture of social relations at the scale of encounter (Hendon 2004: 273). Thus, if colonial perceptions worked to de-humanize the landscape, our attempts to dispel this myth have to some degree replaced one spatial abstraction for another.

This situation, in a good part, is due the way that we in archaeology and other disciplines have thought about the significance of different forms of landscape data. Largely a question of epistemic limits arising out of an enquiry that has sought to understand cultural subjects that no longer exist (Wylie 1989: 95), it has been commonly assumed that "archaeological [etic] data are different from social and cognitive and emic data" (Hayden 1997: 243). This can be linked to a narrowly empiricist position through which the material remains of the past, such as landscape features, preclude any inferential understanding of knowledge claims beyond pure "objective" descriptions. Moreover, from our vantage point in the present, this is combined with a self-defeating view of the cultural subject—its norms and values—that is considered essentially unrecoverable and intangible (Wylie 1989: 95). While the idiosyncrasies of human history are not considered recoverable, the material record of the landscape is sufficiently stocked with the residues of past economic behaviour, patterns that could be assessed—or so the thinking goes. All of this echoes a more general problem in archaeology that tends to bracket off subsistence or economic practices from those which are considered social ones (Edmonds 1999b).

THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE AS SOCIAL ARTIFACT

Up until very recently, archaeologies of Indigenous peoples have paid little attention to the way in which the human modification of landscapes and the shaping of ecologies could be seen as a social artifact with symbolic import (Butler 1995; Head *et al.*, 2002: 176). For the most part, such evidence as charcoal lenses, pollen records, and forest structures has been used to shed light on past environmental settings or to understand human impact on natural ecosystems. Less commonly are they viewed as a means for getting at environmental perceptions in the past (Butler 1995: 16).

However, if evidence from history and anthropology is any indication, the human transformation of "natural" forms has never rendered the landscape devoid of socially constructed meanings. For example, in Georgian England, carefully landscaped parks and sculpted gardens became symbols of polite society and power (Daniels 1988; Williamson 1995). Similar concerns with the visual character of gardens were imported to and developed independently in colonial America (Leone 1984). Even in colonial British Columbia, the growth of successional forests in areas once considered improved for agriculture came to symbolize in certain contexts a struggle with the prevailing discourse of progress (Oliver 2006, *in press*). It is more difficult to gauge the import of modified landscapes in societies without written records.

That said, a number of anthropological studies are beginning to demonstrate that Indigenous peoples were highly attuned to the way in which they shaped ecological structures and biogeography (Head 2000; Head *et al.*, 2002; Janowski 2003; Johnson 2000; Knight 1996). This indicates not only an awareness of places historically modified by people, but also a keen sense of the temporality of these places and how they tie into histories of human practice.

Understanding how and why these kinds of places become meaningful partly hinges on how continuity or change in the landscape is acknowledged. For example, over time, the Northwest Coast evidenced different forms of transformation through both natural and human processes. Water erosion sculpted the mountainsides making rivers and streams an important feature of the coast. The forests grew tall and old, rot set in, and wind (and occasionally fire) felled the giants creating room for fresh growth. In places such as the lower Fraser Valley, food-producing water meadows and mountainside berry patches lent the landscape a patchwork character: a managed and altered landscape that changed over time. Here a comprehensive network of trails pierced the understory and open meadows. Under the dark evergreen canopy were frequent signs of the felling of trees and their modification for bark and wood. Other places bore the signs of more aggressive transformations such as the burning to clear undergrowth and to encourage the browsing of deer.

It is not easy to make sense out of these changes and how they would have become meaningful to people in the past. One way of thinking about them is to understand their patterning as a palimpsest of temporally and spatially situated acts collapsed into the land itself. Ingold (1993; 2000) refers to this ensemble of related features as the *taskscape*, a qualitative and heterogeneous array of landscape contexts that signify past physical transformation. Wrought by human or natural processes, the peculiar character of the landscape lies partly in the way it was used and embraced by others. Taking into account how changes in the land were bound up with the routine practices of the annual round, and how people may have returned to the same places, sometimes synchronising their presence with others, it becomes difficult to ignore the idea that they would have been attentive toward the changing texture of the land, and conscious of the practices and agencies that had helped engineer its shifting form. This interaction was not a passive appreciation; rather, knowledgeable actors were themselves agents, and those who reciprocally acted back, constructing new meaning, in the process of their own dwelling (Ingold 1993: 163).

The endurance or indeed passing character of these kinds of changes over the space of lives or generations may signify social distinctions. Features that stand the test of time may suggest a sense of continuity with the past, whereas the disappearance of others may indicate ruptures. This is how material changes in the land can stand for past lives, identities, and other relationships (Thomas 1996: 80). What is more, patterns signified not only particular meanings, but also "an entanglement of roles and values, as if different qualities … were pulled in and out of focus over time" (Edmonds 1999a: 111). In this way, the material qualities of places could bind people together based on the way they enshrined a form of common ground. In other contexts, changes in the land and the practices that created them invoked the presence of sharp boundaries.

In the remainder of this paper I flesh out these ideas in two different landscape vignettes taken from the south coast of British Columbia (Figure 2). The first focuses on cedar harvesting; the second, on gardening. The evidence I draw from centres on (but is not exclusive to) the traditional geographies inhabited by speakers of the central Coast Salish language family[3], and in particular to those of speakers of mainland Halkomelem, who refer to themselves today as the Stó:lō. Each scenario illustrates different ways in which Aboriginal groups may have engaged with the environment by examining places that were routinely modified during the course of the annual round, as well as the practices that were employed in relation to them. Crucially, these vignettes show how meaning in the landscapes and the making of places was actively constituted by social actors themselves, as opposed to existing in an imposed abstract space. Organised around both economic and social obligations, the annual round is informative not only because of its more obvious connections to land use, but also because it takes us through landscapes of everyday practice, both the ordinary and the exceptional.

CEDAR TRANSFORMATIONS

Throughout the late spring and summer, groups of Salish around the Gulf of Georgia made their way into parts of the forest to work groves of cedar for their wood and bark. When their work was done, the physical effects of their labour remained as conspicuous visual reminders. Reporting to the Ethnological Society of London in 1866, Royal Engineer Charles Wilson (1866: 288) noted the many cedar stumps that marked the valley in places, clear signs of the importance of wood for

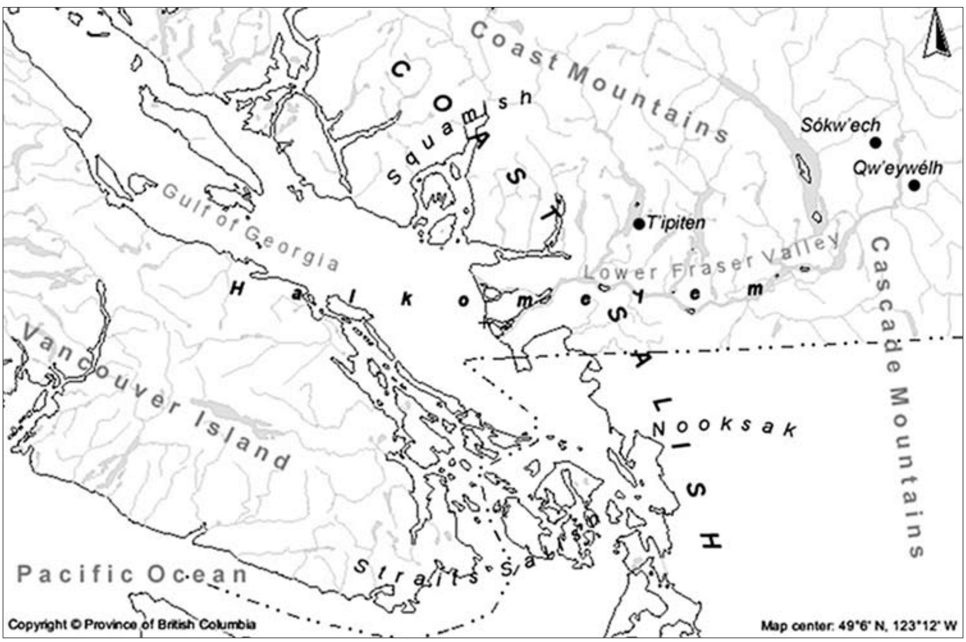

Figure 2. Map of southwest British Columbia, showing Coast Salish Language Groups and selected Halkomelem place names mentioned in the text.

building the conspicuous monuments of Northwest Coast culture: the graceful dugout canoe, the ingenious shed roof house, and the enigmatic house pole. However, despite the evocative nature of what were once ancient and magnificent trees, the most common form of cedar exploitation was bark.

Largely a task undertaken by women, the pliable inner bark of the cedar was used for making clothing, mats, masks, rattles, nets, twine, blankets, towels, and rope, while the outer bark was valued for heavy-duty rope, fish traps, baskets, and fuel (Stewart 1984; Stryd and Feddema 1998; Turner 1998). Good cedar stands were returned to annually, or every few years, as these places afforded the best trees for stripping. The best trees were young with supple bark, and with few interfering branches. This allowed the bark to come off in long unbroken strips around seven meters in height, although this could vary significantly (Stryd and Eldridge 1993: 198). To remove the bark, an incision narrower than the width of the trunk was made at waist height; the bark was then pulled away from the base of the tree exposing the living tissue of sapwood underneath. In response to this damage, trees produced large healing lobes that slowly grew over the edges of the scar. Older scars were evidenced by well-developed healing lobes that eventually enveloped the scar leaving little trace of its presence. This process of healing took decades and often hundreds of years (Stewart 1984; Stryd and Eldridge 1993).

Attention to the archaeology of "forest utilization" has provided us with an insight into the economic, geographical, and historical character of exploitation practices in the late prehistoric forests of the Northwest Coast (Mobley and Eldridge 1992; Pegg 2000; Prince 2001; Stryd and Eldridge 1993; Stryd and Feddema 1998). Often spread out over very wide areas, the heaviest stripping activity always clustered around places with the best trees, and in some cases they were named. For example, *T'ipiten,* at the foot of the mountains on the western shore of Pitt Lake, north of the Fraser Valley, translates as "a good place for gathering cedar bark" (Suttles 1955: 18), while *Sókw'ech,* a small tributary stream located in the Fraser Canyon at Yale means "cedar bark stream" (McHalise 2001). Patterns of harvesting radiated outwards from these places, creating tendrils of modification that followed pathways. In other places, tree scars appeared as solitary features or diffuse gatherings within mixed stands of forest. What becomes immediately clear to archaeological surveys is that bark-stripped trees were not necessarily close to settlements along the shoreline or river's edge. Where good cedar stands were close at hand, they were sure to be prised of their skin, but people also travelled great distances, even into the mountains to attain bark, particularly from the yellow cedar that was used to make high quality clothing. On the west coast of Vancouver Island, the Meares Island Study revealed that, while forest utilization was heaviest along the coast, people expended considerable efforts to access bark from interior area at elevations as high as 600 meters (Stryd and Eldridge 1993: 200).

Beyond what the spatial distribution of scars can tell us about strategies of bark harvesting, ethnography has revealed some of the more human aspects surrounding this task. For example, Nancy Turner has noted how bark stripping was typically bound up with social activities that helped to alleviate what could be a difficult and time-consuming task. Drawing from

ethnographic sources she suggests that it was made more "enjoyable" when "turned into a social event." In particular, the burden of work would have been eased by singing, such as one Haida song, which roughly translates as: "We want a long strip; go up high; go up high!" (Turner 1998: 37). Moreover, and perhaps of greater importance, many have noted the widespread animist relationship that many Northwest Coast people had with cedar trees, and the importance of placating the spirit of the tree through ritualistic verse (e.g., Mauzé 1998; Turner 1998: 38; Turner and Peacock 2005: 133)

However, while these accounts do well to highlight something of the human scale of these practices, the issue of the meaning of tree scars, in the context of bark-stripping, seems to be avoided all together. This maintains a clear line between the materially productive landscape, evidenced through remains of bark-stripping, and the arena of social production. The implication here is that there is little affective value, or dialectic, between the worked landscape and routines of working. Places marked by human hands appear to be incapable of generating new meaning, beyond dietary concerns, or beyond the static backdrop of cultural traditions lodged in the land. For these approaches, social meanings have a repetitive and predictable value. At the end of the day, the social qualities—the songs—end up back at the place of the village.

Tree Scars as Social Boundaries

Groves of stripped trees were not simply quarries where Salish people gathered the raw substance of their material culture; they could also come to symbolize the people who owned and worked them. While most places were probably open to use by all, we know that certain kin groups controlled access to particular stands of cedar, with the most powerful owning the very finest. This not only gave them privileged access to resources over other members of society, but may also have worked to reinforce their identities on lines of social status, kinship, language, or dialect. Like other owned or maintained places in the land, such as camas beds or cranberry bogs (Suttles 1955: 26; Turner *et al.* 2005: 155–156), these were caught up in webs of family connections. Strangers were not permitted to use the trees unless they sought permission, so the best gathering places tended to be exploited by the same people over long periods of time.

But what is most remarkable about these rather mundane places in the forest is how they captured the imagination of those who worked the land. Bark-strip scars are physical records, but because they are conspicuous objects they may also be cues for memory and sources for metaphor. On this point, it is interesting to note that the term "stripping event"—the calendar date when the tree was harvested for bark, arrived at by counting tree rings—has become synonymous amongst archaeologists with bark-stripped scars themselves. However, rarely can archaeology pinpoint the precise dating of artifact manufacture to the time scale of Braudel's (1972) *histoire événementielle* (the history of events), as they can with bark-stripped trees. This is somewhat ironic because while a scarred tree may be viewed as a static index of bark-stripping, like *events* themselves they may have been contested and interpreted in the past from more than one point of view, making history an ambiguous affair. As Sahlins (1987: 27) has argued, there is always a possible inversion between kinds of action and categories of relationships.

Verbs can signify just as well as nouns and can change the structural order of meaning so that the significance of a thing can be illuminated from other angles. Our attention, therefore, should focus on the way in which bark-stripping and tree scars (the nouns) become bound up within embodied social practice, because it is only through understanding the changing contexts of human engagement with patterns evident in the material world, that we may be able to see something of the ways that meaning can be transformed (the verbs).

Good cedar stands were usually easily identified. Pathways leading to the trees could be well trodden and marked by wayfinding devices such as carved blazes. But scarred trees themselves stood out in stark contrast to the often-muted tones of the forest floor. Their pale colour, smooth texture, and height afforded them a visual peculiarity against the darker background of trees and understory of ferns and salal, making them in many situations ideal landmarks. As people retuned to these places on a seasonal basis, the tasks of seasons past were repeated, fresh trees were stripped adding to the scale of the sites and drawing out their history for all to see[4] (Figure 3).

Not every site had the same depth of history and character. Many evidenced the activities of more recent pasts. While Europeans often decried the lonely character of the forests, for Native peoples, signs of recent bark-stripping may have thrown up questions about territorial rights and a way of doing things that respected the status quo, perhaps in a way not dissimilar to the effect achieved by marking Salish garden plots (Suttles 1955, 2005; Turner *et al.* 2005). In these cases, fresh scars and cut marks on the trees spoke of others; the forest was not an empty place. Who had stayed to gather bark? Were they kin from down river? If the scars were fresh and the sap still running, perhaps they had only been missed by a few days.

Analogues for the Ancestral Past

Of course it would be naïve to suggest that all bark-stripping sites were understood in the same ways. Other stands of

Figure 3. A bark-stripped tree near Port Eliza on west coast of Vancouver Island, identified by Heather Pratt and the author in 2000. While the majority of standing bark-stripped trees, such as the one pictured above, date from the early 19th century, a few examples are known from the mid 1600s (Pegg 2000; Stryd and Eldridge 1993: 216). In contrast to their natural surroundings, the conspicuous and deliberate signs of bark-stripping can be seen as metaphorical signposts for intended and unintended social transformations (Photograph by Heather Pratt).

worked trees elicited evidence of much older activity. Here, veteran cedars may have stood as symbols of continuity and permanence in contrast to the relatively brief existence of humans. In European cultures, trees have often been seen as metaphors for genealogical history (Davies 1988; Evans *et al.* 1999: 251). As far as I am aware, this is not a metaphor that has been directly applied to Northwest Coast cultures. However, there may be some currency in this view when we consider that the Salish, like other Northwest Coast peoples, believed that cedar trees were sentient beings. The progeny of an earlier myth age, cedar trees—many of which survive for over a thousand years—connected people in the present age and their "place" in the landscape (in terms of territory and kinship rights) with the events of the mythical past. Here the confidence inspired by their height may have reflected the strength of family lineages, their age, and continuity with perceived ancestors, while roots lodged this edifice of kinship into the landscape. Moreover, as Mauzé (1998: 235–236) points out, considering the many life-sustaining properties that cedar trees possessed, or were believed to have afforded—such as the practice among some groups of placing afterbirth in the topmost limbs of a tree if they wanted a newborn to grow brave and courageous—it would not be surprising that they were also associated with the continuity of kinship lines.

While perhaps speculative, this argument is strengthened if we consider that tree scars themselves can be seen as analogues to human generational time. As signatures of the presence of individuals from seasons past, scars may have been highly evocative of ancestors who once worked the land but who no longer dwelled in the world (Oliver 2001). Their presence was clearly marked by the very oldest scars, many of which were made hundreds of years before. As archaeological dating of bark-stripped trees from the coast confirms, older tree scars are not uncommonly one or two hundred years in age, with the earliest examples dating as far back as four centuries (Stryd and Eldridge 1993: 216). Older scars generally belonged to the largest trees, with girths often in extent of many people, their healing lobes matching their advanced age. However, these conspicuous signs were not museum pieces; rather, the knowledge of how to prise strips of bark combined with the routine practice of this activity was crucial. In this context, stripping bark itself may have been seen as a kind of performative act connecting the living with generations past.

Modern First Nations communities claim a special attachment to these places. Haida carver Guujaaw once suggested that they are memorials "to our ancestors who worked in the forest" and that they provided "a sense of communion with the old canoe makers" (Stryd and Feddema 1998: 14). Similar sentiments have been expressed by the Dakelh (Carrier) from the interior of British Columbia who consider bark-stripped trees to be "sacred" because they were evocative of past ancestors (Joe Charlie, pers. comm. 2000; see also Mohs 1994: 199). Perceptions such as these are not uncommon. While it might be argued that this way of seeing has more to do with the recent politics of an emerging pan-Aboriginal resistance to what they see as the destruction of their cultural heritage, it nevertheless demonstrates the highly visible nature of these places, hinting at the ways in which human history is implicated in the landscape, and how it could be remade to serve the agendas of people in the past.

TENDING THE LAND

Other places in the landscape evidenced more intensive management through the episodic use of prescribed burning (Lepofsky *et al.* 2005; Turner 1999). During the autumn, when others harvested wapato crops and cranberry bogs near the river, many household groups made their way into the mountains to harvest patches of blueberry and black huckleberry[5]. Berries were an important source of food that could be eaten fresh or dried for the lean months of the cold season. Typically, located on the lower south facing slopes of the adjacent Coast and Cascade Mountain ranges, both above and below the tree line, these were special places that were nurtured and maintained like gardens. As Stó:lō informant Les Fraser recalled, there were "hardly any trees where the blueberries were" (cited in Washbrook and Hallet 1997: 4). Ethnographic sources indicate that kin groups from up and down the Fraser Valley gathered at the larger berry gardens late in the fall to work the patches and to hunt for game. Often family groups camped in common gatherings that could last anywhere between four days and four weeks (Duff 1952: 73; Lepofsky *et al.* 2005: 224). After the harvest, the late fall or spring was marked by conspicuous acts of burning over the land to promote crops for the year to come.

Interviews conducted with Native elders capture a sense of what these places were like and of the traditional practices that were carried out to increase the size of berry crops, as well as to discourage threatening pests. As one informant indicated "the old Indians ever since they started going there, … every spring they would all climb up and burn the place down all over. Just burnt the whole, just like looking after a garden I guess. And then they go … next fall you have all them berries (HA, cited in Washbrook and Hallett 1997: 4). Others have touched on the timing of these tasks and their importance to the harvest: "It was every third year they would burn the berries, burn the berry bushes right down … Kill some of the beetles that used to get into them, into the berries … they used to burn them down, just to get rid of the pests that were in them berries (RG, cited in Washbrook and Hallett 1997: 5).

Mountain toponyms such as *Syíyeqw* ["burnt mountain"] or *Qw'eywélh* ["known for berry harvesting"] (McHalsie 2001), perched high over the Fraser River north of Yale, directly implicate the way these places were used, but they also tend to betray more fine-grained histories bound up within their making. Burning and maintaining the land was not only crucial for a good berry harvest, it also symbolised and shaped social boundaries that were negotiated at different scales of social life.

"There Were Special People Who Burned It"

Working in these places would have evoked meanings that filtered into other social arenas. According to the recollections of elders, burning was not practiced by anyone and so mountainside berry patches were also synonyms for those who possessed apposite skills and knowledge. More than any other form of landscape management, igniting a blaze on the mountainside and controlling the burn was a task that bore great responsibility. As one elder confirmed, "there were special people who burned it, they know the weather, and they would go up and burn it just before it rained. And it had to rain, otherwise they'd burn the berry patch out (LH, cited in Washbrook and Hallett 1997: 5)

Knowledge about when it was time to burn and how to do it was probably taken for granted; yet at the same time these were practical skills that people counted on for an abundant harvest and an important part of their winter diet. Igniting and managing the unruly behaviour of fire required both intelligence and expertise. It demanded a detailed knowledge of ecology, of the way trees and bushes would react to fire, and the successional nature of plant communities (Turner 1999: 201). It also required a profound appreciation of the weather; understanding the effects of wind and rain on the unpredictable contours of the mountainside was essential: the weather could be your greatest enemy, as well as your greatest friend. Recognising the signs of seasonal change were vital to decide when to burn. Once the fire was lit, the specialist had a burden of responsibility; an uncontrolled burn could cause devastation both to berry patches and the surrounding forest. The skill required to control the blaze is indicated by the following quotation: "My father … used to clear some of the area that he wanted to burn. Clean all around it like a ring hey, so the fire won't go on the other side … he just wanted to burn just a certain area, and then that's what he did. And then, he had to wait till there's no breeze … Even if you think there is no breeze, and you set a fire … that fire is just wild, it just goes (AD, cited in Washbrook and Hallett 1997: 4).

Harvesting berry gardens was the work of communities, but burning over the mountainside spoke of individuals. Through practices of modification arose social distinctions that separated those who controlled the knowledge to burn from the uninitiated. Such knowledge translated into a form of status, a respect that transcended the achievement of physically taming the landscape and lent itself to forms of "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu 1977: 41), which could be traded on in other contexts of interaction. A similar point has also been made recently by Lepofsky *et al.* 2005: 239).

Of course, we should also be careful in how we attribute such notions of identity. It does not follow that burning specialists were always "high status" individuals, with the *de rigeur* accoutrements of materially productive wealth manifested in the place of the village site (e.g., Ames and Maschner 1999; Matson and Coupland 1995). Rather, one's social status was a relational and shifting affair (Jenkins 1996) that hinged upon specific contexts where knowledge or material resources were brought into play to exert form of influence on others.

For instance, the role of the specialist in passing on his/her knowledge to younger generations cannot be understated. Indeed, unique from other activity centred nodes, such as village sites or fishing grounds, a managed berry patch was a specific place where the role of teacher and student were implicated in the landscape itself. Here, identity was brought sharply into focus through adherence to their contextually defined roles, forms of ranking which were not necessarily resolved in the same way in other times and places. This is a dynamic that closely parallels Salish society from ethnography. Among the upper Stó:lō, for example, status was not necessarily derived from being a high born individual, although this certainly helped. Instead, status was linked to "personal qualities and abilities which were most highly regarded" (Duff 1952: 80). Yet this does not mean that an individual developed a "habit of leadership" (Duff 1952: 81); rather, the identities of individuals were very much inscribed

within the contexts where their skills were recognized.

Respecting the Land, Respecting the Past

Similar customs of mountainside burning are evidenced in other parts of the coast. Because this form of stewardship can be found in a variety of ecosystems, it "suggests that such practices are well integrated into the traditional ecological knowledge of coastal First Nations" (Lepofsky *et al.* 2005: 218). A recent programme of research into the prehistoric application of these methods to mountain landscapes by Lepofsky *et al.* (1996, 2005) not only confirms the recollections of elders, but also suggests these practices to have been developed in the distant past. Charcoal collected from soil profiles in the Cascade Mountains east of the lower Fraser Valley, where burning was said to be conducted historically, and pollen-charcoal records from nearby lake sediments suggest a history of landscape management that dates to 2400 BP (Lepofsky 2005: 239).

As part of these investigations, surveys have noted that former berry patches have become overgrown and difficult to distinguish since their abandonment around the middle of the twentieth century. While evidence of landscape management is thin on the ground, successional tree stands display a variable age structure in stark contrast to the more homogenous forests nearby. These are places where second-growth trees of mountain hemlock display varied girths and heights, which contrast sharply against the same-age stands of the surrounding forest. This patchwork character is thought to indicate former localized areas of burning and, by deduction, former productive berrying grounds (Lepofsky *et al.* 1996).

In contrast, Native elders have consistently recalled the open and cultivated feel of these places, commonly referring to them as "gardens" (Peacock and Turner 2000). Berrying grounds had an enduring quality like the "well used" trails (Lepofsky *et al.* 1996: 1) that connected them to the valley below. They would have evidenced clear signs of human endeavour and stood in clear contrast to the uncultivated ground of the forest nearby. After a burn, fire blackened the earth, roots, and the base of trees, but more importantly the land was kept open to sunlight: on lower slopes, forest stands were park-like, allowing berry gardens to flourish in the understory, while above the tree line extensive and well-tended patches dominated in areas of alpine meadow.

In describing the feel of berry patches, the use of term "garden" by informants is revealing. Keeping a garden is not a practice uniformly related to dietary concerns—the never-ending "food quest"—but it may also imply something about environmental values (cf. Head *et al.* 2002: 176; Johnston 2005). However, these perceptions are often taken for granted and sometimes it takes a change in the status quo for reasons behind a tradition to be made explicit. The abandonment of these practices by the middle of the last century is one such fault line that has helped to expose the social significance of tending the land. In this context, memories of what berry patches used to be like are telling. In the words of Lillooet informant Baptiste Ritchie, "it seems the things that were eaten by our forefathers have disappeared from the places where they burned. It seems that already almost everything has disappeared … they have disappeared because the hills grew weedy and no-one seems to tend them, no one clears there as our forefathers did so thoroughly (Swoboda 1971, cited in Turner 1999: 189–190).

These ideas do not appear to be idiosyncratic. Indeed an earlier piece of pioneering research on Aboriginal fires documented from the 19th Century in the northwest of the United States made a similar finding. Barrett and Arno noted that fires were not only set to make hunting and travel more economical, but that the aesthetic value of "cleaning up refuse" (1982: 649) was one of their most systematic uses.

Understanding berry patches as a kind of "garden," at least of the European variety, is clearly a linguistic borrowing from Western intellectual tradition and might be seen as evidence of how English, and colonization more generally, has influenced Native culture. However, what the modern English word denotes in terms of physical appearance—distinguishing land that is intensively cultivated from that which is wild nature—may not be that different from the way in which Natives peoples in the past conceived of places that were cultivated and modified by humans. Interestingly, this idea finds some resonance in linguistic structures. For example, in the Halkomelem language, we find words indicating plant species considered to be invaders within a cultivated space: *sqə́lə́ṗ* are "weeds" or "something bad or dirty in the ground," while *cə́sə́ə́mələṗ* seems to correspond literally to "weeds in garden" (Galloway 1993: 581). What does appear to be different, and this is clearly implied by Ritchie, is more akin to the way Aboriginal Australians understand the term "Country." This is a place that is multi-dimensional, consisting of people, animals, plants, the soil and myths, and crucially a place having both an origin and a future (Rose 1996: 7–8). It was a place towards which Aborigines had a fundamental responsibility to, as if it was a benevolent but mindful being (Head 2000: 129) with a historical consciousness of those who worked the land. This is an idea that has broad similarity to what ethnographic sources suggest about indigenous environmental values on the Northwest Coast in general (Turner and Peacock 2005: 132–133) and amongst the Salish in particular (Hill-Tout 1978: 49). Where the distinction lies, however, is in the clear historically constituted nature of this relationship that places people as knowing agents of a tradition of accountability to the land which reflected upon those who cared for it.

Taken in the context of colonialism, the growth of successional forest appears to be perceived by Native peoples as a kind of desocialisation. What we can learn from this evidence may be similar to what John Knight (1996) has argued for the forest plantations of highland Japan. Since World War II, Japan's extensive forest plantations have deteriorated due to the state of market forces resulting in many plantations taking on a "wild" character. For Western eyes, this change from one forest type to another may be of little consequence; for Japanese foresters, however, it is viewed as a threat to a traditional way of life. As the landscape becomes "dark," isolated and abandoned villages, crops and cemeteries become susceptible to damage from invading plants and animals. But most importantly, there is a keen sense of loss for a routine form of cultivation that is rooted in the deep past. If ethnography is at least suggestive of pre-contact cultural values among Salish people, then gardens and gardening may have been the natural order of things, a form of respect shown to both the ancestors and to the land. A well-managed landscape may have been a metaphor for an aesthetic tradition and a way of doing things that had its roots in the ancestral past.

Changes Over Time: Memories of Smallpox

There are still other, more local meanings we may be able to draw from this example. The cessation of burning practices was part and parcel of the impacts of colonialism, but changes of similar importance in the landscape can be inferred over two hundred years earlier. Between 1782 and 1783, a smallpox epidemic originating in Mexico hit the Gulf of Georgia region, killing around two thirds of its population (Harris 1997: 18). Not only did it cripple kinship groupings, resulting in the abandonment of certain settlements, it would also have significantly reduced Native abilities to tend the land[6] (cf. Denevan 1992: 379).

If the current physical conditions on the mountainside can be seen as a kind of visual palimpsest, with patches of successional growth standing as evidence of abandonment, then certainly similar observations would have been made in the past. Recent approaches in anthropology have shown how attentive Indigenous populations are to the physical character of biogeography. For example, the Kelabit of Sarawak in modern-day Indonesia are well aware of the influence that humans have on the forest (Janowski 2003: 35). In fact, many people are able to say how recently a forest has been cut and when it has began to grow again because of their comprehensive knowledge of agricultural history and plant succession. For example, "big" forests were made up of old trees and were places that were only visited by men. On the other hand, "little" forests were made up of young second-growth trees, and were recognised as places that were up until recent times dominated by agriculture. Likewise, a similar awareness of environmental change has been noted among Australian Aborigines (Head *et al.* 2002). Places used historically as yam gardens are recognized because of their characteristic holes from which yams are dug resulting in an undulating ground surface. The antiquity of a site that was regularly used corresponded to the number of holes that were present, while a site that remained unused for many years was recognized because it had become overgrown.

Like fishing sites, berry gardens were tied into kinship networks, meaning that picking places were often tended by and associated with particular families. Even if these places were not "owned" like hereditary fishing stations, household units did not randomly tend different berry patches; because of investments in seasons past, kin groups became associated with particular places. However, with populations devastated, never to replace their pre-contact numbers (at least not until well into the 20th century), it seems reasonable to suggest that the management of these places would have been seriously diminished, with many berry gardens becoming abandoned and recolonized by successional growth. Gardens abandoned after the smallpox would have looked similar to those that were abandoned in the early 20th century (as observed by Salish elders above). Where gardens remained in seasonal use,[7] people would have become intimately aware of former gardens slowly becoming recolonized by the forest.

In this context, successional growth was not only a metaphor for an abrupt desocialization, for a tradition of tending to the land that had become lost, as I have argued above. The successional forest as a cultural artefact may have become a symbol for lives lost, even of whole generations. Ultimately, because the physical transformation of the landscape is associated with the memory of

past activities and people, if the management practices are not maintained these relationships will fade over time (Head *et al.* 2002: 189).

CONCLUSIONS

Popular perceptions continue to trade on the Northwest Coast's claim to pristine wilderness. However, as recent research has demonstrated, this claim is highly dubious since many parts of the coast were actually products of cultural intervention. Nevertheless, while archaeology and other disciplines have given empirical backing to the critique of colonialism, we have tended to view the relationship between humans and the landscape at a scale that loses sight of what makes social relations so important: their contingent and ambiguous nature.

Paradoxically, by framing the landscape around questions of economic production and its relationship with social complexity, the "social life" I have been so earnest to draw from this essay, is forced to subsist at the cultural oases of settlements, where the colonial caricature first located them. This is not to forget that Northwest Coast peoples had many culturally specific understandings of their environment, as anthropologists and others have pointed out (Duff 1952; Hill-Tout 1978; Suttles 1981; Turner and Peacock 2005). However, cultural perceptions, such as animism, are not the same thing as social relations, and used abstractly, they can completely miss the ongoing and shifting social production of the landscape.

In contrast, my reading of the Aboriginal landscape has been purposeful in moving beyond the clichéd position of the village site as the centre of social life. Instead, I have focused on the landscapes of annual round; arenas of socially embodied interaction that helped inform peoples' sense of place throughout much of the year. What I have argued is that we cannot separate economic (or cultural) patterns, from the social qualities that are bound up with them and shift in and out of focus. The latter are important concerns, but they cannot be hived off from the way that landscape was experienced, as they involve the creation of categories and distinctions in the material and social world that are, themselves, socially defined (Ingold 1980: 120). Limitations on environmental data and ethnographic information mean we cannot get at everything. However, if we begin from the premise that the material world and the social are always bound up with each other, then an archaeology of routine life, which archaeologists are well placed to investigate, provides a starting point to explore the social content of these places beyond the water's edge. In sum, these places could be read as much as the enclosed and coppiced landscapes of Europe—they were places of work, but equally they were caught up with meanings that were socially consequential to people living in the past.

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NOTES

1. Any bookstore in Vancouver will have a good selection of these. A particularly poignant example is Ian Mackenzie's *Ancient Landscapes of British Columbia* (1995). See also Malcolm Lowry's shorts stories in *Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* (1963), a paradisiacal take on the Northwest Coast that helped popularize the idea of the coast particularly in Britain. For a fascinating interpretation of the social, discursive and political practices that have served to construct the idea of the rainforest on Canada's West Coast, see Braun (2002).
2. While bark-stripping practices are known from Indigenous societies in other parts of the world, notably the Saami of Scandinavia (Zackrisson *et al.* 2000), the *scale* of the woodworking culture evidenced from the Northwest Coast is, to my knowledge, incomparable.
3. The central Coast Salish include speakers of Squamish, whose territory took in Howe Sound and the Squamish river; the Halkomelem, situated on in the lower Fraser Valley and eastern parts of Vancouver Island; the Straits Salish, who were distributed across the south coast of Vancouver Island, the San Juan Islands and Semiahomoo peninsula on the mainland; and the Nooksak, whose territory is completely in Washington State (Suttles 1990).
4. Some sites indicate continuous stripping activity for decades, if not hundreds of years. On Meares Island, one site had been stripped regularly between AD 1722 and 1936 (Stryd and Eldridge 1993: 220)
5. The species under regimes of management included oval leaved blueberry *(Vaccinium. ovalifolium),* blue-leaved huckleberry *(V. deliciosum),* Alaska blueberry *(V. alaskense),* and black huckleberry *(V. membranaceu)* (Lepofsky *et al.* 2005: 224)
6. It is interesting to note that the smallpox epidemic also had a clear impact on Indigenous logging practices. Many felled logs and canoe blanks, apparently abandoned in the forest, appear to date from this period (Steward 1984: 40; Stryd and Feddema 1998: 16).
7. It is difficult to give any indication about the size of blueberry gardens in relation to pre-smallpox levels.

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