

Ethnohistory Field School Report

2002

“They Lost Their Refrigerator”: Stó:lō Historical Interpretations of the Creation and Reduction of the Central Fraser Valley Douglas Reserves

Elizabeth Scott

University of Saskatchewan

The Ethnohistory Field School is a collaboration of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, Stó:lō Nation & Stó:lō Tribal Council, and the History Departments of the University of Victoria and University of Saskatchewan.



When Sir James Douglas retired as Governor of the colony of British Columbia in 1864, the Sto:lo living in the central Fraser River Valley were about to confront a challenge for their land and their rights; a struggle that remains largely unresolved today. Sto:lo oral history confirms that in 1864 Governor Douglas had reserves surveyed at the discretion of the Sto:lo leadership that were to act as temporary protections until the colonial government was able to secure funds to negotiate treaties.¹ In 1867, Joseph Trutch, the Commissioner of Lands and Works, under Governor Seymour's administration, reduced Douglas's Reserves by over ninety percent, leaving the Sto:lo with an insufficient land base on which to prosper.² Throughout the late nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries the Sto:lo actively fought for the return of lands that had been rightfully and legally reserved for them in 1864. The government of British Columbia has consistently asserted that the original Douglas Reserves were made without proper authority, and what is more, that the Sto:lo accepted this and happily consented to the reduction of their land base. A question has arisen, however, that this official historical narrative may be incomplete, and perhaps even inaccurate. The Aboriginal oral historical record has, until recently, been ignored by non-Native scholars and the public. This paper seeks to engage those missing voices in an effort to help determine the authenticity and legitimacy of the government's interpretation of historical events. It will be argued that the oral history provides a counter narrative that is set at odds with the official history; that for almost one hundred and fifty years Sto:lo oral historians have reliably imparted an understanding of the creation and reduction of the Douglas Reserves, have recognized a strong ancestral political leadership, and when possible have provided specific details relating to land allocations and transactions.

The historiography of what has become known as the "British Columbia Indian land question," has not until recently, with the work of Keith Carlson and Sto:lo Nation, considered

Aboriginal interpretations. In the 1970s, Robin Fisher's work, while sympathetic to Aboriginal views, never took the next step of incorporating their perspectives. Paul Tennant's important work in the 1990s failed to do the same. However, Fisher and Tennant do provide valuable historical interpretations of the more sympathetic policies of Governor Douglas and of the contradictory attitudes of Joseph Trutch. Additionally helpful is an anthology of colonial correspondence first published in 1875, and reprinted in 1987. This correspondence now serves as proof of Governor Douglas's intentions and exposes the racist attitudes that shaped Joseph Trutch's policies. Moreover, this record of official correspondence exposes the provincial government's current interpretation of the history of reserve creation and reduction.³

Before examining the Sto:lo oral historical sources, a brief summary of the history of the Douglas Reserves is beneficial. In April of 1858, gold deposits were discovered in the Fraser Canyon and within a few months the area was suddenly home to over 30,000 miners.⁴ The miners were nothing like the fur traders who had been in *S'olh Temexw* since 1827.⁵ Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) traders depended on good relations with Aboriginal people in order to procure furs and fish.⁶ In contrast, miners believed Aboriginal people were obstacles in the way of acquiring the gold they so desperately wanted. The Sto:lo were confronted with widespread racism, namely attitudes that had traveled up with American miners. They were also the targets of random violence and sexual assault, and were terribly affected by the prevalence of whiskey in the area.⁷ However, the largest threat the Sto:lo faced was towards their land. Land was fundamental to the success of both parties. For the Sto:lo the land was the cornerstone of culture and identity (and necessary if they were to make the transition to prosperous participants in the newly introduced European economy and society), for the miners the land was a means of obtaining instant wealth and affluence.⁸

By November of 1858, the Crown colony of British Columbia was established, and Sir James Douglas, HBC Chief Factor, was appointed as its first Governor.⁹ Douglas was well aware of the conflict between the Sto:lo and the gold miners, and quickly began reserving tracts of land for the protection of the Sto:lo.¹⁰ Douglas maintained a policy of “benevolent assimilation;” he respected Aboriginal people and treated them fairly and rationally, but he also believed it would be in their best interest to adopt a European agricultural lifestyle and essentially become “British.”¹¹ Douglas continually asserted that Aboriginal peoples were to be treated equally in the colony and he endeavored to protect their lands and their rights.¹² In order to begin settlement on Vancouver Island, Governor Douglas recognized Aboriginal title to the land and signed fourteen treaties thus extinguishing title.¹³ Douglas appears to have intended to do the same on the mainland, however, colonial treaty funds were chronically scarce. Instead, he adopted a policy of creating reserves to serve as temporary protections.¹⁴

Douglas’s intentions for the creation of reserves were always very clear and were approved by the Colonial Office in London.¹⁵ He reiterated that “in laying out the Indian Reserves the wishes of the Natives themselves, with respect to boundaries, should in all cases be complied with.”¹⁶ Furthermore, he wanted the reserves to be self-sustaining: “In forming the settlements of natives, I should propose, both from a principle of justice to the state and our of regard to the well-being of the Indians themselves, to make such settlements entirely self-supporting...”¹⁷ One of the prerequisites necessary for the reserves to be self-sustaining was that they be large enough to be economically and agriculturally viable.

In early 1864, Governor Douglas instructed surveyor William McColl to stake out reserves in the central Fraser River Valley. He was to do so in accordance with the wishes of the Sto:lo leadership. In May the surveys were complete, resulting in the creation of fourteen

reserves totaling 39,900 acres. Keith Carlson reminds us that even though these reserves were considered large at the time, each individual received only 45 acres, while a *Xwelitem* (Sto:lo word for Euro-Canadian) settler and his family were able to obtain 160 acres.¹⁸ However, Governor Douglas did allow the Sto:lo to pre-empt additional farm land, a privilege he believed would accelerate assimilation.¹⁹ The fact that Governor Douglas allowed Aboriginal people to pre-empt their own land further indicates the respect he had for them, unlike the man who was to follow after his retirement.

Sir James Douglas retired in 1864 and was replaced by Governor Seymour, whose attitude towards Aboriginal people was similar, although slightly less extreme, than that of his Commissioner of Lands and Works, Joseph Trutch.²⁰ Furthermore, William McColl died before finishing the registration of the reserves.²¹ Trutch was not the sort of man who would make certain McColl's work was finished, for he had quite a different plan for the area, and an equally opposing view of Aboriginal people.

Joseph Trutch argued that the Sto:lo were not "using" their land in an agricultural manner: "The Indians really have no right to the lands they claim, nor are they of any actual value or utility to them; and I cannot see why they should either retain lands to the prejudice of the general interests of the Colony, or be allowed to make market of them to Government or to individuals."²² Trutch had very little respect for Aboriginal people and failed to understand that they had different concepts of the land. He further justified reducing Douglas's Reserves by falsifying and distorting the past Governor's intentions. He claimed the surveyors misunderstood their instructions, that stakes in the ground could have been moved, and that there were no written instructions from Douglas.²³ He made every attempt to reduce the Sto:lo land

base, and he did so in part because of his belief that Europeans were superior in every respect to Aboriginal people, or “savages” as he called them.²⁴

By 1867, Joseph Trutch had reduced the fourteen Sto:lo reserves by over ninety percent, from 39,900 acres to 3,430 acres.²⁵ Trutch claimed that the acreage given by Governor Douglas was “entirely disproportionate to the numbers or the requirements of the Indian Tribes,” yet he actually had no idea how many people were living on those reserves.²⁶ Many times, as will be discussed shortly, the Sto:lo petitioned for the land they were continually losing. They found little help in either the British or Canadian governments, the governing bodies who were to protect their interests. Unfortunately, Douglas’s policies were never codified in law, and were thus subject to, as Fisher says, misrepresentation and manipulation by men like Trutch.²⁷ As a result, Trutch denied the Sto:lo equal citizenship and left them with an insufficient land base.²⁸ Sto:lo oral historians have made sure to tell of his actions so that these injustices may one day be resolved.

One of the strengths of using oral history is that Aboriginal perspectives are finally accorded a place in the historical record that so frequently discusses its people.²⁹ Julie Cruikshank, a leading scholar of Aboriginal oral traditions, reminds us that oral history must be viewed as part of an ongoing cultural practice that is forever changing and adapting. This is also true of written historical texts.³⁰ Interpretations and criticisms change over time in academia and so do they in Aboriginal historical arenas. Oral history and written history must be accorded the same value, although it should be recognized that they are somewhat different. They are transmitted for different purposes, for different people, in a different manner. Oral histories are often passed on by “repeated tellings” requiring personal reflection, whereas written texts are publicly read and criticized.³¹ Aboriginal oral narratives are best understood by members of the

narrative's host culture, but can also be appreciated by outsiders. Cruikshank states that historians and anthropologists are able to critically analyze oral narratives based on previous or concurrent knowledge of supporting documents and texts or scientific data, and that without these references the oral sources might not be as comprehensible to outsiders.³² This project certainly confirms that notion. Many of the interviewees' comments do not always make sense to listeners from outside the culture until consideration is given to the wider historical data; that is to say, until a comparative context is established.

In the Sto:lo oral tradition there are two types of narratives, *sxwoxwiyam* and *sqwelqwel*.³³ *Sxwoxwiyam* tell of the time when the world was not right, a time a transformation, and serve to explain the origin of many geographical features in *S'olh Temexw*. These stories are oftentimes categorized by Euro-Canadian academics as myths or legends. However, for the Sto:lo, *sxwoxwiyam* are very much rooted in both the past and the present and need not be sorted into these literary categories of analysis.³⁴ *Sqwelqwel* are stories of "true" history or recent news.³⁵ The Sto:lo history of the Douglas Reserves then would be *sqwelqwel*. Any time a Sto:lo oral account is recorded on tape or transcribed on paper, a certain layer of the meaning is lost. Written words do not always capture the sadness and grief felt over the loss of reserve lands in the same way as facial expressions, gestures, and body language.³⁶ However, they are still valuable sources.

In Sto:lo culture, the spirit world and the physical world are not separate.³⁷ They are one in the same, constantly connected to each other by the people, the land, the music, and the language. The loss of reserved lands in *S'olh Temexw* continues to endanger this balance between spirituality and every day life. The oral histories presented here are examined with the

utmost respect and sensitivity towards Sto:lo wishes and concerns; every attempt has been made to evaluate them accurately.

One of the people I talked to, who did not wish to be interviewed, explained that oral history need not be recorded, that it is an active force which is thriving and is in no danger of being lost. This individual sees a strong and vibrant oral history in his community, and reminds us that oral history is an ongoing process. However, some of these histories are extremely valuable sources for projects such as these and are not harmed if used in a respectful and accurate manner.

I have chosen to begin the analysis of Sto:lo interpretations of the creation and reduction of the Douglas reserves with four interviews conducted by myself during a three week period in May and June of 2002. The oral sources will be examined in reverse chronological order for several reasons. First, these interviews reflect the time in which this paper is written. Many of the concerns herein demonstrate a necessity to resolve these historical issues immediately as lands are continually being lost to *Xwelitem* populations. Second, I was especially careful to avoid asking leading questions, and adopted a style of simply allowing the interviewees to speak about what *they* felt was important. Any questions asked were designed in such a way as to invoke, as much as possible, an authentic Sto:lo response, not a response that a historian might necessarily be trying to unearth (see Appendix 1). Consequently, the first four interviews were controlled in such a way as to be less problematic than some of the older interviews. Finally, by placing Sto:lo petitions of the late nineteenth-century at the end of this examination, the reader is returned to the root of the conflict; the time in which unjust reductions to an already thinning land base were carried out.

The key to a good interview is to have a meaningful relationship with the participant. In three weeks time, this is a daunting task. However, there are also benefits in not being too close to the informant. It is perhaps best to be somewhere between one's own world view and academic commitments and a Sto:lo world view and social position.³⁸ Information conveyed to me was both exclusive and inclusive of certain kinds of material and this was surely due to my short relationship with the interviewees, and my being a university student of Euro-Canadian background. Some of the people contacted refused to discuss issues pertaining to the land with me, but were more than happy to talk about their family history and things less controversial.³⁹ When a family member was present the interviewee was genuinely more comfortable and open. The interview with Ray Silver was conducted in the presence of Ray's nephew Dalton Silver, whose being there allowed Ray to feel comfortable sharing sensitive information with me in a thoughtful and emotional manner. The same is true for the interview with Frank Malloway, whose granddaughter Nikki LaRock accompanied me and introduced me to her grandfather.

I was initially unaware of the sensitive and controversial nature of this topic until I began conducting interviews. As will be further discussed, the land is central to Sto:lo identity, and the loss of that land has been devastating. Emotions run high during discussions of Joseph Trutch's actions and the subsequent situation in which the Sto:lo found and still find themselves. This paper recognizes and acknowledges the strength and resilience of the four individuals below. They shared with me the history of the Douglas Reserves to the best of their abilities and revealed their feelings, sometimes painful and angry, regarding the loss of the land. I sincerely thank them for recognizing the importance of their words for all Sto:lo people.

When I began my analysis of Sto:lo interpretations of the Douglas Reserves, I held the objective of recovering specific details like acreage size, dates, and names from the oral

narratives. I quickly found that this was an unrealistic expectation. These details are not nearly as important to the Sto:lo as the geographical features that outline a reserve's boundary or the larger significance of broken promises. That the details of those promises do not always emerge from almost one hundred and fifty years of oral history, must be understood in a cultural context. Sto:lo oral historians have chosen to pass on certain kinds of information based on several cultural factors. What they have chosen to teach the next generation has been of importance to them and may not necessarily now provide historians and legal researchers with the kind of information that clearly coincides with written sources. And yet, this is entirely appropriate, in that it provides not just supplemental information, but a genuinely different source of information on the same topic, thereby enabling richer historical understanding and cross-cultural appreciation. Where appropriate, I have noted when an oral source appears to support a written source. I do this only to emphasize that sometimes these specific details appear in the oral narrative and are helpful in determining actual reserve boundaries and persons involved. I do it not to devalue any of the other Sto:lo history that materializes in the interviews. My primary goal in this analysis is to remain as true as possible to the Sto:lo voice and to respect the words, meanings, and intentions of the informants.

Ray Silver, an elder at Sumas Reserve, began our interview with the following statement: "The land is the most important thing to us."⁴⁰ This statement encompasses the political, spiritual, and cultural relationship the Sto:lo have with the land. Not only is *S'olh Temexw* a territory from which the Sto:lo may be self-determining and economically sustaining, it is a spiritually potent landscape rich in history that is in constant danger of disruption and destruction by the encroaching *Xwelitem* population. Ray's careful placement of this statement in our discussion is indicative of the significant nature of this relationship. The land and its resources

are fundamental to Sto:lo identity.⁴¹ It is, and always has been, the base from which much of the Sto:lo language *Halq'emeylem* has developed, from which a sense of nationhood or collective identity has evolved, and from which a profound respect for and spiritual connection with the natural world has continued to exist. While Ray was unable to offer any specific details regarding the Douglas Reserves, his words capture the sadness and grief felt by the Sto:lo over the loss of their lands. These feelings of great sadness and anger resonate from almost every interview on the subject and are integral to the Sto:lo interpretation of the reductions made to their reserves; actions that now leave them with an insufficient land base from which to fully prosper and succeed.

Ray's knowledge of the original Sumas boundaries, those surveyed under Governor Douglas, was not from Sto:lo oral sources. He said that a professor from the University of British Columbia told him that Sumas Reserve used to be 11,000 acres.⁴² Other written sources record the size at 7,600 acres.⁴³ Either way Sumas is presently only 579 acres.⁴⁴ It appears as though many of these details, such as acreage size, dates, and names, were not passed on through oral narratives. There is more so an understanding of how the reserve boundaries related to certain geographical features in the surrounding area. For example, at Sumas there are two very important geographical features, Sumas Mountain and Sumas Lake. Sumas Lake was drained in 1924 for the purposes of making available prime farm land to incoming *Xwelitem* settlers.⁴⁵ Sumas Mountain is now the site of new housing developments extending from the city of Abbotsford. Ray spoke first of the devastating economic and spiritual impacts of losing Sumas Mountain:

...Sumas Mountain has a very special deer here...I was up in Chehalis, very close to the Chehalis people, and they were telling me about how they used to come up on the Sumas Mountain and shoot these deer because they were a very very good deer. A different kind of meat, I guess it's the vegetation up here on Sumas Mountain that the deer is more

like beef....But that mountain is really sacred to us....you see them holes up there on the mountain, Sumas Mountain? Those are very sacred to our people. They call them thunder holes. Thunder holes. And they say that's where our songs come....I hope that we can get a little bit of our land back, a little bit of Sumas Mountain back.⁴⁶

Ray discussed his concern for the deer and the other animals that have historically made Sumas Mountain their home. With new houses being constructed these animals are being pushed out of their natural habitat, a phenomenon Ray likens to the Sto:lo being pushed on to small reserves.⁴⁷

Frank Malloway echoed Ray's sentiments regarding displaced animals: "[The animals are] just roaming where they're supposed to be roaming. But people don't understand that....they want em shot or moved. Same what they did with us. Now the animals gotta go through that."⁴⁸

I asked Ray if Sumas Mountain in its entirety would have been included in the original Douglas survey and he believed it most likely was. If the Sto:lo presently had control over Sumas Mountain, as they had before the reduction of the reserve, the ecological management of the area would be in the hands of a people who have always had a sustainable relationship with the animal world, unlike *Xwelitem* settlers who frequently see animal populations as a hindrance to land development. The "thunder holes" are in danger of being disrupted as more houses appear on the mountainside. Again, if these reserved lands had not been reduced, Sto:lo spiritual sites would be in less danger of *Xwelitem* ruin.

I asked Ray if Sumas Lake had also been a part of the original surveyed reserve and he made the following response:

Yeah. The lake was their refrigerator. Trout, salmon, fish....There was so much fish....They never ever believed the white man could ever drain that lake. So they didn't worry about it....The white man's crazy, he can't drain that. Finally one morning they woke up and the lake was damn near dry. They couldn't believe it. So that affected them really really bad. Not only did they lose a lot of their land, most of their land, all of their land, they lost their country and now they lost the lake. They lost their refrigerator.⁴⁹

The lake provided many resources and was also the site of several transformer stories.⁵⁰ The draining of Sumas Lake remains a powerful reminder of the *Xwelitem* presence in the Fraser Valley. It is an example of the destructive capabilities of incoming populations into Aboriginal territory where promises to protect the land have time and time again been broken and still remain unresolved.

One of the other resources that has been depleted as a result of insufficient reserve land is the cedar tree. Ray talked of the importance of this resource to the Sto:lo and how the loss of reserve land has substantially decreased the growth of the species. The Sto:lo use cedar bark and roots for many purposes such as clothing, baskets, firewood, and building material. Additionally, a *sxwoxwiyam* tells of how a good man was transformed into the cedar tree to be of everlasting help to the people. Albert “Sonny” McHalsie reiterates that this *sxwoxwiyam* serves to illustrate the kind of relationship the Sto:lo have with the land. *S’olh Temexw* is home to many resources which are considered ancestral Sto:lo spirits. In other words, the cedar tree is more than just a tree, it is a spiritual being that is closely related to the people it supports.⁵¹

In the nineteenth-century, when Sto:lo reserves were being drastically reduced, these concepts of the land were never taken into consideration. If the Sto:lo were not believed to be “using” the land in a European agricultural way, justification was made for removing them of those lands and allowing new settlers to pre-empt and begin farming.⁵² Today, these realities in Sto:lo culture are rarely considered when developers begin new building projects.

A significant portion of this interview included a discussion of the history of Sto:lo-*Xwelitem* relations at Sumas. Ray talks here of how the Indian Agent treated the people and of how little or no negotiation ever occurred when new infrastructure was being developed:

...You know most everything here, everything taken from us, was never agreed by us. All the decisions were made by an Indian Agent, not a chief, not a tribe, nobody....The

roads were put in and they were not allowed by our people, they were not our doing, it was done by, the municipality come and they'd never come up and see a chief or us people. They'd go and see the Indian Agent and he'd say sure we'll do this and we'll do that. Like the freeway....They never negotiated with nobody....The disrespect they had for us. We were just little pups I guess, not even as clean as pups, we were dirty no good native people that they were in charge of and they respected us none....A lot of my older people were afraid...of the Indian Agents....They done them [people] hell....⁵³

This is important in demonstrating the difficulties the Sto:lo had in standing up for their rights in the face of colonial oppression and racism. It is often argued that Aboriginal people did not actively fight for their lands at the time they were lost. There is abundant evidence showing an active Sto:lo political rights movement present throughout the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. Moreover, these obstacles must be contextualized in terms of the impossibility that was created for any kind of strong Sto:lo political voice to rise out of these years of verbal and physical abuse at the hands of government officials and settlers alike.

Ray mentioned several times that “the reserve used to be so big.”⁵⁴ He stressed that there is now not enough land for all of the Sumas people to live on reserve and that they are forced to leave their communities. His words no doubt echo the sentiments of many Sto:lo people who live on reserves directly affected by Trutch's reductions. The land has been irrevocably altered and remains insufficient as a result of Douglas's policies being ignored and deemed incompatible with the colonial government's plans for the area.

Respected Sto:lo elder Rosaleen George, who lives at Skwah Reserve in Chilliwack, was also unable to provide any specific details relating to the creation and reduction of the Douglas Reserves. However, Rosaleen did confirm that when the reserves were created the wishes of the Aboriginal people were to be acknowledged, and were to dictate the boundaries of the survey:

The only thing I remember is what they did to my grandfather. They had the government men on the boat, and they had the councilors and I think there was the agent and the councilors and grandfather on the boat and they took them out on the river there ask them how far the Chehalis went and so grandfather told them how far....He just went as far as

the end of that first mountain there and right up into the other mountain up right close to the land he owned....and so that's what I remember....that's what grandmother and my dad were talking about.⁵⁵

I asked Rosaleen to talk about how the boundaries at Skwah, (one of the Douglas Reserves), were defined and she replied: "I don't know how they did that in Chilliwack, but I know they owned that little mountain because some of our people, our ancestors are buried there."⁵⁶

Rosaleen's understanding of the purpose of setting out reserve boundaries was expressed as "measuring the property for the people...because the white people were coming."⁵⁷ While part of Douglas's hastiness in setting reserve boundaries was to make way for *Xwelitem* settlement, he also viewed the reserves as tools of assimilation and protection: "I conceive the proposed plan to be at once feasible, and also the only plan which promises to result in the moral elevation of the native Indian races, in rescuing them from degradation, and protecting them from oppression and rapid decay."⁵⁸ Unlike Trutch, Douglas was able to successfully maintain a balance between the needs of the Sto:lo and the needs of the settlers.

Rosaleen's knowledge coincides with the written record specifically implying that the colonial government wanted the Sto:lo to determine their own reserve boundaries. Also implied, is the way in which reserve boundaries were recorded in Sto:lo memory. Recognition of the included geographical features appears more important than actual acreage allotment. This method coincides with Sto:lo concepts of the land, that many geographical features are places of spiritual significance requiring protection in reserved land. Protecting certain sacred mountains and river sites was equally important as securing land that was economically or agriculturally viable.

In our first meeting Rosaleen repeatedly discussed her dislike of certain *Xwelitem* people like priests and doctors, and talked extensively about the devastating effects of the residential

schools on her people. It appeared that Rosaleen chose to share these stories with me to emphasize the injustices experienced by the Sto:lo people. I asked her a number of questions relating to land issues but she directed our interview in such a way as to include these important topics. I am quite certain that she told me all she knows about issues pertaining to the land. Perhaps though because our relationship was so new and unfortunately short in length, she might, if interviewed by someone close to her, offer more details relating to the land issue.

Yakweakwioose elder and former Chief Frank Malloway, provided a number of details regarding the Douglas Reserves, even though he first informed me that his knowledge of the subject was limited. Frank confirmed Governor Douglas's policy of having the Sto:lo set their own boundaries: "I don't know too much about Governor Douglas's reserve policies. It's just that he told the surveyors to give the Indians what they want you know, their fishing spots and their where they if they are able to plant crops you know, let them have what they want."⁵⁹ This reaffirms Rosaleen George's understanding of the way in which the reserve boundaries were created, and appears to be an important detail in Sto:lo oral history.

Frank continued by talking about how the reserves used to be much larger:

And the reserves were huge you know? I think Yakweakwioose was 2,500 acres, and that included Skowkale band because we were all as one you know and it was the churches that....and Trutch I guess was the one that divided us....The only boundaries that have changed is from the Douglas to the Trutch reserve, and that's quite a drastic change.⁶⁰

The original boundaries of Yakweakwioose, Skowkale, and Tzeachten were indeed 2,500 acres.⁶¹ It is difficult to discern the source of Frank's details, whether they come from oral history or from written sources. Frank confessed that he had never read a report regarding the Douglas Reserves that had been given to him, which might suggest that his knowledge is rooted in oral history. Conversely, he has been an active Sto:lo leader and may be familiar with such

details as a result of this participation. Whichever is the case, some oral histories should be regarded as blends of both written and oral sources.

Frank discussed the re-routing of the Chilliwack River and how traditionally the Sto:lo would have followed the course of the river had it not been for the creation of reserves. Here Frank emphasizes the incompatibility and limitations of reserve structures with Sto:lo lifestyles:

The Indian people it's their spirituality is that you don't control nature, don't try and control nature. You let mother earth and father sky do what they want and they just let the river go wherever it wanted to go. But see when the farmers came into this area and their land was always getting flooded and they changed the direction of the Chilliwack River...they dammed up one spot, and the river cut a channel going down towards Yarrow. That's the way they changed the course of our river. Now, the reserves were already established. So we couldn't move. If we didn't have reserves we probably would be at Yarrow right now.⁶²

Many Chilliwack people are no longer able to fish in the Chilliwack River because of its being redirected. Frank continued by describing the kinds of lands that were reserved and why they were chosen over other spots:

Our original church that was standing where this one is was built in 1862. And my dad said that he was told by his grandfather that the priests told us to move closer to God you know because their houses were way up the field there and down here and so they built houses here you know close to the church. And then two years later the surveyors came in 1864 and surveyed the reserves you know they just give them the land that they had their cabins on. They learned from the white people to build the little cabins instead of living in the longhouse.⁶³

At the time of the Douglas surveys in 1864, it appears as though the Sto:lo were actively adopting, or at least experimenting with, European methods of farming and house building. This transitional time in Sto:lo history was occurring simultaneously with the creation of the reserves and directly affected the kinds of lands that were reserved.

Sto:lo Chiefs setting the reserve boundaries must surely have considered this time of transition, while they also remained faithful to Sto:lo concepts of the land, aiming to protect sacred sites, fishing spots, and hunting grounds. The lands chosen by Sto:lo Chiefs were both

spiritual sites and agriculturally and economically viable spots and differed according to location.⁶⁴ There is also a possibility that contemporary Chiefs, as well as surveyors, had a variety of concerns and desires that may not have always been consistent throughout *S'olh Temexw*. It is important to note then that each reserve may contain, and may have always contained, different geographical features for a number of unique reasons and purposes; they are not all identical. In addition, the influence of the colonial agents may have been more considerable in some areas and than others. Here R.C. Moody, Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works under Governor Douglas, explains how he would not be swayed by a settler's wishes: "The reserve in question was most carefully laid out, the Indians being present, and after they had themselves marked according to their own wishes and bounds, the area was further enlarged. I resisted the appeal of the neighboring settler, and acceded to the amplest request of the Indians."⁶⁵ Other surveyors may not have been as accommodating.

Sto:lo interpretations of the creation and reduction of the Douglas Reserves should be analyzed like any other historical source. Like any historian, Frank brings his own world view and cultural biases to his historical knowledge. For the Sto:lo, history is very much situated in the present. Here, as he often does, Frank creates links between the past and the present:

Trutch was the one that came and reduced the reserves down to their present size....they always tell us we don't have any cut off lands but we have the original maps that we...the Douglas Reserves you know....I don't know what's really gonna happen. I don't think we want money for what we've lost but we want more Crown property given to us, Crown property that they don't use anymore.⁶⁶

Likewise, Frank talked of the many petitions that were signed by Sto:lo leaders from the end of the nineteenth-century to the present day. He said today the Sto:lo charge their governments with the task of researching and bringing forward land claims, just as in the past the leadership acted to protect the peoples' interests regarding the land.⁶⁷

Frank further discussed the petitions made by Sto:lo leaders regarding the reductions made to their reserves in terms of the difficulties they had in expressing their concerns to a governing body of men who did not speak their language and did not always understand their distress:

Our ancestors did have a lot of concerns and you can find their petitions in the history books....it was around 1912 or something like that. I'm not sure the exact date but I think it was after 1900s, and when our people started getting a little more education you know, in 1864 I don't think any of our people had a formal education you know just educated through the Indian system. How to live and how to look after the land.⁶⁸

In order to petition the governments of the day, the Sto:lo had to become well versed in an unfamiliar political style, had to learn a new language, and had to accept the incongruous relationship *Xwelitem* now had with their land. This was by no means an easy task, yet it is quite evident that this adaptation occurred upon reading the many petitions and letters the Sto:lo communicated to the government.

Finally, the sadness and the grief, and feelings of displacement resonate from Frank's discussion of the loss of his inherited fishing and hunting sites: "I'm interested in land up the Chilliwack River Valley that's where my ancestors came from....I go up there and all where I used to hunt they got it all fenced off. No trespassing signs; that used to be my hunting grounds. The same is going to happen there as Sumas Mountain."⁶⁹ The Sto:lo living in the Central Fraser River Valley continue to experience many of the same injustices their ancestors faced. *Xwelitem* are steadily building over sacred and inherited grounds just as they did in Governor Douglas's and Governor Seymour's time. In reality, very little has actually changed.

Larry Commodore's extensive knowledge of the Douglas Reserves stems from both oral history and a reading of written texts. Larry acknowledged that for Sto:lo people oral history is synonymous with the reality of every day life. There is often little distinction between the past

and the present and he describes the passing down of history through oral means as part and parcel of Sto:lo life. People talked, and they did so regularly. Larry began our interview by identifying where the history of the Douglas Reserves began for him:

...with the Douglas Reserves...where it began for me, oral history, when I was young my grandfather would bring me...around to my great grandmother Amy Cooper, he would always bring me down there and to other elders' places and...a lot of traditional information was happening then, my grandfather would be talking with...his mother and with other folks about traditional history, traditional information, so I always knew as a youngster...that the army base belonged to Soowahlie, and I think it was just later on that I heard of something called the Douglas Reserve....That was a term of how we lost it, or that's what it was called when they first laid out the Soowahlie reserve.⁷⁰

Larry also talked about visiting his grandfather's house as a young boy and looking out over the Canadian Forces Base lands and having his grandfather say, "that used to be our lands, we used to have control of that land."⁷¹ Larry's oral footnoting specifies that he received this information from a number of different sources, first from his grandfather, then from his great grandmother, and then from other elders. This indicates that Sto:lo history was consistently being passed on by more than one person in the community, lending credibility and accuracy to Larry's narrative.

Larry continued by providing a detailed summary of the Soowahlie Douglas Reserve boundaries:

Soowahlie Douglas Reserve is Cultus Lake area the north side of Cultus Lake from Sunnyside(?) which is the north side of Cultus Lake, and the main beach...so it swings from the lake over here and then through over the ridge there and then over the river on that side and taking in the army base...and comprising of 4,000 acres, Soowahlie presently 1,200 acres, so there was a sizeable amount of acreage that we lost....The whole of the Douglas Reserve was 4,000 acres taking in the north end of Cultus Lake, and over the ridge to the army base and as far as Tzeachten. It takes in some of the present day Tzeachten Indian Reserve too along Vedder Road.⁷²

Like Ray, Rosaleen, and Frank, Larry identifies the reserve boundaries by geographical features. However, he additionally gives actual acreage size. This is most likely a result of having been exposed to the maps and the literature concerning the Douglas Reserves. Larry differed from the

elders in his account of the geographical features in that he did not offer any information regarding the spiritual potency of the mountains and the waterways. Larry's experience with the Douglas Reserves in legal matters may have prompted him to exclude those details and include the facts of acreage size and location, details central to claiming lands surveyed by Douglas's administration.

Larry was the only individual to mention William McColl, the surveyor who marked out Sto:lo reserves in the Central Fraser Valley in 1864 as directed by Governor Douglas:⁷³ "1864 was the year that William McColl who was a surveyor came to these parts, to Soowahlie, and laid out a rough sketch map of [unclear] and bounds. He just basically started hammering a few posts into the ground and said that's Soowahlie Indian Reserve."⁷⁴ Larry's precise understanding of the Douglas Reserves supports the written historical record almost flawlessly. In the following excerpt Larry summarizes the history of the Douglas Reserves:

1864, Governor Douglas...basically gave the mandate lay out these reserves as the Indians want them, where the Indians want them to be and the impression was that from there we would move on to Treaty. That would be our, cover us for now, protect our land for now, our village lands for now, and then...our traditional territory that would be Treaty....So they laid out Soowahlie and then just after that Governor Douglas resigned and Governor Seymour took over but he wasn't so much the villain. There was a guy named Joseph Trutch who was the Commissioner of Lands and Works and he was just notoriously anti-Indian. There's quite a few quotes where he puts down Indians very severely.⁷⁵

As close as this account is to written sources, Larry does impart a Sto:lo perspective rendering it somewhat different from say Tennant or Fisher. Larry successfully incorporates his Sto:lo perspective from oral sources with his knowledge of the related texts. He also reveals Trutch's negative attitude towards Aboriginal people and how that dictated his policies.

Joseph Trutch repeatedly misunderstood and disrespected Aboriginal uses of the land. He believed that if the Sto:lo were not making agricultural use of the land they somehow had no

right to it at all. He failed to comprehend the spiritual relationship the Sto:lo had, and continue to have, with their traditional territory. He upheld racial attitudes of European superiority and Aboriginal inferiority. He made his opinions exceedingly obvious and felt simply that Aboriginal people were unworthy beings who were very much in the way of European settlement.⁷⁶ Being in an oppressive position of power, he then robbed them of their lands. There is a strong possibility Trutch was not at all interested in what the Sto:lo were doing with the land, or in Douglas's authority in laying out the reserves. He had his mind set on depriving the Sto:lo of their land and resources so that they would ultimately no longer be able to exist as a culture in the province of British Columbia.

Larry's version of Joseph Trutch's policies concurs with the written material on the same subject:

....[The Indians] will make no use of this land, that they don't know what to do with it, they didn't have any right to it. Joseph Trutch kind of, his star rose and he became a very influential person in British Columbia and he said look they don't need this land, these Indians don't need this land, and then there were some white settlers around here and they were saying look at all that land over there, the Indians aren't using that let's start taking it over and so that's what happened it started getting pre-empted by farmers after 1864.⁷⁷

The incompatibility of Sto:lo concepts of the land and *Xwelitem* concepts and uses of the land is one of the most poignant issues in this debate. Trutch's reductions denied the Sto:lo the right to use the land as their culture dictated, and the fact remains that they are essentially still denied this right.

The loss and disruption of sacred lands is as devastating as it is dangerous. Here, in a passage from You Are Asked to Witness, Jimmie Peters, a Sto:lo elder, discusses this danger: "Some places are sacred. Your [sic] not supposed to go there and touch anything... You can't just go there and do as you like... Certain things [were] done to it by the old timers... Your [sic]

not supposed to touch them or do anything wrong with them.”⁷⁸ As so, many of these sites remain unprotected as a result of Trutch’s reductions, and constant spiritual danger exists for the Sto:lo.

I asked Larry about how the Sto:lo political leadership voiced their concerns since the reductions were made in 1867. He talked not only of the petitions’ content, but also of how petitions were always given coverage in local and provincial newspapers. Larry talks here of one petition in particular:

... We tried different ways I guess to appeal to the moral conscience of the governments of the day. There’s been various petitions. One I remember in particular because it was my great great grandfather Captain John...of Soowahlie, and it was in the front page once again of the Chilliwack Progress... He was saying that it’s beautiful that you white people have come to our lands here, it’s a beautiful land and we can share this land together and we can create beautiful relationships here, but you gotta remember whose land it is that the Creator gave us this land and that it is our land but we’re willing to share it. Let’s talk this over...we’ve still got issues left to deal with here.⁷⁹

Larry also mentioned that prior to 1951 and amendments to the Indian Act, Aboriginal people were not allowed to hire lawyers. So to bring forward any legal claim to the land was impossible. It is for that reason unfair to accuse the Sto:lo of not bringing forward claims at the time of the Douglas Reserve reductions, or shortly thereafter.⁸⁰ Besides this, many petitions and concerns were voiced and were carried out in the way the colonial government had requested. It also appears the Sto:lo still had faith in colonial justice. The only course of redress was to deal with the Queen and her representatives whom they firmly believed were looking out for their interests.⁸¹ It would not be until well into the twentieth-century that a deeper mistrust of *Xwelitem* and their governments would develop. This mistrust is a result of the horrors of the residential school experience, the continual denial of Aboriginal rights to the land, and the perpetuation of racial stereotyping.

Larry concluded our discussion with the following reflection, one that echoes the sadness and grief of the elders' comments:

One of the main things is the lost opportunities...that if we would have had control of that land from 1864 I think Soowahlie would be in a lot better of a situation, that our people would have been a lot more better off, because we would have...more land for one thing and more opportunities...So I think that's one of the whole sad things about Douglas Reserves that it has limited our ability to be self-sufficient and self-determining and I think that's one of the saddest things.⁸²

Surely the reductions made to the Douglas Reserves have been limiting and have impeded economic sustainability within these Sto:lo communities. Larry's comments show that these feelings of sadness are not differentiated by age, location, gender, or social position. They are very much a part of the oral history of the land issue.

I will turn now to an interview conducted in 1994 by two Simon Fraser University students, (one of whom appears to be Sto:lo), with the late Soowahlie elder Wes Sam. The students tend not to ask leading questions, although at one point during the interview they mention Joseph Trutch's name before Wes does. As Wes has trouble with Governor Douglas's name, I find it possible he might not have used Trutch's name had it not been for the students prompting him. Regardless, Wes provided a wealth of information regarding the creation of reserves, Sto:lo concepts of the land, and reserve reductions.

Wes was asked how the reserves came to be and how it was decided where they would be located. This was his response:

The government of the white settlers. Didn't want the Indians to be always underfoot... What happened was they fenced in the property, they were fencing in where the Indians used to come there maybe fish or get berries or something like. And now they come there and it's all fenced. So there was some kind of disagreement but of course the settlers went out and told the government about the day the Indians have to settle on reserves. So that's how reserves were became about.⁸³

This excerpt reinforces the nature of colonial relationships, that the oppressor is most always successful in having his needs met. It also reiterates the strains placed on traditional Sto:lo food procuring sites by *Xwelitem* philosophies of private property.

Wes also explained how agreements regarding the land were made between *Xwelitem* settlers and governments and Sto:lo leaders at the time the reserves were created:

It's one of those kind of like a hand shake rules of the Natives long time ago...They didn't like to write it down...it went by what we call "The Indians Like It To Be Known,"...The white people they didn't want that to be known because they wanted to use that land after they developed it. So they never put it down in book form, whatever you want to call it, document.⁸⁴

It is not entirely clear as to whether or not Wes is referring to a specific case, or if meant to say that *Xwelitem* habitually defrauded the Sto:lo of their lands by not writing down their wishes. It immediately makes one think of the Douglas surveys and how they were not always properly or carefully recorded. However, it does not seem that this is what Wes is speaking of here.

Governor Douglas's policies, as discussed earlier, were not malicious and were not intended to leave the Sto:lo with an insufficient land base for the benefit of the settlers. Thus this reference does not really seem to apply to Douglas.

Wes's interpretation of the way in which Douglas and Trutch treated the Sto:lo, albeit in very different ways, is confirmed here:

...there was two people in history, white people, that was one was for the Indians and the other guy was against the Indians. The guy that was for the Indians his name [Bow] or something like and gave the Chilliwack people, the Chilliwack Indians all the land they needed and whatever...that man said this is your land. That was the original land that was given to the Indians. And then the other guy came little after, cut it all off to what we own at the present day....Trutch....We used to own a lot of land.⁸⁵

This is where Wes was unable to provide Governor Douglas's name. I do not believe this is terribly problematic because he very clearly understands the treatment accorded by both men.

The uncertainty of the name almost seems irrelevant in light of the unmistakable fact that it is most certainly Governor Douglas. This interpretation perfectly supports the fact that Douglas treated Aboriginal people like human beings, and Trutch regarded them as savage animals.⁸⁶

Wes Sam appears to have been very knowledgeable about reserve policies despite his lacking specific details. Again, the Sto:lo oral historical record should not be faulted for this. These details seem not as important as the concepts and messages that emerge from the history. In short, the absence of details in Wes's interview does not devalue the history he provides. Rather his words echo those of his community members and other Sto:lo elders, and represent the Sto:lo interpretation of events.

Oliver Wells's interview collection, recorded in the 1960s, is at best a detailed record of Sto:lo place names and village sites, *Halq'emeylem* vocabulary, genealogy, and cultural practices. At worst it is a highly flawed set of interviews dominated by Wells himself, that is difficult to read due to his constant interruptions which disrupt the flow of the informants' speech. Wells continually leads his informants by bombarding them with facts derived from written sources oftentimes invoking mere positive or negative reinforcements. These interviews provide small pieces of information regarding the Douglas Reserves, and in only one case does Wells allow his interviewee to speak virtually uninterrupted. This interview, with Albert Louie, is really the only one that offers any valid oral history relating to the Douglas Reserves, yet it is also problematic. Accordingly, I have chosen to assess these interviews on a limited scale due to the many problems found within them. A few of the interviews with Amy Cooper, Bob Joe, and J. W. Kelleher provide minute details regarding reserves and are really not worth examining here.⁸⁷ They are so tainted by Wells's leading questions that they are rendered invalid.

To begin, an interview with Dan Milo in 1962 at Skowkale reserve provides an explanation as to why the reserves were no longer as large as they once were:

Because way back in the early days here, the corner of the Soowahlie Reserve runs as far as Wells' place, just a little ways back here. Well, he was living there, the old Thompson Uslick was living there when the white people came, and they couldn't find no place that is open for anybody. That's how the Indian reserves got so small, you know. They just leave it to them to pick out as much land they can use....So that's how the Chilliwack Valley was opened for white people when they first come in this valley.⁸⁸

In this excerpt, Dan attributes reserve reductions to settler pre-emption after the reserves had already been surveyed. This is consistent with the written record of the time, and is particularly in line with Joseph Trutch's plan to throw open tens of thousands of acres for settlement in 1867, which is exactly what he did. In fact, once Trutch had resurveyed the reserves, 40,000 acres were suddenly available for settlement.⁸⁹ As it was also made illegal for Aboriginal people to pre-empt their own land after 1866, making them unable to regain any of the reserved lands they had effectively lost.⁹⁰ Dan's interpretation of events offers no dates which makes for some confusion. If he is referring to reductions made in 1867, then this passage most definitely refers to Trutch's actions. If he is not referring specifically to Trutch's reductions then it is difficult to discern exactly what he is speaking of, although it does seem to fit nicely. Again, Dan's lack of precise details reaffirms the lesser degree of importance dates and names hold in Sto:lo oral history.

Oliver Wells interviewed Albert Louie at Yakweakwioose in July of 1965. Surprisingly, he allows Albert to talk quite freely at times, resulting in lengthy passages about reserve boundaries and survey maps. Albert talks here of the original Soowahlie reserve boundaries: "Well, they had pretty big land you know, right up to the lake, and right down where Cooper lives, there. Hits that mountain...that's from Stan Mussell's and cross right over and hits where Amy Cooper lives there now, right to the crossing there, you know. Hits right over. They got

about 2,000 acres or there's supposed to be anyway."⁹¹ Albert's information about acreage size is incorrect, Soowahlie having been originally surveyed at 4,000 acres.⁹² However, despite this error he does indicate that the reserve was, in 1965, not the size it was supposed to be. Like many Sto:lo people he visualizes reserve boundaries by using geographical features.

The following except from the same interview is extremely confusing. It is very difficult to determine what Albert is referring to:

After Douglas, James Douglas, the first governor, and Governor Seymour, you know, they gave the Indians...of course Seymour's the one that give out the map. You know, I give Richie that map. Richie [Malloway] was here the other day with his map, but this was way different. And I just showed him my map and I told him, "you can keep this map." I told him he was Chief now. It's a better map. There's a piece of ground right outside there, right outside that second house from here...Mine was old. It was marked that that was a map after this...after they spoke for that, Bishop Durieu, you know. There's Father Paquette, another French fellow, they spoke to the governor as how they got this. I think it must be about 1887, I think it was when they got that. It wasn't given, you know. But they just marked that map, you know. Well, it's a mark there, that fellow that first surveyed that. His name was on there.⁹³

He discusses the difference between two maps, one which is his and apparently very old, and one Richie Malloway has which was quite different. It seems as though Albert might be in possession of a map sketched by William McColl. Although the date he gives, 1887, would not be consistent with Governor Douglas's surveys. Richie's map seems to delineate a smaller reserve indicating that it may be a map drawn under Governor Seymour's administration. Albert says his map was given under Seymour, which would mean the boundaries were reduced from what they had been in 1864. Perhaps though, Albert meant he was in possession of a Douglas map not a Seymour map and simply made an error. However, this seems unlikely after he mentions that missionaries were trying to help the Sto:lo with their land concerns.

Missionaries frequently acted on behalf of the Sto:lo to ensure their land was protected and were sometimes even dissuaded by the colonial government from doing so.⁹⁴ The

missionaries' involvement is more likely to have occurred in the post-Douglas period because they seem to be fighting for larger land allocations, aside from the fact that Albert gives the date of 1887. Finally, it appears as though the boundaries sketched out on Albert's map were never actually enforced, this being indicative of some of the Douglas surveys. However, this could just be a coincidence, that in 1887 a survey map was drawn at the request of the missionaries and was subsequently never registered.

Despite these substantial confusions, there is little debate that two maps existed both showing different reserves boundaries; an indication that the land issue was never properly dealt with, leaving the Sto:lo with mixed messages and broken promises. This clearly shows that the Sto:lo were continually denied the right to a proper survey, and that the colonial government dealt with the land as they pleased. If an initial survey hindered settlement, the government appears to have made excuses to resurvey and reduce reserve lands. Perhaps it is less important to determine which maps Albert is discussing than it is to recognize how confusing all of this must have been for the Sto:lo, and that having no just course of redress prevented any resolution. Furthermore, the existence of competing maps suggests government manipulation of earlier promises.

Albert also briefly mentions that the reserves were being reduced in the late nineteenth-century: "But that new map he got from the Government, it's way different....Course, they'd been surveying, you know. They were cuttin' and a lot of that thing, you know."⁹⁵ Most of Albert's interview is difficult to understand because he leaves out details that would better complete his narrative. The absence of dates in this case is problematic and the possibility of his errors with names creates further difficulties. Still, his words clearly demonstrate that the Sto:lo

have for a long time been attempting to resolve issues pertaining to the land, and that they face many conflicting assumptions and understandings.

From 1913 to 1916, the government held a series of inquests into the Aboriginal land issue in British Columbia referred to as the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission. During this time many Sto:lo leaders expressed their concerns regarding the loss of their lands. These testimonies now offer historians a collection of oral histories from Sto:lo who were almost immediately involved in the creation and reduction of the Douglas Reserves. Some may have lived through Douglas's administration, others may not. However, the Commission was conducted at a time when these issues were still relatively recent and definitely unresolved.

Sto:lo testimonies repeatedly refer to Douglas's surveys and to the Governor's intentions.

Chief William Sepass of Skulkayn Band [Skowkale] made the following remarks:

The answer to the questions which you brought to His Royal Highness is what I am patiently waiting for; chiefly towards our land. There has been four posts set for me – This last fifty years what has become of it, or where the changes have been made I cannot get an understanding – The only people that I see is white settlers in this reserve which belongs to me. I haven't got the slightest idea of how this is being changed or transacted. Sir James Douglas was the one that surveyed this property for us. The grievances which I am laying before you is what I have already said. After this reserve was surveyed for me by Sir James Douglas from then I came to learn that there would be compensation made to us Indians for all the land in the Province.⁹⁶

Chief Sepass very clearly states that Governor Douglas originally surveyed the land and then promised to negotiate the larger territory at a later date. Also evident in the testimony is the reduction made to Skowkale reserve from the Douglas to the Trutch survey: 2,500 acres down to 200 acres including Yakweakwioose and Tzeachten.⁹⁷ The Sto:lo interpretation in the early twentieth-century includes more specific details than the oral history now does. This is most likely due to the fact that many of these Chiefs had first hand dealings with Douglas's

administration. Chief Sepass also confirms that *Xwelitem* settlers quickly pre-empted reduced reserve lands after 1867.

Chief Sepass told the Commissioners of his land being “too small” to facilitate any viable agricultural operations and of how he wished for the land “to be returned back” to him.⁹⁸ More disturbing, is the problem of *Xwelitem* farmers ploughing through unprotected Sto:lo burial sites: “We have nearly lost that graveyard through the white people settling in there and they have disturbed the graves by ploughing.”⁹⁹ Chief Selesmlton (Ned) from Upper Sumas Band also expressed concern for the protection of their burial grounds.¹⁰⁰ The disruption of gravesites is a good example of the disrespect incoming *Xwelitem* had for Sto:lo people. To wantonly destroy a burial site shows just how insatiable settlers were for the land that was being unjustly sanctioned for their use.

Chief Selesmlton (Ned) talks here of how either their reserve survey changed or was not adhered to: “My old parents have had very hard feelings over that piece that we have and there was one man came along and told us he was going to survey it up for us, and then I thought I was all right on there. Not very long after white people came and settled right alongside the reserve.”¹⁰¹ This excerpt reveals that these changes were not consensual, that no consultation took place, and that no explanation was given to the Sumas people about what was happening to their lands. There is a strong possibility that the first surveyor was one of Douglas’s men and that the later *Xwelitem* settlement is indicative of the result of Trutch’s reductions.

Chief Charlie of Matsqui stated that his reserve boundaries had also been lessened by a surveyor different than the first: “I claim that surveyors were over surveying that piece of land. The first surveyor that surveyed that piece of land he shifted the post back 50 feet, and a while after another surveyor came along and he found out that the post was shifted back 50 feet each

way. (Commissioner - They reduced it in length and width.)”¹⁰² Again, the first surveyor to whom he is referring is most likely one of Douglas’s surveyors, the second surveyor being one of Trutch’s men.

Finally, Chief Kwaw-a-pilt from Klaw-a-pelt Band [Kawakwawapilt] speaks of his frustration with the land surveyed by Governor Douglas being continually resurveyed and changed: “The grievance that I have is on account of the land that was surveyed by Sir James Douglas – this land has been surveyed and surveyed until now there is very little left.”¹⁰³ This statement further confirms the expediency with which the Chiefs wanted to act in dealing with the land issues. If left unresolved the Sto:lo would continue to lose their land to *Xwelitem* settlement. All of these Chiefs were adamant the government return lands surveyed under Governor Douglas. The land remaining was economically insufficient and spiritual sites were in constant danger.

The oral accounts found in the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission confirm a Sto:lo understanding that Governor Douglas’s intentions and surveys were honorable, that after his retirement reserves in *S’olh Temexw* became endangered and were reduced, and that a number of specific details were recorded in memory. There is also a sense that the Sto:lo still believed the government would help them guard their lands from *Xwelitem* settlement. The Commissioners promised that these matters would be dealt with in a legal manner, leaving many leaders with false hope. Lastly, feelings of sadness, grief, and anxiety emerge from the testimonies, just as they do in interviews conducted today.

At the time of the reserve reductions, the Sto:lo leadership was engaged in a process of petitioning and letter writing. This was really their only form of redress and they continued to have a faith in *Xwelitem* governments to protect their interests.¹⁰⁴ Extracts from the petitions

below, written from 1864 to 1868 by various Sto:lo leaders, some of whom were directly affected by the Douglas Reserves, reveal a sense of urgency and anxiety about the land.

Several months following Governor Douglas's retirement in 1864, a substantial group of Sto:lo leaders made a speech to Governor Seymour, "Please protect our land, that it will not be small for us; many are well pleased with their reservations, and many wish that their reservations be marked out for them."¹⁰⁵ Clearly, this large contingent of leaders recognized Governor Douglas's surveys as their reserve boundaries. Already in August of 1864 the Sto:lo were concerned for the future of their land and were asking for protection well before Trutch's actions.

This petition written to Governor Seymour in 1866, implies that land the Sto:lo believed was reserved for them was being tampered with by *Xwelitem*: "The white man tell many things about taking our lands: our hearts become very sick. We wish to say to Governor Seymour: please protect our lands."¹⁰⁶ Also evident in this petition are the feelings of sorrow and desperation that the land was being lost and that nothing seemed to be preventing this occurrence.

In late 1868, the Sto:lo living at Whonock made a petition to the government to return lands that had been taken from them:

Governor Douglas did send some years ago his men among us to measure our reserve and although they gave us only a small patch of land in comparison to what they allowed to a white man our neighbor, we were resigned to our lot, consequently your memorialists build new houses, cultivate the land to raise potatoes for themselves and their children, and make, if possible, some money selling the excess. Some days ago came new men who told us by order of their Chief they have to curtail our small Reservation, and so did to our greatest grief; not only they shortened our land but by their new paper they set aside our best land, some of our gardens, and gave us in place, some hilly and sandy land, where it is next to impossible to raise any potatoes: our hearts are full of grief day and night, and in fact we have been many days without being able to sleep.¹⁰⁷

Trutch reduced the size of their reserve from 2,000 acres to a meager 92 acres.¹⁰⁸ This drastic reduction is plainly evident when looking at a comparative map of the Douglas surveys and the Trutch surveys for Whonock reserve (see Appendix 2). Again, the devastating nature of the unjust loss of the land, carried out without cooperation or respect, is instantly recognizable.

These petitions and letters differ only from the later oral accounts in that they were voiced at the time the reductions were taking place. They convey, however, the same feelings of sadness and grief as do the oral histories told today. They speak of a process of dishonest land transactions, just as elders do today. The history contains only a few specific details, just as it does presently. The Sto:lo have passed on the history of the Douglas Reserves in a concise, emotional, and culturally meaningful way. The similarities and connections between the history collected today and the oral accounts of the late nineteenth-century are significant. Naturally there are differences that reflect the time in which the histories were collected. However, today the Sto:lo speak of the expediency necessary to deal with outstanding land issues just as their ancestors did at the time of the reductions. The consistencies displayed in the Sto:lo oral historical record are proof that their methods are successful.

Indeed, the history of the Douglas Reserves has survived in Sto:lo oral narratives. The Governor's intentions have been understood in the same way since the 1860s.¹⁰⁹ Despite many attempts by *Xwelitem* to assimilate the Sto:lo and take away their language and their traditions, this history has survived almost intact. While the history may have remained virtually unchanged in Sto:lo memory, the land has drastically changed. *Xwelitem* settlers have dominated the lands in *S'olh Temexw* by either extracting gold, and other minerals, or ploughing up land to make way for farming operations. Ironically, *Xwelitem* settlement was never actually legally sanctioned because Sto:lo title to the land had never been extinguished. Today,

Aboriginal title to the land has yet to be extinguished, so technically the Sto:lo still “own” all of the lands in *S’olh Temexw*.¹¹⁰ With a better understanding of the rich and diverse history of the Sto:lo, *Xwelitem* in British Columbia may finally begin to realize the significance of the relationship the Sto:lo have with the land, and the devastating effects of Trutch’s reductions. Unfortunately, many of Trutch’s outdated and blatantly racist attitudes continue to prevail in Canadian courts, but it is time for *S’olh Temexw* to be returned to her rightful protector; fortunately the evidence is very much in her favor.

- ¹ Keith Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History* (Chilliwack: Sto:lo Heritage Trust, 1997), 67.
- ² *Ibid.*, 74.
- ³ See Generally: Keith Carslon, ed., *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001), Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977), Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia 1849-1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), British Columbia, *Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question, 1850-1875, 1877* (Victoria: Printed by Richard Wolfenden, Government Printer, 1875, Reproduction, 1987).
- ⁴ Carslon, ed., *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 92, and Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 60.
- ⁵ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 49.
- ⁶ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 96, and Carslon, ed., *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 92.
- ⁷ Carslon, ed., *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 92.
- ⁸ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 102-3.
- ⁹ Carslon, ed., *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 163, Note: Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 96, states the colony was created in August, 1858.
- ¹⁰ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 61.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 66.
- ¹² Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 147, and Tennant, 29.
- ¹³ Tennant, 19.
- ¹⁴ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 151, 155.
- ¹⁵ Copy of Despatch from the Right Hon. Sir E.B. Lytton, Bart., to Governor Douglas, C.B., 20 May 1859, In British Columbia, *Papers*, 18.
- ¹⁶ Governor Douglas to the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, 27 April 1893, In British Columbia, *Papers*, 27.
- ¹⁷ Copy of Despatch from Governor Douglas to the right Hon. Sir E.B. Lytton, Bart., 14 March 1859, In British Columbia, *Papers*, 17.
- ¹⁸ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 71.
- ¹⁹ Tennant, 35, and Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 67.
- ²⁰ Robin Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and Indian Land Policy," *BC Studies* 12(Winter) (1971): 8.
- ²¹ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 72.
- ²² Joseph Trutch, Report, 28 August 1867, In Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and Indian Land Policy," 11.
- ²³ Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and Indian Land Policy," 14, and Tennant, 42.
- ²⁴ Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and Indian Land Policy," 5.
- ²⁵ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 74, See Table.
- ²⁶ Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and Indian Land Policy," 10.
- ²⁷ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 156.
- ²⁸ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 74.
- ²⁹ Julie Cruikshank, "Oral tradition and oral history: Reviewing some issues," *Canadian Historical Review* 75(3) (1994): 403.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 418.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 403-4.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 417.
- ³³ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 185.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 185, 187, 193.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 189.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.
- ³⁸ I have no formal source for this statement, rather it was frequently discussed in seminars conducted between May 6, 2002 and May 21, 2002 with Keith Carlson and John Lutz, and is not an original idea.
- ³⁹ I met with Robert Sepass and his grandson Bill Sepass and they were unwilling to discuss these issues with me.
- ⁴⁰ Ray Silver, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, Transcript and recording on file at Sto:lo Nation Archive, Chilliwack, 3 June 2002.
- ⁴¹ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 102-3.
- ⁴² Ray Silver, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 3 June 2002.

- ⁴³ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 74. See Table
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 74. See Table as of 1996.
- ⁴⁵ Carslon, ed., *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 104,105 (Plate 34).
- ⁴⁶ Ray Silver, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 3 June 2002.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Frank Malloway, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, Transcript and recording on file at Sto:lo Nation Archive, Chilliwack, 27 May 2002.
- ⁴⁹ Ray Silver, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 3 June 2002.
- ⁵⁰ Carslon, ed., *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 104,105 (Plate 34).
- ⁵¹ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 55.
- ⁵² Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and Indian Policy," 11.
- ⁵³ Ray Silver, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 3 June 2002.
- ⁵⁴ Ray Silver, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 3 June 2002.
- ⁵⁵ Rosaleen George, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, Transcript and recording on file at Sto:lo Nation Archive, Chilliwack, 3 June 2002.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Copy of Despatch from Governor Douglas to the right Hon. Sir E.B. Lytton, Bart., 14 March 1859, In *British Columbia, Papers*, 16.
- ⁵⁹ Frank Malloway, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 27 May 2002.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 74. See Table.
- ⁶² Frank Malloway, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 27 May 2002.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Ray Silver, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 3 June 2002.
- ⁶⁵ The Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works to His Excellency the Governor, 28 April 1863, In *British Columbia, Papers*, 27.
- ⁶⁶ Frank Malloway, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 27 May 2002.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Larry Commodore, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, Transcript and recording on file at Sto:lo Nation Archive, Chilliwack, 30 May 2002.
- ⁷¹ Ibid.
- ⁷² Ibid.
- ⁷³ Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 71.
- ⁷⁴ Larry Commodore, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 30 May 2002.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ⁷⁶ Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and Indian Land Policy," 7.
- ⁷⁷ Larry Commodore, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 30 May 2002.
- ⁷⁸ Interview with Jimmie Peters, in Carslon, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 71.
- ⁷⁹ Larry Commodore, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 30 May 2002.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid.
- ⁸¹ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 147.
- ⁸² Larry Commodore, Interview by Elizabeth Scott, 30 May 2002.
- ⁸³ Wesley Sam, Interview by Unknown Simon Fraser University Students, Transcript at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack, 22 February 1994.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁸⁵ Wesley Sam, Interview by Unknown Simon Fraser University Students, 22 February 1994.
- ⁸⁶ Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and Indian Land Policy," 6, 7.
- ⁸⁷ Interviews noted are all found in Oliver Wells Collection at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack. J.W. Kelleher, Mrs. Kelleher, and daughter Irene, at Abbotsford, B.C., 11 September 1966; Bob Joe, at Tzeachten, 8 February 1962, Amy Cooper, November 1965.
- ⁸⁸ Dan Milo, Oliver Wells Interview Collection, Transcript and recording at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack, 8 January 1962: 7.

-
- ⁸⁹ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 164.
- ⁹⁰ Carlson, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 74.
- ⁹¹ Albert Louie, Oliver Wells Interview Collection, Transcript and recording at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack, 28 July 1965: 27.
- ⁹² Carlson, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 74. See Table.
- ⁹³ Albert Louie, Oliver Wells Interview Collection, 28 July 1965: 28.
- ⁹⁴ This was obtained from a Timeline constructed by Keith Carlson, and its original source is BCARS: GR 1372, File 584/1c. Microfilm B-1328.
- ⁹⁵ Albert Louie, Oliver Wells Interview Collection, 28 July 1965: 28. Albert continues here by talking about how in 1913 the "Commissioners" told the Sto:lo they had to straighten out their reserve lines along the mountains. Again, this passage is unclear and confusing so I've decided not to include in this analysis.
- ⁹⁶ Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913-1916. New Westminster Agency. Transcript of Meeting with Skulkayn Band [Skowkale][Chief William Sepass] Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack: 196.
- ⁹⁷ Carlson, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 74. See Table.
- ⁹⁸ Royal Commission, Chief Sepass, 201.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁰ Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913-1916. New Westminster Agency. Transcript of Meeting with Upper Sumas Band [Chief Selesmlton (Ned)] Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack: 166.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., 165-6.
- ¹⁰² Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913-1916. New Westminster Agency. Transcript of Meeting with Matsqui Band [Chief Charlie] Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack: 148.
- ¹⁰³ Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913-1916. New Westminster Agency. Transcript of Meeting with Klaw-a-pelt Band [Kawakwawapilt] [Chief Kwaw-a-pilt] Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack: 187.
- ¹⁰⁴ Carlson, ed., *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 170.
- ¹⁰⁵ Sto:lo Speech to Governor Seymour, August 1864, in Carlson, *A Sto:lo Coast-Salish Historical Atlas*, 170-1.
- ¹⁰⁶ Sto:lo Petition to Governor Seymour, 1866, in Carlson, *A Sto:lo Coast-Salish Historical Atlas*, 171.
- ¹⁰⁷ Petition of the Whonock Indians, December 1868, in Carlson, *A Sto:lo Coast-Salish Historical Atlas*, 171.
- ¹⁰⁸ Carlson, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 74. See Table.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 68, 70.
- ¹¹⁰ Carlson, ed., *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 94-5, and Tennant, 13.

Bibliography:

Interviews:

Commodore, Larry. Interviewed by Elizabeth Scott. Transcript and recording on file at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack, 30 May 2002.

George, Rosaleen. Interviewed by Elizabeth Scott. Transcript and recording on file at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack, 3 June 2002.

Louie, Albert. Oliver Wells Interview Collection. Transcript and recording on file at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack, 28 July 1965.

Malloway, Frank. Interviewed by Elizabeth Scott. Transcript and recording on file at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack, 27 May 2002.

Milo, Dan. Oliver Wells Interview Collection. Transcript and recording on file at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack, 8 January 1962.

Sam, Wesley. Interviewed by Unknown Simon Fraser University Students. Transcript at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack, 22 February 1994.

Silver, Ray. Interviewed by Elizabeth Scott. Transcript and recording on file at Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack, 3 June 2002.

Published Primary Sources:

British Columbia. *Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question, 1850-1875, 1877*.
Victoria: Printed by Richard Wolfenden, Government Printer, 1875, Reproduction, 1987.

Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913-1916. New Westminster Agency. Transcripts of Meetings with Skulkayn Band, Matsqui Band, Upper Sumas Band, and Klaw-a-pelt Band. Sto:lo Nation Archives, Chilliwack.

Secondary Sources:

Carslon, Keith, ed. *A Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001.

Carslon, Keith, ed. *You Are Asked to Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History*. Chilliwack: Sto:lo Heritage Trust, 1997.

Cruikshank, Julie. "Oral tradition and oral history: Reviewing some issues." *Canadian Historical Review* 75(3) (1994): 403-18.

Fisher, Robin. *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977.

Fisher, Robin. "Joseph Trutch and Indian Land Policy." *BC Studies* 12(Winter) (1971): 3-33.

Tennant, Paul. *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia 1849-1989*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990.