

## **1994 Sto:lo Rock Art Project**

### **Project History**

This slide portfolio and accompanying research paper are the net products of a project I undertook as a student in the 1994 Ethnographic Field School sponsored by the University of British Columbia and directed by professors Michael Kew and Bruce Miller. Members of the 1994 Ethnographic Field School are but the latest in a series of student cohorts to benefit from a collaborative relationship between the Department of Anthropology and the Sto:lo Tribal Council. As was the case with the 1993 Ethnographic Field School, the guiding principle directing the development of each student project was a desire to match student research interests with topical issues defined by the Sto:lo Tribal Council. Happily, the desire on the part of the Sto:lo Tribal Council to launch a Sto:lo Cultural Tours programme intersected with my interests in Coast Salish rock art.

### **Project Purpose**

In a meeting in March 1994 attended by members of the Sto:lo Tribal Council and field school students and instructors, Sto:lo heritage researcher Gordon Mohs described the details of a proposed cultural tours programme scheduled to be implemented by the Sto:lo during the summer of 1994. One of the tours in the proposed programme featured an excursion by boat to various

pictograph sites located on the lower reaches of Harrison Lake and along the Harrison River. Gordon was interested in obtaining a set of high-quality slides of these pictograph panels for the preparation of promotional material and, more importantly, to form a photographic record of extant rock art figures as a hedge against their deterioration and ultimate disappearance.

### **Infrared Photography**

Bill McLennan, a graphic designer with the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, reported good results from his experiments with the use of infrared photography designed to increase the resolution of faded images painted on the sides and lids of wooden boxes. Gordon encouraged me to experiment with the use of infrared photography to see if similar results could be obtained on faded pictographs. To this end, I spent much of the first two weeks of the four week field season on the photographic set-ups necessary to shoot figures at various pictograph sites-- to no avail. I shot Kodak HIE High Speed Infrared film in direct sunlight, experimenting with both a No. 87 Wratten gelatin filter and a No. 25 lens-mounted filter. I used a range of exposure settings for each set-up. Though my attempts did not produce encouraging results, I hasten to add that further work in this vein should be encouraged.

## Observations and Recommendations

I wish to make several observations in addition to those expressed in the research paper appended to this portfolio. The first concerns the "spiral pictograph" (see slides 63-66) adjacent to DhRl 22. Close inspection suggests to me that the pigment used for this "pictograph" came from a spray can. This is evidenced by the hot spots or concentrations of paint at the beginning and end of each paint stroke, paint concentrations which I think result from a brief pause in motion while the spray nozzle was still open. As well, the relative density of the paint layer across each painted line varies from a heavy concentration at the centerpoint and diminishing uniformly toward the outside edges of each line. This feathering is consistent with lines produced by the fan-like spray from a hand-held spray bomb. A definitive conclusion awaits the chemical analysis of a small sample of paint recovered from the spiral figure at the request of Gordon Mohs.

One of the thoughts which lurked in my mind throughout the hours spent cruising from site to site was the potential for damage to the pictographs resulting from an increased public awareness of their existence and location. I noted, for example, that a portion of one of the figures at DhRl 22 (see slide 47) was missing. The foliated rock upon which the pictograph had been painted raises the possibility that the slab was removed from the site after it had sloughed off naturally. Nonetheless, the pictograph is missing, and quite a few other pictographs at this site are painted onto the flat surfaces featured by this foliated rock, offering opportunities for easy removal by potters. Similarly, the "eyes"

featured at DiRk 15 could be removed intact thanks to the natural spalling which has effectively fissured the panel from the parent rock formation (see slides 127 and 128). In view of the ease with which the entire panel could be removed, I suggest that the cultural tour avoid DiRk 15.

### **Acknowledgements**

I doubt that any researcher has achieved success in developing a comprehensive list of all the individuals who have contributed in some manner to a finished product, and I am no exception. Nonetheless, the very act of writing an acknowledgement allows me the opportunity to revisit moments and conversations shared with a number of influential people over the last several months.

University of British Columbia anthropologists Mike Kew and Bruce Miller each provided me with a wealth of insights into the nature of ethnographic research and Coast Salish culture, before, during and after the fieldwork. I had the good fortune of finding lodging for the duration of the fieldwork in the home of Bill and Karen Davis and their young son Willy, and I want to thank them for their hospitality. Sto:lo elders Aggie Victor and Edna Douglas granted me the opportunity to query them on various aspects of rock art, and I thank them for their patience and insights. Obviously, the opportunity to conduct this research at all would not have existed had it not been for the interest expressed by the Sto:lo Tribal Council, in particular, Chief Clarence Penner, and Sto:lo heritage

researchers Gordon Mohs and Sonny McHalsie. Finally, I wish to thank Darwin Douglas for sharing with me some of his thoughts on Sto:lo culture as a lived experience. His wisdom belies his years

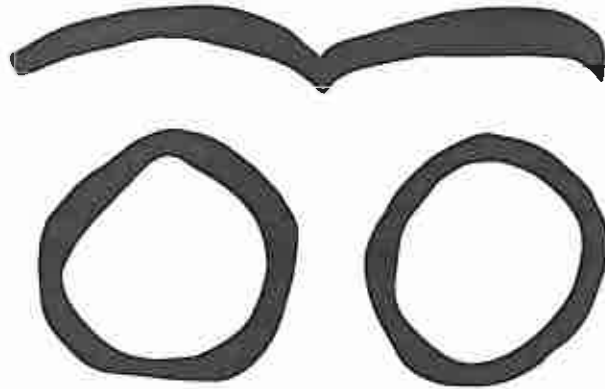
Douglas Brown

The University of British Columbia

1994

# Rock Painting and Place

## A Study of Pictograph Placement In Sto:lo Territory



Doug Brown

The University of British Columbia

21 June 1994

The title page figure is a rendition of the red ochre pictograph found at DhRk 4, a site located on the southwest shore of Echo Island on Harrison Lake, British Columbia.

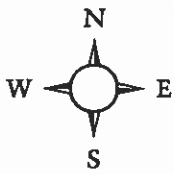
## **Introduction**

There is a leitmotif, a particular event, which has influenced the contents and conclusions of this paper. Under the auspices of the University of British Columbia ethnographic field school, and on the invitation of the Sto:lo Tribal Council, I was afforded the opportunity to investigate 15 pictograph sites located on the foreshore of Harrison Lake and along the Harrison River (Figure 1). Delving into the literature on Northwest Coast rock painting alone could not have provided the insights nor stimulated the questions which developed over the course of my fieldwork. One particular set of questions concerning place and placement advanced to the forefront as I visited one site after another, wondering as I passed apparently ideal locations for rock painting why some venues were chosen over others. Contained in this paper are some personal insights pertaining to the issue of place, placement, and pictographs in a particular area of Sto:lo territory. Yet, heavily influenced though the contents and conclusions of this paper may be by my personal experience, they are embedded within the framework of contemporary understanding regarding Sto:lo cultural patterns. As such, I hope this research makes a contribution to the ongoing discussion regarding rock painting. But perhaps the real test of worth for this research will be the degree to which the ideas I express here are of significance and value to members of the Sto:lo community.

North American archaeologists and anthropologists, trained as scientists, often have been reluctant to apply the principles of objective study to the subjective realm of rock painting (Hill and Hill 1974:17). Such is especially the case for studies of Coast Salish rock painting, given the private nature of knowledge and power prevalent among Coast Salish societies (Suttles 1987:104). With such a reality in mind, I have followed the lead of Alfred Kroeber and directed my efforts toward a "descriptive integration" (1952:63) of Coast Salish

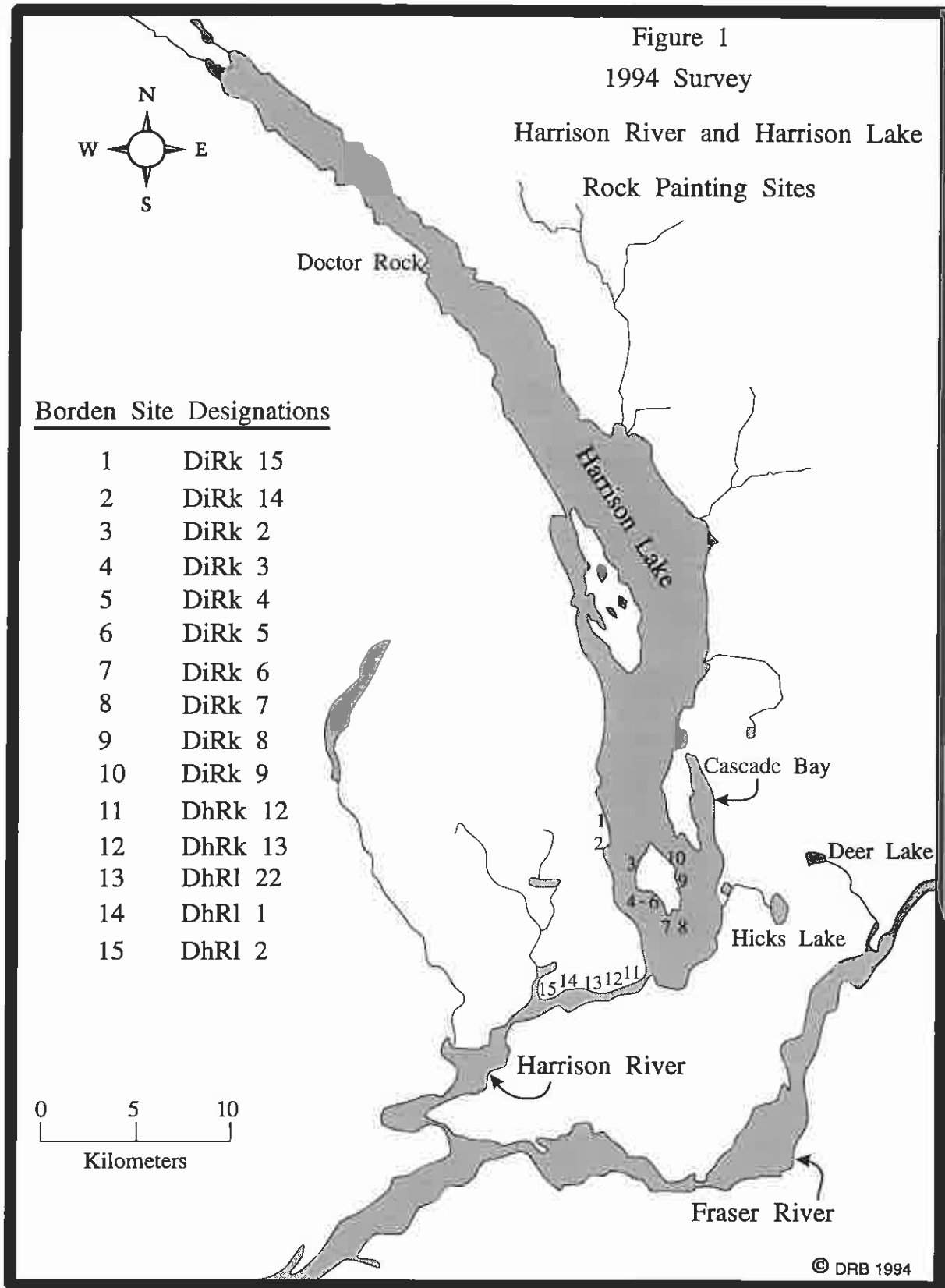
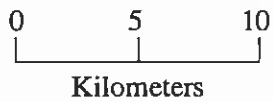
Figure 1  
1994 Survey

Harrison River and Harrison Lake  
Rock Painting Sites



Borden Site Designations

- |    |         |
|----|---------|
| 1  | DiRk 15 |
| 2  | DiRk 14 |
| 3  | DiRk 2  |
| 4  | DiRk 3  |
| 5  | DiRk 4  |
| 6  | DiRk 5  |
| 7  | DiRk 6  |
| 8  | DiRk 7  |
| 9  | DiRk 8  |
| 10 | DiRk 9  |
| 11 | DhRk 12 |
| 12 | DhRk 13 |
| 13 | DhRl 22 |
| 14 | DhRl 1  |
| 15 | DhRl 2  |



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cultural facts and features in order to comment on specific examples of rock painting found in Sto:lo territory.

I begin with a general discussion of the anthropological understanding of the role of rock painting in Coast Salish culture, paying particular attention to the significance of place as an element in the act of cultural expression. I then direct attention to specific examples of rock painting found within the traditional territory of the Sto:lo nation in order to underscore the assertion that, material considerations of what constitutes an appropriate rock painting surface aside, cultural factors concerning, among other things, power and cosmology, influenced the placement of rock paintings . In the first instance, I suggest that the choice by the artist of a particular rock formation which features two salamanders and two anthropomorphic figures was not arbitrary, but rather that the rock formation itself is an integral element in the material expression of a Sto:lo myth, possibly the place where a mythical event was thought to have occurred.

I go on to point out that five pictograph sites located around the southern foreshore of Harrison Lake and the southern and eastern foreshore of Echo Island, sites comprised solely of facial design elements with the emphasis on eyes, may be the material expression of what Jenness refers to as "second sight" (1955:39) or the power of remote vision. I will refer to these sites as the "eye sites", suggesting that the field of vision for each set of painted eyes would have afforded the ritualist/artist the means by which to "see" those who entered the area through the medium of personal spirit power.

## Rock Paintings and Research

Rock paintings are, of course, simply another nexus in the integrated network of Coast Salish culture, so in this section I resort to the use of broad strokes in order to outline some of the current understanding regarding aspects of rock painting pertinent to the discussion to follow. The reader is directed to other sources for further information on Coastal art in general and rock art in particular (Hill and Hill 1974; Holmes 1990; Lundy 1974, 1972), Coast Salish spirituality, mythology and sacred sites (Barnett 1955; Hymes 1990; Jenness 1955; Mohs 1987; Suttles 1987, 1955), and the assignment of purpose and meaning to rock paintings (York et al. 1993; Teit 1900).

Worldwide, rock painting is known to have been practiced for at least 20,000 years (Leroi-Gourhan 1967), and there is no reason to believe that the earliest human inhabitants of the New World did not express themselves symbolically through rock paintings. Humans, according to Jung (1964:232) transform objects or forms into symbols, giving them power and meaning in the minds of their human creators. As such, it is absurd to think that the study of rock painting could be conducted without reference to the manner in which humans embed themselves in a natural and cultural world. For the Sto:lo, as with the Coast Salish generally, it was the activities of *Xa:ls*, a benevolent Transformer Being who travelled through their territory altering and teaching as he went, which define the nature of the world (Duff 1952; Maud 1978). It was *Xa:ls*, for example, who created the relationship between the Sto:lo and salmon by teaching the first Sto:lo to "catch, process, care for, and respect this gift" (Mohs 1987:43). Thus, when activities such as the application of red ochre to petroglyph images of salmon are observed (Hill and Hill 1974:284), or when a priest is said to have coated a stone with red ochre, recited an incantation over it, and then thrown it away in order to destroy a

canoe many miles away (Jenness 1955:38), it becomes clear that rock paintings are composed of much more than merely material elements.

Material though it may be, rock painting is also a form through which the nature of life and power are expressed, giving potency to the collective psyche of people who saw, or rather see, themselves as part of the life force that pervades all of nature. Rock painting is a cultural phenomenon which reflects what Lommel describes as "an intensification of a world view" (quoted in Hill and Hill 1974:289). Given the symbolic and permanent nature of rock painting, it seems unlikely that either the design elements or the location in which they were placed was in any way arbitrary, though Doris Lundy (1974:315), on the basis of an exhaustive study of Northwest Coast rock art sites, remarks that few rock art sites have yielded information regarding the reasons why they were made. Researchers have, however, noted some patterns with respect to rock painting.

According to Lundy, the motive behind their creation probably influenced the placement of pictographs, with most located along the shores of inlets, lakes and rivers on rock faces which "command a view of the area" (1974:251). Unlike petroglyphs, pictographs are not generally associated with old village sites (Lundy 1974:252). Pictographs were apparently intended to last for some time and to be clearly visible to all who passed (ibid). Other pictographs are to be found in much more isolated venues and probably reflect spirit-questing activities (Lundy 1974:252; York et al. 1993). In any case, the places where pictographs were to be found typically were places of power according to Teit, who remarks that, "the mysterious forces or powers of Nature were believed to be in greater abundance and strength" (quoted in York et al. 1993:5) in such places. Old Pierre of Katzie is reported to have said that "solid rocks possess power, perhaps also vitality" (Jenness 1955:37), as did places from which salmon could be called upstream by ritualists with the requisite knowledge

(Barnett 1955:89). Hill and Hill (1974:11) and Lundy (1974:297) suggest that some pictographs were made to mark boundaries and hunting and fishing sites, though as I will discuss further on, viewing such pictographs as merely inert boundary markers may be an over-simplification. However, I want to address first the subject of myth and place.

## Myth

The painted panel at DhRk 12 consists of four elements-- two salamanders (Figure 2), one face, and one anthropomorphic figure depicting a head with detailed facial features joined to a curvilinear pattern which appears to represent a torso, one leg and one arm. All figures are rendered in black and white, which apparently makes them unique among the other known pictographs in the Sto:lo territory, all of which have been rendered in red ochre (Lundy 1974:246). I was able to find few references to the symbolic connotations of either black or white pigments for pictographs among the Coast Salish, and few examples of pictographs of either colour appear to have been produced, discovered, or preserved. The most comprehensive survey of pictographs on the Northwest Coast was conducted by Doris Lundy in the mid-1970s, and she remarks that there are no examples of either black or white pictographs in the Coast Salish territory (1974:246), let alone a panel in which both colours are incorporated into each figure on a single panel. John Corner, in the course of studying Interior pictographs, was told by an Indian informant that "human figures painted in black symbolize death by violence or tragedy" (1968:21). Another, rather mundane, explanation for the pictograph colour combination at DhRk 12 is that black and white are the colours of the Pacific Giant salamander (*Dicamptodon ensatus*), a species indigenous to the area (Whitney 1985:637).



Figure 2. Painted figures adjacent to crevice at DhRk 12. Another salamander figure, not visible in the photo, appears to be entering the crevice.

Up ↑

Darwin Douglas, a Pilault student of Sto:lo culture, showed me this black and white panel and related to me the Sto:lo myth concerning salamander and *Xa:ls*. Franz Boas recorded the following version of the salamander myth as it was recounted to him by Chief George of the Chehalis in 1895:

Quals [*Xa:ls*] walked on and reached a house where there lived an old man with a red face and with red hair on his hands and feet. His name was PetHel (*pítxel*). When Quals arrived, he hid, and Quals journeyed on, he changed into a small snake [lizard or salamander] (with a red belly and a black back) and followed. When Quals pitched camp in the evening the eldest brother sat down, he crawled into his anus. "Ha!" cried Quals, "Are you playing such tricks? Then remain a snake [salamander] and always do this." Ever since then, PetHel has been a small snake [salamander] which always follows people, even into the water, and crawls into their anuses.

Douglas went on to say that salamanders are thought by the Sto:lo to have magical powers, and to be poisonous. It is commonly believed by the Sto:lo, and apparently the Coast Salish in general, that if you were unfortunate enough to see a salamander during the day, it would attempt to follow you home, enter your anus during the night and kill you by eating your heart. Upon seeing a salamander, it was, and probably is, common practice to jump over a fire in order to prevent the salamander from following (see also Mohs 1990, unpaginated manuscript).

I visited DhRk 12 a number of times after the initial visit with Darwin before coming to the realization that the rock formation upon which the panel is painted may be part of the story as well. Indelicate though it may sound, the shape of the rock formation upon which the figures are painted resembles human buttocks, down to the detail of a long horizontal cleft which widens slightly at the midpoint. The impression is of the posterior of a human figure in repose. Interestingly, one of the two salamander figures is positioned so that it appears to be crawling into the rock cleft. It seems plausible to me that the site may have been

perceived to be more than simply a convenient surface for painting. Rather, this location may have represented to the artist and his or her contemporaries the place where the myth of *Xa:ls* and salamander was manifested.

The suggestion that a particular pictograph site represents a mythical manifestation is not extraordinary. Louise Jones (1979:88), in an ethnographic study among the Cree which focused on the rock paintings found along the Nelson River in northern Manitoba, relates that some of the panels are found on landforms thought to be associated with the culture hero *Wisahkicáhk*, or with other mythical beings or events. Suttles (1955:18), in a list of place names in Katzie territory, describes a cave on Pitt Lake as the home of the mythical thunderbird which became the guardian spirit of a Katzie warrior. Lundy (1972:20) suggests the possibility that pictographs located adjacent to this cave may be linked to the myth. The obvious caveat is that even if links can be drawn between oral tradition and material expression, the question of chronology remains (Lundy 1974:308). Yet the issue of order may be a moot point inasmuch as myths "invest the natural world with enriched meaning" (Hymes 1990:595); they "close the world, not through content, but through form" (ibid. 596). Order, it seems, is irrelevant with regard to purpose.

This being the case, perhaps I should be embarrassed to mention that, having obtained permission from the Sto:lo Tribal Council, I removed a few fragments of the black pigment used at Dh Rk 12 in order to have it chemically analyzed. If, as seems likely, the black material is carbon-based, it should be possible to date the pictograph using accelerator mass spectrometry. To do so would represent the first instance of direct dating of a pictograph on the Northwest Coast, and would link instances of oral tradition and material expression along the dimension of time.

## Private Power and Public Place

Five pictograph sites distributed around the southern end of Harrison Lake, DiRk 4, DiRk14, DiRk 15, DiRk 8, and DiRk 9 (Figure 1), are all single-element sites with the emphasis on eyes (see title page and Figure 3). Each site location provides a field of vision which includes an important entry route into the southern Harrison Lake and Harrison River area. The "eyes" of Di Rk 9, for example, gaze across Harrison Lake toward the mouth of Cascade Bay. Darwin Douglas and Sonny McHalsie, the latter a Sto:lo heritage researcher, both told me Cascade Bay was a favoured travel route when the water conditions were particularly bad, a condition which my own experience suggests was probably quite frequent. Canoes could be portaged easily across the narrow isthmus at the head of Cascade Bay.

The "eyes" painted at Di Rk 8 are directed precisely toward the mouth of Trout Lake Creek which drains Hicks Lake. Again, Darwin Douglas informed me that the valley in which the creek flows forms an easy and, in the past, frequently used overland route connecting the lower Harrison Lake area to the Fraser River. This pattern holds for the other three eye sites as well, and is a pattern which suggests to me that each pictograph represents the work of someone who painted the eyes as part of a ritual invoking the power of prophecy, protection, and/or what Jenness refers to as "second sight" (1955:39).

Jenness was told by Old Pierre of Katzie that one could not train for the power of second sight; it was instead held to be a gift granted to some by Him Who Dwells Above. The youngest daughter of Old Pierre is said to have possessed this power to a slight degree inasmuch as she was able to foretell the arrival of visitors (ibid.).



Figure 3. The "eyes" of DiRk 15. Up ↑

Jenness goes on to recount the conduct of one such clairvoyant or *syewe'* as follows:

After covering his face and body with red ochre the *syewe'* chanted the special song that He Who Dwells Above had inspired in him. His power came to him as he chanted and the audience beat time for him with sticks, and he prayed: "O You Who Dwells Above, my power comes from you. Let me See" (1955:39).

Though any claim to an understanding of the precise meaning of the figures found at the eye sites would be ludicrous, there is ethnographic evidence to suggest that rock art was in some instances the material representation of various forms of power such as second sight, prophecy and protection, and that placement would have been a critical consideration. Hill and Hill posit a connection between the "blind eye" petroglyphs found along the Coast and the one-eyed spirit in a Puget Sound Spirit Canoe ceremony in which the spirit is purported to have said "Now look at me! I have only one eye and with it I can see everything" (1974:275).

A priest writing in the late 19th century recorded a rock painting practice among feuding Carrier factions at Stuart Lake who believed that

By painting in such a conspicuous place the totem which had been the object of his dream, the Pintce Indian meant to protect himself against any inhabitant of Na'kraztli, as the intimate connection between himself and his totem could not fail, he believed, by infallible presentiment the coming of any person who passed along the rock adorned with the image of his totem (quoted in York et al. 1993:264-265).

And Teit, with reference to the Interior Salish, remarks that rock paintings of manitous were made in places "overlooking pathes and routes (on land or water), by which enemies might approach" (quoted in Hill and Hill 1974:287).

Suttles writes that among the Coast Salish, "the rites and the designs [of the ritualist] were the property of the individuals, who kept to themselves the knowledge of the ritual words that made them efficacious, but they could be used on behalf of descendants..."

(1987:104). In this sense then, the secrecy surrounding personal power and the stress placed on the ownership of incorporeal property among Coast Salish societies makes it unlikely that the full nature and meaning of symbolic representations were known even to people closely related to a ritualist. Yet at the same time, it seems likely that there would have been a generally received understanding that designs, though covert, were nonetheless manifestations of power which were not to be taken lightly. This idea seems to be borne out in the comment by a Squaxin woman who recalls that as a child growing up in the area of Puget Sound, she was warned constantly by elders not to walk in front of the petroglyph figures of faces carved into a boulder at Agate Point because the images held spiritual power (Hill and Hill 1974:21). In the case of the eye sites on Harrison Lake, the design elements featuring eyes, their placement at strategic vantage points adjacent to travel routes into the area, and several ethnographic examples of relevance, when considered together, lead me to suggest that these sites are the material manifestation of a ritual relating to the powers of second sight, prophecy and/or the protection of local inhabitants from intruders, human or otherwise.

## **Conclusion**

This paper represents a search for patterns which provide opportunities for the descriptive integration of various features of Coast Salish culture, specifically the relationship between rock painting, place and world view. I have operated from the premise that the content of rock painting is not material, but spiritual. Using this angle of vision, I have suggested that the design figures, rock formation and location of a specific rock painting site on the Harrison River represents the manifestation of a Sto:lo myth. I have also put forth the proposition that a series of rock paintings found in the area of lower Harrison Lake, though not produced perhaps by the same individual, exhibit a pattern consistent with evidence on the

nature of indigenous understandings regarding second sight, prophecy and protection. I do not pretend to understand the role of place in terms of the scores of other pictographs found throughout Sto:lo territory. I am certain, however, that place mattered, and the decisions regarding the placement of rock paintings on the landscape were anything but arbitrary.

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## Slide Index

This portfolio contains slides of most of the pictograph figures known to exist around the extreme southern end of Harrison Lake and along the Harrison River. All of the sites illustrated here were visited and recorded in the mid-1970's by S. Lucs, J. May, D. Lundy, C. Oliver and R. Wallace, and I have used their designations in referencing the various pictograph figures. A copy of the site survey forms completed by these researchers is held by the Sto:lo Tribal Council, and interested individuals should refer to those records for further information. Of particular value are the drawings accompanying the site reports. The twenty years between the time the pictographs were drawn and moment I photographed them have not been kind to many of the figures, in some cases making it impossible to distinguish the form and features of the figures without reference to the drawings.

Another copy of this portfolio is housed in the library at the Laboratory of Archaeology in the Museum of Anthropology, the University of British Columbia.

Douglas Brown

The University of British Columbia

1994

## Slide Index

Catalogue Number	Site	Pictograph Figure	Comments
1			View of Harrison River looking west from DhRk 12
2			View of Harrison River looking southwest from DhRl 2
3			Eagle in flight near the mouth of Weaver Creek
4			Tow boat and log boom entering the Harrison River from Harrison Lake
5			Tow boat and log boom entering the Harrison River from Harrison Lake
6			Tow boat and log boom entering the Harrison River from Harrison Lake
7			Darwin Douglas
8			Bald eagle
9			Weaver Creek
10			View looking southwest across Morris Slough from DhRl 2
11			Harrison River near DhRk 12
12	DhRl 1		General view
13	DhRl 1		Photographic setup
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15	DhRl 1	Figure I	

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17	DhRl 2		General view of site
18	DhRl 2		General view of site
19	DhRl 2		Rock shelter at DhRl 2
20	DhRl 2		Rock formation at DhRl 2
21	DhRl 2		View of rock face at DhRl 2
22	DhRl 2		Darwin Douglas at DhRl 2
23	DhRl 2		Photographic setup
24	DhRl 2	Figure C	
25	DhRl 2	Figures E and F	
26	DhRl 2	Figure L	Panel with missing figure
27	DhRl 2	Figure L	Panel with missing figure
28	DhRl 2	Figure O	
29	DhRl 2	Figure O	
30	DhRl 2	Figure O	
31	DhRl 2	Figure O	
32	DhRl 2	Figure G	
33	DhRl 2	Figure I	
34	DhRl 2	Figure I	

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36	DhRl 2	Figure I	
37	DhRl 2	Figure J	
38	DhRl 2	Figure B	Close-up showing spall damage to pictograph
39	DhRl 2	Figure B	
40	DhRl 2		Pictograph on isolated boulder
41	DhRl 2		Pictograph on isolated boulder
42	DhRl 2	Figure H	
43	DhRl 2	Figure H	
44	DhRl 2	Figure H	
45	DhRl 2		Graffiti (?) etched into soot in rock shelter overhang at DhRl 2; text reads "Home of the Morris Town Nishka Tribal Council Meeting Members. Give Us Our Land!!"
46	DhRl 2		Spray-painted graffiti near DhRl 2
47	DhRl 2	Figure L	Panel with missing figure
48	DhRl 22		General view of site
49	DhRl 22		General view of site
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51	DhRl 22	Figure D	

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