Victoria's First Peoples Festival:
Embodying Kwakwaka'wakw History in Presentations of
Music and Dance in Public Spaces

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts

Graduate Program in Musicology and Ethnomusicology
York University
Toronto, Ontario

May 2000

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Abstract

Performances and venues at the First Peoples Festival, an aboriginal arts festival in Victoria, B.C., involve histories of the Kwakwaka'wakw, a Northwest Coast First Nation. This thesis documents different relationships with land that are central to these histories. It has been informed by my fieldwork at 1996, 1998 and 1999 First Peoples Festival performances, interviews with participants in these events and archival research on the festival.

In my thesis, I discuss the histories of two First Peoples Festival performance spaces: the festival's main stage and Wa'waditla, a Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial big house. I consider how the production of performances at and location of the main stage have changed since the festival began in 1985. I explain that initially, festival producers featured indigenous music and dance from throughout North America on the stage. After 1994, they highlighted Kwakwaka'wakw and other First Nations' artforms from the Northwest Coast at the venue. In the past two years, they have also moved the main stage to certain sites because of their historical importance to these nations.

Then, I address festival programming in the big house. I demonstrate that festival producers have included Kwakwaka'wakw artworks from B.C.'s coast in Wa'waditla programs since 1987. Since 1998, they have required festival performers to discuss

Kwakwaka'wakw histories about Wa'waditla during big house presentations. I examine narratives about the house presented by one Kwakwaka'wakw festival performance group, the Kwagiulth Dancers. These artists are based in Victoria and not on their ancestral lands. At Wa'waditla presentations, they explain that the house embodies legends about Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territory and has been a place for Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw artists to practise artforms from this territory.

I also discuss the Kwagiulth Dancers' background, and dances and songs that they share at the festival. I reveal that dance group members have maintained and renewed their connections to their traditional territories through presentations of music and dance. Dances and songs that they perform at the festival symbolize oral histories about Kwakwaka'wakw and other Northwest Coast First Nations' ancestral lands. These Kwakwaka'wakw festival presentations have relevance for various political and legal debates, including Canadian land claims disputes.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to my consultants, who so generously shared their knowledge with me. Special thanks to the Northwest Coast First Nations artists who taught me about potlatch arts and/or talked with me about their participation in the First Peoples Festival: Chief Tony Hunt, Chief Frank Nelson, Freda Shaughnessy, Lou-ann Neel, Kevin Cranmer, William Wasden Jr., Barb Matilpi, Sandra Glendale and Nora Guest (Kwakwaka'wakw), and Douglas Robinson (Nuu-chah-nulth). Thank you to Barbara Hager, Leslie McGarry, Raven August, Kevin Neary and Grant Hollands, who have been involved in producing the festival and taught me about the festival's history. Many of these consultants took time to read my work and offered me valuable suggestions on how I could improve it. I am also grateful to others who encouraged me and critiqued my thesis. Heartfelt thanks to Dr. Beverley Diamond, my thesis supervisor, for her guidance, constant support and insightful comments on my work. I also appreciated help with editing my thesis from one of my thesis committee members, Dr. Mary Bernard, anthropologist Dr. Richard Daly and my father, Joseph Harrison.

I am thankful to different organizations and individuals that allowed me to reprint illustrations, especially Douglas & McIntyre, the Smithsonian Institution, Davenport Maps Ltd., the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, the Times Colonist, Stuart Daniel and Cheryl Coull. Thanks also to Chief Robert Joseph for granting me permission to include a transcription of a Kwakwaka'wakw song in my thesis.

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Introduction

The fire burns straight upwards, billowing smoke and silver flecks of dust through the smokehole's clear-cut, diagonal slice of sunlight. Singer Kevin Cranmer tunes his frame drum at the fire as tourists seat themselves on Wa'waditla's cedar bleachers. Chief Tony Hunt, wearing an elaborate grizzly bear vest and red cedar bark regalia, welcomes his guests to the big house:[1]

> Chief Mungo Martin built this house. An unbroken line of tradition is what you will see today. We are very proud of being able to still carry on what we do. The songs that are being sung are hundreds of years old. An oral tradition is always teaching the next generation. Mungo raised me to carry on the tradition. I am very proud to be able to stand here today as hereditary chief and see the next generation carrying on our traditions. (Kwagiulth Dancers 8 August 1998)

Cranmer and Hunt are members of the Kwagiulth Dancers, a group of Kwakwaka'wakw (or Kwakiutl) musicians and dancers based in Victoria, and not in Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territories (see Figure 1 and 2, pages 3 and 4). They are about to perform at Victoria's First Peoples Festival, which has been produced by Victoria Native Friendship Centre[2] and/or Royal B.C. Museum staffmembers since 1985. It is arguably Canada's largest aboriginal arts festival.

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[1] Big houses are square-shaped buildings made of cedar, which have long hosted the ceremonials of various Northwest Coast First Nations. They feature crest designs that serve as mnemonic devices for families' oral histories. Sewid offers a particularly clear description of crest designs' historical functions (see Sewid 1966).

[2] The Victoria Native Friendship Centre offers various services and programs to over 10,000 indigenous people in Victoria. It belongs to a network of 111 friendship centres in Canada (National Association of Friendship Centres 1998).

Tony Hunt goes on to emphasize that the Kwakwaka'wakw traditions shared at the festival represent only a small portion of a complex series of dances. The Hunt family usually displays these dances in potlatch contexts, over a period of days. The songs, regalia and masks associated with each dance genre signify Northwest Coast First Nations oral histories. In the legal, financial, political and social potlatch system, the rites facilitate the witnessing of a major life event, such as marriage or death, and the subsequent transference of rites. At the First Peoples Festival, these rites assert relationships with land which are integral to Kwakwaka'wakw artistic and oral histories.

This thesis explores how First Peoples Festival performances and performance spaces articulate a Kwakwaka'wakw identity that is deeply connected to land. It aims to demonstrate how Kwakwaka'wakw expressions of place in festival venues and performances correspond to changing social relationships between non-Natives and Northwest Coast First Nations. It also explains how these social relationships and histories about land have influenced the social goals of the festival's producers and Kwakwaka'wakw performers.

Figure 1. Map of approximate locations of Northwest Coast First Nations' traditional territories
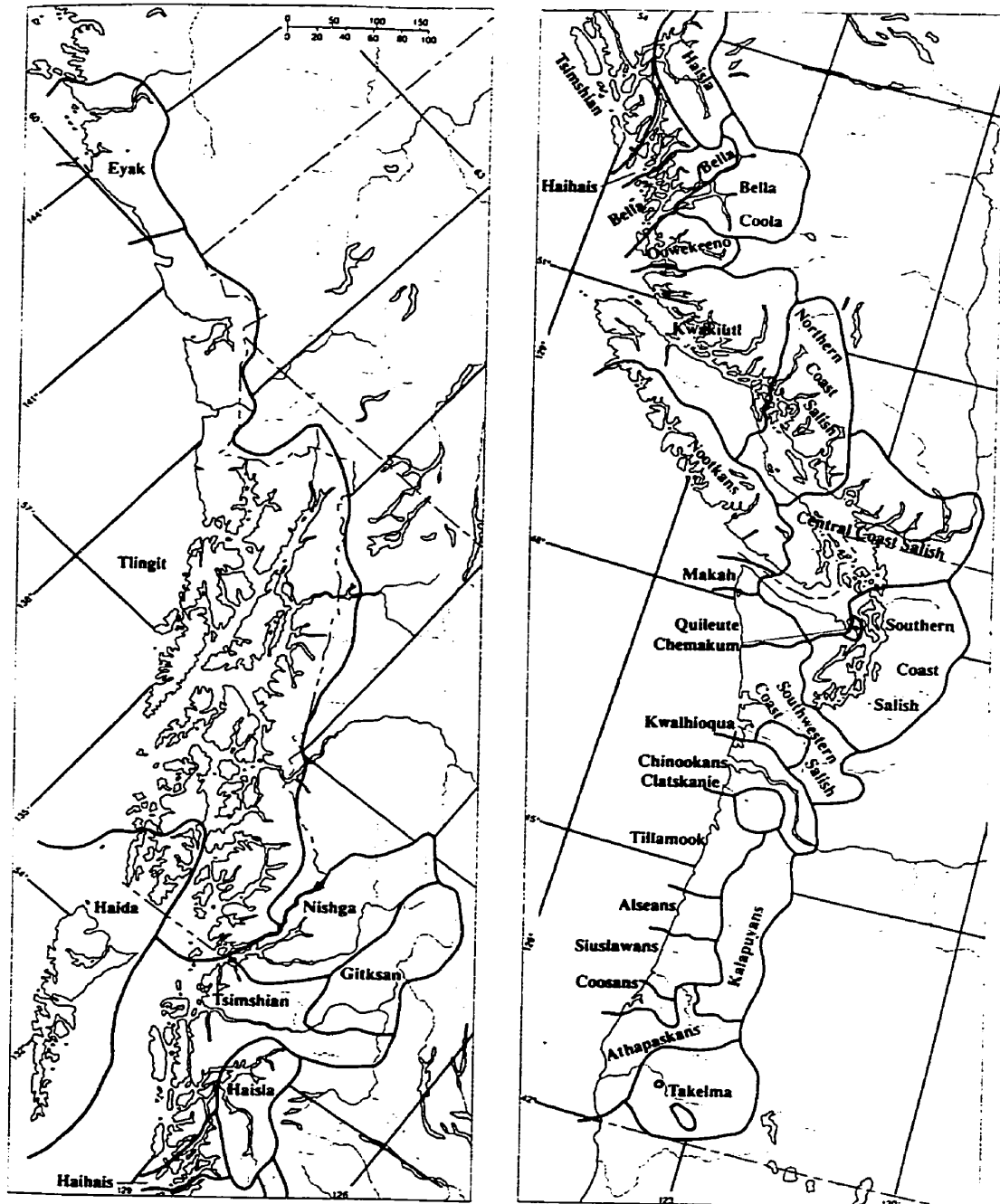
Reprinted, by permission, from Suttles, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians, Northwest Coast*, ix.

Figure 2. Map of Kwakw<u>aka</u>'wakw traditional territories
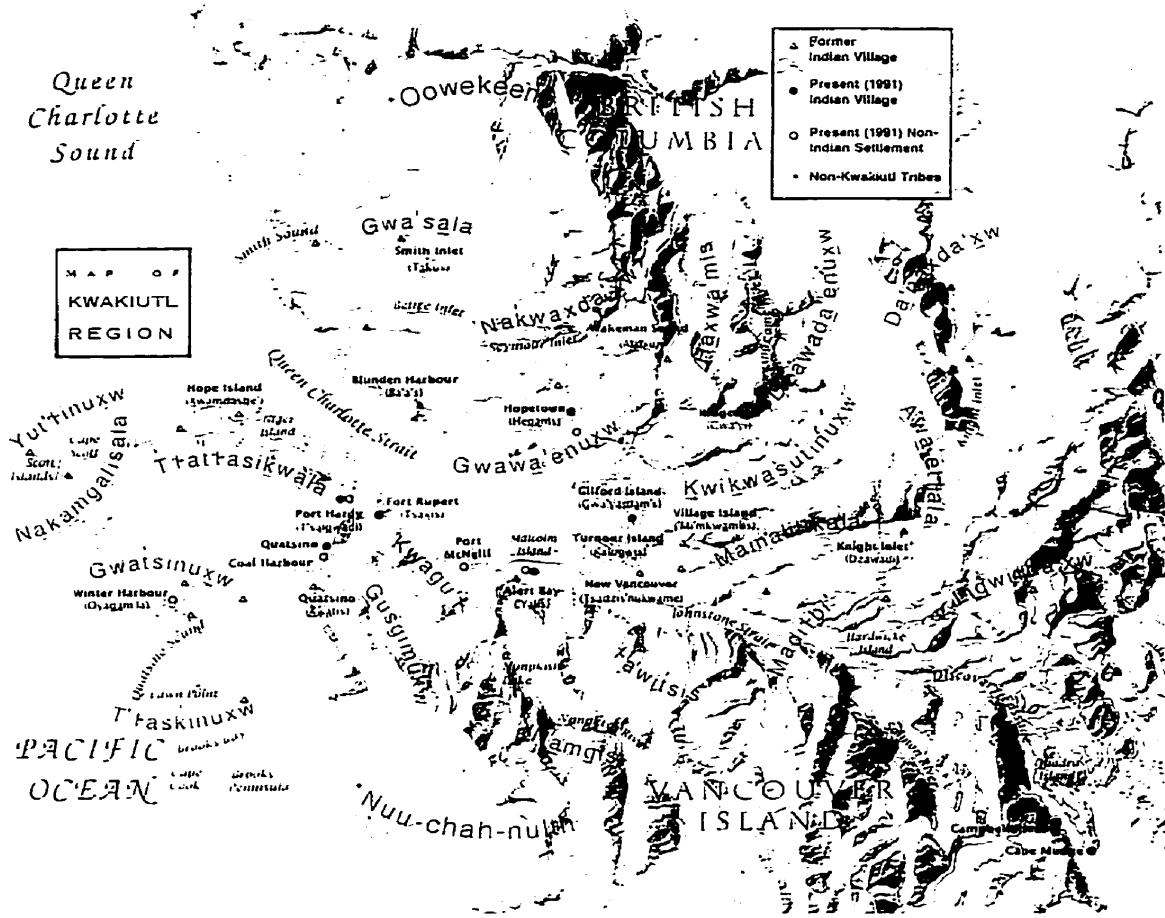
Reprinted, by permission, from Jonaitis, *Chiefly Feasts: The Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch*, 18

My thesis has been informed by my fieldwork at the 1996, 1998 and 1999 First Peoples

Festivals as well as my interviews with festival coordinators and performers, and the

archival materials provided by my consultants. At the 1996 festival, I attended and

documented some B.C. First Nations' presentations at two performance spaces on the

Royal British Columbia Museum grounds: Wa'waditla, the ceremonial house mentioned

above, and the main stage, an outdoor venue. In 1998, I volunteered in the festival's

Artists' Market, an area where First Nations visual artists sold their artworks,[3] and helped

Barbara Hager, then the museum's Aboriginal Liaison Officer, organize the festival's

press conference. I also shot video footage and took photographs of Northwest Coast First

Nations' performances, and sought out audience members' photographic or written

responses to festival shows. During the 1999 festival, I helped set up the festival site each

day, and took video footage and photographs of performances both for my own use and

for the Kwagiulth Urban Society's cultural program.[4] In 1998 and 1999, I interviewed

Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth (or Nootkan) elders and performers involved in

the festival, and spoke with Victoria Native Friendship Centre and provincial museum

employees who have produced the festival. Some of these First Nations artists kindly

shared their ceremonial knowledge and experiences with me. Many of the consultants

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[3] I refer to First Nations artistic creations as artworks and styles as artforms in this thesis because many of my indigenous consultants do so. They identify the works and styles using the language of art gallery and museum practice, which gives them cross-cultural value, as anthropologist James Clifford suggests (see Footnote 16). For a longer discussion of the cultural implications of such terms, see First Nations writers Lou-ann Neel and Dianne Biin's article "By Design" (Neel and Biin 2000, 1-2).

[4] Victoria's Kwagiulth Urban Society is a non-profit organization that provides numerous kinds of support for Kwakwaka'wakw who move from their traditional territory to an urban setting. Lou-ann Neel spearheads the society's cultural program. Later this year, the program will offer singing and regalia-making workshops. I did much of the preliminary archival research for the workshops.

gave me written permission to discuss their interviews in my thesis. Also, certain friendship centre and museum staffmembers allowed me to access their files and videos on previous First Peoples Festivals. When I interviewed Lou-ann Neel on her role in the Kwagiulth Dancers in 1998, she asked me to do some archival research for the Kwagiulth Urban Society. My subsequent research at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Royal B.C. Museum and B.C. Archives on Kwakwaka'wakw art objects and ceremonials further informed my thesis.

My thesis is important because of the ways in which it represents the Northwest Coast First Nations' First Peoples Festival presentations of music and dance. In my thesis, I describe these performances as events that blur the boundaries between insider and outsider, ceremony and staged performance, the authentic and the touristic, and history and entertainment. I explain that Northwest Coast First Nations artists blur the divisions when educating the general public about ceremonial artforms as well as various issues that involve them, such as intellectual property and land issues. In doing this, the performers make their festival presentations much more than just demonstrations of culture, but "tangible forms of social action," as anthropologist Julie Cruikshank calls such events (Cruikshank 1997, 56). These social actions are incredibly significant because they can affect First Peoples Festival audience members' points of view and actions. As anthropologist Noel Dyck points out, the social actions may sway opinions of

sectors of the general public that have power to influence political authorities' decisions (Dyck 1985, 15) on issues raised by the performers.

Many of these performers have told oral histories at festival presentations and shared stories with me in interviews. How I represent these narratives in my thesis is also important. My approach to the talks has been inspired by writings by ethnomusicologists Ida Halpern and Judith Vander. Like Vander in *Shoshone Ghost Dance Religion* (1997) and Halpern in her articles that accompany four Folkways records of Northwest Coast First Nations' songs (1967, 1974, 1981, 1986), I cite and quote First Nations' oral narratives in the same way I do books. I do this because in the indigenous cultures I write about, verbal accounts of events are given as much authority and recognition as written histories are in Eurocanadian cultures. I reflect the equal importance of the two ways of recording past events (in the different cultures) by treating them in the same manner. Similar to Halpern and Vander, I often write heteroglossically. In my thesis, I let my consultants "tell their own stories," as Halpern describes the approach (Halpern 1986, 2). I relate narratives and their meanings as my informants told them, and without interpreting them. I do this partly because like Halpern, I feel strongly that my Native consultants are authorities on their own cultures and should be represented as such (Halpern letter 1981, 297), and also because my consultants encouraged me to document their stories in this way. Also, like both Halpern and Vander, I consider different First Nations artists' statements about the historical significance of performances. I do this in

order to reveal complex layers of meanings that they associate with different songs, dances and visual artworks. Lastly, just as Judith Vander discusses her consultants' comments on song texts because they wanted her to, I too try to respect the wishes of my informants. At my consultants' requests, I do not discuss oral histories that they feel are too sacred or politically sensitive for me to write about in my thesis.

My thesis is ground-breaking in at least several ways. Firstly, it explains in detail how specific dance movements from the two sections of the contemporary Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch, the *t'seka* (red cedar bark ceremony) and *tla'sala* (peace dance ceremony), are coordinated with songs' lyrics, melodies and rhythms. Some writings, such as Franz Boas' *Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians* (1895) and volume 10 of Edward Sheriff Curtis' *The North American Indian* (1915), have examined relationships between Kwakwaka'wakw dance gestures and songs, but not those from both the t'seka and tla'sala. Secondly, this thesis is the first comprehensive discussion of Kwakwaka'wakw participation in a public, Canadian aboriginal arts festival. Some articles, including one written by musicologist John Comfort Fillmore (Fillmore 1893) and another by anthropologist Curtis Hinsley (Hinsley 1991), have addressed Kwakwaka'wakw performances at American fairs, but not Canadian festivals. Thirdly, this thesis discusses connections between music and place that are different from those examined in some other writings. Certain essays, such as those by ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes and social scientist Jody Berland, have explained how certain musics'

meanings have changed when the musics have been dislocated or relocated (see Stokes 1994, Berland 1998). Chapters by ethnomusicologist Steven Feld in *Music Grooves* (1994) and *Senses of Place* (1996) have described how a spatial-acoustic metaphor is embodied in Kaluli music of Papua New Guinea. Unlike these writings, my thesis addresses how music can facilitate the enactment of histories of place. At First Peoples Festival performances, Kwagiulth Dancers act out such narratives when dancing to Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial songs. The narratives suggest that the artists' families have rights to land in Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territories. The dance presentations are examples of the social actions that I described above. During these presentations, Kwagiulth Dancers teach festival audiences about Kwakwaka'wakw land rights by enacting histories of place.

Background

Before reading my thesis, it will be useful for you, as reader, to be familiar with two histories and one term. The first history involves relationships between Victoria's Royal British Columbia Museum and Northwest Coast First Nations. Changes in these relationships have affected First Peoples Festival production and performances in numerous ways. The second history concerns European and Eurocanadians' influence on the Northwest Coast First Nations' potlatch. The ceremony's history is addressed in many First Peoples Festival performances that I discuss. The single term is *portability of rights*.

This term is often used in Canadian land claims negotiations and is relevant to certain First Peoples Festival performances that articulate First Nations' relationships with land.

The Royal B.C. Museum and Northwest Coast First Nations

The Royal B.C. Museum started collecting Northwest Coast First Nations' cultural objects when it was established in 1886 (Corley-Smith 1989, 17-20). Since that time, relationships between the museum and Native groups have changed. Until the 1950s, the institution made contact with indigenous Northwest Coast groups usually only when obtaining cultural objects from them. The museum sent its employees to different communities on B.C.'s coast so that they could purchase or questionably acquire Native art objects and other materials. Royal B.C. Museum staff members gathered these materials because they mistakenly assumed that indigenous Northwest Coast cultures would eventually become extinct either as a result of devastating European-introduced diseases or government assimilationist policies. They wanted to preserve physical evidence of these cultures for posterity. The museum then featured the indigenous Northwest Coast materials in their exhibits and the general public paid to view them. Northwest Coast First Nations generally were never consulted about how their objects were represented in the institution and did not benefit from their display (Neary 4 May 2000).

By the early 1950s, the Royal B.C. Museum began to collaborate with, and employ artists and elders from these nations. The museum started to confer with Northwest Coast First Nations artists and elders when planning exhibits of cultural objects from their nations. Chief Mungo Martin (Kwakwaka'wakw), whom I mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, advised the institution on how to represent Kwakwaka'wakw art objects in its exhibits. The museum started to commission indigenous Northwest Coast artists like Martin to create visual artworks, such as totem poles and masks, for these exhibits. Also, the museum began to hire Northwest Coast Natives to present music and dance in and near their exhibits. Martin's family was hired by B.C.'s provincial museum to share dances and songs at events there, such as the opening of the big house referenced above, Wa'waditla (see McGarry interview 1999).

Over time, relationships between the Royal B.C. Museum and Northwest Coast First Nations changed further. By the 1980s, the museum treated Northwest Coast Natives less as consultants or employees who could enhance museum exhibits or public programs, and more as partners in the production of such events. Also, it began to repatriate Northwest Coast First Nations cultural materials that had been unscrupulously collected to their nations of origin. During the 1990s, B.C.'s provincial museum carried this repatriation approach even further and encouraged Northwest Coast First Nations to produce certain museum events that involved them on their own. The museum no longer commissioned Northwest Coast First Nations artists to carve totem poles, but urged these

nations to organize carving demonstrations by their artists at the museum. It also arranged for Northwest Coast Natives to administer their own performances of music and dance at the museum, such as those at the First Peoples Festival. The Royal B.C. Museum gave Northwest Coast First Nations control over how they were represented in certain events at the museums by letting them produce the functions, and allowed them to keep most profits from these events (see Hollands 1998, Neary 1998).

The Potlatch

Just as the collaboration between Canadian museums and Northwest Coast First Nations influenced how these nations were represented in museum exhibits, relationships between European colonizers and the indigenous groups affected their potlatches in various ways. Shortly after contact, in the 1770s and '80s, trade relationships between colonizers and Northwest Coast Natives allowed the types of materials used in potlatches to change. Before the late 1700s, the First Nations created art objects used and gifts given away at potlatches from materials indigenous to the Northwest Coast. After that time, the Natives made the artworks using materials that they acquired from the Europeans through trade (see Cranmer Webster 1992, 27). Northwest Coast First Nations potlatch hosts gave goods that they had obtained through trade to guests at their ceremonials (see Piddocke 1965, 245).

In the 1860s, European military attacks on Northwest Coast First Nations prompted the Kwakwaka'wakw in particular to potlatch more often than ever before. According to ethnohistorian Gail Ringel, some of the attacks were launched by British naval gunboats in order to stop Northwest Coast indigenous groups from warring with one another (Ringel 1979, 354). They were successful in this regard. Some anthropologists and Kwakwaka'wakw artists have observed that when Kwakwaka'wakw chiefs no longer competed with each other in warfare, they competed though potlatching. One chief could outdo a second chief by holding potlatches more often than the second leader did (see Codere 1950, 118-25).

In 1884, the Canadian government passed legislation that banned Northwest Coast First Nations potlatches in an attempt to force these nations to assimilate into Eurocanadian society (Cole and Chaikin 1990, 14-24). The legislation was included in section 149, chapter 81 of the Indian Act, and declared "every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the 'Potlatch' . . . guilty of a misdemeanour" (La Violette 1961, 43). The ban was enforced by government workers called Indian Agents who lived in Native communities on B.C.'s coast. When Northwest Coast Natives participated in potlatches, the agents arrested them and/or confiscated their ceremonial art objects. For example, twenty-two Kwakwaka'wakw who attended a 1921 potlatch held by Chief Dan Cranmer, the grandfather of singer Kevin Cranmer, were arrested by Indian Agent William Halliday and served jail terms at Oakala Prison near

Vancouver. Other Kwakwaka'wakw families who came to this potlatch had to give their masks, rattles and other ceremonial items to Halliday, who then sent or sold them to museums (Klan 1981). The anti-potlatch legislation had the opposite effect on potlatches than the naval gunboat attacks. The prohibition forced Northwest Coast indigenous groups to hold potlatches less frequently. When the First Nations did celebrate potlatches, they did so in remote locations, far away from Indian Agents, and in secret (see Cranmer Webster 1992, 34). Because potlatches were rarely held, some ceremonial artforms fell into disuse (Neel 1998). The potlatch prohibition lasted until 1951, and had a significant impact on the ceremonial lives of many Northwest Coast First Nations First Peoples Festival participants and their families.

Since the Canadian government ended the potlatch ban, Northwest Coast indigenous groups have potlatched more often. They have revived potlatch song and dance genres, and visual art styles that were not used during the prohibition, and have developed them in various ways. Northwest Coast First Nations have also have presented potlatch arts at public events in Canada, such as the First Peoples Festival.

Portability of Rights

"Portability of rights" is short for "portability of aboriginal rights." The phrase expresses the idea that First Nations maintain their aboriginal rights when they do not live on their

ancestral lands. Anthropologist Michael Asch writes that "aboriginal rights," as the term

appears in Canada's constitution, "refers to (1) matters of ownership such as property

rights, land title, or rights to use the land and its resources for certain purposes; and/or (2)

a corpus of human or constitutional rights, which can include the rights to political self-

determination for the aboriginal peoples of Canada" (Asch 1988, 7). So, "portability of

rights" concerns Canadian indigenous groups' rights to own and use land in, and/or

participate in aboriginal governments in their traditional territories. In land claims

negotiations, "portability of rights" generally refers to rights that First Nations' have to

land in their traditional territories when they do not live there.

During many First Peoples Festival performances, Northwest Coast First Nations and

especially Kwakwaka'wakw artists who do not live in their traditional territories present

oral histories about these territories. In my thesis, I demonstrate that when they do this,

they are suggesting that they have portable rights to the lands.

I have divided my thesis into two sections of two chapters each. The first section, entitled

"Space and its Meanings," considers what the festival's main stage and big house

performance venues mean to the First Nations and non-Native communities involved in

their production and use. Chapter 1 investigates how changes in main stage location and

programming reflect the political and social objectives of Victoria Native Friendship

Centre and/or Royal B.C. Museum festival administrators. It is a historical reconstruction

of the First Peoples Festival that examines how the museum's transfer of administrative power to Northwest Coast First Nations encouraged Leslie McGarry, a Kwakw̱aka'wakw administrator, to articulate local First Nations' land and social issues at the main stage. Chapter 2 describes how the festival's use of Wa'waditla reinforces the big house's importance to the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation as a statement against government assimilationist tactics, and an embodiment of relationships with land in hereditary rites. The second section of my thesis, "Movement and Sound," considers the importance of performing certain dances and songs at the First Peoples Festival to some members of the Kwagiulth Dancers, a Kwakwaka'wakw dance group. In Chapter 3, I document the history of the Kwagiulth Dancers and discuss what performing at the festival means to Kwakwaka'wakw artists who do not live in their traditional territory. The final chapter features my analyses of some dances and songs that the Kwagiulth Dancers share at the festival, and my thoughts on what these analyses might indicate about Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community's social relationships with other nations and connections to land. In conclusion, I summarize the meanings of the festival's main stage and big house venues, and Kwakwaka'wakw performances, then consider their wider implications for Northwest Coast First Nations' land issues and relations with Eurocanadians.

I. Space and its Meanings

Producing the First Peoples Festival is a process of social interaction and negotiation among various First Nations and non-Native communities and institutions. Together, they strive to create festival spaces that at once celebrate First Nations cultures and educate the general public. Since the First Peoples Festival began in 1985, the number of groups and establishments that take part in festival production and the degree to which they are involved has changed, directly affecting articulations of social relationships and statements about indigenous connections to land prominent in the site layout. The Victoria Native Friendship Centre employees who started the festival have joined forces with the Royal British Columbia Museum, the festival's varied "volunteer community," the B.C. Legislature and numerous sponsors, making not only the festival's production process, but also its physical results and political implications complex.

Over the past 15 years, communities and institutions involved in festival production have developed the initial concept of the festival and the event's administrative guidelines (Neary 1998) in ways that have consistently privileged indigenous expressions of place. Canoe rides in Victoria's Inner Harbour (1987-1996), for example, have included lectures on pre- and early contact Coast Salish uses and names for the area, imbuing a now clearly non-Native, tourism-driven locale with First Nations' oral histories (Speech for Harbour Tours [1996]). Similarly, First Nations storytelling that relates either

mythological (*This Week* [Victoria], - August 1990) or politicized connections to land (Harris and Dixon 1994) has happened in spaces largely administered by non-Natives, such as the museum's First Peoples Gallery or the Carving Studio, the Thunderbird Park workshop that serves as a living exhibit during summer museum hours, complete with chains separating artists from onlookers. Spaces that have facilitated the sharing of dances and songs have alternatively expressed interests of both their First Nations and non-Native creators, and articulated historical relationships between places and communities through their moveability or fixedness as venues. All of these cultural performance spaces and festival events have, however, conveyed First Nations and non-Native histories of place. Many of these narratives pose challenges to essentializations made by the general public about the effects of colonialism on indigenous cultures and relationships with land.

Narratives conveyed in and by festival spaces, although they relate to several nations, have special significance for Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community because of its consistent involvement in the festival and ties to the present festival site that reach back at least to the 1950s. Kwakwaka'wakw families constructed and own Wa'waditla, the big house used during the festival, established the Thunderbird Park carving program featured during the festival and created many of the totem poles that stand on the Royal British Columbia Museum festival site. Many decisions about First Peoples Festival organization have also been made by Kwakwaka'wakw community members. These

decisions range from the movement of the main stage to the parliament lawns to the pragmatics of which families will supply the fish for the salmon barbecue. Intense Kwakwaka'wakw involvement in festival production and on the festival site historically has manufactured performance spaces that embody changing social relationships between government institutions and Northwest Coast First Nations.

This section is divided into two chapters that focus on two different First Peoples Festival venues, and the social relationships and connections to land that have been embodied in them. In the first chapter, I discuss the festival's main stage. I explain that changes in both main stage production and location have reflected changing social relationships between Victoria Native Friendship Centre and Royal B.C. Museum employees and have emphasized different relationships with land. In the second chapter, I concentrate on Wa'waditla. I describe how festival programming in this big house developed as relationships between friendship centre and museum staff changed, and recount histories of place that the Kwagiulth Dancers, a Kwakwaka'wakw dance group from Victoria, associate with the house. While *Space and its Meanings* addresses social relationships and histories of place that involve Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community, the next section of my thesis examines how the Kwagiulth Dancers express such relationships and histories through presentations of music and dance at the two festival venues.

Chapter 1

Moving the Main Stage: An Administrative History of the Festival

The influence of First Nations/non-Native social relationships on festival production is particularly apparent in the movement of the main performance space from Sooke and Fernwood to the Royal B.C. Museum to the B.C. Legislature lawns and back to the Royal B.C. Museum (see Figures 3-5 on pages 21-23). I think that each shift in main stage location corresponds to four distinct phases in the festival's administrative history that can be characterized by the presence or absence of museum partnerships. In this chapter, I examine several issues: (a) how social relationships at an organizational level have affected main stage production; (b) how social concerns have influenced administrators or performers' decisions about festival production; and (c) what changes in main stage production might indicate about this festival in particular and relationships between government institutions and First Nations at large. I also consider certain relationships with land that have been highlighted through main stage production at different points in the festival's history. I have devoted one section of this chapter to each of the four main stage locations mentioned above, so that I can discuss these connections to land as well as the transformations of social relationships involved in festival production and their implications in some detail.

Figure 3. First Peoples Festival main stage locations
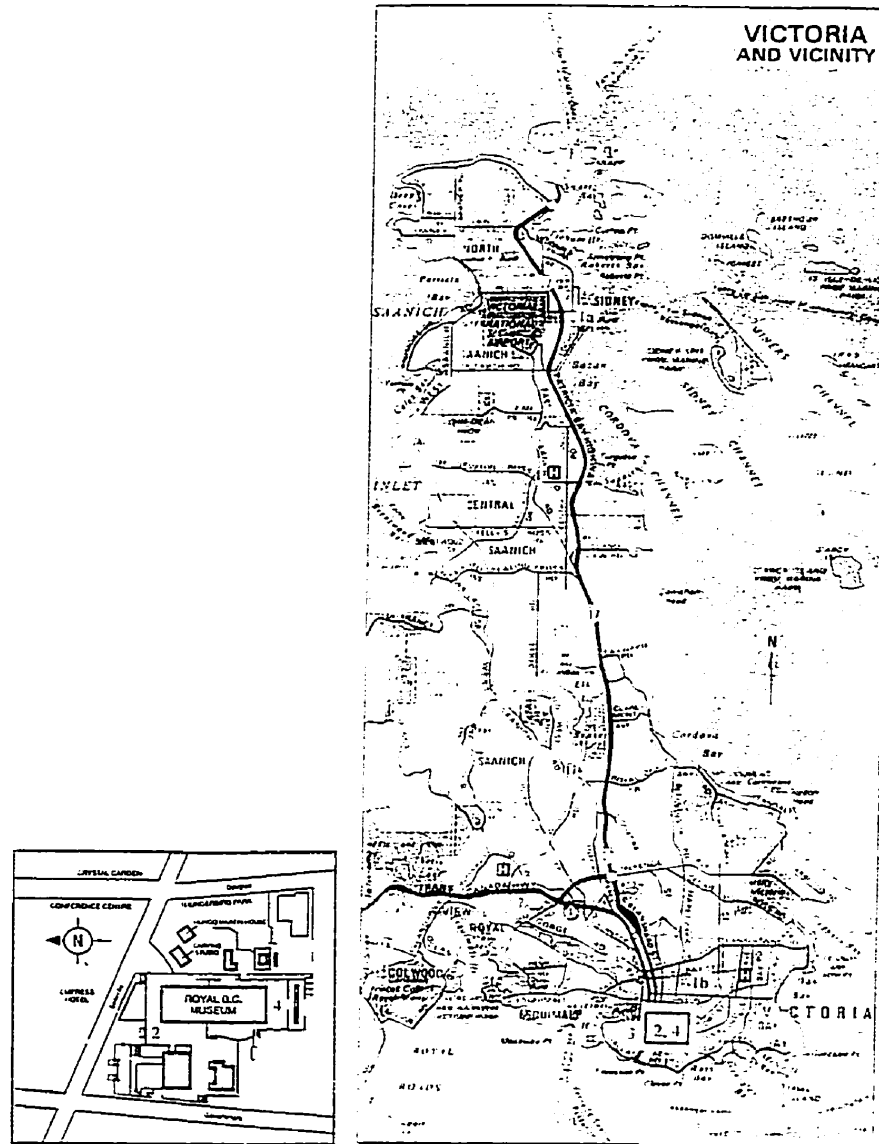
Inset courtesy of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre; Map courtesy of Davenport Maps Ltd.

1a. 1985-1986 Victoria Native Friendship Centre princess pageant float at Sidney Days (no photo available)
1b. 1985-1986 Spring Ridge Square performance space in Fernwood (no photo available)
2. 1987-1994, 1996-1997, 1999 Belleville site stage (no photo available)
3. 1998 Legislature Lawn stage
4. 1999 Newcombe Courtyard stage

Figure 4. The Nuu-chah-nulth group Dancing Spirit present a Paddle Song and Dance on the 1998 legislature lawn stage.

Photo by Rosanne Sullivan

Figure 5. The Kwagiulth Dancers, led by Kwakwaka'wakw chief Frank Nelson (singer, far left), share a Women's Dance at the 1999 Newcombe Courtyard stage.

Photo by author

Beginnings in Fernwood

On B.C. Day long weekends in 1985 and 1986, groups of 40-50 people gathered in Spring Ridge Square next to the Belfry Theatre (Cranmer 1998) and near the Victoria Native Friendship Centre's Gladstone Office in Victoria's Fernwood neighbourhood in order to "increase . . . public awareness of First Nations' images" (Victoria Native Friendship Centre festival program 1994, 3, 31). These small festivals emphasized the need for Northwest Coast First Nations "to get involved with the [non-Native] community and for the community to see [the First Nations] in a different light [and not as] just a group with social and political problems" (Victoria Native Friendship Centre festival program 1994, 3). The first festivals involved three tables at which some Island Nations artists, several cooks and a tarot card reader marketed their talents, outdoor powwow dance group performances, an indoor theatrical presentation, a barbecue at which passers-by could purchase plates of the Island Nations' favourite foods, and a parade float and modeling competition for pageant princesses (*Monday Magazine* [Victoria], 31 July - 6 August 1985, Neel 1998). Fernwood festivals featured traditions from Europe, such as fortune telling, dances and songs performed by indigenous groups throughout North America, and visual art, theatre and food created by First Nations from Vancouver Island. By showcasing cultural expressions from various parts of the northern hemisphere, friendship centre staff hoped to facilitate communication between non-Natives and First Nations, and increase non-Natives' respect for indigenous cultures.

Fernwood festival participants that I interviewed told me that few non-Natives attended the first two festivals, however, because they were not well advertised. These consultants said that even though the Fernwood festivals were supposed to be cross-cultural educational events, they were in actuality celebrations organized and largely enjoyed by indigenous people from Vancouver Island (Glendale 1999, Neel 1998, Shaughnessy and Matilpi 1998). Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish Victoria Native Friendship Centre employees coordinated Fernwood festival events. During the Fernwood festivals, Island Nations community members shared or exchanged goods and privileges amongst themselves. Kwakwaka'wakw artists who participated in the 1985 festival, for example, bought each others' artworks and gave away the massive amounts of food not sold due to the festival's small size at a Kwakwaka'wakw T-Bird Recreation and Cultural Association soccer club dance (Neel 1998).

Even though the Fernwood First Peoples Festivals may not have completely realized their cross-cultural educational objectives, they did succeed in opening up venues for intertribal and intercultural displays of First Nations cultural elements. These displays had been inspired by Northwest Coast First Nations friendship centre employees' participation in a B.C. public school Native Awareness program which promoted pride in and respect for indigenous cultures (Victoria Native Friendship Centre festival program 1994, 3, Neel 1998). Motivation for showing First Nations' arts in a public setting also

stemmed from the lack of any regularly scheduled, public indigenous event in the Victoria area at that time (Hollands 1998).

At the Fernwood festivals, demonstrations of First Nations traditions happened at two outdoor performance spaces: one on a float in a Sidney parade and a second in a corner of Spring Ridge Square. On the parade float in Sidney, Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish pageant contestants would wear their regalia before modeling clothes from Victoria merchants in the Belfry Theatre (Glendale 1999);[5] in the little square outside the Belfry, a powwow dance group, such as the Big Eagle War Dance Club[6] would share its repertoire (*Monday Magazine* [Victoria], 31 July - 6 August 1985). While the powwow dance group performances set a precedent for the presentation of musical genres that did not originate on the Northwest Coast, the pageant float established a main display area for regalia indigenous to Northwest Coast First Nations' traditional territories.

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[5] The festival's princess pageant was created by Robin Cooper, a Tsawout (Coast Salish) model who worked for the friendship centre (Neel 5 July 1999). Cooper personally found that modeling boosted her self-esteem, and her goal for the princess pageant's modeling competition was to improve indigenous festival participants' self-images (Glendale 1999).

[6] The Big Eagle War Dance Club was the first powwow group in Greater Victoria and on Vancouver Island. It was started and led by the late Tommy Paul, a well-respected Hul'qumi'num (Coast Salish) singer (Arnett 2000).

The Provincial Museum's Belleville Site

When Kevin Neary, an anthropologist employed by the Royal British Columbia Museum, attended one of the Fernwood festivals, he immediately saw that public displays of Northwest Coast First Nations traditions would fit in well with the museum's public programming. If the First Peoples Festival took place at the museum, people who visited museum exhibits could experience the vitality of local First Nations cultures in addition to viewing more static displays, such as masks or regalia locked up in glass cases. So, with the support of Kwakwaka'wakw political leader Alec Nelson, Kevin Neary proposed that the Royal B.C. Museum and Victoria Native Friendship Centre produce the festival together, developing the event in ways that would benefit both organizations (Neary 1998). Neary and Nelson succeeded in moving the 1987 festival to the Royal B.C. Museum so that the "celebration of friendship and understanding" (*Monday Magazine* [Victoria], 30 July - 5 August 1987) could attract greater numbers of people and expand its scope.

This partnership between museum and First Nations organizations, however, was fraught with much distrust in both communities (Neary 1998). According to Kevin Neary, this distrust stemmed from the fact that at that time, the Royal B.C. Museum had control of First Nations artifacts as well as representations of indigenous cultures and histories in its exhibits, and First Nations wanted to obtain this control (Neary 20 February 2000). Because of concerns about Eurocanadian/First Nations power relations, the museum

"took the reins" of the festival only for the first few years and then gradually turned the event over to the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. In an effort to avoid liberal paternalism,[7] the museum eventually ceased to train First Nations administrators, donate government funds or provide other organizational support for the First Peoples Festival. Kevin Neary described this process as "a very conscious effort" on the part of the museum staff, which would "back off . . . if [festival producers demonstrated adequate] skills, talents and competence, [and] maintain[ed] certain standards of performance and presentation" (Neary 1998).

While tensions between this museum's self-consciousness and Northwest Coast First Nations' ideas about self-representation prompted administrative restructuring, they also caused social concerns to manifest themselves more intensely in festival production on the museum site than in Fernwood. The Fernwood festival's princess pageant, for example, underwent multiple transformations after 1987 in response to gender equality challenges and problems with stereotyping "Indianness." Once the festival moved to the museum, administrators asked pageant entrants to demonstrate their artistic abilities as well as model ceremonial regalia so that the pageant's format would resemble that of a talent contest and no longer reinforce the "Indian princess" stereotype. This Northwest Coast First Nations "star search" expanded into a "cultural showcase" in 1992 that included both a Mr. and Miss Victoria Native Friendship Centre in attempt to reflect

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[7] The term liberal paternalism generally refers to certain treatment of First Nations by some non-Natives. Like benevolent parents, such non-Natives give First Nations opportunity or benefit, but no real agency.

complementary gender roles in ceremonial contexts more accurately. Still, the gulf

between First Nations' value systems and Eurocanadian modes of presentation created

problems with intercultural translation and encouraged festival administration to replace

the "pageants" with "fashion shows" (Neel 1998). Standards of music and dance

implemented in Island Nations potlatches with penalties or fines (Hunt, George 1998),

and important to pageant competition juries held little interest for non-Native festival

audiences. Contemporary northern formline[8] textiles featured in fashion shows, on the

other hand, could be bought and worn by anyone. In the museum context, festival

displays largely focussed on fabric arts changed from being literal "pageants" or

"spectacular procession[s] . . . illustrating historical events" (Allen 1990, 855), from First

Nations' viewpoints within Eurocanadian beauty or talent show frameworks to being

more interculturally translatable and accessible fashion shows.

A general trend of valuing "performance frames" over "exhibition frames" also emerges

in presentations derived from the Fernwood First Peoples Festival's pageants, especially

in light of the absence of pageants or evening fashion shows at the 1995, 1996, 1998 and

1999 festivals. If we accept Bauman and Sawin's definitions of "exhibition frames" as

meaning formats which emphasize products or objects and "performance frames" as

denoting presentations focussed on process as much as or more than product (Bauman

and Sawin 1991, 297), we see festival producers' gradual preference of multi-media

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These actions are usually taken in the name of social justice.

performance frames and the "dancing" of regalia over relatively static exhibition frames for regalia. As Kirschenblatt-Gimblett has pointed out, these two display mechanisms carry different historical connotations in museology: display frames originated from zoological exhibits and performance frames have been associated with human theatrical presentations (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 42). It makes sense, then, that as festival producers thought more about the implications of displaying people, they chose to use performance frames rather than display frames. The pageant which exhibited princesses on parade floats outside of the museum context was not only the inspiration for Northwest Coast First Nations performances at the museum's main stage, but also transformed into a performance event itself once it moved to the Royal B.C. Museum site.

In contrast to pageants or fashion shows inside of the museum whose transformations primarily resulted from social concerns with modes of display, main stage programming at the museum site related most directly to changes in the festival's organizational partnerships. During the Victoria Native Friendship Centre and Royal B.C. Museum's first five years of collaboration, outdoor cultural performances resembled those at the Fernwood festivals: they did not make use of a stage, and only featured a dance group from Greater Victoria which presented musical genres that are not indigenous to the Northwest Coast and are performed by many First Nations throughout North America. At

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[8] Northern formlines are "linelike . . . design units" created by northern Northwest Coast First Nations artists. The formlines vary in width and delineate figures in larger designs (Holm 1965, 29).

the 1990 and 1991 First Peoples Festivals, for example, the Saanich Thunderbird Singers shared their 10-song powwow repertoire learned under Chief Hummingbird, the late Leonard Paul, at various locations in the museum courtyard (*Times-Colonist* [Victoria], 5 August 1990). Expansion of the festival's First Nations performance events happened not at the museum's Belleville site, but inside Thunderbird Park's big house.

When the museum completely withdrew funding in 1992, Krystal Cook, the festival's Kwakwaka'wakw director, set up a main stage in the museum's courtyard and hired "contemporary" indigenous musicians to perform there (Cook 1992). Several of the musicians, Ed Tatoosh (Nuu-chah-nulth), Rick Patterson (Nuu-chah-nulth) and Willie Thrasher (Inuit), were based on the Pacific Northwest Coast. These artists conveyed indigenous messages with music rooted in mainstream, popular traditions. For example, Patterson, who came from Vancouver Island's west coast, performed the music from his MuchMusic video hit "The Message is Clear" (*Times-Colonist* [Victoria], 8 August 1992). Thrasher, who lived in Vancouver, played guitar while singing about the revival of Inuit identity in Nunavut following the termination of residential schools (*Times-Colonist* [Victoria], 9 August 1992). These main stage presentations, like outdoor shows at the Fernwood festivals, featured some musicians who lived on B.C.'s coast and performed musical styles common to many indigenous groups in North America.

Cook's 1992 main stage festival programming promoted "contemporary" musical expressions of indigeneity, and kept them very separate from more "traditional" songs shared by Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish musicians in Wa'waditla or at that year's Canoe Welcome in Victoria's Inner Harbour (Victoria Native Friendship Centre 1992). Even though the Royal B.C. Museum ceased to support the festival financially and festival administration had to turn to the Native Participation Committee of the 1994 Commonwealth Games for funding from 1991-1993, main stage programming still reflected some precedents set in Fernwood and reinforced by museum administration. Like at the Fernwood festivals, "contemporary" art forms indicative of non-Native social relationships or artistic styles, and "traditional" art forms preserved through oral tradition by Northwest Coast First Nations were distinguished in spatial terms.

As First Peoples Festival administrators sought additional sponsorship from other government organizations, various foundations and crown corporations in 1993 and 1994, main stage programming accommodated new festival themes which were set by the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. While 1993 main stage presentations celebrated indigenous traditions from throughout North America in honour of the United Nations' International Year of Indigenous Peoples, 1994 performances "highlight[ed] traditional Aboriginal family values and traditions" (Victoria Native Friendship Centre press release 1994) in ways respectful of the United Nations' International Year of the Family.[9] Groups

performing on the 1993 museum courtyard stage hailed from as far away as Inuvik (Inuvialuit Dancers and Drummers) and New Zealand (Tepouwhaikaro Maori Dancers), and as nearby as Greater Vancouver (Stamesh Seagoing Society). The 1994 main stage, on the other hand, primarily featured family groups from Nunavut, such as the Iqaluit Throat Singers, and British Columbia, such as the Le-la-la Dance Society, Sookenai Singers and Saanich Thunderbird Club. Through diverse and geographically far-reaching programming appropriate for selected themes, festival director Barbara Hager, a Canadian Métis-Cree arts administrator from New York, increased festival attendance from 25-30,000 from 1990-1992 to 40-50,000 in 1993-1994 (*Times-Colonist* [Victoria], 8 August 1992, 6 July 1994, 7 August 1994).

The festival's development from a medium-sized cultural eco-tourism[10] event (funded by the Royal B.C. Museum, ticket sales and government employment grants) into a large-scale First Nations arts festival sponsored by a variety of different groups gave festival administrators greater freedom when programming shows on the main stage. This increased independence allowed Hager to feature "traditional" indigenous dance and song on the main stage for the first time. Hager also carried over "contemporary" indigenous musical expressions from the Cook administration, and kept the powwow dancing and

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[9] Barbara Hager used these United Nations themes at the First Peoples Festival not for philosophical or financial reasons, but simply because they helped unify festival programming. Hager had learned to organize events around the U.N.'s yearly themes when she worked as Director of Special Programs for the Art Commission of the City of New York in the late 1980s (Hager 1999).

singing characteristic of the Fernwood festivals an important part of the programming, as demonstrated by B.C.'s interior's Nicola Valley Night Hawks (1993, 1994) and Greater Victoria's Saanich Thunderbird Club's (1994) shows. At the 1993 festival, "traditional" dances and songs, or genres that had been passed down orally since time immemorial, were shared by main stage artists who were not from the Pacific Northwest Coast, such as New Zealand's Tepouwhaikaro Maori Dancers (1993). In 1994, traditional music and dance was performed at the festival's main stage by artists both from B.C.'s coast, and from other places in Canada. Nunavut's Iqaluit Throat Singers, for example, demonstrated an Inuit vocal game in which they mimicked the whines of husky puppies and a member of Vancouver Island's Le-la-la Dance Society danced a Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial bear mask (Harris and Dixon 1994). At both of these festivals, Hager also facilitated all three Island Nations' musical participation in the festival's traditional canoe welcoming ceremonies on downtown Victoria's waterfront. So, Hager scheduled performances of traditional music and dance indigenous to the Northwest Coast and to other parts of the world at different outdoor venues in 1993, but not in 1994. In 1994, she arranged for First Nations ceremonial dances and songs from B.C.'s coast to be performed both on the waterfront and at the main stage.

In 1995, Barbara Hager accepted the Royal B.C. Museum's Aboriginal Liaison position and Leslie McGarry, a Kwakwaka'wakw administrator, became the new First Peoples

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[10] Barry Parker, who served as president of the Canadian National Aboriginal Tourism Association, defines cultural eco-tourism as a form of tourism that involves cultural expressions and has minimal impact on

Festival director. That year, the festival featured no main stage due to the construction of an Imax theatre on site (Neary 1998), and promoted Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish performances in Wa'waditla. Performance artists and festival-goers missed the main stage so much, however, that a series of impromptu musical performances happened in Thunderbird Park over the course of the weekend (Neary 1995) and festival administrators planned to include an outdoor performance space in following years.

In 1996 and 1997, Leslie McGarry arranged for outdoor performances to take place on a cemented area near the Belleville entrance to the Royal B.C. Museum (see Figure 3, page 21). These performances, however, only lasted between ten and twenty minutes. Many of them acted as previews for longer performances in Wa'waditla. For the first time, Belleville site presentations featured the Northwest Coast First Nations ceremonial styles that would be shared in the big house by Kwakwaka'wakw (1996, 1997), Coast Salish (1996, 1997) and Nuu-chah-nulth (1997) artists, many of whom lived in Victoria. In 1996, Belleville site shows that did not involve Island Nations ceremonial elements generally served as previews for events at a children's stage called "Showcase of Wonder." In 1997, they acted as advertisements for guest appearances in Wa'waditla by indigenous performance groups from B.C.'s interior (Coyote Dancers), Nunavut (Chief Jimmy Bruneau School Drummers), Australia (Queensland Delegation) and South America (Allpa Kallpa).

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ecological systems (Parker 1998).

All 1996 and 1997 main stage performance groups self-identified as "traditional," at least in part (Henderson 1996, Mannix 1997). This, however, was not enough for some festival employees, volunteers and participants. In a survey that McGarry conducted with people involved in the festival, these critics explained that they wanted festival performances to reflect what they felt was "traditional" or appropriate for different venues. They asked festival producers only to schedule artists in Wa'waditla who came from indigenous nations that traditionally used big houses or had potlatch systems, like the house's Kwakwaka'wakw owners. They also requested that coordinators only hire First Nations artists from Canada at the main stage. Producers agreed to accommodate these demands at the 1998 festival (McGarry 1998, interview 1999).

If we consider the significance of social trends implicit in outdoor performance space production at the 1996 and 1997 festivals, we see the emergence of a phase in festival administration that used government and private sector funding to sponsor outdoor, public performances by musicians and dancers renowned in Northwest Coast First Nations' potlatch systems. This change may not be attributed to the festival's organizational and financial partnerships with government institutions and private funding agencies because they remained similar to those used until 1994. Developments in main stage production between 1995 and 1997 instead link to festival partnerships involved in the dispersal of funds to performers, or business partnerships between festival administration and local, ceremonial performance artists. These developments resulted

from local First Nations' political struggles about their representation at the First Peoples Festival, which began in 1993 after festival administration hired New York's American Indian Dance Theatre to perform Kwakwaka'wakw dances and songs at a festival gala[11] (Hager 1998). In 1996 and 1997, festival administration put funds available for outdoor presentations towards fulfilling the Victoria Native Friendship Centre's mandate of "providing . . . services and information designed to enhance traditional values and cultures of the Native peoples" living in Greater Victoria (Victoria Native Friendship Centre annual report 1998, i) by hiring Northwest Coast ceremonial artists based in Victoria to share music and dance in both outdoor and big house contexts.

McGarry's use of funding for performances in the museum courtyard reflected the friendship centre's mandate and did not compromise Northwest Coast First Nations' festival goals for themes of concurrent local or international events. This signals the growing autonomy of the First Peoples Festival. The festival's autonomy was encouraged by sponsors like the Royal B.C. Museum which, after it had "kick-started" the festival, reduced its administrative involvement in an attempt to avoid patronization and recognize the capabilities of First Nations administrators. According to Royal B.C. Museum employees Kevin Neary and Grant Hollands, the museum recognized that the festival had

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[11] Festival coordinators paid the dance company $18,000 U.S. to present various indigenous North American dances and songs at this gala, including some from the Kwakwaka'wakw *hamat'sa* (cannibal or wild man) potlatch dance series (American Indian Dance Theatre 1993). Some First Nations artists from Victoria felt that festival producers had spent too much money hiring non-local artists to perform these potlatch genres, and pressured producers to hire more local, ceremonial musicians and dancers at future festivals (Hager 1998).

taken on "its own life and momentum" and that adept First Nations administrators could "improve it and shift its focus" (Hollands 1998) after Krystal Cook coordinated the festival in 1991 and 1992 (Neary 1998). Even though Victoria Native Friendship Centre festival administration restricted its collaboration with the museum mostly to joint promotion of the festival after 1991, the support of local First Nations traditions so important to the friendship centre's mandate could not be seen in main stage production until McGarry directed the festival.

The 1998 Legislature Lawn Stage

In 1998, Leslie McGarry decided to move the main stage one block west from the museum courtyard to the B.C. legislature lawns because she realized that spatial limitations on the museum grounds placed certain restrictions on performance groups and did not allow either the festival or friendship centre mandates to be thoroughly fulfilled at the main stage. Both the First Peoples Festival's aim to educate non-Natives on the "integrity and authenticity of First Nations cultural property" (Victoria Native Friendship Centre 1997) and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre's objective to support traditional cultures and values of First Nations living in Victoria (Victoria Native Friendship Centre annual report 1998, i) suffered in brief, cramped museum courtyard presentations. By moving the performance space to the legislature lawns, McGarry encouraged main stage shows to change from being previews for performances at other venues to being longer,

cultural eco-touristic presentations that featured a large number of Northwest Coast First Nations' ceremonial elements in a decidedly meaningful, if not controversial, space. McGarry's decision to use the parliament site put a spotlight on local First Nations traditions and land issues, embodying the festival and friendship centre mandates not just in terms of programming, but also in terms of space.

The First Peoples Festival's use of the parliament lawn stage conveyed the site's importance to local First Nations with implicit references to discourses of resistance and explicit articulations of histories of displacement. While the political resistance implied by the festival administrator's positioning the venue on the legislature lawns was discussed in the media, the government's removal of the Lekwammen people from the parliament site in the mid-1800s was explicitly referenced in main stage speeches. The performance space suggested general political resistance simply because of its situation: in front of the B.C. Legislature (*Weekend Edition* [Victoria], 24 July 1998), the site for countless protests, demonstrations and rallies concerning diverse issues as well as various gatherings associated with indigenous land claims and court cases. In the summer of 1998, for example, women gathered on the legislature lawns to protest the outcome of various sexual abuse court cases involving First Nations women (*Times Colonist* [Victoria], 21 July 1998). Some newspaper columnists alluded to First Nations' resistance to largely non-Native governments, which they thought festival producers had symbolized by scheduling the Nisga'a Laxgalts'ap Cultural Dancers at the legislature site

soon after the resolution of Nisga'a land claims (*Times Colonist* [Victoria], 7 August 1998). Main stage emcees and performers' verbal commentaries on the performance space's meanings, on the other hand, stressed the location's historical importance to the Coast Salish, usually when thanking the Coast Salish for letting the event take place in their traditional territory. Since Northwest Coast First Nations' protocol requires public acknowledgment of ownership, whether it be of a ceremonial rite or material possession, most speakers would mention that Coast Salish had owned the parliament site before moving onto reserves. The speakers blurred the boundary between history and entertainment when teaching festival audiences about Coast Salish connections to the site.

Rather than wanting to draw political attention to the main stage, First Peoples Festival producers aimed to celebrate the successes of the Nisga'a and other nations in a spiritual way. Leslie McGarry told media that main stage audience members would experience "spiritual joy" when seeing the Nisga'a Laxgalts'ap dancers, who performed at the festival without pay so that the general public could celebrate their land claims settlement with them (*Times Colonist* [Victoria], 9 August 1998). Festival coordinators also wanted to raise non-Native awareness about traditional Coast Salish relationships with Victoria's Inner Harbour. When I asked McGarry why she had moved the main stage from the Belleville courtyard to the parliament site, she replied:

This is the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people. It is only appropriate that a First Peoples Festival take place on the legislature lawns. One thousand years ago that is where people were camping while they were shell fishing along the harbour. Beacon Hill Park is a place where they used to play a form of field hockey and relax in the sun. That side of the harbour should be a place of celebration because that is what it was designated for well before the buildings were there.[12] It is part of Canada's history. It is part of our province's history. (McGarry interview 1998)

Barbara Hager, who has helped with festival organization since she resigned as director, similarly stated that the intention of moving the main stage was not to stake a Coast Salish land claim, but to assert indigenous peoples' place in the history of Victoria's Inner Harbour generally (Hager 1998).

The Coast Salish histories repeatedly referenced by main stage producers and performers seemed significant to festival administrators and participants because of the stark contrast between pre-contact Coast Salish life, and present day tourist and government activities on the parliament site. When a main stage speaker mentioned traditional Coast Salish connections to this performance space, s/he often conjured the winter village inhabited by ancestors of the Esquimalt band and other closely-related groups until the 1850s, after the Swengwhung family "sold" the property to the Hudson's Bay Company (Duff 1969, 9). Blatant differences between the descriptions of a remote Coast Salish village and the flocks of tourists infiltrating the parliament site in the summer of 1998 begged the

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[12] Coast Salish people who lived on Victoria's Inner Harbour in pre- and early contact times also practised landscape burning on its the south side (see Turner 1999, 195-96). They did this in order to clear meadows in which they played *qoqwialls*, as McGarry mentioned, and cultivated camas lilies, one of their staple foods (see Keddie 1988, 2). First Nations have both entertained and created spaces in which to entertain themselves on that side of the harbour for thousands of years.

question of how such huge changes could have happened within a space of one hundred fifty years. As many audience members realized (Harrison 1998), oppressive colonial government measures facilitated these changes.[13] Hudson's Bay Company officials had forced the Coast Salish from the parliament site onto designated reserves so that the legislative buildings could be built (Duff 1969, 5).

While festival producers clearly intended to convey a historical message by placing the main stage on the parliament lawns, the staging of the central performance space itself involved a number of highly pragmatic decisions (McGarry interview 1998). When debating whether to accept the B.C. Lottery Corporation's donation of the Hey Wagon!, a 40 x 40-foot stage that folded out of a semi-trailer, festival administrators considered how the stage might improve on performance setups used in past festivals. Festival organizers decided to use the Hey Wagon! because its flashy appearance would increase main stage visibility and its speaker system would enhance small dance groups' sound quality at the spacious legislature site. Similarly, stage layout at the parliament location needed to contrast with previous festivals in a positive way while at the same time complying with restrictions imposed by the B.C. Legislature's grounds management. Although the rear portion of the Hey Wagon! could not be opened due to the grounds management's demand that thirteen feet be left between the back of the stage and the parliament steps

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[13] For detailed descriptions of such government actions, especially floggings, hangings and military attacks, see B.C. author Chris Arnett's *The Terror of the Coast* (1999).

for fire clearance (Mannix 1998), the size of the performance space still exceeded that of earlier festivals' main stages.

When I discussed the legislature performance space with some of the main stage dance groups, they brought up issues that had affected their outdoor shows at the 1998 festival, all of which pertained to production pragmatics and not production symbolism, as one might think. The Hey Wagon! had struck me and some other festival-goers as ironic (Oxendale 1998) because it featured bold images of B.C. Lottery Corporation billboards ostensibly lining a highway -- a form of advertising only allowed on reserve land in B.C. -- and seemed to undermine the festival's mandate of erasing negative stereotypes held about indigenous people, such as those associated with gambling. Performers that I spoke with, however, did not identify the B.C. Lottery Corporation's agenda or stage symbolism as problematic and merely stated that although they appreciated the venue's high-quality sound system, they found the performance space foreign and physically limiting. Both the Laxgalts'ap Cultural Dancers (Nisga'a) and the Kwagiulth Dancers (Kwakwaka'wakw) made use of the stage's sound equipment, but opted to dance on the parliament lawns in order to communicate more effectively with audience members and incorporate more dancers into their presentations (Neel 1998). Not using the stage also allowed the Kwakwaka'wakw group space enough to dance in traditional big house formations, such as large circles surrounded by audience members on three sides or convey social relationships between performers and observers with adaptations of

Kwakwaka'wakw modes of display. These included *tla'sala* (peace dances) and *amlala* (fun dances) in which both Kwagiulth Dancers and audience members could participate.

Festival producers recalled another First Nations' social idiom in scheduling main stage performances by groups that could demonstrate relationships with the legislature site before contact: the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and Nisga'a. These "traditional" First Nations social relationships had involved either the defense of Coast Salish ceremonial rites and land ownership, as shown by wars between the Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish, or the exchange of materials connected to various Northwest Coast First Nations' territories through indigenous trade routes (Keddie 1994, 50-51). After the 1843 establishment of Victoria's Hudson's Bay Company post, Northwest Coast First Nations' ceremonial, territorial and trade relationships changed drastically as a result of the increased communication, intermarriage and general collaboration between indigenous coastal nations prompted by colonial oppression and trade (Macnair 1993, 50). Although Europeans and other immigrants influenced Northwest Coast First Nations, many indigenous ceremonial art styles continued to be passed down orally following contact. The Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, Kwakwaka'wakw and Nisga'a groups that performed at the 1998 main stage proved this. Some male South Island Dancers (Coast Salish), for example, presented dance styles in which they jumped upwards, causing deer hooves that encircled their feet and small wooden paddles that were sewn onto their regalia to hit each other and make loud,

percussive sounds (South Island Singers and Dancers 1998). According to Coast Salish oral history, these dance styles were demonstrated to Captain George Vancouver, who made the first non-Native contact with the Coast Salish in 1792, and are taught orally to Coast Salish boys and young men to this day (Musqueam Warriors Dance Group 2000). These presentations of thriving indigenous Northwest Coast art styles that were directly or peripherally connected to the legislature site supported the friendship centre's aim to promote "traditional" aspects of First Nations cultures and emphasized the importance of Coast Salish land to various Northwest Coast First Nations.

The 1999 Newcombe Courtyard Stage

Leslie McGarry, the festival's director, and Raven August, the festival's Culture and Recreation Coordinator, decided to move the 1999 main stage back to the Royal B.C. Museum site after discussing various difficulties that McGarry and other festival administrators had encountered when producing shows on the parliament lawns (McGarry interview 1999). Some of these difficulties stemmed from the Victoria Native Friendship Centre and B.C. Legislature administrations' problematic collaborative relationship. Although the B.C. Legislature grounds management claimed to support the First Peoples Festival's parliament lawn stage location, it treated Northwest Coast First Nations' performers in ways which could be understood as discriminatory. Legislature grounds management guidelines stated that no money could be exchanged on the

parliament site. The management applied this policy to Native performers and did not allow them to collect donations during their parliament lawn presentations. These legislature employees did not, however, apply the policy to non-Native festival volunteers and let them solicit financial contributions from audiences at the same performances (August 1999). Other production problems concerned the degree to which performance groups felt they could communicate with people on the festival site. Some dancers and singers, for instance, told festival administrators that they did not feel comfortable sharing their ceremonial rites on the legislature site because the Hey Wagon! stage physically separated them from their audiences and the stage location isolated them from potential audience members on the museum grounds (McGarry interview 1999, August 1999). McGarry and August interpreted these concerns about main stage performances' social function and the problematic social relationships involved in legislature site management as cues to address Northwest Coast First Nations' contemporary social concerns, as well as indigenous histories with the festival site, in main stage production. But rather than further politicizing main stage production and performances by debating the discriminatory enforcement of legislative grounds management policy and rearranging the parliament site to suit disgruntled performers, First Peoples Festival administration opted to deal with indigenous social issues at a main stage on the museum grounds, not on the legislative grounds.

Festival coordinators' decision to situate the 1999 main stage in the Royal B.C. Museum's Newcombe Courtyard was also influenced by the positive experiences that McGarry had when advising the museum on its 1999-2000 Nuu-chah-nulth exhibit entitled "Out of the Mist." McGarry worked for the museum in the spring of 1999 as a consultant on the protocol required for contacting Nuu-chah-nulth nations, inviting them to participate in exhibition planning, and asking them to share ceremonial rites at the exhibition opening. She agreed to do this work for the museum and approved of the museum's approach to planning "Out of the Mist" because it welcomed First Nations' participation in all levels of the production process. In fact, McGarry felt so impressed by the collaboration between some museum curators and Nuu-chah-nulth performance artists that she wanted to thematically coordinate the festival's main stage programming with "Out of the Mist." In return, exhibition curators promised to provide some materials for the site, continue advertising festival events and feature live main stage footage on the museum website. For both museum curators and First Nations festival administrators, the museum grounds seemed an appropriate location for the 1999 main stage if the venue's programming was to address social relationships between local indigenous groups and museums specifically, and First Nations and government institutions in general.

Once First Peoples Festival administrators decided to move the main stage back to the Royal B.C. Museum grounds, the question then became where to locate the venue on the museum site. McGarry proposed that Clifford Carl Hall, the theatre in which museum

staff had held the "Out of the Mist" exhibition opening, be used as a main stage space (McGarry interview 1999). August, on the other hand, argued that the sound, if not the sight of outdoor main stage shows might attract more people touring downtown Victoria than an indoor venue, and suggested that festival volunteers set up a stage facing Belleville Street, like in 1996-1997 (August 1999). Since the City of Victoria would only waive traffic by-laws on the Belleville site for the festival's brief opening ceremonies and the friendship centre could not afford to pay $1,500 for the rental of Clifford Carl Hall, festival administration decided to situate the stage behind the museum in the Newcombe Courtyard (Victoria Native Friendship Centre 1999).

Festival administrators also coordinated the physical layout of the Newcombe Courtyard stage area with the help of Victoria Native Friendship Centre staff, Royal B.C. Museum employees and 1998 main stage performers. McGarry and August's co-workers at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre ensured that the friendship centre's banner, red and black felt festival logo, and cedar benches could be used at the Newcombe Courtyard stage. The museum's facilities and public programming staffs donated plain black stage curtains and risers for the Newcombe plaza, and offered advice on the pragmatics of setting up the venue. Dance groups' suggestions on how festival organizers might improve on the legislature lawn stage prompted McGarry and August's decisions to hire a sound technician, rent a sound system and arrange for a small stage to be constructed for singers' use only (McGarry interview 1999).

In addition to negotiating collaborative relationships between communities involved in festival production, programming at the 1999 main stage reflected McGarry's personal understanding of social issues that might be important to local First Nations. For example, McGarry commemorated issues of respect important in relationships between local museums and indigenous groups with a tribute to the museum exhibit "Out of the Mist," which McGarry thought exemplified a respectful approach to cross-cultural education on Nuu-chah-nulth intellectual property. This tribute showed the vitality of cultural traditions displayed in "Out of the Mist" by presenting the West Coast Nuu-chah-nulth Dancers, a troupe which features young dancers and singers currently undergoing training in Nuu-chah-nulth potlatch systems. The tribute also added to exhibitions of ceremonial arts inside the museum by showcasing Nuu-chah-nulth artists who express traditional art forms in contemporary ways: magician Evans Martin and fashion designer Denise Williams. While Martin practises the art of illusion, an important part of some Northwest Coast ceremonial dances (Arima and Dewhirst 1990, 404), Williams creates clothing decorated with Nuu-chah-nulth designs formerly only used in potlatch contexts. Both Williams' and Martin's festival performances educated the general public about artistic skills which have always been valued in Nuu-chah-nulth communities, and questioned understandings of "tradition" as something static or unchanging, especially in terms of media of expression. Nuu-chah-nulth performers who participated in the "Out of the Mist" tribute associated displays of inanimate art objects inside of the Royal B.C. Museum with thriving and dynamic expressions of tradition outside of museum contexts,

explicitly realizing the festival's objective to "provide . . . a 'living' contextual link to the [m]useum's exhibits" (Neary 1993).

Another social focus of the 1999 main stage performances was directed not at the general public, but at Northwest Coast First Nations individuals recovering from the traumatic effects of the residential school system (see Jaine 1993). At the Newcombe stage, Fara, a Métis-Cree jazz, soul and rhythm & blues artist based in Vancouver (Victoria Native Friendship Centre 1999), performed compositions that described her mother's painful residential school experiences and the shame that residential school survivors' children might feel about their identities. Fara's lyrics about residential schools had such a powerful emotional effect on some local First Nations audience members that McGarry asked Victoria Native Friendship Centre social workers to make themselves available during Fara's shows (McGarry interview 1999). By inviting Fara to perform at the festival and ensuring that social workers could help individuals who reacted emotionally to Fara's residential school lyrics, McGarry allowed the Newcombe stage space to facilitate indigenous individuals' healing from discriminative, abusive government and church educational policies. Main stage performances that considered the social implications of removing First Nations children from their traditional territories and placing them in residential schools also elaborated on narratives articulated at the 1998 legislature site about the displacement of local First Nations.

Narratives which demonstrated Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw connections to the festival site continued to be conveyed at the 1999 main stage. When the Kwagiulth Dancers and West Coast Nuu-chah-nulth Dancers shared ceremonial rites in the Newcombe Courtyard, for instance, Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth spokespeople thanked the Coast Salish for allowing festival shows to take place in Lekwammen territory. These speakers, similar to those heard at the 1998 legislature site, acknowledged the importance of Victoria's Inner Harbour to the Coast Salish and other Northwest Coast First Nations in pre- and early contact times, which I outlined in the previous section. Unlike speakers at the parliament stage, however, some Newcombe Courtyard stage emcees and performers also addressed recent histories involving displays of Northwest Coast First Nations ceremonial objects within the Royal B.C. Museum (e.g., McGarry speech 1999). Other 1999 main stage speeches and performances, such as those given by Salishan hoop dancer Earl Charters, educated the general public about the variety of dance genres practised by the Coast Salish today. Charters demonstrated a pan-First Nations dance genre performed by descendants of Coast Salish who once lived on the festival site and talked about the significance of the Lekwammen Powwow to local First Nations (Charters 1999). Finally, still other 1999 main stage shows involved non-Canadian indigenous groups in efforts to welcome them to Coast Salish territory. At the suggestion of local First Nations' community members, First Peoples Festival administrators invited some Maori and Ainu performers to share dances and songs at the Newcombe stage (August 1999). These indigenous New Zealander and Japanese

presentations realized political alliances with local First Nations community members through performance and, like the Northwest Coast First Nations shows, functioned to reaffirm Coast Salish connections to the festival site.

In Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained how changes in the First Peoples Festival's main stage location relate to changes in festival administration. Moving the main stage has defined several phases in festival co-ordination which have been characterized by different community and organizational partnerships. The first phase in festival co-ordination was embodied in the Fernwood First Peoples Festivals' main performance spaces (1985-1986) which resulted from the collaborative efforts of Victoria Native Friendship Centre employees and Island Nations community members. A second period in festival production involved the cooperation of friendship centre staff with Royal British Columbia Museum workers at the museum's Belleville main stage site (1987-1997). Over these 10 years, museum staff who had initiated the move to the Belleville site gradually decreased their administrative and financial involvement in main stage production in order to avoid liberal paternalism. The return of administrative power to the Victoria Native Friendship Centre has characterized a third stage in festival organization, and prompted the relocation of the festival's main stage on the B.C. Legislature lawns (1998) and in the museum's Newcombe Courtyard (1999).

Different social goals of these festival administrations influenced main stage production. At the 1985 and 1986 Fernwood festivals, friendship centre and Island Nations coordinators wanted festival presentations to foster pride in indigenous identities. They produced events at outdoor performance spaces that were associated with or involved First Nations' artistic competitions: powwow dance performances and princess pageants. Powwow presentations featured dances that First Nations perform competitively throughout North America and were intended to encourage pride in indigenous dances of this continent. Pageants involved a modeling competition that was supposed to foster pride in fabric arts of indigenous groups from Vancouver Island in which Island Nations contestants wore regalia from their traditional territories. From 1987-1992, museum and friendship centre administrators of the Belleville site aimed to educate non-Natives about First Nations cultures through festival performances. These administrators thought that cultural eco-touristic presentations should take place in "authentic" cultural contexts, so they restricted "traditional" Northwest Coast First Nations dance groups to Wa'waditla and Victoria's Inner Harbour, and booked some B.C.-based powwow groups (1987-1991) and mainstream, popular indigenous musicians (1992) for the main stage. When the museum decreased then ceased its involvement in festival administration, however, friendship centre staff incorporated traditional First Nations dance and song into Belleville site programs. In 1994 and from 1996-1999, many traditional indigenous performers featured at this festival performance space lived in places on B.C.'s coast. At the 1998 legislature lawn and 1999 museum courtyard main stages, friendship centre

festival producers wanted to teach the general public not only about indigenous cultures, but also about Northwest Coast First Nations' social issues and concerns about land. They hired performers who addressed social relationships between government institutions and First Nations (1999), and Northwest Coast First Nations ceremonial artists who drew attention to land issues by referencing their families' histories with the festival site (1998-1999) at the main stages.

As the Royal B.C. Museum decreased then ceased its involvement in the administration of the festival's main stage, Victoria Native Friendship Centre First Peoples Festival producers changed the venue's location, objectives and programming. They chose main stage sites, aims and programs that highlighted Northwest Coast First Nations' relationships with land.

Chapter 2

Wa'waditla
Negotiating Eurocanadian/Northwest Coast First Nations' Social Relations

Wa'waditla or Mungo Martin House (Figures 6 and 7, pages 56 and 57) is a replica of a

19th-century Kwagiulth big house from Fort Rupert (see Figure 2, page 4) that was built

in the Royal B.C. Museum's Thunderbird Park in 1953 (see The B.C. Indian Arts Society

1982, 15-16), two years after the termination of Canada's anti-potlatch legislation (see

Nuytten 1982). Kwakwaka'wakw chief Mungo Martin constructed the big house with

help from his son David Martin, anthropologist Wilson Duff, carpenter Robert Wallace,

B.C. Forest Service employee Joseph St. Pierre and others (Duff 1953, B 20-21). Since

Martin held Wa'waditla's opening potlatch in 1953, various indigenous North American

cultural events have taken place in the big house.

Wa'waditla has hosted First Peoples Festival presentations since 1987. Like the main

stages, the big house signifies Northwest Coast First Nations' histories with museums

and other government institutions, and has facilitated festival performers' articulations of

both traditional and politicized relationships with land. These histories and expressions of

place center on the Kwakwaka'wakw elders and artists that have created and used

Wa'waditla.

Figure 6. Wa'waditla/Mungo Martin House viewed from the corner of Belleville and Douglas Streets, Victoria. In front of the big house is a First Peoples Festival donation box and Mungo Martin's heraldic pole, which represents the entire Kwakwaka'wakw nation's oral histories (see Duff 1953, B23). Behind Wa'waditla, we see another Kwakwaka'wakw totem pole and the Royal B.C. Museum.

Photo by author

Figure 7. Some Kwagiulth Dancers, including festival director Leslie McGarry (far left), share a women's dance inside Wa'waditla at the 1999 First Peoples Festival. In the background, we see two frontal poles, which feature *Dzunuḵ'wa* (Wild Woman of the Woods) and Grizzly Bear crests, as well as a painting, which displays a *Sisiutl* (Double-headed Serpent) crest.

Photo by author

I have divided this chapter into two sections, the first of which considers Mungo Martin House's meanings at the First Peoples Festival from a production standpoint, and the second of which focusses on the big house's significance to some Kwakwaka'wakw musicians and dancers. In the first section, I explain how different attitudes towards Wa'waditla's meanings relate to changes in the production of festival performances in the big house. Next, I discuss what the festival's use of Wa'waditla means for Kwakwaka'wakw chiefs and artists that I have interviewed, first historically and then in a contemporary sense. By describing Wa'waditla's significance for both Kwakwaka'wakw elders who have used the ceremonial house since the 1950s and First Peoples Festival producers, I hope to consider the big house's social and spatial significance in some historical depth.

Producing Shows in the Big House

When Victoria Native Friendship Centre and Royal B.C. Museum employees first co-produced the First Peoples Festival in 1987, they moved the event to the provincial museum and transformed Wa'waditla into a festival venue. In fact, Mungo Martin House's proximity to the museum was a motivating factor for the festival's change of location. For Kwakwaka'wakw festival organizers, such as Alec Nelson, who generally used Wa'waditla for private or ceremonial functions, the festival would present a rare occasion to share the big house with the general public (McGarry 1998). Kevin Neary and

Peter Macnair, festival coordinators who worked for the museum, saw moving the festival to the museum site as an opportunity to alter the general public's perception of Wa'waditla. Because Wa'waditla was a copy of a 19th-century Kwagiulth big house, it displayed and evoked Kwakwaka'wakw artistic expressions of the "potlatch period" (1849-1920: Codere 1961, 435), giving the general public the mistaken impression that Northwest Coast First Nations arts were things of the past. Neary and Macnair hoped that featuring live performances in Mungo Martin House would communicate the vibrancy and resilience of present-day, local First Nations artistic traditions to festival audiences (Hollands 1998, Neary 1998). Festival coordinators also thought that sharing local First Nations performance arts in Thunderbird Park, an area filled with Northwest Coast First Nations visual artworks, seemed more appropriate than presenting them in a square in Fernwood (see Cranmer 1998).

Even though both friendship centre and museum staffs coordinated the festival and expressed equal interest in using Wa'waditla, museum personnel played a dominant role in managing the festival shows in the big house until 1995. This happened simply because the Royal B.C. Museum administered and maintained Wa'waditla until that time. Kwakwaka'wakw Chief Peter Knox and his family, who had inherited Wa'waditla from its original owner Chief Mungo Martin, unfortunately had little to do with day-to-day occurrences in the big house and would only be consulted by the museum if an application to use Wa'waditla did not "appear routine" (Royal British Columbia Museum

1995, 3). So, when First Peoples Festival producers wanted to use Mungo Martin House, they met with the Royal B.C. Museum's grounds management and applied to the museum's program technicians to rent the house, in writing. The museum required Grant Hollands, facilities manager for Mungo Martin House, to read festival producers the big house's "rules and regulations [and tell them] what they could do and what they couldn't do" (Hollands 1998). Hollands saw this process as patronizing, particularly when he had to review Kwakwaka'wakw big house protocol with local First Nations individuals who had tremendous ceremonial knowledge, or when he needed to ask the big house's owners to pay $50 to use it (Hollands 1998). During festival performances, museum staffpeople such as Hollands or Neary also had to, perhaps unnecessarily, "ensure that Wa'waditla [was] properly cared for and treated with appropriate respect" by local First Nations dance groups and their audiences (Royal British Columbia Museum 1995, 3).

Unlike this management of First Peoples Festival performances in Wa'waditla, programming of the festival's first big house shows respected Wa'waditla's hereditary Kwagiulth ownership. First Peoples Festival producers honoured present and past big house owners Chiefs Peter Knox and Mungo Martin by asking members of their families to perform in Wa'waditla (Neary 1998). The festival's first shows in Wa'waditla solely featured a dance group headed by Chief Tony Hunt, who was raised in Victoria by Chief Mungo Martin and has the authority to make decisions about Wa'waditla if Chief Peter Knox is not available (Royal British Columbia Museum 1995, 3). The Hunt Family

Dancers (or Kwagiulth Dancers), in turn, celebrated ceremonial rites and traditional territory associated with the big house by sharing hereditary masks, dances and songs belonging to Kwakwaka'wakw families that presently live in Victoria, but originated from Fort Rupert (see Figure 2), where the original Wa'waditla stood in the 1800s (*Monday Magazine* [Victoria], 30 July-5 August 1987/3-9 August 1989). This use of Wa'waditla juxtaposed the big house's 19th-century crest art with live presentations of ceremonial rites associated with these crests, which emphasized the continuation of Kwakwaka'wakw artistic traditions in spite of government and church assimilationist policies. It also mirrored Chief Naka'penkim's (Mungo Martin's) use of the big house for his 1953 potlatch, which celebrated the termination of Canada's anti-potlatch legislation and required audience members to "watch the dances of Chief Naka'penkim's family history, as they had always been done" (Chiefs Mungo Martin and Dan Cranmer, speech in Nuytten 1982, 97).[14]

Kwakwaka'wakw performances in Wa'waditla gradually expanded in scope as the festival grew in size. By 1990, over 30,000 people attended the First Peoples Festival (Cook, Henry and Neary 1991, 1) and Krystal Cook, the festival's Kwakwaka'wakw director, needed to schedule a number of dance groups to perform in the big house. Cook rehired the Hunt Family Dancers and also invited other Kwakwaka'wakw dance groups,

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[14] This remark about Chief Naka'penkim had a double meaning. Chief Mungo Martin had inherited the Wa'waditla built in Fort Rupert in the 1800s and the name "Naka'penkim" from his uncle, Chief Naka'penkim. Chiefs Martin and Cranmer's mention of Chief Naka'penkim's dances therefore referred both to the dances owned by Mungo Martin in 1953 and Naka'penkim in the 19th-century.

such the U'mista Cultural Centre Dancers, to share music and dance in Mungo Martin House. In response to festival audiences' demands for more frequent shows in Wa'waditla, Cook organized big house performances by dance groups not just from Kwagiulth territory, but from a variety of southern Kwakwaka'wakw communities (Victoria Native Friendship Centre 1990). Like previous festival shows in Wa'waditla, however, 1990 big house performances communicated the vitality of Kwakwaka'wakw artistic traditions.

But when the First Peoples Festival's commercial success caused big house programming to broaden for a second time in 1991, the social function of the festival's big house shows changed. At that time, festival producers decided that Mungo Martin House should be used to educate non-Natives not only about Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonials, but also about Coast Salish and Nuu-chah-nulth music and dance. First Peoples Festival producers chose this "Three Island Nations" theme because they wanted festival performances in the big house to "reflect aeon-long [indigenous] relationship[s] with the land" that Victoria stands on (*The Westerly News* [Tofino-Ucluelet], 24 July 1991). Festival producers acknowledged these ancient relationships with Victoria in Wa'waditla by asking the Coast Salish Khowutzun Tzinquaw Dancers, whose families have lived in Victoria for thousands of years, to perform in the big house. Also, festival coordinators honoured Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth communities' histories of trade with Coast Salish in Victoria by travelling to these communities, telling them about the First Peoples

Festival and asking them to dance in the event's big house shows. In May 1991, for example, Cook and some other festival organizers presented First Peoples Festival information sessions at Alert Bay's U'mista Cultural Centre and for Fort Rupert's Kwakiutl District Council, which consequently sent their U'mista Cultural Centre Dancers and Fort Rupert Dancers to perform in Wa'waditla (*North Island News* [Port Hardy], 19 May 1991; *Times Colonist* [Victoria], 3 August 1991). This use of Wa'waditla further corresponded with the Royal B.C. Museum's encouragement of Island Nations artistic traditions in Thunderbird Park since the park's creation in 1940 (Stewart 1993, 100). Historically, the museum had sponsored dance presentations in the big house by Island Nations artists, such as George Clutesi's Nuu-chah-nulth dancers (Duff 1960), and commissioned sculptures from Island Nations carvers working in Thunderbird Park, such as Rod Modeste (Coast Salish), Tim Paul (Nuu-chah-nulth) and Richard Hunt (Kwakwaka'wakw) (Neary 1985, 4). But despite these changes in First Peoples Festival big house programming, festival administrators continued to highlight the Kwagiulth Dancers in Wa'waditla in order to acknowledge the big house's hereditary ownership.

The Island Nations theme continued to shape programming in Mungo Martin House for the next six festivals, even though other festival venues adopted United Nations themes, such as the International Year of Indigenous Peoples (1993) and International Year of the Family (1994). Festival directors Krystal Cook (1992), Barbara Hager (1993-94) and Leslie McGarry (1995-96) maintained this theme in Wa'waditla because, in addition to

respecting local First Nations histories with the festival site, it offered all three Island Nations opportunities to share their music, dance and histories about southern Vancouver Island with Victoria's general public (see Victoria Native Friendship Centre festival program 1994, 8). The theme also allowed festival programs in the big house to remain fairly consistent from year to year. At the 1991, 1993, 1994 and 1996 festivals, musicians and dancers from all three Island Nations performed in Wa'waditla. During the 1992 and 1995 festivals, only Coast Salish and Kwakwaka'wakw artists were able to share songs, dances and stories in the house (Victoria Native Friendship Centre festival programs 1991-96). At these performances, the Coast Salish artists told legends, and presented some songs and dances that involved ceremonial art styles, but were created specifically for tourist consumption by Khowutzun singer Ray Peters. The Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth singers and dancers, on the other hand, shared songs and dances usually presented at potlatches as well as narratives associated with them (see Hager 1998). The Island Nations theme influenced repertoire choice, and a festival "tradition" of presenting local First Nations' music and dance in Mungo Martin House was established.

In 1995, the Royal B.C. Museum transferred the responsibility of administrating Wa'waditla from its program technicians to the museum's Aboriginal Liaison Officer, former festival director Barbara Hager, and some duties involved in big house maintenance to the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (Hollands 1998, McGarry interview 1999). These changes had no effect on festival programs in the big house

initially, but had an immediate impact on friendship centre administrators' management of festival performances in Wa'waditla. The friendship centre's festival administrators could now coordinate work parties to clean up Mungo Martin House prior to the festival and could ask local First Nations volunteers, rather than museum staff, to supervise the festival's big house performances (McGarry interview 1999). This shift in the management of Wa'waditla meant that the museum's only role in the organization of festival shows in the big house was to put festival administrators in touch with Chief Peter Knox, so that they could ask his permission to use Mungo Martin House. Festival administrators no longer had to adhere to some regulations imposed by the museum and could consult Peter Knox directly about using the big house.

The Royal B.C. Museum's decreased involvement in Wa'waditla's administration enabled friendship centre employees to drastically expand the scope of programming in the big house at the 1997 festival. Big house programs at this festival featured indigenous dance groups from B.C.'s interior, Nunavut, South America and Australia as well as First Nations artists from Vancouver Island. Because festival coordinators did not need to comply with the museum's request that only "North American Indian group[s]" use Wa'waditla (Royal British Columbia Museum 1995, 3), they scheduled dance groups from outside North America for 1997 big house shows, with approval from Chief Peter Knox.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, some participants in a survey that McGarry conducted with people involved in the 1997 festival strongly objected to big house presentations by non-local indigenous groups. These participants asserted that Mungo Martin House should only be used by First Nations dancers and singers from B.C.. McGarry's survey revealed that because non-local indigenous performers did not publicly acknowledge Wa'waditla's hereditary Kwakwaka'wakw owners or thank the Coast Salish for letting the festival happen on their traditional lands, they were no longer welcome to perform in the festival's big house shows (McGarry 1999).

In light of the results of McGarry's 1997 First Peoples Festival survey, friendship centre staff decided once again to use the Island Nations theme when programming 1998 and 1999 festival presentations in Wa'waditla. This decision was the first choice about the festival's use of Wa'waditla that was singularly inspired by the opinions of local First Nations community members and other festival participants. It marked a new trend in friendship centre employees' organization of festival performances in Wa'waditla that primarily involved consultation with Northwest Coast First Nations elders and artists, instead of Royal B.C. Museum staffpeople. The festival's use of Wa'waditla in 1998 and 1999 also reflected just how much local indigenous protocol and histories mattered to festival survey participants. Big house presentations at these festivals featured Island Nations dance groups that had heeded Northwest Coast First Nations protocol and had spoken about local First Nations histories of place during past festival performances: the

Kwakwaka'wakw Kwagiulth Dancers, Coast Salish Khowutzun Tzinquaw Dancers and Nuu-chah-nulth Dancing Spirit (Victoria Native Friendship Centre festival programs 1998, 1999). Starting in 1998, the public acknowledgment of local First Nations' histories about the Royal B.C. Museum site became a mandatory part of festival presentations in Wa'waditla (see Victoria Native Friendship Centre performers' contract 1998, 2).

When I attended 1998 and 1999 First Peoples Festival presentations in Wa'waditla, I noticed that Island Nations dance groups would share the meanings that Wa'waditla holds for them personally in their speeches about the big house's Kwakwaka'wakw ownership and the museum site's Coast Salish history. The Coast Salish South Island Dancers (1998) and Esquimalt Singers and Dancers (1999), for example, would explain that the construction of Mungo Martin House in Lekwammen territory demonstrates how dramatically social relationships between the Coast Salish and other Northwest Coast First Nations have changed since contact. To convey this, these groups' speakers often contrasted descriptions of Coast Salish singing in Kwakwaka'wakw-owned spaces before and after contact. At one 1998 South Island Singers & Dancers performance, speaker Ray Peters compared Coast Salish presentations of Paddle Welcome Songs in pre-contact and First Peoples Festival contexts. He said that before contact, Coast Salish would sing these songs in their canoes to announce their peaceful presence in foreign territory. At the festival, Paddle Welcome Songs serve to welcome travellers to Coast Salish territory.

Spokespeople for the Nuu-chah-nulth group Dancing Spirit, on the other hand, focussed on the influence that cross-cultural educational forums in Wa'waditla have had on scholarship and mentioned the work of George Clutesi (Dancing Spirit 1999).[15] Chiefs that spoke on behalf of the Kwagiulth Dancers alternatively shared histories about how Wa'waditla has affected the lives of Kwakwaka'wakw artists who have lived not in their traditional territory, but in Victoria (Kwagiulth Dancers 1998, 1999). When discussing Wa'waditla's significance, these speakers obscured the boundary between history and entertainment, like those at the main stage.

Wa'waditla's Importance to the Kwagiulth Dancers

Because Chief Mungo Martin built Wa'waditla so soon after the end of the potlatch ban and on provincial precinct land (see Hollands 1998), the big house has been understood by some Kwagiulth Dancers as a statement against colonial oppression. In the 1998 and 1999 festival performances that I attended, the Kwagiulth Dancers' speakers often mentioned Mungo Martin House's political connotations. During a presentation of Kwakwaka'wakw dance and song in Wa'waditla at the 1999 festival, for instance, the Kwagiulth Dancers' speaker Chief George Hunt (Jr.) told his audience that

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[15] George Clutesi was renowned both on the Northwest Coast and throughout Canada for his accomplishments as a Nuu-chah-nulth painter and dance teacher (Halpern 1967, 5). As I mentioned above, Clutesi had educated non-Natives about Nuu-chah-nulth dance in Wa'waditla in 1960.

a lot of people don't realize that we weren't allowed to do this. We weren't supposed to be carrying on this legacy. Just a few short decades ago, we weren't practicing our culture openly, we had to practise it secretly. That is one of the reasons Mungo left this house. (Kwagiulth Dancers 1999)

Leslie McGarry, who dances with the Kwagiulth Dancers in addition to directing the festival, explained to me that Mungo Martin built Wa'waditla because he believed firmly in "keep[ing] the Kwakwaka'wakw culture alive" even though he had been arrested and persecuted for "continu[ing] to potlatch, carve masks and prepare regalia when the potlatch was under prohibition" (McGarry interview 1999). For McGarry and Hunt, Mungo Martin House both resulted from and signifies Kwakwaka'wakw histories of resistance to the colonial ceremonial oppression that they and their families experienced.

According to McGarry, Chief Mungo Martin decided to build Wa'waditla because he thought that "if he didn't work collectively with museums, [displays of Kwakwaka'wakw] artifacts would [continue to] be showcases of the 'once were'" (McGarry interview 1999). Around 1950, Martin noticed that most exhibits about the Kwakwaka'wakw assumed that the First Nation would eventually assimilate into Eurocanadian culture and stop practising cultural traditions such as potlatching, and did not involve consultation with Kwakwaka'wakw elders. Martin regretted that these museum and art exhibits also represented complex Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch artforms (see also Footnote 3, page 5) as "crafts." So, Mungo Martin collaborated with the Royal B.C. Museum, and fostered friendships with numerous museum employees and art historians when constructing Wa'waditla. Martin's friendships with curators and scholars

had a transformative effect on representations of Northwest Coast First Nations in museums and art galleries. In 1967, for example, Wilson Duff and Bill Holm, who had been taught about Kwakwaka'wakw culture by Mungo Martin, helped organize the Vancouver Art Gallery's *Arts of the Raven*, the first of many exhibits to portray potlatch traditions as *living, artistic* expressions (see Duffek 1993, 221). At the Royal B.C. Museum, Martin encouraged curators to maintain a carving program in Thunderbird Park that he had established in 1952 to display the creation of "Northwest Coast [First Nations] artwork . . . as an art form and not a craft" (Hunt, Richard 1998).[16] By continuing to employ Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw artists in Thunderbird Park, the museum secured a working partnership with Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community. Through their involvement in the First Peoples Festival, the Kwagiulth Dancers have maintained Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community's partnership with the museum, as Chief Mungo Martin requested before he died (McGarry interview 1999).

For some of the Kwagiulth Dancers, such as Chiefs George Hunt Jr. and Tony Hunt, the creation and initial use of Wa'waditla has personal artistic and educational significance. George Hunt told one 1999 festival audience in Wa'waditla, for instance, that when he was growing up in Victoria, he learned about Kwakwaka'wakw singing by "coming to [the big] house and seeing Mungo, [his] grandfathers and other chiefs from other villages

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[16] James Clifford has argued that "one of the most effective current ways to give cross-cultural value (moral and commercial) to a cultural production is to treat it as art" (Clifford 1991, 241). He has discussed how this argument might apply to Northwest Coast First Nations art in his 1991 article "Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections."

sitting at [the] log [drum]" and singing (Kwagiulth Dancers 8 August 1999). George Hunt then went on to demonstrate his strong singing skills, and it became clear to me, as an audience member, that the teachings Hunt received in Wa'waditla laid the foundation for his career as a Kwakwaka'wakw singer. Tony Hunt, on the other hand, told some 1998 festival audiences in the big house that he "helped paint all the white on [Wa'waditla's] houseposts," and danced a dance presented by the Kwagiulth Dancers at the festival in Mungo Martin's 1953 potlatch, when he was 11 years old (Kwagiulth Dancers 1998). During the Kwagiulth Dancers' 1998 First Peoples Festival performances, Chief Tony Hunt explained that he had been raised by Chief Mungo Martin and had started an apprenticeship with Martin when Wa'waditla was being built. Tony Hunt's apprenticeship with Mungo Martin allowed him to become a good dancer and visual artist. Mungo Martin had succeeded in his efforts to get Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch traditions recognized as art forms, which enabled Tony Hunt to market his art at an international level as well as open his *Arts of the Raven Gallery* and *Raven Arts* workshop in which he sold the work of and trained Northwest Coast First Nations visual artists (see Macnair 1984, 183-84). Both Tony and George Hunt's educational experiences with Mungo Martin in Wa'waditla, then, encouraged them to pursue successful artistic careers.

Wa'waditla also has educational and artistic significance to Kwagiulth Dancers who did not know Chief Mungo Martin and have lived in Victoria for the past eight years. Since 1992, chiefs who benefited from Mungo Martin's teaching and other experienced

Kwakwaka'wakw artists have taught dancing and singing in the big house to young Kwak'wala speakers living in Victoria and not in their traditional territory. Kwakwaka'wakw chiefs Tony Hunt, George Hunt Jr. and Frank Nelson have led singing rehearsals and two Kwagiulth Dancers, Debbie Hunt and Lou-ann Neel, have organized dance practices in Wa'waditla (Neel 1998). These chiefs and dancers decided to do this after they realized that young members of Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community had received no formal training in Kwakwaka'wakw singing and dancing, despite the fact that the community had been hosting feasts and other ceremonies in Mungo Martin House since the 1970s (see Hunt, Tony 1998, Nelson 1999). The experienced singers and dancers have also urged the youths to pursue their interests in music and dance individually. For example, they have encouraged young Kwagiulth Dancers' to learn songs and vocal techniques on their own by listening to recordings of well-known Kwakwaka'wakw singers, such as those made by Ida Halpern of Mungo Martin (see Chen 1995, 55-56). Today, Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw youth have excellent traditional singing and dancing skills, which they demonstrate in the Kwagiulth Dancers' First Peoples Festival performances.

Finally, Wa'waditla is important to the Kwagiulth Dancers in that it embodies and evokes their connections to specific locations in Kwakwaka'wakw territory. Speakers for the Kwagiulth Dancers usually share these Kwakwaka'wakw histories of place during their First Peoples Festival presentations in the big house. When I attended the dance group's

1999 festival performances in Mungo Martin House, for example, I heard Musgamagw

Chief Frank Nelson share a creation story belonging to his family, which presently lives

on Gilford Island (see Figure 2, page 4), a place represented by a crest on two of

Wa'waditla's houseposts (Duff 1953, B21):

> I come to you on behalf of the Raven, the *Wagila*, who landed on the top of a
> mountain peak, protruding out of the water at the time of the flood. And as the
> flood subsided, before the Wagila, there opened up a beautiful valley. In this
> setting, the Wagila was overwhelmed. He decided for the remainder of his days to
> stay there. That is the descendency which I come from, from the Wagila. I am
> from the Lila'wagila, from the Musgamagw Tsawataineuk.[17] (Kwagiulth Dancers,
> 7 August 1999)

In telling his family's creation story, Frank Nelson was at once doing what anthropologist

Keith Basso calls "place-making," describing a particular location and its history (Basso

1996, 5), and demonstrating that his family is connected to Mungo Martin's ancestors in

terms of place. As shown by the Dzunuk̲'wa (Wild Woman of the Woods) crest on

Wa'waditla's front houseposts, one of Mungo Martin's grandparents belonged to the

Kwik̲wasutinux̲, who live on Gilford Island with Frank Nelson's *'namima* (the

Lila̲'wagila of the Dza'wad̲anux̲w).[18] So, Wa'waditla, in addition to having political,

artistic and educational significance for Kwagiulth Dancers living outside their traditional

territory, is important to the dance group because it signifies oral histories about their

families' traditional lands.

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[17] The Musgamagw Tsawataineuk consist of four groups that have lived on Gilford Island at various times:
the Kwik̲wasutinux̲, Dza'wad̲anux̲w (which include the Lila̲'wagila), Gwa'wa'inux̲w and Hax̲wa̲'mis (see
Coull 1996, 61).
[18] "'Namima" refers to a Kwakwaka̲'wakw family or community associated with a specific big house,
which makes up a sub-group within a given tribe (see U'mista Cultural Society 1997, 24-28). The 'namima
system was documented by Franz Boas and George Hunt in *Kwakiutl Ethnography* (1966).

Conclusion

I have explored two main issues in this chapter: (1) how changing social relations between Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community, friendship centre and provincial museum have affected First Peoples Festival programming in Wa'waditla, and (2) how meanings that Kwakwaka'wakw festival performers attribute to the big house reflect First Nations/non-Native social relations and indigenous Northwest Coast social interrelations. I have observed that the museum's transference of some big house management and maintenance duties respectively to the house's hereditary Kwakwaka'wakw owners and Victoria's native friendship centre prompted festival administrators to base their decisions about big house programs' scope on festival participant feedback, instead of museum regulations. In short, this festival community-based decision making resulted in Wa'waditla being restricted to Island Nations dance groups and in adherence to local First Nations' protocol becoming a mandatory part of big house presentations. This protocol required dance groups to acknowledge Coast Salish and Kwakwaka'wakw histories with the festival site and big house in their performances. I have also explained that Kwakwaka'wakw histories about Wa'waditla that some Kwagiulth Dancers have shared in interviews and festival presentations (a) address non-Natives' increased respect for First Nations traditions, which prompted the end of the potlatch prohibition as well as the exhibition of Northwest Coast First Nations potlatch traditions as arts in museums and art galleries, and (b) reveal the deep importance of the big house to Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community as a place where Kwakwaka'wakw artists living amongst

the Coast Salish can practise and teach ceremonial arts associated with Kwakwaka'wakw territory, and as an embodiment of oral histories about Kwakwaka'wakw ancestral lands created in Coast Salish territory. These histories centre on the influence that Kwakwaka'wakw cultural presentations embodied and featured in Wa'waditla have had on Kwakwaka'wakw artists that have lived in Victoria and outside of their traditional territory.

Changes in the production of First Peoples Festival presentations in Wa'waditla and meanings that the big house holds for the Kwagiulth Dancers both involve Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community's use of the big house for ceremonial purposes. Festival producers and participants required all Island Nations presenters in Wa'waditla to mention the big house's Kwakwaka'wakw history because they realized that the big house has a past of Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial activity. Histories about Wa'waditla recounted by the Kwagiulth Dancers describe non-Native curators and Kwakwaka'wakw artists' reactions to presentations of Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites in the big house. The fact that First Peoples Festival producers, festival participants, museum and art gallery curators, and Kwagiulth Dancers have been affected by Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community members' creation and use of Wa'waditla is important because it indicates their recognition of portable Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites.

II. Movement and Sound

Northwest Coast First Nations' presentations of ceremonial dances and songs at the First Peoples Festival convey indigenous relationships with specific geographical locations. These ceremonial genres signify oral histories, evoke mythological beings and belong to family groups associated with different traditional territories (see Joseph 1998, 18-19). Some of these dance and song genres have been practised in particular places for hundreds, if not thousands of years (Kwagiulth Dancers 1999), and involve ancient relationships with land. Other movement and sound shared by indigenous Northwest Coast festival performers reflect more recently established connections to places facilitated by changing social relations among First Nations, and between indigenous and non-Native groups.

Indigenous Northwest Coast dancers and singers that I have interviewed and/or seen perform at the festival have shared various histories about land and the ceremonial genres they present publicly in at least two contexts: (1) when discussing the history of their dance groups and (2) when talking about dances or songs' meanings. For example, an elder for the Nuu-chah-nulth dance group Dancing Spirit, Douglas Robinson, told me that people from the Sheshaht Nation, Opetchesaht Nation and some other Nuu-chah-nulth groups started Dancing Spirit in 1993 in order to revive potlatch dances and songs. He

said that the ceremonial genres practised by First Nations in the Port Alberni area (see

Figure 8, page 78) for countless generations have changed dramatically due to this

revival. Robinson pointed out that newly-composed songs presented by Dancing Spirit at

the festival differ from older songs that Nuu-chah-nulth singers have inherited from

elders in that they contain a large number of references to spirituality and singers'

parents, and involve tempo-oriented instead of polyrhythmic interplay between voices

and drums (Robinson 1998). A speaker for Nisga'a elder Chester Moore, on the other

hand, told 1998 First Peoples Festival audiences that dance movements for a Welcome

Song shared by the Laxgalts'ap Cultural Dancers represent the crests of four phratries (or

clans) that live in Laxgalts'ap (see Figure 9, page 79): the Wolf, Eagle, Frog-Raven and

Killer Whale (Laxgalts'ap Cultural Dancers 1998). During Coast Salish performances at

the 1998 festival, Ray Peters, spokesman for the South Island and Khowutzun Tsinquaw

dance groups, translated some lyrics from "The Triple," several songs composed in 1949

which are based on a legend[19] set in Cowichan traditional territory (see Figure 10, page

80) (South Island Singers and Dancers 1998). In interviews and festival presentations,

Kwagiulth Dancers have described how their approaches to learning and publicly

presenting Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial genres outside their traditional territory have

changed during their dance group's history. They have also explained that the dances and

songs they share embody narratives that involve artworks' owners, concern historical

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[19] In this legend, Kwuhn'-ayss (Killer or White Whale) kills some Cowichan warriors because they have tried to shoot him for eating their salmon supply. Tsinquaw (Thunder God) then kills Kwuhn'-ayss in order to avenge the warriors' deaths (South Island Singers and Dancers 1998).

events, and/or convey Kwak'wala speaking people's understandings of the world around them. Kwakwaka'wakw relationships with land are integral to many of these narratives.

Figure 8.
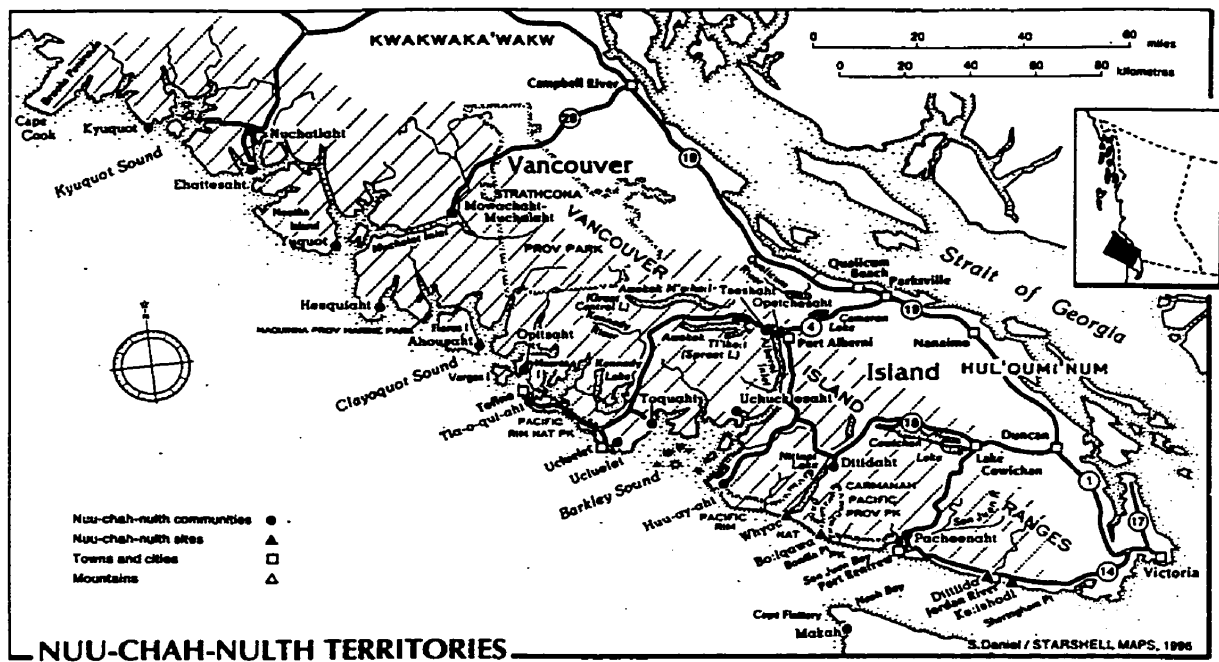
Reprinted, by permission, from Coull, *A Traveller's Guide to Aboriginal B.C.*, 40

Figure 9.
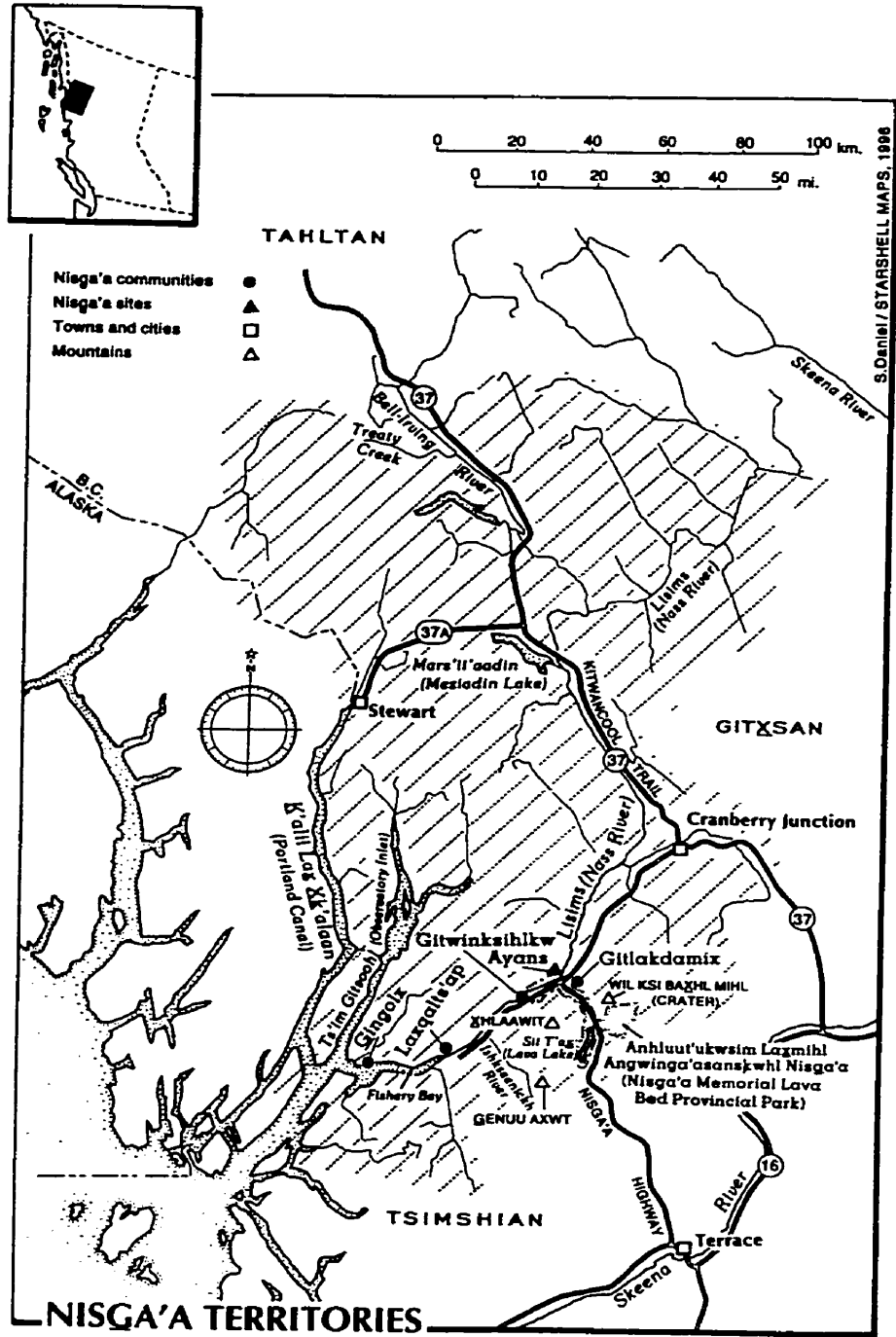
Reprinted, by permission, from Coull, *A Traveller's Guide to Aboriginal B.C.*, 212

Figure 10.

HUL'QUMI'NUM TERRITORIES
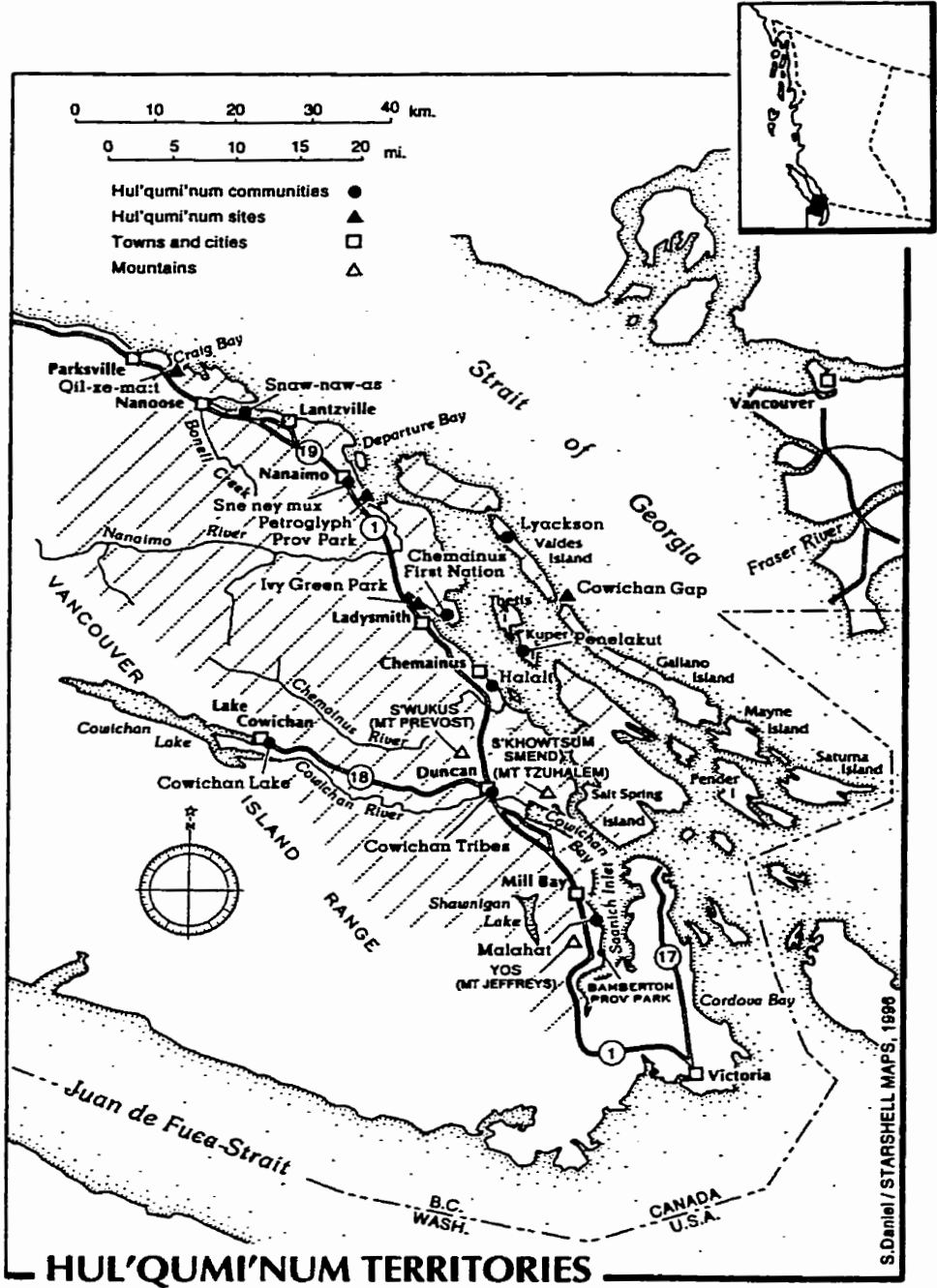
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Chapter 3

A History of the Kwagiulth Dancers

Kwakwaka'wakw cultural eco-touristic dance groups have been mentioned by many ethnographers, including Gloria Cranmer Webster (1995, 195), Curtis Hinsley (1991, 349-351, 353) and Peter Macnair (1973-74, 94), among others. The history, objectives or significance of these groups, however, have rarely been discussed in detail. In this chapter, I document the origins, history and aims of one Kwakwaka'wakw dance troupe, the Kwagiulth Dancers. I describe the tradition of Kwakwaka'wakw cultural eco-touristic presentation that gave rise to the Kwagiulth Dancers' creation, outline the dance group's accomplishments and explain how the group's objectives have been met at Victoria's First Peoples Festival. Then, I consider the importance of the Kwagiulth Dancers to some Kwakwaka'wakw artists who live in Victoria and perform at the festival. This examination of the Kwagiulth Dancers' group history, and some dance group members' personal histories addresses the impact that the dance group has had not only on non-Native publics, but also on some of its members.

Group Origins and History

The Kwagiulth Dancers share Kwakwaka'wakw music and dance with the general public, a practice that began at Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition (Cranmer 1998, see Hinsley 1991).[20] In the early 1890s, George Hunt,[21] a Kwakwaka'wakw ethnographer employed by anthropologist Franz Boas, shipped materials to the Chicago fairgrounds for the construction of a Kwakwaka'wakw village exhibit, in which 17 Fort Rupert (see Figure 2, page 4) Kwakwaka'wakw artists would live, create artworks and demonstrate ceremonial genres (Jacknis 1991, 183). During the event, Hunt and other Kwagiulth artists living in the "village" used music and dance presentations to educate people at the fair about Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch arts. Among those who attended the exposition was musicologist John Comfort Fillmore. Fillmore, who was unfamiliar with Kwagiulth music prior to 1893, spent several weeks recording songs performed by and talking with these artists in attempt to learn about Kwakwaka'wakw voice production (see Boas 1896, Fillmore 1893).[22] Also, Kwagiulth artists soon to be formally initiated as dancers in the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch system, such as David Hunt, used these dance presentations as rehearsals for their initiation ceremonies. David Hunt or 'Namugwis danced the hamat'sa (cannibal or wild man dance) and wore regalia made from *t'lagakw*

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[20] Live demonstrations of North American indigenous arts for non-Natives, on the other hand, happened as early as 1501, when some Inuit presented their artistic traditions in Bristol (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 41).

[21] Many of the Kwagiulth Dancers, including Tony Hunt, George Hunt and Kevin Cranmer, are descendants of George Hunt (Cranmer 1998).

[22] Fillmore then wrote an article in which he mistakenly concluded that the Kwakwaka'wakw sing microtones because they have poor musical training and senses of pitch (Fillmore 1893, 288-89). As

(red cedar bark) in preparation for his initiation as a hamat'sa dancer in 1894 (Cranmer

Webster 1995, 195). At the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, then, Kwakwaka'wakw

artists presented dances and songs largely owned by George Hunt and his family in order

to teach both non-Native audiences and young Kwagiulth about Kwakwaka'wakw

ceremonial genres.

In subsequent years, Kwakwaka'wakw cultural eco-touristic presentations not only

provided opportunities for Kwak'wala speaking initiates and Eurocanadian audiences to

learn more about Kwakwaka'wakw music and dance, but also facilitated cultural

exchange between First Nations. At St. Louis' 1904 National Exposition, for instance, a

Sioux dance group gave some Da'naxda'xw Kwakwaka'wakw musicians from Upper

Knight Inlet, B.C. (see Figure 2, page 4) an indigenous South Dakotan dance called the

sudi. The Kwakwaka'wakw classify the sudi as a "fun dance." It is done by children,

women and men, who dance in a circle and then in two lines while keeping their hands in

fists and swinging their arms. Kwakwaka'wakw participants in the 1904 exposition, such

as James Nowell (or Klalish) and Bob Harris (or Klakoglas) (Louisiana Purchase

Exposition Co., *The Kwakiutl*, photograph, 1904, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis),

taught the sudi to other Kwak'wala-speaking artists. The dance soon became the preferred

way to end a Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch (Cranmer Webster ed., 58). Kwakwaka'wakw

singers also learned several Navajo songs at the 1904 National Exposition, which were

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Halpern has proven, however, Kwakwaka'wakw singers undergo rigorous vocal training and use

similarly shared with other Kwakwaka'wakw artists, especially Chief Mungo Martin (Duff 1959, 3), who was the grandfather of Kwagiulth Dancer Chief Tony Hunt. Songs and dances learned by the Kwakwaka'wakw from other First Nations at St. Louis' 1904 fair were quickly adopted into the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch system as fun or social genres.

In Canada, public presentations of Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch genres rarely happened until after 1951, when the Canadian government deleted section 149, chapter 81 of the Indian Act, which had banned potlatching since 1884 (Sewid-Smith 1979, 1-2). The first Canadian public performance of Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites following the ban happened during Wa'waditla's opening ceremony, a three-day celebration hosted by Chief Mungo Martin in December 1953 (Nuytten 1982, 94). On days two and three of the big house opening, Martin's family members shared some of their ceremonial rites with provincial government officials, logging company representatives, members of the media and the general public (Duff 1953, B 21, 23, 24). Like Kwakwaka'wakw shows at the American national expositions, these presentations educated non-Native audiences about Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial genres, such as the *yathla* and *hamsamala* (Provincial Museum of Natural History and Anthropology 1953). Martin's relatives, many of whom lived in Victoria, emphasized the legalistic aspects of potlatch genres by demonstrating the yathla, a cradle ceremony that precedes the transference of a hereditary name and the

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microtones in systematic, highly sophisticated ways (Halpern 1981, 5).

rites associated with it to a young child. Mungo Martin's family showed that Kwakwaka'wakw ritual cannibalism no longer exists in a literal sense, but thrives in a metaphoric sense by presenting the hamsamala, which contains symbolic references to human flesh-eating. In the hamsamala, male artists danced masks that represented several mythological creatures that constantly crave human flesh: *Huxwhukw* (Long Beak), *Galukwaml* (Crooked Beak of Heaven) and Raven, the three cannibal bird attendants to *Baxwbakwalanuxwsiwe'* (Cannibal at the North End of the World) (Nuytten 1982, 94-98). Public dances presentations at Wa'waditla's opening ceremony, however, differed from earlier Kwakwaka'wakw cultural eco-touristic performances in that they were highly political. They immediately followed the first openly held Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial to happen since 1921,[23] which Martin hosted on day 1 of the opening ceremony.

Some Kwakwaka'wakw dancers who lived in Victoria and participated in Wa'waditla's opening ceremonies, including Henry, Tony and Helen Hunt, formed a dance group which became known as "The Hunt Family Dancers" by the late '60s. The dance group's name reflected the facts that its dancers, in addition to being related to Mungo Martin, were descendants of George Hunt and performed some of the same ceremonial rites that Hunt had shared at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Since the Royal B.C.

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[23] As I mentioned in the introduction, Kwakwaka'wakw chief Dan Cranmer held a potlatch in 1921. Indian Agent William Halliday arrested 45 people who participated in and confiscated most regalia used in this potlatch under the Indian Act's anti-potlatch clause. Between 1921 and 1951, Kwakwaka'wakw chiefs

Museum employed some of these dancers in the Thunderbird Park Carving Program, the dance group rehearsed in Thunderbird Park's Mungo Martin House (Hunt, Tony 1999). The dance group also practised at Tony Hunt's Victoria home (Hunt, Tony 1998). The Hunt Family Dancers presented certain Kwagiulth ceremonial rites that they owned for both local and international cross-cultural educational events and public ceremonials. Examples of cross-cultural educational events at which the dance group performed include opening ceremonies for tourist attractions, such as the 1968 opening of the reconstructed Gitxsan village 'Ksan (Travel Bureau, *The Hunt Family Dancers*, photograph, 1968, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria), and for museum exhibits, such as the 1981 opening of the "Hunt Family Heritage Show" (Peter Macnair, *Dances Staged by the Hunt Family*, photographs, 1981, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria). Among the public ceremonials at which the Hunt Family Dancers presented hereditary rites were two totem pole-raising ceremonies in Victoria, one for a totem which the *Victoria Times* commissioned Mungo Martin to carve in 1956 (The B.C. Indian Arts Society 1982, 20), and one for a pole that Richard Hunt created for the Royal B.C. Museum in 1980 (B. Storey, *Dedication of Pole*, photographs, 1980, Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria). Also, in 1979, some of the Hunt Family Dancers dedicated a totem pole carved by Tony Hunt at the Canadian Embassy in Bonn, Germany (Hunt, Tony 1998). So, in addition to demonstrating ceremonial rites at cultural eco-touristic events like turn-of-the-century Kwakwaka'wakw dance troupes, the Hunt Family Dancers

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needed to hold potlatches in secret in order to avoid further arrests and confiscation of regalia (Cranmer Webster 1992, 33-34).

presented dances and songs in public ceremonies that commemorated the erection of commercial totem poles in public spaces.[24]

During the 1980s and early '90s, Chief Tony Hunt, who was then the leader of the Hunt Family Dancers, invited Kwakwaka'wakw artists from a variety of families and nations to participate in the Victoria-based dance group. As a result, the group expanded from a small troupe that only showcased artists from the Hunt family, to a large group which featured dancers and singers from many of the 20 Kwakwaka'wakw nations (see Figure 2, page 4) (Neel 1998). The dance group no longer called itself the Hunt Family Dancers, but used different names for different performances. When the dance group presented ceremonial rites at an event, it would use a name that described the collective history of the Kwakwaka'wakw artists who could participate in that event. At the 1994 First Peoples Festival gala "Family of First Nations," for instance, the group called itself "The Thunderbird Park Dancers" because its members often practised and presented Kwakwaka'wakw rites in Thunderbird Park's big house (see Harris and Dixon 1994). For an *Up Close & Personal* performance at the 1999 Vancouver Folk Festival, the group called itself "Dancers of the Kwakwakawa'kw" because Kwakwaka'wakw chiefs Robert Joseph and Tony Hunt spoke, and artists from numerous Kwakwaka'wakw territories shared rites at the event (Dancers of the Kwakwakawa'kw 1999). At the past two First

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[24] B.C. author/illustrator Hilary Stewart defines commercial poles as totems that are commissioned by non-Native individuals and organizations. According to Stewart, commercial poles often stand in untraditional places and serve as reminders of Northwest Coast First Nations' ancient relationships with land (Stewart 1993, 25).

Peoples Festivals, the dance group has called itself "The Kwagiulth Dancers" because (a)

two chiefs of the Kwagiulth band, Tony and George Hunt, speak at the group's festival

presentations (see Kwagiulth Dancers 1998, 1999), (b) the dance group originated as an

all-Kwagiulth troupe (Hunt, Tony 1998), and (c) Kwakwaka'wakw artists involved in

Victoria's Kwagiulth Urban Society organize the group's rehearsals and presentations

(see Neel 1998).

The Kwagiulth Dancers (as I will now call them for simplicity's sake) hold singing and

dance practices at separate rehearsal times in Mungo Martin House in Victoria. These

practices usually happen on weekends or evenings during the week when the musicians

and dancers do not have work or ceremonial commitments. Any Kwak'wala-speaking

artist living in or visiting the Victoria area who wants to learn about Kwakwaka'wakw

music and dance is encouraged to attend these rehearsals. Generally, these artists find out

about the practices by word-of-mouth. The Kwagiulth Dancers' singing practices are

primarily attended by Kwakwaka'wakw men, as women do not sit at the log drum and

sing for Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial genres.[25] As Chief Tony Hunt told me, a

Kwakwaka'wakw chief will organize and supervise these rehearsals in order to ensure

that the artists not only sing songs correctly, but also understand the oral histories that

they signify (Hunt, Tony 1998). Knowledgeable female dancers, on the other hand,

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[25] Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch artists that I have spoken with have not offered any rationale for why this is so, but simply stated that it is a "customary practice." Lou-ann Neel wrote me, however, that Kwakwaka'wakw matriarchs know songs from hearing them many times at ceremonies. In potlatches,

coordinate dance practices in Wa'waditla. In recent years, Lou-ann Neel, a dancer, textile artist and arts administrator who has danced with the Kwagiulth Dancers for 10 years and organized their presentations for 7 years, has arranged dance practices. Importantly, the Kwagiulth Dancers' practices allow Kwakwaka'wakw artists living in Victoria and away from their traditional territory not only to maintain, but also to develop their respective disciplines by learning new dances and songs.

The Kwagiulth Dancers have shared Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites at numerous festivals, exhibits, pole dedications and conferences. When doing this, they have blurred the boundaries between insider and outsider, the authentic and the touristic, and ceremony and staged performance. While a large number of Kwagiulth Dancers have participated in some events, specific Kwakwaka'wakw dancers and singers have been selected to perform at other functions. At some festivals and museum exhibit openings in southern B.C., such as Victoria's 1999 First Peoples Festival and the Royal B.C. Museum's opening of *Chiefly Feasts* in 1991, as many as 50 of Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw artists have taken part in Kwagiulth Dancers presentations (Kwagiulth Dancers 1999, see Nelson 1999). As Kwakwaka'wakw carver, dancer and singer Kevin Cranmer told me, these large dance presentations have featured so many members of Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community that they might best be described as community gatherings (Cranmer 1998). Smaller Kwagiulth Dancers presentations have happened at local

male singers sometimes ask these women for advice if they have any doubts as to as to how a song should be sung (Neel 8 March 2000).

conferences, and out-of-province pole-raising ceremonies, art exhibits and festivals. For local conferences, such as Victoria's 1994 Women In Wellness conference, Lou-ann Neel has asked between 10 and 25 Kwagiulth Dancers to share Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites (Neel 25 November 1999). For out-of-province functions, such as the 1999 *Down from the Shimmering Sky* exhibit at Ontario's McMichael gallery (The Kwakwaka'wakw Dancers 1999) and the 1995 Japanese Cultural Exchange Gathering in Morioka, Neel has arranged for between 4 and 6 Kwagiulth Dancers to share Kwakwaka'wakw dances and songs. When I asked Neel why more Kwagiulth Dancers have performed at some events and less at others, she replied that the number of Kwakwaka'wakw artists who present dances and songs at an event is influenced by cost and travel factors. If a function's organizers offer the dance group a large honourarium and do not need to reimburse the artists for travel costs (because the function happens near their homes), then large numbers of Kwagiulth Dancers will perform. If an event's coordinators give the Kwagiulth Dancers a modest honourarium and/or must reimburse the artists for considerable travel/accommodation expenses (because the event takes place outside B.C.), then fewer Kwakwaka'wakw artists will present dances and songs at the event (see Neel 8 March 2000).

The cultural objectives of small and large Kwagiulth Dancers' performances differ slightly. At small-scale presentations, Kwagiulth Dancers aim to educate non-Natives about potlatch arts. They do this by performing Kwakwaka'wakw dances and songs, and

sometimes also by demonstrating their visual art skills. Kwagiulth Dancers who participated in the Scotiabank Family Day Northwest Coast Festival at the McMichael, for example, carved masks, made silver jewelry and sewed button blankets in addition to dancing and singing (McMichael Canadian Art Collection 1999). At large-scale presentations, like those at the First Peoples Festival, Kwagiulth Dancers aim to educate young dance group members as well as the general public about Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites.

During the First Peoples Festival, the Kwagiulth Dancers' chief speakers teach young Kwakwaka'wakw dancers and musicians about ceremonial rites owned by their families when making public speeches. In these speeches, chiefs often point out errors made by young Kwakwaka'wakw dancers from Victoria who have not yet been formally initiated into the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch system. These dancers participate in the Kwagiulth Dancers' presentations in order to practise dancing in front of large crowds in preparation for their initiation ceremonies (Hunt, Tony 1998). When an uninitiated dancer makes mistakes in a festival performance, the Kwagiulth Dancers' chief speaker will explain the nature of these errors to audience members and say that they are excusable because they have not occurred at a potlatch.[26] After Tony Hunt's grandson's tla'sala (peace dance) headdress fell off twice during the 1994 Family of First Nations gala, for instance, Hunt gave the following speech:

> My grandson has been dancing for a week now and he is happily enjoying it. I'm having fun watching him. That headdress dance in the real ceremony: the dancer can stop and tighten up his leggings and take off his headdress, fix it. He got carried away and [his headdress] came off, twice. But that is okay. (Harris and Dixon 1994)

During their festival speeches, Kwakwaka'wakw chiefs also recount songs' oral histories for the educational benefit of young Kwakwaka'wakw singers living in Victoria. As Frank Nelson told a 1999 festival audience, it is important that Kwakwaka'wakw singers know songs' oral histories because these histories dictate how and when songs should be used in potlatches. He said that for a Kwakwaka'wakw singer,

> . . . it is not enough just to be able to sing. You have to be able to connect these songs to certain families. You have to be able to connect these songs to tribal groups . . . for inevitably what we carry is the history of our people in song, name and dance. (Kwagiulth Dancers 7 August 1999)

Like the uninitiated dancers, these singers learn about Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites during the festival so that when they participate in potlatches in Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territory, they know how to conduct themselves appropriately (Neel 1998).

The Kwagiulth Dancers' speakers similarly teach non-Native First Peoples Festival audiences about Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites during their speeches. At Kwagiulth Dancers performances that I attended, Kwakwaka'wakw spokesmen made comments intended for non-Native onlookers about the potlatch's format and Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites' ownership (Kwakwaka'wakw Dancers 1996, Kwagiulth Dancers 1998,

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[26] If a Kwakwaka'wakw dancer makes a mistake during a potlatch, he or she will have to pay fines to chiefs. When I attended Chief George Hunt Sr.'s Fort Rupert potlatch in 1998, for example, a dancer broke the rigging on his mask and had to pay $750 in total to different chiefs (Hunt, George 1998).

1999). During 1998 Kwagiulth Dancers presentations, for example, Kevin Cranmer and

Chief Tony Hunt said that the ceremonial is divided into two parts, the t'seka (red cedar

bark ceremony) and the tla'sala (peace dance ceremony). They emphasized the

ceremonial's complexity by explaining that the two sections of the potlatch contain

numerous dances, songs and masks which are associated with specific families, tribes and

territories, and signify different narratives (Kwagiulth Dancers 1998, 1999). By

describing potlatches in some detail, Cranmer and Hunt tried to break the erroneous

stereotype that all indigenous people in North America (rather than specifically the First

Nations of the Plains) wear feathers and moccasins, and live in teepees (Hunt, Tony

1998).[27] Chief Frank Nelson, on the other hand, told largely non-Native Kwagiulth

Dancers audiences which family or community owned each Kwakwaka'wakw dance,

song and mask featured at the 1999 festival. Nelson addressed intellectual property

issues,[28] and mentioned the fact that some business people outside of the

Kwakwaka'wakw nation have exploited elements of Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites

for personal financial gain. He cautioned entrepreneurs in the festival audiences against

"stretching their arms" or marketing intellectual property that does not belong to them

(Kwagiulth Dancers 1999). In an interview, Chief Nelson told me that he spoke out

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[27] The history and implications of this stereotype have been explored by ethnomusicologists Beverley Diamond, M. Sam Cronk and Franziska von Rosen (1994, 44-46), historian Deborah Doxtator (1988) and folklorist Rena Green (1988, 86, 88-89), among others.

[28] Lawyer Lesley Harris defines intellectual property as "a form of creative endeavour that can be protected through a trade mark, patent, copyright, industrial design or integrated circuit topography" (Harris 1995, 11). Individual artworks can be protected under Canada's federal copyright laws. The question of whether shapes that originated from specific Northwest Coast First Nations' traditional art forms (e.g., the ovoid in northern formline design) can be protected by Canadian law is still being debated (Neel and Biin 1998).

against non-Native appropriation of Kwakwaka'wakw intellectual property because he

wanted to convey to audience members that asymmetrical power relations between non-

Natives and First Nations still exist. He said that both non-Natives and First Nations

should strive to attain balanced power relationships with one another:

> [A Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rite] does not raise you above anyone else. It just
> allows you a place in this life. That is the most important part, that no one towers
> over anyone else. That understanding I want to convey not only to my own
> people, but to the public. We are not one over and above anybody else. We are
> one and the same. That is the balance, the balance of life. (Nelson 1999)

Nelson discussed the ownership of ceremonial rites, and Hunt and Cranmer talked about

the potlatch's complexity in order to point out what non-Native audience members might

learn about their own perceptions of indigenous groups from Kwagiulth Dancers'

presentations of music and dance. These speeches identified the Kwagiulth Dancers'

festival performances as events that would not only influence the way that Victoria's

young Kwakwaka'wakw artists conducted themselves at potlatches in traditional

Kwakwaka'wakw territory, but also increase non-Natives' respect for First Nations

cultures. As Julie Cruikshank describes such events, the speeches are not "texts" as much

as "social actions" (Cruikshank 1997, 56).

Personal Histories of Some Kwagiulth Dancers

I will now discuss the artistic backgrounds of four Kwagiulth Dancers: Chief Frank

Nelson, Kelsey Alfred, Kevin Cranmer and Sean Wanukw (Whonnock). While certain

parts of these personal histories were told by some of these Kwagiulth Dancers to festival

audiences, other parts were shared with me in interviews. All of the stories are printed

here with these four artists' permission. The histories reveal the educational, artistic and

spiritual significance of the dance group to the artists, who live in Victoria and not in

their traditional territory.

Chief Frank Nelson

Frank Nelson (Figure 11, page 98), a chief of the Dza'wadan̲ux̲w (see Figure 2, page 4),

started to study Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw potlatch arts in Victoria in the mid-1970s. When I

interviewed him, Frank Nelson said that he is thankful to some members of Victoria's

Hunt Family Dancers, especially Tony and Tommy Hunt, because they encouraged his

initial interest in Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw dance, song and visual art, and introduced him to

Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw elders. Chief Nelson told me that he chose to pursue a career as a

Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw artist for two main reasons. Firstly, he had heard chiefs say at

potlatches that if young Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw did not take the opportunity to learn potlatch

dances, songs and Kwak'wala[29] from elders, the elders would take their ceremonial

knowledge with them when they died. These speeches motivated Nelson to become a

potlatch artist because he realized that some parts of the potlatch system would

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[29] Kwak'wala speakers generally distinguish two types of Kwak'wala: (1) the Kwak'wala used in everyday speech, and (2) the Kwak'wala used for potlatch speeches and songs. Ceremonial Kwak'wala differs from conversational Kwak'wala in that it contains vocabularies and concepts which relate to governance (see Neel 5 November 1999).

disintegrate if young Kwakwaka'wakw did not learn ceremonial arts. Secondly, Chief

Nelson found that practising Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch arts gave him spiritual direction

and helped him maintain a healthy lifestyle. He told me that early in his artistic career he

suffered from several illnesses and underwent a quadruple bypass. Nelson attributed his

full recovery from his illnesses and surgery to his involvement in Kwakwaka'wakw

ceremonial arts, which allowed him to express his spirituality. Since the early 1980s,

Frank Nelson has hosted several potlatches, and has participated in other

Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonials as an elder, carver, dancer, composer and singer. He has

exhibited masks that he has carved at numerous art shows in North America and Europe.

He has also led various presentations by Kwagiulth Dancers and directed some of the

dance group's rehearsals (Nelson 1999).

In his interview, Chief Frank Nelson said that Kwagiulth Dancers' practices and

presentations are important to him because they are contexts in which he can encourage

young Kwakwaka'wakw artists to make certain lifestyle choices and follow the

ceremonial protocol he learned from elders. I learned from speaking with Nelson and

watching him direct Kwagiulth Dancers' performances that he teaches the young artists

these "habits of being" (hooks 1990) by demonstrating them. For example, Chief Nelson

discourages young Kwagiulth Dancers from drinking alcohol or taking drugs both when

sharing ceremonial rites and in everyday life by not using the substances himself. He does

this because he realizes that Kwakwaka'wakw and non-Native audiences will treat the

dancers and singers with more respect if they do not use alcohol or drugs. His efforts in this regard have been successful -- during Tribal Journeys 1993 (or Qatuwas), a canoe trip down the Northwest Coast (see Cranmer 1997), the young Kwakwaka'wakw artists that participated in the event followed his example, and did not indulge in drugs or alcohol. Frank Nelson shows young Kwagiulth Dancers that they must adhere to ceremonial protocol if they do not want to pay fines. He does this by paying fines himself if he makes an error in ceremonial protocol at a potlatch or public dance performance. In a Kwagiulth Dancers presentation at the 1999 First Peoples Festival, for instance, Chief Nelson sang a song which belonged to another Dza'wadanuxw chief when neither the chief nor his family was present, and breached protocol. Nelson noted his error in a speech and asked his nephew, George Shaughnessy, to distribute money to audience members on his behalf (Kwagiulth Dancers 6 August 1999). Chief Nelson educates young Kwagiulth Dancers about ceremonial protocol because he feels that some participants in the dance group "learned to run before they learned to walk," or learned to sing before they learned how to use songs in culturally appropriate ways (Nelson 1999). He wants to ensure that the young Kwakwaka'wakw artists understand and follow ceremonial protocol in future presentations of ceremonial rites so they do not offend owners of Kwakwaka'wakw dances and songs. For Frank Nelson, then, Kwagiulth Dancers' gatherings are significant because they provide him with opportunities to teach young Kwakwaka'wakw dancers and singers from Victoria about different approaches to ceremony and life that they must adopt in order to be well-respected as Kwakwaka'wakw artists.

Figure 11. Chief Frank Nelson gives a speech during a Kwagiulth Dancers performance at the 1999 First Peoples Festival.
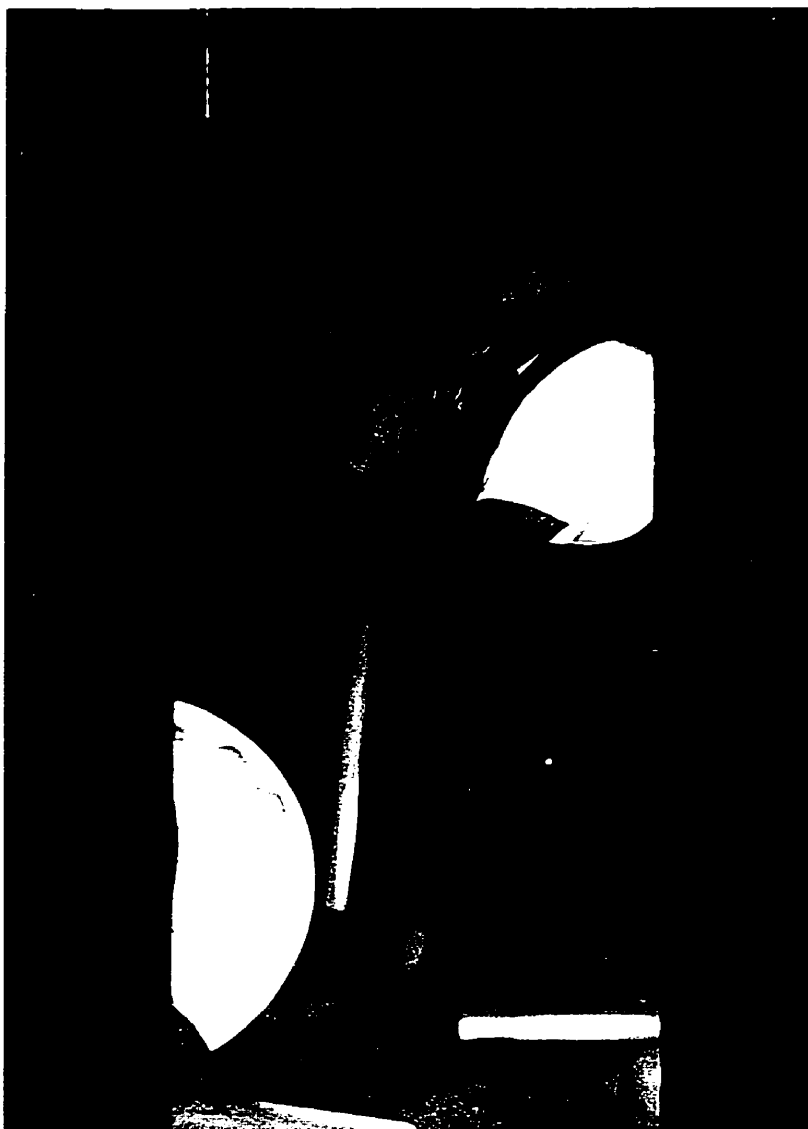

Photo by author

Kelsey Alfred

As Frank Nelson proudly told 1999 First Peoples Festival audiences, the Kwagiulth Dancers have played a central role in Kelsey Alfred's artistic development. Kelsey Alfred (Figure 12, page 100), a well-respected 'Namgis dancer who lives in Victoria, and the 8-year-old son of visual artists Harold and Bernice Alfred, first showed his talent for dance during Kwagiulth Dancers' performances at age 2. At a 1993 Kwagiulth Dancers presentation, Alfred left his seat in the audience and danced in the northeastern corner of Wa'waditla to a song composed by Nelson. After Chief Adam Dick or Kwaxsistala saw Alfred dance, he gave Alfred the name Gwagwada'xala and the ceremonial rites associated with it at a potlatch. During the 1999 festival, Chief Nelson talked about Kelsey Alfred's Kwak'wala name. He said:

> You only need to look at [Gwagwada'xala] to know that he knows what the name means that he carries: pride, honour, integrity. Sometimes, within our tribes, we have a name such as Gwagwada'xala. It's a little coin we call a *gwadla*, a quarter. That young man, he has to have a pocketful that he is able to give to you. That is the richness of the name he carries. (Kwagiulth Dancers 7 August 1999)

One of the ceremonial gifts that Kelsey Alfred received with his Kwak'wala name was the privilege to dance the *hoylikalal* (chief's dance) to Nelson's song, which he did for Kwagiulth Dancers performances at the 1999 First Peoples Festival. The Kwagiulth Dancers have been important to Kelsey Alfred because they inspired him to start dancing, and have encouraged his artistic development by welcoming him to practice and perform dances with them.

Figure 12. Kelsey Alfred dances the hoylik̲alal in Wa'waditla at the 1999 First Peoples Festival.

Photo by author

Kevin Cranmer

Kevin Cranmer (Figure 13, page 102) is an internationally renowned 'Namgis/Kwagiulth dancer, carver and singer who moved from his birthplace Alert Bay (see Figure 2, page 4) to Victoria at age 4, and has shared ceremonial rites with the Kwagiulth Dancers since the late 1980s. Cranmer trained as a dancer with his aunt Vera Newman of Alert Bay both in Victoria and Alert Bay starting at age 13, shortly before his initiation as a hamat'sa dancer at a 1980 potlatch. In the mid-1980s, he began studying carving formally with his cousin, Chief George Hunt Jr., and with master carver Tony Hunt at Victoria's Arts of the Raven Gallery. By 1992, Kevin Cranmer started to sing, and receive singing instruction from William (Wah) Wasden Jr. (see Wasden) in Victoria and in Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territory. Cranmer's artistic successes have been numerous: he has danced at most major Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonials since 1980, including Chief George Hunt Sr.'s 1998 Fort Rupert potlatch (Hunt, George 1998); he has shown his carvings at various art exhibits in North America, such as The American Museum of Natural History's 1992 *Chiefly Feasts* exhibit in New York; he has sung at many Kwakwaka'wakw potlatches and on different recordings, like the National Museum of the American Indian's *Creation's Journey* (1994), for example. While Cranmer began to sing with the Kwagiulth Dancers in 1992, he has displayed dances as well as his masks and totem poles during the group's dance presentations since 1988. Kwagiulth Dancers' presentations are important to Cranmer because they are opportunities for him to share

what he has learned from his dancing, carving and dancing teachers both with the general

public and with members of Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community (Cranmer 1998).

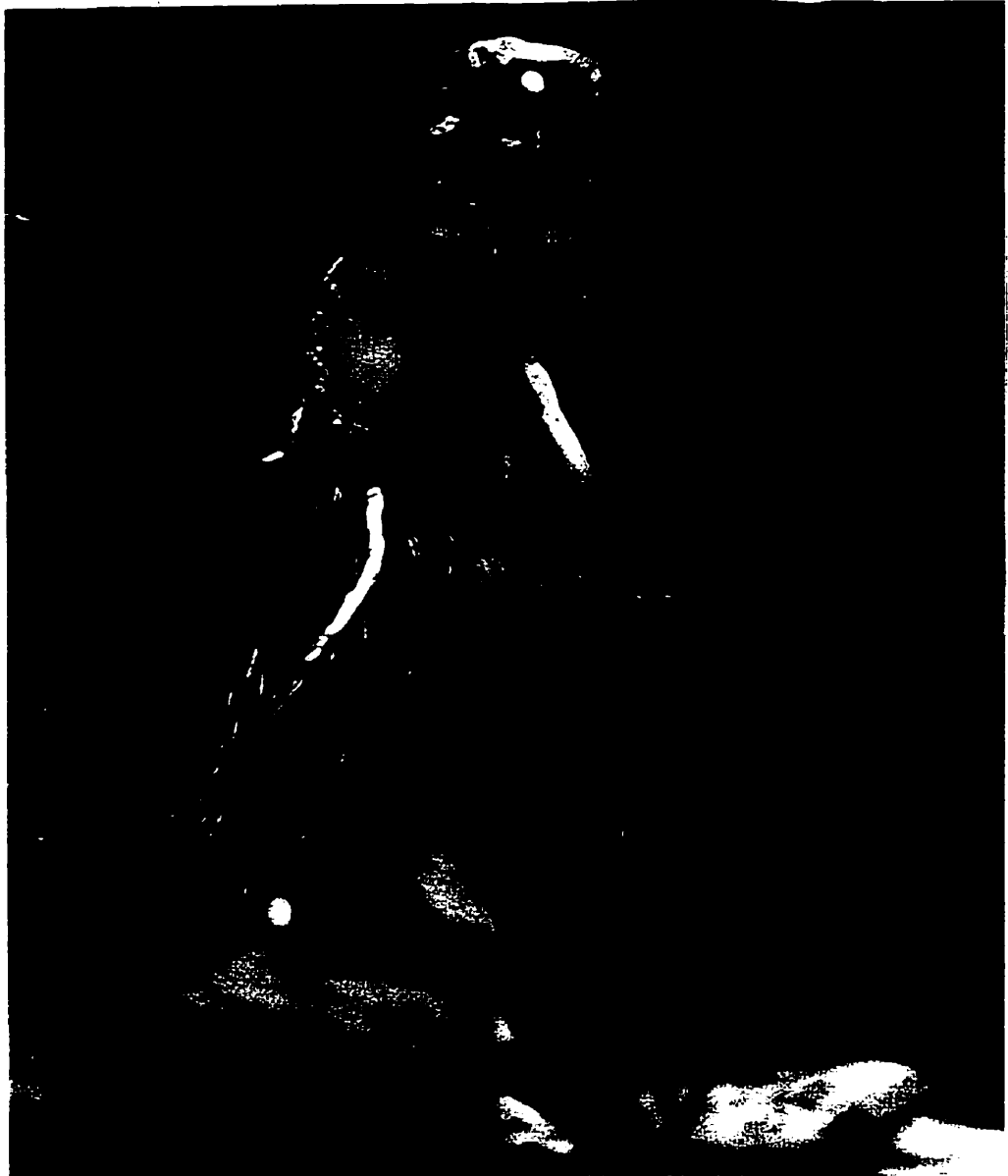Figure 13. Kevin Cranmer dances the hamat'sa at the 1995 First Peoples Festival.

Photo by Ray Smith for the *Times Colonist* (Victoria, 12 August 1995)

Sean Wanukw

Sean Wanukw (no photo available) is a well-known Kwakwaka'wakw carver from Alert Bay who presently lives in Victoria and works out of the Thunderbird Park Carving Studio at the Royal B.C. Museum. He first participated in the Kwagiulth Dancers at the 1998 First Peoples Festival. When Sean Wanukw was demonstrating carving techniques in the studio for tourists attending the festival, Lou-ann Neel asked him if he would take part in the dance group's performances. Wanukw agreed and, after Neel had given him brief lessons in Kwakwaka'wakw percussion and dance techniques, played a rattle and danced the *hiligaxste'* (tamed hamat'sa) in the group's festival performances (Neel 1998). For Wanukw, performing with the Kwagiulth Dancers was a profound spiritual experience. He said to me:

> When I was looking at the crowd, I couldn't see anybody. All I could see was smoke. It felt magical. (Wanukw 1999)

Also, participating in the Kwagiulth Dancers' festival presentations dramatically affected Wanukw's artistic development. After the 1998 First Peoples Festival, Wanukw began learning to sing Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch songs, painting frame drums and attending Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonies, activities that members of his family who had attended residential school had discouraged him from doing as a child and young adult. Sean Wanukw continues to take part in the Kwagiulth Dancers' cultural eco-touristic presentations because he finds them to be supportive contexts for learning about Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonials in general and potlatch songs in particular

(Wanukw 1999).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained that the Kwagiulth Dancers carry on a tradition of cultural eco-touristic presentation that began in the United States in 1893 and in Canada in 1953, after the Canadian government's potlatch ban ended. I described different purposes of early Kwakwaka'wakw cultural eco-touristic performances, some of which were to educate the general public about Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial genres, and to teach Kwakwaka'wakw dancers who had not yet been initiated into the potlatch system about potlatch dances. Also, I stated that while the first Kwakwaka'wakw musicians and dancers who performed publicly in the U.S. lived in Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territory, some of the Kwakwaka'wakw artists who first presented their ceremonial rites publicly in Canada did not. By the mid-20th century, many Kwakwaka'wakw dancers and singers had moved to Victoria and other cities in southern B.C., and continued to practise ceremonial arts there. Next, I documented the Kwagiulth Dancers' group history and objectives. I discussed the fact that the Kwagiulth Dancers originated in the late 1960s as the Hunt Family Dancers, a group of Kwagiulth artists who lived in Victoria and presented Kwagiulth ceremonial rites. Then, I traced the Kwagiulth Dancers' development into a dance group which featured numerous Kwakwaka'wakw artists from Victoria and ceremonial rites from many Kwakwaka'wakw nations by the early 1990s. I

also considered the social goals of Kwagiulth Dancers presentations, particularly those at the First Peoples Festival, some of which include (a) to raise non-Native awareness about various socio-political issues, like problems with stereotypes and non-Native appropriation of Kwakwaka'wakw intellectual property, for example, and (b) to teach young Kwakwaka'wakw artists who grew up in Victoria about Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites' protocols and oral histories. Lastly, I recounted the personal histories of some Kwagiulth Dancers, which revealed that the dance group has played a central role in the artistic development of certain members of Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community. Kwakwaka'wakw artists who discussed personal histories with me emphasized that Kwagiulth Dancers practices and public presentations are contexts in which Kwakwaka'wakw artists who do not live in their traditional territory can teach and learn Kwakwaka'wakw dances and songs.

These different histories underscore the fact that portable Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial rites have been integral to Kwakwaka'wakw cultural eco-touristic performances for over a hundred years. Historically, public presentations of Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch genres have served to educate not just non-Native audiences, but also young Kwakwaka'wakw artists about ceremonial genres from Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territory. Kwagiulth Dancers performances of ceremonial rites at the First Peoples Festival, then, realize educational goals that were first achieved by George Hunt at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

Chapter 4

Music and Dance Presented by the Kwagiulth Dancers at the Festival

Northwest Coast First Nations' songs and dances have been discussed by numerous writers. Some anthropologists and ethnomusicologists have aimed to identify characteristics of music and/or dance of indigenous people living in a Northwest Coast culture area in efforts to find similarities or differences between these artforms and those in other culture areas (e.g., Barbeau 1962, Nettl 1954, Roberts 1936). Many scholars and ethnographers have sought to define aspects of music and/or dance styles/genres/works practised by Natives from an area or location on the Pacific Northwest Coast (e.g., Enrico and Bross Stuart 1996, Herzog 1949, Mulder 1994/Boas 1944, Rhodes 1974/Angulo 1929, Deans 1891). All of these writers have associated Northwest Coast First Nations' songs and dances with specific places, but virtually none have analyzed how certain artforms represent these nations' narratives about land.

In this chapter, I examine how some dances and songs shared by the Kwagiulth Dancers at Victoria's First Peoples Festival signify and embody Northwest Coast First Nations' histories of place. I discuss the dance group's festival presentations of dances and songs from the two ceremonies in the contemporary Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch, the t'seka (red cedar bark ceremony) and the tla'sala (peace dance ceremony). I write about these ceremonial genres in the order that the dance group shares them with festival audiences,

which is the same order in which potlatch hosts present them to their guests. First, I examine the Kwagiulth Dancers' performances of some potlatch genres from the t'seka: the welcome, *hamsamsala* (dance of the hamat'sa or cannibal masks), hiligaxste' (tamed hamat'sa), women's, salmon and wolf dance and song. Then, I consider the dance group's presentations of some ceremonial rites from the tla'sala: the hoylikalal (chief's), tla'sala (peace), *bak'was* (wild man of the woods), *'yagam* (sea monster) and *amlala* (fun) dance and song. In conclusion, I reveal why Kwakwaka'wakw histories of place symbolized by these artforms are important to Kwagiulth Dancers who do not live in their traditional territory, but in Victoria.

Dances and Songs from the T'seka

The Kwagiulth Dancers begin their First Peoples Festival performances in Mungo Martin House by sharing a welcome dance and song, art forms which have been incorporated into the Kwakwaka'wakw t'seka from Nuu-chah-nulth tradition (see Cranmer Webster ed., 57). During a welcome dance, women and girls from Victoria's Kwakwaka'wakw community enter Wa'waditla through the building's front door, slowly dance in a counterclockwise arc and make a counterclockwise turn[30] before disappearing behind a dance screen hung at the back of the house. As in all Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch dances, the dancers are guided around the performance space by an attendant who wears a vest

with northern formline designs on it or a plain, dark-coloured blanket, and shakes a rattle. The dancers wear button blankets and aprons,[31] dance on the spot and bend their knees in time with a welcome song's spondaic[32] drumbeat. As in many Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch songs, male artists play this rhythm on frame drums and/or a log drum (see Figure 14, page 110), and make it accelerate slightly as the song progresses. The dancers also extend their left hands directly in front of them and hold their right hands at shoulder-level, with their palms facing upwards (see Figure 15, page 111), and make eye contact with onlookers in order to welcome them to the performance. At least once during each verse of a welcome song, these Kwagiulth Dancers take several steps towards the back of the big house, alternate their hand positions and turn 180 degrees, then resume dancing in one place.

When the artists dance in stationary positions, the northern formline designs on their button blankets and aprons are clearly visible to festival audiences. These designs represent narratives about Kwakwaka'wakw family crests and mythical beings associated with, or historical events which happened at specific locations in Kwakwaka'wakw

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[30] Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch protocol requires dancers to make a counterclockwise turn before entering or exiting a performance space, except when they come into or leave a space through a big house's front door (Hunt, George Sr. 1998).

[31] The Kwagiulth Dancers make these pieces of regalia from wool, polyester and/or cotton fabrics, create northern formline designs on them using buttons, beads, sequins, paint and/or appliqué, and often edge them with fur or tassels. For histories of the use of these materials, see artist Doreen Jensen and researcher Polly Sargent's book *Robes of Power, Totem Poles on Cloth* (1986).

[32] In this chapter, I have borrowed ethnomusicologist Ida Halpern's idea that stressed and unstressed drumbeats can be described using metric feet (see Halpern 1967, 7). I equate a metric foot's stressed syllable with a note value one-and-a-half or twice as long as that of a foot's unstressed syllable.

traditional territory (see Jensen and Sargent 1986, 37-38, 63). Barb Matilpi, the dancer

shown in Figure 15, for example, told me that the white cloth band edged with green

beads near the bottom of her dance apron symbolizes the Adams River, a river just north

of Campbell River (see Figure 2, page 4) and in the traditional territory of Matilpi's

family's 'na'mima, the Ma'amtag'ila of the Madilbi' (or Matilpi) First Nation. Since

Matilpi's father's family lived in the Adam's River area, Matilpi appliquéd a tree design

that has six branches on her apron. These branches represent her father and his five

siblings. Above the tree of life, she beaded a sisiutl, a crest and mythological being

important in oral histories about her father's family (Matilpi 2000). Welcome songs

presented by male Kwagiulth Dancers at the festival's Wa'waditla performances also

signify different histories of place. As Kevin Cranmer told a 1998 festival audience, one

Welcome Song that the Kwagiulth Dancers share at the First Peoples Festival comes from

Alert Bay and has been used by 'Namgis families to welcome guests to potlatches held in

Alert Bay's big house (Kwagiulth Dancers 9 August 1998). Chief Frank Nelson

explained to a 1999 festival audience that another Welcome Song presented by the dance

group has Nuu-chah-nulth lyrics, and was acquired by a Dza'wadanuxw man from

Kingcome Inlet when he married a Nuu-chah-nulth woman born on the west coast of

Vancouver Island (see Figure 2, page 4 and Figure 8, page 78) (Kwagiulth Dancers 7

August 1999). In this way, the Kwagiulth Dancers verbally acknowledge histories of

place associated with certain Welcome Songs and display visual representations of

narratives about land during Welcome Dances they present in Wa'waditla (Kwagiulth

Dancers 1998, 1999).

Figure 14. Some male Kwagiulth Dancers play frame drums and a log drum during a 1999 First Peoples Festival presentation in Wa'waditla.

Photo by author

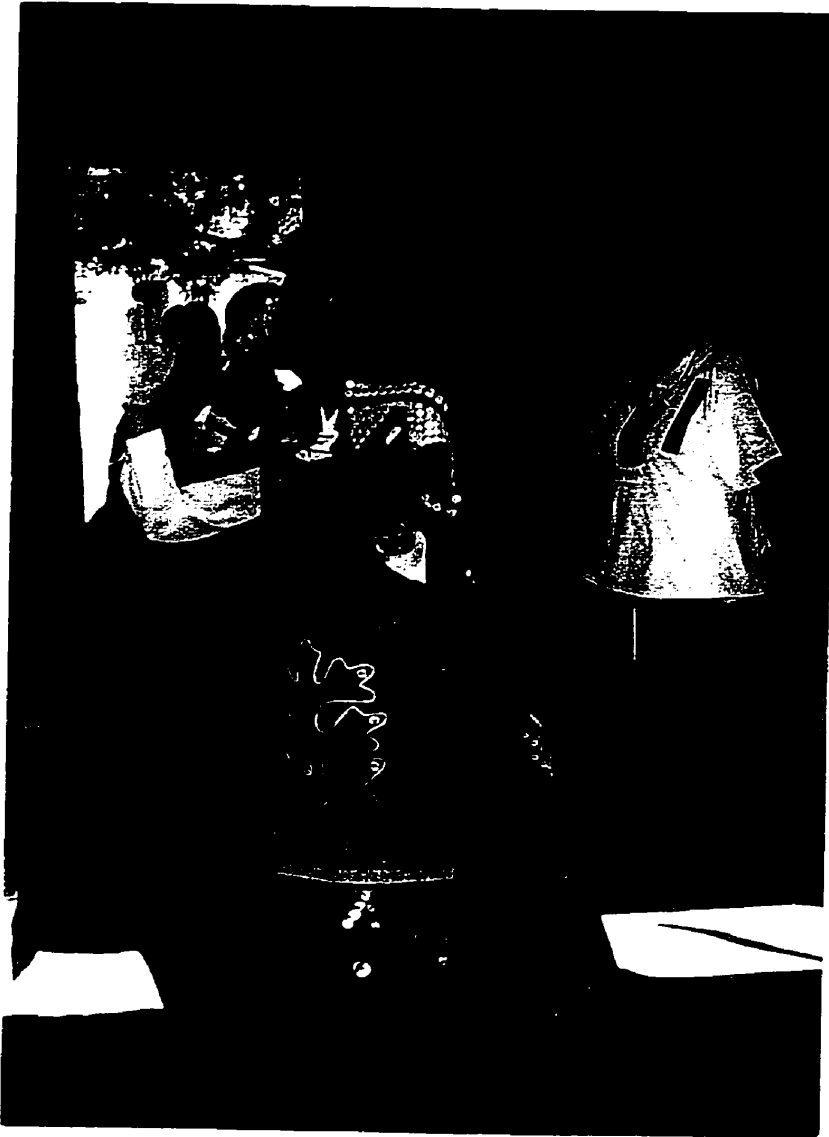Figure 15. Kwakwaka'wakw artist Barb Matilpi leads a Welcome Dance at the 1999 festival.

Photo by author

Kwagiulth Dancers continue their festival performances in Wa'waditla and start their

festival presentations at other venues with one or more selections from the hamat'sa. The

hamat'sa is a four-part Kwakwaka'wakw dance series in which dancers and singers wear

the red cedar bark[33] from which the red cedar bark ceremony gets its name. While the first

two parts of the dance series involve the transfer of Kwakwaka'wakw Hamat'sa Society

membership from elders to young people and only happen in potlatches,[34] the last two

parts of the hamat'sa feature ceremonial privileges (Hunt, George 1998) and have been

presented by Kwagiulth Dancers at the First Peoples Festival. From 1987 to 1993, the

dance group shared songs and danced masks from part 3 of the hamat'sa series, the

hamsamsala (Neel 1998). During virtually all their festival performances, the

Kwakwaka'wakw artists have presented dances and songs from the hamat'sa's final

section, the hiligaxste'. Since 1993, the Kwagiulth Dancers have performed Hiligaxste's,

but not Hamsamalas because they have felt that Hamsamalas are too sacred to share at a

secular, public festival (Neel 3 February 2000). Compared to Hiligaxste's, Hamsamalas

feature more sonic and obvious visual references to Kwakwaka'wakw spirituality and

mythology.

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[33] Many Kwakwaka'wakw artists put on red cedar bark regalia during the hamat'sa and keep it on for the remainder of the t'seka. Some singers and dancers wear red cedar bark headbands that may be decorated with ermine skins and/or abalone shell. Other dancers wear red cedar bark skirts or neckrings (Harris and Dixon 1994, Hunt, George 1998, Kwagiulth Dancers 1998 and 1999, Kwakwaka'wakw Dancers 1996).

[34] At the start of this initiation, new hamat'sas dance frenziedly and are said to be possessed by the spirit of the cannibal Baxwbakwalanuxwsiwe' (see below). Gradually, dancing calms the initiates. Once these dancers are calm, they belong the Kwakwaka'wakw Hamat'sa Society, whose members share the experience of spirit possession and enjoy elevated social status (Cranmer Webster ed. 9-10, 16-21, Curtis 1915, 159-65).

Kwagiulth Dancers that I interviewed told me that in demonstrations of the hamsamala, they danced three hamsamls (hamat'sa masks): the Huxwhukw (Long Beak), Galukwaml (Crooked Beak of Heaven) and Raven (e.g., Hunt, Tony 1998, Neel 1998). These masks represented man-eating birds described in Kwakwaka'wakw mythology that were servants to Baxwbakwalanuxwsiwe' (Cannibal at the North End of the World), a legendary cannibal who had bloody mouths all over his body (Macnair 1973-74, 62). Hamsamls shared in Kwagiulth Dancers' festival presentations featured northern formline designs in red, black and white, colours of the smoke emitted by several houses described in legends about these man-eaters and places in Ooweekeno territory (see Reid 1981, 190-94, 269). When Kwagiulth Dancers presented the hamsamala, male dancers shut the beaks on their masks while shouting, "Hap! Hap!" and singers performed songs appropriate for specific masks which contained the vocables ha, ma and mai. These syllables derive from the Kwak'wala words for "eating," hama-hamap and "food," hama (Halpern 1976, 255), and according to some Kwakwaka'wakw myths, were uttered by the cannibal Baxwbakwalanuxwsiwe' and his wife in their Ooweekeno home (see Cranmer Webster ed., 12, Boas 1897, 397-99). Syllables and masks used by Kwagiulth Dancers during their festival presentations of the hamsamala, then, were redolent of locations in Ooweekeno territory mentioned in Kwakwaka'wakw mythology.

During the Kwagiulth Dancers' demonstrations of the hiligaxste', male Kwakwaka'wakw Hamat'sa Society members and prospective initiates wear chilkat blankets, and dance in

large, counterclockwise circles with hiligaxste's or close female relatives (see Figure 16, page 115). Other female dancers, who dance in single file, either follow the hamat'sas and hiligaxste's, or stand in front of the dance screen, facing the audience. All of these dancers move their legs in time with a drum pattern, which consists of a quarter note, dotted quarter and accented dotted quarter, and is often imitated by singers when they sing the vocables *ha, ma* and *mai*. Both the hiligaxste's and hamat'sas also coordinate their arm movements with this rhythm. The hiligaxste's bend their arms at the elbows and swing them from side to side, and the hamat'sas raise then extend their arms while rotating their wrists quickly. In contrast, the hiligaxste's keep their arms still and extend them towards the hamat'sas, with their palms facing upwards, as if offering them something (Kwagiulth Dancers 1998 and 1999, Kwakwaka'wakw Dancers 1996).[35] According to Kwakwaka'wakw myth, Baxwbakwalanuxwsiwe's wife not only uttered the vocables *ha, ma* and *mai*, but also taught some of the Kwagiulth Dancers' ancestors that hiligaxste's should not move their arms during the tamed hamat'sa in her Ooweekeno home (see Boas 1897, 398). Kwagiulth Dancers associate both the position in which hiligaxste's hold their arms and the vocables singers use for festival presentations of the hiligaxste' with Ooweekeno traditional territory (Neel 3 February 2000).

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[35] This gesture derives from the arm position used by hiligaxste's at pre- and early contact potlatches. According to some ethnographers and Kwakwaka'wakw oral historians, these hiligaxste's carried corpses on their arms and offered them to hamat'sas during tamed hamat'sa dances in order to "tame" or calm them (see Goddard 1924, 128, Hunt, Tony 1998, McDowell 1997, 216).

Figure 16. At a 1998 festival main stage performance. prospective hamat'sa initiate Andy McGarry dances the hiligaxste' with his mother and hiligaxste'. Leslie McGarry. Andy wears a chilkat blanket. a ceremonial blanket woven from finely spun mountain goat wool and yellow cedar bark (see Holm 1987. 182).

Photo by author

After the Kwagiulth Dancers present the hiligaxste', they usually share at least one women's dance, such as a ladies' professional. This dance is called the ladies' professional because women who perform it must have good dancing skills in order to coordinate their body movements with different drum patterns and song lyrics (see Neel, Glendale and Guest 1998). During ladies' professionals, male Kwakwaka'wakw artists drum various rhythms which may include (1) combinations of dotted quarter notes and quarter notes, (2) series of dotted quarter notes, (3) dotted half notes interspersed with dotted quarter notes, and (4) *tsaxalas* or rapid spondaic beats. For the first three types of rhythms, female dancers take one step forward with each drumbeat and make counterclockwise turns; for tsaxalas, dancers either make the same movements as they do for the first three rhythmic types or take fast, tiny steps forward then backward. The male artists also present ladies' professional song lyrics that are made up of vocables and words. The men sing the lyrics when they drum rhythms 1-3 and a lead singer speaks them loudly when the men play *tsaxalas*. When vocables are sung/said, the dancers hold their right hands at shoulder-level and their left hands at stomach-level with their palms facing upwards, then alternate their hand positions, as they do in welcome dances (see Figure 15, page 111). While words are sung/spoken, the women dancers make lifting and sweeping gestures[36] (Harris and Dixon 1994, Kwagiulth Dancers 1998 and 1999, Kwakwaka'wakw Dancers 1996). As the Kwagiulth Dancers' coordinator Lou-ann Neel

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[36] Lou-ann Neel explained to me that in potlatches, the dancers use these gestures to "cleanse the floor of hamat'sas' untamed energy, and make way for all other business and ceremony" (Neel 3 February 2000).

told me, these words often emphasize "what proficient and professional dancers these women are, that they are magnificent in their recollection and recounting of the movements of Baxwbakwalanuxwsiwe'" (Neel 3 February 2000). According to Kwakwaka'wakw legend, Kwagiulth Dancers' ancestors also learned ladies' professional dance gestures from Baxwbakwalanuxwsiwe's wife in River's Inlet (see Wasden 1998, 16).

Next, the Kwagiulth Dancers share the salmon dance with First Peoples Festival audiences. This genre honours women's ability to bear twins (Kwagiulth Dancers 7 August 1999) and the Kwakwaka'wakw belief that human twins are gifts from the salmon people (see Wallas 1981, 134). It is only danced by women and girls from Kwakwaka'wakw families that have twins in them (Cranmer Webster ed., 42). Like in women's dances, female Kwakwaka'wakw dancers who perform the salmon dance at the festival synchronize their body movements with certain drumbeats, vocables and words. When male singers drum tsaxalas and shout the vocable *yoho*, these women hold their hands in front of their right then left hips, and enter into a performance space by taking a number of small steps forwards then fewer steps backwards in order to mimic salmon swimming upriver. When the men call out the syllables *hiii* and *yihiii*, the women put their hands close together and jump so as to imitate salmon jumping out of water. When the singers sing salmon songs' words, and drum a spondaic (♩ ♩ ♩) or amphimac rhythm (♩ ♩ ♩), the dancers hold their hands above their right then left shoulders and take one

step forward with each drumbeat (Kwagiulth Dancers 1998 and 1999, Kwakwaka'wakw

Dancers 1996). While these drumbeats, vocables and dance movements are used by all

Kwakwaka'wakw nations, salmon songs' words and melodies are acquired by individuals

and associated with certain territories. Chief Frank Nelson explained to some 1999 First

Peoples Festival audiences, for example, that the words and melody of one Salmon Song

> . . . came to one of [his] relatives in a dream. When he heard the song in his dream, he woke up the next morning feeling very, very good about what had happened. He knew that there was going to be an abundance of salmon in future years. When he came out with this song, he picked twins within his family to demonstrate the song to whomever they came across. (Kwagiulth Dancers 7 August 1999)

Since the man's and twins' ancestors lived in Blunden Harbour, the Kwagiulth Dancers

associate the Salmon Song with 'Nakwaxda'xw traditional territory (see Figure 2, page 4)

(Kwagiulth Dancers 7 August 1999).

Following the salmon dance, the Kwagiulth Dancers often present another women's

dance. At some 1999 festival performances, for instance, the dance group shared the

ladies' dance for the cleansing song "Galisukw'ala" at this point in its program. During

this dance, female Kwakwaka'wakw artists coordinate many of their body movements

with "Galisukw'ala's" rhythm and melody. The dancers move their feet in time with the

song's drum pattern, which is identical to the one used for the hiligaxste'[37] and gradually

increases in speed from M.M. o = 38/39 to M.M. o = 40/41 as the song progresses. These

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[37] Kwakwaka'wakw singer William Wasden Jr. told me that "Galisukwala" has this same drum rhythm because it was originally a hiligaxste' song. Over time, a women's dance was developed for "Galisukwala" and it became used for this dance instead of the hiligaxste' (Wasden 2000).

female artists frequently hold one of their hands at shoulder-level when they hear an

accented drumbeat. Some dancers also raise their hands when "Galisukw'ala" jumps

upwards by a perfect fifth, lower them when the song's melody descends by tones and a

minor third, and sweep them from side to side when the song's melody hovers around its

tonic, which gets about a half-tone higher as the song progresses[38] (Kwagiulth Dancers

1999). Whereas Kwakwaka'wakw artists who dance to "Galisukw'ala" synchronize

certain body movements with specific rhythms and melodic contours, artists who sing

"Galisukw'ala" may explain that the song's lyrics signify a particular sound and moral

lesson. After Chief Frank Nelson sang "Galisukw'ala" at one 1999 First Peoples Festival

performance, for example, he said that in Kwak'wala,

> . . . "Galisukw'ala" refers to the sound of the ice flow during the winter months.
> That song tells of the symbolism behind that sound of ice rubbing against [itself],
> flowing down the river. It is symbolic of taking away a lot of the ills that come
> our way. It is a lesson to us that we always have to reflect on our everyday life, on
> how we treat each other, so that we ensure that there is a place for our children
> and our elders, that we create a strong circle, that we hold onto each other [and
> adhere to] all of the principles that are part of the dictation of the [big] house.
> (Kwagiulth Dancers 7 August 1999)

Nelson explained that the sound referenced in "Galisukw'ala" can be heard in

Musgamagw Tsawataineuk territory (see Footnote 17, page 73 and Figure 2, page 4) and

that the song's lesson is especially significant to its owners, who come from Musgamagw

Tsawataineuk communities (Kwagiulth Dancers 7 August 1999).

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[38] The tonic of most songs presented by Kwagiulth Dancers at the festival rises as a result of microtonal variation. Halpern analyzed the use of microtonal variation in Kwakwaka'wakw songs in her liner notes for *Kwakiutl Indian Music of the Pacific Northwest* (1981, 5-8, 11-12, 15-51).

If time allows, the Kwagiulth Dancers demonstrate the wolf dance, a genre which is performed by the Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, Makah and Quileute (see Figure 1, page 3), among others, and is associated with different secret societies and creation stories (Cranmer Webster ed., 44, Kirk 1986, 73-74). During a 1999 First Peoples Festival big house performance, for example, the dance group shared a Musgamagw Tsawataineuk Wolf Dance. This dance was done by five women in reversed button blankets, one of which carried a miniature Galukwaml mask and four of which wore wolf masks. The woman holding the Crooked Beak of Heaven mask led the other female dancers counterclockwise around Wa'waditla's fire and in a zigzag pattern. As these dancers wound their way around the fire, they made counterclockwise turns, held their hands in fists and pointed their thumbs upwards. They then lined up in front of the singers, faced the audience and, keeping their hands fisted and thumbs up, dipped from side to side in time with an iambic drum pattern (see Figure 17, page 121). Before leaving the big house, the women danced in a counterclockwise circle not around the fire, but directly in front of the singers. When these women danced in counterclockwise circles, the singers played tsaxalas on their drums and shouted *yihii*, a vocable that musicologist Franz Fodermayr describes as a "stylization of wolf howls" (Fodermayr 1971, 97). While the women danced on the spot, the singers sang a Wolf Song whose lyrics recount the creation story of the Kwikwasutinuxw (see Figure 2, page 4), a Musgamagw Tsawataineuk tribe. Chief Frank Nelson explained to one festival audience that in this story,

Ozistalis, a *Kolus* or young thunderbird, was perched on top of a mountain peak close to Gilford Island. [Chief] T'sekame sent his son in the form of a wolf to go and greet Ozistalis. Ozistalis wanted to marry T'sekame's daughter (Kwagiulth Dancers 8 August 1999).

Nelson said that Ozistalis gave the right to perform wolf dances and songs to T'sekame when he wed T'sekame's daughter and became the first ancestor of the Kwikwasutinuxw (Kwagiulth Dancers 8 August 1999). This Wolf Song's lyrics, then, describe the meeting between Ozistalis and T'sekame's son which happened on a mountain near Gilford Island and preceded Ozistalis' founding a tribe in Kwikwasutinuxw territory.

Figure 17. Gin-gin Alfred dances the Wolf Dance during a 1999 First Peoples Festival Kwagiulth Dancers performance.

Photo by author

Dances and Songs from the Tla'sala

After the Kwagiulth Dancers present their final selection from the t'seka, the singers yell,

"La'man's lixalil!" ("Let's roll over [from the t'seka to the tla'sala]!") while drumming

tsaxalas, and take off their red cedar bark regalia in order to indicate that they will now

demonstrate music and dance from the tla'sala ceremony. One of the singers explains that

the next dance the dance group will share is the hoylikalal, a tla'sala or peace dance that

may be owned by the oldest son or grandson of a chief (Kwagiulth Dancers 1998, 1999).

This singer often provides a brief history of the dance as well. At a 1998 First Peoples

Festival performance, for instance, Kevin Cranmer said that

> . . . the reason we call them Peace Dances is that in the old days, there were often
> times when two chiefs would be at odds with each other. The [Kwakwaka'wakw
> people] would bring them together in front of the singers to dance. The chiefs
> would put eagle down in their frontlets and they would dance together. The eagle
> down would come out of their headdresses and fall down, *kumkwiala*, and would
> represent peace. When the dance was over, their differences were over as well.
> (Kwagiulth Dancers 9 August 1998)

Then, two or four male Kwagiulth Dancers enter a festival performance space while the

singers repeat one verse of a Hoylikalal Song and drum tsaxalas. The dancers wear

chilkat blankets, chilkat or button aprons, and headdresses which have sea lion whiskers,

carvings of crests and many ermine skins attached to them (see Figure 18, page 124).

These Kwagiulth Dancers play tsaxalas on wooden raven or globular hide rattles, make a

counterclockwise turn each time the verse begins, and tilt their headdresses so that any

down that is in them floats to the ground. Soon, the singers drum spondaic and/or

anapestic rhythms, and go on to complete this song and sing a second song. The dancers

may continue to rattle tsaxalas, but jump, make both clockwise and counterclockwise turns, and tilt their frontlets in time with these new rhythms. Many Kwagiulth Dancers inherited the right to wear chilkat regalia, play raven rattles, and present hoylikalal music and dance from female ancestors from Heiltsuk (Bella Bella), Haida, Tsimshian, Nisga'a (Nishga) and Tlingit territories (see Figure 1, page 3) (see Kwagiulth Dancers 1998 and 1999). Dance group members who belong to the Hunt family, for example, received these rights from Anisalaga (Mary Ebbetts), a Tlingit noblewoman who moved from Tongass, Alaska to Fort Rupert, B.C. when she married Robert Hunt, the father of ethnographer George Hunt (see Cranmer 1999, Cranmer Webster 1995, 196, Nelson 1999). While the hoylikalal dance movements, general layout of chilkat designs, basic shape of raven rattles and some Peace Dance Songs that the Kwagiulth Dancers present come from northern Northwest Coast First Nations' traditional territories, chilkat crests, specific raven rattles and other Hoylikalal Songs that they share at the festival originate from rural Kwakwaka'wakw communities (Hunt, George 1998, Kwagiulth Dancers 6 August 1999).

Figure 18. Kwagiulth Dancer Johnathan Henderson wears tla'sala regalia and dances the hoylikalal at the 1999 festival.

Photo by author

The next artforms that Kwagiulth Dancers share with festival audiences are regular tla'sala songs and dances, which also derive from northern Northwest Coast First Nations' traditional territories (see Holm 1990, 384). The Kwagiulth Dancers perform between one and three tla'sala songs and dances, which they usually alternate with as many masked dances. Tla'sala songs presented at the festival have spondaic drumbeats that may be played in parts or hocket for variation, and are often interspersed with rests of equal duration. They involve tla'sala ceremonial vocables such as *hoo*, *yay* and *wo*. Many of the songs are sung solely in unison. Specific notes or sections of some songs, however, are initially sung in seconds and then repeated in unison. Some of these tla'sala songs also signify different histories of place. At a 1999 First Peoples Festival performance in Wa'waditla, Chief Frank Nelson said

> For my family, [one Tla'sala] Song is an uplifting song, but also a sad song [because it] conjures up images of some family [members] who have passed on. This song was coined by my late brother Yakathanis who, not too long ago, passed on. It is associated with my late nephew. His name was Darren. . . . I introduced the song a number of years ago at this very setting. A long time ago, we used to practise our songs here. This young man came to me, sat beside me, always jabbed me on the chest or side, and [said,] "C'mon Chief, let's sing our song." (Kwagiulth Dancers 8 August 1999)

Alec Nelson, executive director of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre from 1985 to 1989, told a 1994 festival audience that two Northwest Coast First Nations associate "Kania," a different Tla'sala Song, with another location in Victoria: the Inner Harbour. He explained that Kwakwaka'wakw chief Robert Joseph gave Kwakwaka'wakw and Coast Salish participants in the 1994 canoe trip Tribal Journeys permission to sing the song when they arrived in Victoria's Inner Harbour from their traditional territories

(Harris and Dixon 1994). Tla'sala dances performed by the Kwagiulth Dancers, on the other hand, feature some dancers who wear chilkat regalia and ermine headdresses, and others who wear button blankets and aprons because they have not inherited rights to chilkat designs or tla'sala headdresses. During tla'sala dances, Kwakwaka'wakw women and boys respectively put their hands on their hips and upper thighs, and dance on the spot first with their backs to festival spectators, then facing the audience. They turn from side to side, bend their knees and avert their eyes in time with a tla'sala song's drumbeat (Kwagiulth Dancers 1998 and 1999, Kwakwaka'wakw Dancers 1996). As Alec Nelson explained during the 1994 festival gala Family of First Nations,

> ... the dancers line up [in front of the singers] and dance. The attendant will usually come and poke fun, and try to discourage a dancer from 'staying in tune,' as it were. And then, the dancer will walk out [of a performance space] with [her/his] regalia. The attendant will usually bring the dancer's headpiece back [into the space] {see Figures 19-21, pages 127-29}. This gives a chief an opportunity to reach into his box of treasures. What comes out of there is his *dlugwe'* {supernatural treasure, one of his masks} and it reflects the richness of his family. It demonstrates the relationship the chief and family have to the land. (Harris and Dixon 1994)

When Kwagiulth Dancers present certain tla'sala songs at the First Peoples Festival, they discuss previous performances of the songs that happened at specific places in Victoria. These Kwakwaka'wakw artists associate the songs with the city they live in, rather than their traditional territory. The artists connect the dances that accompany these tla'sala songs, on the other hand, both to their own ancestral lands and those of other Northwest Coast First Nations. Tla'sala dances are promises that a Kwakwaka'wakw chief will demonstrate his ties to these different territories by sharing a mask.

Figure 19. Some Kwakwaka'wakw artists dance a Tla'sala at a 1999 festival performance in Mungo Martin House.
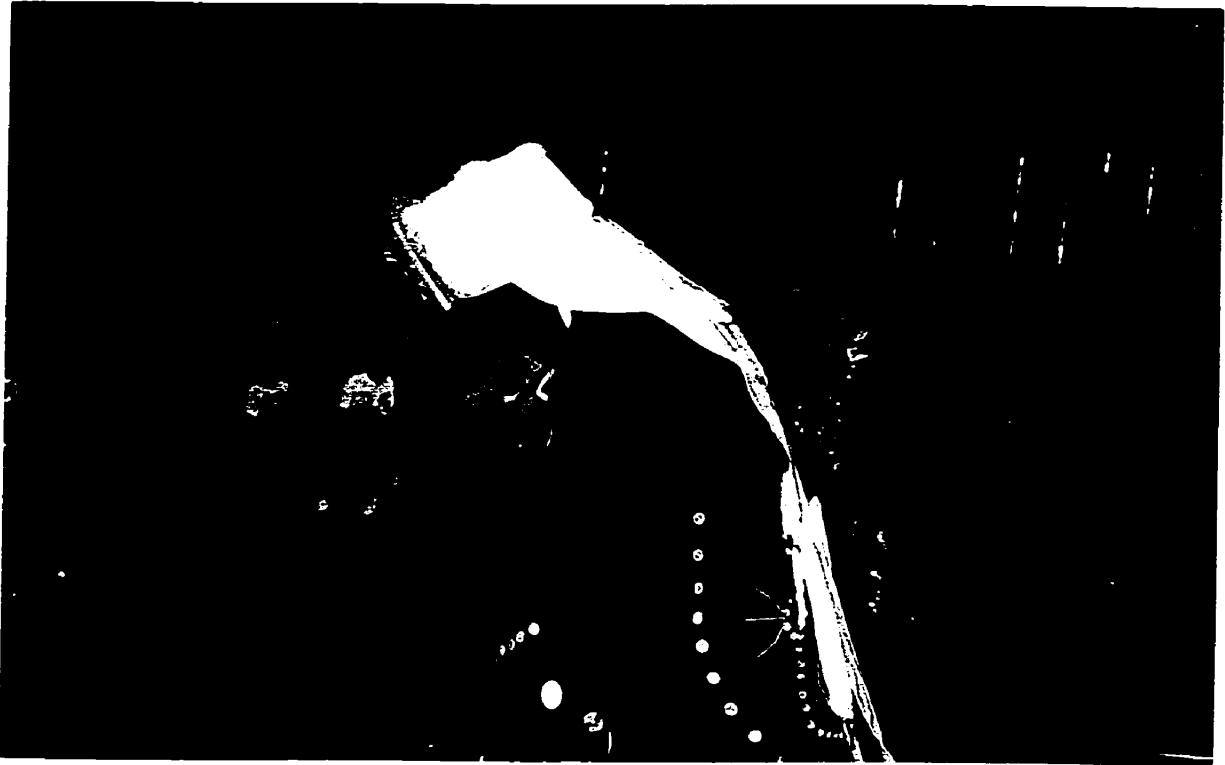

Photo by author

Figure 20. Attendant Mickey Cook ushers a tla'sala dancer towards the big house's front door.

Photo by author

Figure 21. After guiding the dancer out of the big house, Cook carries her ermine headdress back into the house and dances with it.

Photo by author

One dlugwe' that the Kwagiulth Dancers present at the festival is the Bak'was mask. Bak'was, also known as Wild Man of the Woods or Chief of the Ghosts, is an important figure in Kwakwaka'wakw legends. Many of these legends describe Bak'was as an evasive character with a voracious appetite for cockles (see Wallas 1981, 173). Kevin Cranmer told a 1998 festival audience that according to Kwakwaka'wakw legend,

> . . . you rarely see Bak'was. The only time you will see him is just when it is getting light out, early, early in the morning. He is very, very shy and wrapped up in what he is doing. His favourite food is the cockle. (Kwagiulth Dancers 9 August 1998)

When the Kwagiulth Dancers present the Bak'was, singers drum tsaxalas and sing a melody that has a flexible rhythm while one or two attendants guide a masked man and sometimes a masked boy around a festival performance space. Like in all tla'sala masked dances, attendants hide the dancers behind a dark-coloured blanket when they first enter the space and then rattle tsaxalas directly in front of the dancers in order to lead them in a partial or complete counterclockwise circle. The dancers occasionally deviate from this circle to show their wildness, cover their masks with their arms to show their shyness, paw at the ground as if they are searching for cockles, snatch then pretend to devour a wooden cockle, and blow on whistles usually made from wood, electrician's tape and plastic bags (Cranmer 1998). They wear just shorts or a reversed dance apron over everyday clothes as well as Bak'was masks, which are often green, framed with horse hair, and may have hooked noses and horns (see Figure 22, page 131) (Kwagiulth Dancers 1998 and 1999). Chief Frank Nelson told a 1999 First Peoples Festival audience

that the Kwakwaka'wakw nation that he belongs to, the Musgamagw Tsawataineuk, considers Bak'was masks, dances and songs to be offers of hope for an afterlife. He said:

> Sometimes when a family member drowns, it is said that he becomes disoriented as he comes out of the water. When he gets on the beach, he heads towards the forest, and there he remains for the better part of his days. To my people, it is said that the brother has gone into the woods to live. It is an offer of hope that he is still with us in the form of a Bak'was or Wild Man. (Kwagiulth Dancers 8 August 1999)

According to Musgamagw Tsawataineuk oral tradition, people who have drowned and transformed into Bak'wases live in forests in Northwest Coast First Nations' traditional territories (Nelson 2000).

Figure 22. Two Kwagiulth Dancers dance Bak'was masks at the 1999 First Peoples Festival.

Photo by author

Another dlugwe' that the Kwagiulth Dancers have shared at the First Peoples Festival is

the 'Yag̲am or Sea Monster. At one 1998 festival performance, for instance, the dance

group presented a song for, dance for and mask of 'Nam̲x̲xelagiyu, a specific sea monster.

This Sea Monster Song had a 3-note melody that was repeated, and featured a high

degree of microtonal variation which caused the song's tonic to rise more than an

augmented 4th. In the dance, a male Kwagiulth Dancer wore a reversed button blanket

and a 'Nam̲x̲xelagiyu mask, on which he opened and shut the mouth by pulling a string

hidden under his blanket. This 'Nam̲x̲xelagiyu mask has brass teeth, brass-tipped horns,

brass and abalone eyes, a quartz crystal set in its forehead, and was painted with exquisite

northern formline designs in black, green, maroon and white. Kevin Cranmer, who carved

the mask for his mother, Lily Erford (Neel 1998), explained to a 1998 festival audience

that it portrays

> . . . the sea monster that lived at the mouth of the River Gwa'ni, the Nimpkish
> River {see Figure 2, page 4}. That sea monster transformed into a man named
> 'Nam̲ukusto'lis, and came ashore at the mouth of the Nimpkish River. He was the
> first man of the Nimpkish [or 'Nam̲gis] people. (Kwagiulth Dancers 9 August
> 1998)

The 'Nam̲x̲xelagiyu mask depicts a supernatural being who lived perhaps 6,000 years

ago, at the time of the Great Flood, and founded a nation in Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw traditional

territory (Cranmer Webster 1991, 245, Halpern 1981, 15).

The Kwagiulth Dancers end their festival presentations by sharing one or two songs that

people who attend their performances can dance to. Sometimes, the dance group presents

a tla'sala song, and selects between 7 and 11 festival audience members to dance to it.

Always, Kwagiulth Dancers sing an amlala (fun) song and encourage all audience members to participate in a "fun dance." When audience members dance the tla'sala, Kwagiulth Dancers dress them in peace dance regalia, teach them tla'sala dance movements (see Figure 23, page 135) and sing songs used when the dance group presents the tla'sala alone. Unlike when Kwagiulth Dancers perform the tla'sala on their own, dance group members do not discuss histories of place associated with tla'sala songs, but may mention that they are honouring peoples' presence at the festival by asking them to dance (e.g., Kwagiulth Dancers 6 August 1999).

When festival spectators dance the amlala, they wear everyday clothes, like the female and young male Kwagiulth Dancers who lead the dance. The guest dancers also imitate the body movements of these Kwagiulth Dancers, who coordinate dance steps and gestures appropriate for a particular amlala song with the song's drumbeat (see Figure 24, page 136), melody and lyrics. When Kwakwaka'wakw singers sing sections a and b of an amlala song called "The Hoo Yay" (see Figure 25, pages 137-38) at the festival, for example, these Kwakwaka'wakw dancers walk in a large, counterclockwise circle in time with the song's spondaic drumbeat, which accelerates substantially as the song progresses. They hold their hands at stomach-level with their palms facing upwards or towards each other, and swing their hands away from each other then close together in

time with the drum rhythm. During section c of "The Hoo Yay," the Kwagiulth Dancers dance on the spot with their hands on their hips and bend their knees at each drumbeat. They also lean their bodies in a different direction each time the singers sing the vocable *hoo*. The dancers lean to the left when the singers first sing hoo, lean to the right when the syllable is sung a second time, bend forwards as the vocable is sung a third time and return to an upright position when hoo is sung a fourth time. At most First Peoples Festival performances, the Kwakwaka'wakw singers invite Nuu-chah-nulth artists to sing with them in order to demonstrate "The Hoo Yay's" connection to Nuu-chah-nulth territory. As Chief Frank Nelson explained to me in an interview, "The Hoo Yay" originated from Ooweekeno territory, was given as a gift by an Ooweekeno man to people living in Nuu-chah-nulth territory and was then transferred from a Nuu-chah-nulth family to families living in Kwakwaka'wakw territory through marriage (Nelson 1999). So, when festival audience members dance the tla'sala, Kwagiulth Dancers acknowledge audience members' presence on the festival site, but not tla'sala songs' associations with First Nations' traditional territories. But when festival spectators dance to "The Hoo Yay," Kwagiulth Dancers ask Nuu-chah-nulth singers to sing the amlala with them in order to honour the song's owners from Nuu-chah-nulth traditional territory (Harris and Dixon 1994, Kwagiulth Dancers 1998 and 1999, Kwakwaka'wakw Dancers 1996).

Figure 23. Kwakwaka'wakw dancer Gin-gin Alfred (far right) shows four 1998 festival audience members how to bend their knees in time with a Tla'sala Song's drumbeat.

Photo by Mary Anne Oxendale

Figure 24. Audience members wave their arms and step in time with the drumbeat of an Amlala sung at a1998 festival Kwagiulth Dancers performance.

Photo by Mary Anne Oxendale

Figure 25. "The Hoo Yay" as performed by the Kwagiulth Dancers on 7 August 1999

Transcribed with permission from Kwakwaka'wakw chief Robert Joseph, who shares the ownership of this song with various Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth families

Legend
+ = the note is about 1/8 tone sharper than the printed pitch
- = the note is about 1/8 tone flatter than the printed pitch
╱ = the note rises in pitch
╲ = the note falls in pitch

♩=128

ⓐ

Lead Singer

hoo ya hoo yay - y hoo ya hooya hoo yay - y hoo ya hoo ya

ⓑ

ya ya hoo ya hoo ya hoo ya hoo yay - y hoo ya ya ya hoo ya hoo ya ya hoo ya hoo ya hoo

ⓒ

♩=136

yay - y yo yo yo hoo yay

Frame Drums and Log Drum

ⓓ

yo yo yo hoo yay

ⓔ

All Singers

hoo ya hoo yay -

ⓑ

y hoo ya hoo ya ho yay - y hoo ya hoo ya ya ya hoo ya hoo ya

✳ This section was repeated 8 times. In each of the repetitions, the singers increased the tempo. The tempo was 144 b.p.m. by the end of the song. Also, the singers microtonally altered the melody differently in each repetition. This prompted the lead singer to establish new pitches for the melody each time he sang section c. By the end of "The Hoo Yay," the singers had raised the melody's pitches to

Please also note that when the singers repeated sections a and b for the third and fourth times, they sang words. Unfortunately, it is not appropriate for me to print or discuss these words here.

(Kwagiulth Dancers 7 August 1999)

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described regalia, songs and dances presented by the Kwagiulth Dancers at Victoria's First Peoples Festival. I also explained that members of this dance group associate these artforms with different histories of place. I revealed that while some of these narratives are very recent, others document events which took place in the 1800s and still others are set in mythic times. I demonstrated that the histories involve places (a) where owners of the regalia, songs and dances live[d], (b) from which Kwagiulth Dancers acquired these artworks, (c) where members of the dance group presented these artworks previously, (d) that are represented in the artworks, and/or (e) central to myths embodied in the artworks. Some of the stories concern locations in Northwest Coast First Nations' territories north and south of Kwakwaka'wakw ancestral lands, and the majority of the narratives reference places in Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territory.

When Kwagiulth Dancers present certain artforms at the festival, they are wearing, singing and enacting histories about Kwakwaka'wakw lands. In doing so, they are making these histories not just part of their collective experience, but also very personal experiences. These Kwakwaka'wakw artists are renewing their personal connections to their traditional territory through performance. Importantly, the Kwagiulth Dancers also are demonstrating that presentations of regalia, songs and dances allow them to maintain their strong ties to Kwakwaka'wakw ancestral lands when they are living outside of their traditional territory.

Afterword

Kwagiulth Dancers' First Peoples Festival presentations of potlatch songs, dances and other artworks have relevance for the distribution of Canadian government funds from Northwest Coast First Nations' land claims settlements. As I have explained in this thesis, the performances allow Kwakwaka'wakw who do not live in their traditional territory to maintain their strong ties to these territories and their cultural identity. In this way, they are similar to many cultural activities of Northwest Coast indigenous groups on their ancestral lands. Northwest Coast First Nations' treaty settlements often provide funding for activities like these that are vital to the cultural survival of the nations. To date, however, Canadian governments have given all of this funding to indigenous Northwest Coast groups that live in their traditional territories and none to groups that do not live in these territories. The Nisga'a treaty settlement, for instance, includes some funding for Nisga'a to build a cultural centre in their traditional territory, but none for Nisga'a cultural activities outside of this territory (see MacKenzie 1999). Because Northwest Coast First Nations cultural events inside and outside these nations' traditional territories have similar functions and importance, treaty funding could be justified for events in both locations.

First Peoples Festival performances, such as those by the Kwagiulth Dancers, may affect other government actions that concern First Nations issues in Canada. I have explained

that at the festival, some indigenous performers blur various boundaries, such as the division between insider and outsider, when sharing their perspectives on First Nations political issues with the general public. The performers act as advocates and may convince festival spectators to adopt certain political opinions. These spectators are largely non-Native and make up politically significant sectors of the Canadian public. When they vote on First Nations issues in referendums or general elections, their votes may be affected by their adopted opinions and will influence government acts.

Kwagiulth Dancers' festival presentations also have implications for various legal issues, including intellectual property issues. I have demonstrated that during these performances, the Kwakwaka'wakw artists identify indigenous individuals and groups who own different artworks. They tell audiences that some of the artworks have been passed down from generation to generation for hundreds of years. Present copyright laws protect individuals' ownership of artworks for 50 years plus the life of their creators. They do not adequately protect such group or hereditary ownership from commercial appropriation and exploitation. These laws should be modified in order to accomodate Kwakwaka'wakw forms of ownership.

Kwakwaka'wakw oral histories of place that I have recounted have relevance for legal disputes over land claims. In the future, if Kwagiulth Dancers or their families pursue land claims through the Canadian courts, they will be able to use these narratives to

justify their claims. Since the 1997 Supreme Court of Canada *Delgamuukw* decision, oral histories must be accepted as evidence and not dismissed as hearsay in Canadian courts (see Culhane 1998, 360-63). Lawyers for the Kwakwaka'wakw artists or their families could conceivably use the oral histories to demonstrate that the Kwak'wala speakers have rights to pieces of land in Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territory because their families have lived on the lands for thousands of years. Some of these narratives explain that ancestors of these Kwakwaka'wakw first lived on these lands 6,000 years ago. Others document that relatives of the Kwagiulth Dancers have continuously inhabited these lands since that time. The oral histories reveal that even though many Kwagiulth Dancers and their families may no longer live on Kwakwaka'wakw ancestral lands, they have portable rights to these lands, which must be addressed.

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