Shall we Gather at the River?

Reflections on what it means to be Stó:lo (and why it is important to know)

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A. Introduction

This paper emerges from a request by the leaders of Stó:lo Nation to help them and the communities they serve to think about two challenging questions: "what does it mean to be Stó:lo, and "how does this relate to treaties?" In other words, "what is the Stó:lo collective identity, and what does this have to do with Stó:lo political aspirations? Having a strong collective identity is a foundation stone for nation building for any group. In a world where a European Union can take shape while a Soviet Union can crumble, where globalization is a new reality but so are gated communities, and where ethnic tension reaches epic dimensions, it is important to be aware of the complexity of collective identity as well as its importance. The wisdom, and perhaps the warning, of the political scientist Ian Lustick is apt: "identities at both the individual and collective levels are ultimately fluid, chosen, instrumentalizable, and responsive to change in relevant incentive structures"[1] The process of defining collective identity might indeed be as useful to the Stó:lo as its product. Framing the future through observations of the past is a contribution that an interdisciplinary perspective can make in the development of collective identity. The rich body of knowledge in history, anthropology, archaeology, ethnography and genealogy compiled by the Aboriginal Rights and Title Department is a key resource.

Stó:lo people are trying to uncover and perhaps even reinvent collective identity in a number of ways. Structures of identity beyond the Band, such as the renewed tribe, the tribal council, and forums around such key issues as fishing rights have long been part of Stó:lo politics. Social services previously provided by the Province have been decentralized and the Stó:lo have embraced opportunities to deliver them in culturally comfortable ways. The Aboriginal Rights and Title Department has pieced the past together to justify treaty negotiating positions. The nearly extinct language is being recovered. More accurate mirrors are being forged in curricula that better reflect Stó:lo heritage to young and open-minded British Columbians. The newly revealed truths are having unexpected benefits in the growing self esteem of young Stó:lo too . Spirituality is being rediscovered but with a Stó:lo heart. This essay on collective identity thus contributes to an already solid process of rediscovery.

The methodology of this research seeks the *memes*[2] of contemporary Stó:lo collective identity in a range of historic and modern sources. Academics who have got to know the Stó:lo or its issues are considered. Stó:lo Nations' own efforts to reach out to the people, and other First Nations who have gone farther down the treaty and self-government path round out the text sources. Most important is the testimony of

[1] Lustick is referring to what he calls "the constructivist consensus" in a branch of political theory that relates to ethnopolitical conflict, state-building and state-contracting.

[2] This word does not appear in the dictionary, although it is a concept with growing resonance in the cultural evolution, social change literature. A "meme" is a unit of cultural information that can spread through a culture in the same way as genes spread through a gene pool.

individuals about their cultural identity, whether in response to this work, or as captured through their work with others. The thread of the argument is that collective identity in the present is a product of what was collective identity in the past. These dualities can suggest ways of thinking about citizenship. The thesis of this research is that having a solid collective identity, whether rediscovered or newly invented, is a prerequisite if the Stó:lo are to overcome the daunting challenges of negotiating treaties, and becoming self governing. Only one of these challenges is eligibility and enrollment, yet it is the foundation for everything else. If set aside or unsurmountable, this membership challenge might be an indicator that treaties and self government are also unrealizable dreams. Without a clear view of the "we", the "what" and the "how" and the "who" questions of treaties and self government cannot be addressed let alone answered.

Text research was combined with living alongside Stó:lo people, observing them singly and in groups going about their daily routines, and learning from them in many hours of interviews and less formal contacts. The strength of the research lies here, in capturing how a range of Stó:lo people see their world today. The weakness of this research is that of history in general: it is an inquiry that builds conclusions on fragments. However well these might be triangulated by other fragments, they are still but glimpses of what really went on in the past and what is really happening in the complex and layered present. In addition, the answers come through the prejudices of the questions posed. Hearing with "bored ears", as the Lakota people say, assumes that what is presumed to be present knowledge has in fact been properly understood.

Following this introduction, the bulk of the paper, in part 2, builds contemporary perspectives on collective identity from themes set out in the *Historical Atlas* as also having historical significance. Part 3 presents an overview of what is publicly shared about Stó:lo Nations work to date in the treaty process.[3] Part 4 presents some ideas for going forward gleaned from the work of other First Nations, and thinking about membership organizations generally. A conclusion captures the themes in the voice of a departed Stó:lo elder.

B. Perspectives on Collective Identity

Recent research exploring contemporary Stó:lo identity turns up the observation: "Community members disagree about who the Stó:lo people are and what constitutes traditional geography and life ways" [McIlwraith p. 46]. Yet, in the community magazine, an open forum for candidates in a recent election were each asked "how important is knowledge of the Stó:lo culture?" and all who responded said some variant of "very important". A native studies academic studying the Coast Salish of Washington notes that "ethnicity wears two masks, one donned for meetings with outsiders and another presented to insiders…" [Harmon p.5] This suggests that there is a range of ways that individuals and groups identify and perhaps even "continually define and redefine themselves in contradistinction to each other". What is problematic within the community, or what might make consensus decisions impossible, might become a

[3] The level of political tension within Sto:lo Nation at the time of the field school made it inappropriate to pursue such relevant issues as the process and progress of constitution making.

solidarity when facing the outsider. Part of collective identity formation is setting up boundaries and maintaining them as "cultural differences".
Yet though there are differences that need to be protected if cultural identity is to thrive, there is also a sense that other citizens have of common cause that is also important if Canada is to thrive. In a review of the book *A Stó:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas,* Vancouver Sun journalist Steven Hume praises it for its 15,000 year sweep of history, and suggests that it is not only about the Stó:lo people, but about all of us. He says that "we as newcomers become entangled in the history of the Stó:lo , so that in a way their history also becomes part of our history, just as our history becomes part of theirs...whatever the tributaries of our respective pasts, we are all now mingled inheritors of this place" [Hume: Vancouver Sun]. The idea of mingling is part of the Stó:lo identity challenge, (including knowing when not to mingle) and is critical to the Stó:lo membership / citizenship debate. Thus the way that the *Historical Atlas* has framed collective identity is a jumping off point for this research.

1. Language: Does being Stó:lo mean speaking Halq'eméylem?

> *Stó:lo people are trying to bring culture back into the system, and see language as a vehicle to do this. You cannot survive without your culture. We have nearly lost our language because of so many elders passing on. I understand some Halq'eméylem words…when you get older it's more difficult to learn the language, but I try to learn." [Ned Lester]*[4]

There is no doubt that for academics and non-academics as well, language and culture go hand in hand. More than two million references in response to an internet search using the two words together attests to this. Thus, it is a crucial issue for Stó:lo that by the year 2000, there were fewer than a dozen fluent Halq'eméylem speakers remaining. Herb Joe, a middle aged social worker, suggested the loss of language and more importantly the adoption of English as a reason that the culture has been so nearly lost. According to Mr. Joe, language is also a thought process and way of seeing the world. While some informants were uncertain about whether the language could be revived, others proudly self-described as "a level 3" or "a level 2" Halq'eméylem speaker. Everywhere around the Coqualeetza site are Halq'eméylem word lists, and being able to speak even a few phrases evidently gives status.

At the time of the first contact, language differences told the explorers that Stó:lo were a distinct group from others just a few dozen miles away. In 1808, Simon Fraser recognized that the area around Spuzzum seemed to be a boundary between "language and manners" of what is now known as Thompson Aboriginal groups and what he called "Akinroe (Stalo) Nations" [Lamb p.97] . Within the territory, language differentiated again, although the speakers were mutually intelligible to each other.

[4] Lester was speaking in response to a question about the importance of culture at a Forum for candidates to the leadership of Stó:lo Nation in September, 2000. This quote is from Sqwelqwel ye Stó:lo.

> *Just within the territory there were at least thirteen different tribes. And those tribes had their own dialect of language. When someone spoke, everybody knew exactly where they were from…the language is spoken differently depending on who you are. They are regional differences [and class differences].* [5]

In modern times, there has been an effort to create a common "rediscovered Halq'eméylem". There have been political problems when communities have argued for their word for a particularly important site or concept. The involvement of elders, and the overarching goal to seek unity in language, helped reduce these tendencies. As the language skirmishes end with consensus and one language is affirmed, the strengthening effect will pay dividends in collective identity. This process, of setting aside conflict to agree on a common form, declares to Stó:lo that they have the ability to rise above differences for a greater common good.

Language also makes an important political point in treaty negotiations. An interim agreement, for example, begins in Halq'eméylem.…"this is our land". [6] Another example of language used in the politics of identity is the Stó:lo word for who is Stó:lo, *Xwélmexw,* which simply means "human beings who speak the same language" while the Stó:lo word for the who-is-not- Stó:lo is *lats'umexw* . In the same logic, this means "different people".[Atlas p.24] However, another word is used, *Xwelítem* which specifies a particular group of different people as being mainstream Canadians. [Witness p. i] In describing why this word is chosen for textbooks used in Canadian schools, the authors translate the word as "hungry people" and suggest that it is a metaphor reminding young Canadians, "who needs who?" Given the importance of language to the Stó:lo identity, requiring aspiring citizens of Stó:lo Nation to acquire a basic knowledge of Halq'eméylem seems realistic.

2. Place: Does being Stó:lo mean eating fish?

Close upon language as an identity setting device, is the attachment that Stó:lo claim to the Fraser River and its principal resource, salmon. As Sonny McHalsie sees things, "Look at the word for what we call our people: Stó:lo , the river, [we are] the river people…" Though the most modern of Stó:lo leaders, Steven Point, suggests , albeit tongue in cheek, that "You could be Stó:lo if you are living a Stó:lo life style, speak the language, and eat fish" [7], Ernie Gray also concurs. "My history tells me that salmon is the reason I am here. We are salmon people…the salmon, and the Fraser River, define who we are" he says. [8] Stó:lo poet Larry Commodore captures these sentiments in his own way:

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[5] Interview granted by Sonny McHalsie to researcher Thomas McIlwraith in March, 1995
[6] Draft of Fisheries Interim Measures agreement dated November 27th, 2001.
[7] Quoted in the LYSS Treaty Workshop, October 21, 1998.
[8] Longhouse Interpretive Center

Go to the River

Go to the river
in the season of visions.
Go to the river
my grandfather will guide you.
Go to the river
to sing the song
of your new life
Go to the river:
your family will be there.
Go to the river
O! seeker of visions,
the river
will bring you
home.

What historians note as "the seasonal rounds" of fishing and gathering suggests that Stó:lo people, though rooted in semi-permanent villages, still lived a cosmopolitan lifestyle oriented to the river and its watersheds. In pre contact times, salmon was traded as well as being a key part of the diet, 85% by some estimates. [9] The Stó:lo believe that 9,000 years ago, when the world was in chaos, Xals had entrusted them, as a people, with stewardship over the salmon. This is quite possibly the key unifying link between past and present Stó:lo life ways is salmon. Is it a key to contemporary solidarity around Stó:lo-ness?

In modern times, salmon has been the centerpiece of intense competition, both between Stó:lo and not Stó:lo, but also between the Stó:lo themselves. In the former case, a Tzeachten band member, Dorothy Van Der Peet, protested a fine of $50 for selling her husband's days catch of fish and started a case that was fought all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Van Der Peet case stands as another good example of what can happen among the Stó:lo when they apply their resources in unity, towards an agreed purpose. When this does not happen, however, the Stó:lo are also capable of "tearing themselves apart". The Yale dispute is evidence of this.

Stó:lo history is clear that fishing sites in the Fraser canyon have been owned by particular families since time immemorial. Rocks and eddies are inherited and passed down through the generations as formally as a deed to valuable land today. Rocks are also the incentive for intermarriage that in turn broadens Stó:lo identity far beyond the parochial view of the Band or tribe. Until the 1860's, Aboriginal people from as far away as Washington and Vancouver Island had come to the canyon to trade and, if they

[9] Fort Langley interpretive center.

were lucky enough to have accomplished a marriage link with a rock-owning family, to fish for themselves as well.

In spite of this history, one of the most divisive disputes between Aboriginals ever recorded in Aboriginal law is between the Stó:lo Band called Yale and virtually all the others. The Yale Band has litigated to keep the rest of the Stó:lo people out of "its" canyon. The injunction was refused:

> *The court found that …the risk of irreparable harm to the respondents was substantial, and the injunction would threaten the cooperation between the federal government and other First Nations." [Imai p. 408]*

In further assertion of its hegemony over the canyon, the Yale Stó:lo have rejected the logic of their small numbers and proceeded to a separate treaty negotiation. Drawing on history to support this cause, the Yale claim to be a "unique canyon culture", part of the Tait tribe. [10] Most Stó:lo questioned are frustrated by all of this and see it as an impediment to moving forward in treaty talks. One informant, when asked if he had been fishing in the canyon, suggested that he and others did so now, "just to make the point" although in fact modern technology and the realities of modern life make downriver fishing more viable according to other informants. The consequence of this dispute is cynicism. The Chief of the Peters Band, when asked what had made them decide not to join the treaty process, pointed to the fishing dispute as a proof that when valuable resources are involved, all unity seems to vanish. In history, the Fraser fishing fiasco might have been a family dispute, resolvable with a marriage alliance and perhaps a potlatch and even a migration away from the scene of conflict while retaining overall harmony. Without collective identity around the full extent of the Fraser River, it is a source of apparently irreconcilable discord.

3. Kinship: Does being Stó:lo mean family obligations?

According to the ethnography of researchers such as Charles Hill-Tout and Wilson Duff, the extended family unit was the basis for Stó:lo governance. There was a ranking of families based on the amount of respect each family could command, and though there was consensus decision making, the weight of the higher ranked families was greater. Thus:

> *For centuries our extended families have always been the focus of Stó:lo life and have provided our people with the socio-political structure in our everyday lives. [Herb Joe]*

Chief Annette Peters agrees. In contemporary times, she still sees family as her grounding, and a key part of her identity as a Stó:lo person. For her, family is more than just a name. It is a particular connection of knowledge and spirit, and the force connecting her to the earth. It is the basis for disciplines that are learned and modeled

[10] Yale Museum

and that keep the society functioning. When questioned further, Chief Peters asserted that:

> *The Peters family studies hard, is in touch with earth and nature, respects other people and helps other people without greed and desire for fame. If people who say they are family cannot walk this way, they are not related.*

In this curious way (to an outsider) Stó:lo -ness and right behavior have become linked in Chief Peters' world view. Yet this equation holds in history, especially in the knowledge available about how leadership was viewed among the historic Stó:lo.

In precontact times, family leaders, known as *siyá:m* , were the male elders having high status. They gained the right to lead by earning respect through their daily behaviors and decision making qualities. In this, their performance was constantly being evaluated by the extended family and they remained leaders only as long as their last decision was well received. At a higher level of organization, the leader of leaders in the village, the *Yiwal siyá:m* exercised leadership in exactly the same way.

> *He held his position only as long as the community let him. He could be deposed by the "elders and chief men of the tribe" at any time should he ever prove himself incompetent by acting selfish, or mean, or neglectful of the material well being of the tribe.* [11]

At the other end of the spectrum from the leaders who worked on a daily basis to retain respect were those who were low class, or more simply, unworthy, and who (it is presumed since history does not say) would be the rabble sitting in judgment on the leader's performance. As Wilson Duff explained, "Stó:lo felt no man had the right to order them around, but they were willing to follow the leadership of a man they respected". [12] Though one did not inherit low status, one inherited bad blood and this was just as difficult to overcome. Though families tried hard to maintain consensus between themselves and in the village, they were prepared to simply move away if a troublemaker made it difficult to keep the peace.

Even more difficult to overcome than low class bad blood was a family history as slaves. Though contemporary Stó:lo insist to outsiders that this caste system has long since passed away, there is an inside view that it lingers. The old attitudes and responses to who can lead might be latent, but inevitably surface when there is tension in a community. One way of shutting down a difficult discourse is to dismiss it as coming from slave stock.

[11] Hill Tout as reported in Keith Carlson study on leadership, p 24.
[12] Duff , reported in Leadership Review, by Keith Carleson, p.27

People would say, 'that person shouldn't be trying to put himself up there, he's from a slave background. You're not supposed to be on the floor talking like that! You're from a slave family! [Frank Malloway][13]

There are indications that situations that faced the *siyá:m* and *yiwal siyá:m* of history remain active in contemporary Stó:lo Band politics, in spite of the veneer of Indian Act chiefs and majority rule elections.

Q. What do you think about xxx's vision of Stó:lo people…?
A. I acknowledge xxx for bringing the Stó:lo people together. He fulfilled his dream with the Stó:lo people.…but the direction from the chiefs ..is that the people must participate and they must elect that position…I don't think anyone in Stó:lo Nation should be given that authority or power.[14]

While consensus decision making, and permanent leadership review, might have been an effective governance methodology in the longhouses of the past, it fails to support present needs. Building a collective identity as a unity from the blocks of 24 Bands that are of unequal size and endowments, combined with family groups unused to working together for very long without factional discord, makes treaty negotiation and self-government a frustrating and slow moving process for all Stó:lo .

The dominance of inter-village kinship ties over those with the neighbor at the next firepit is a fact of Stó:lo history, quite outside the awareness of early Government officials. Reserves were laid out by well intentioned outsiders who assumed that "community" in the Euro sense of the word as related fundementally to place, had universal application. In a study of Seabird Island in 1945, Eleanor Leacock found that although Seabird had been made into a reserve in 1879,

local contiguity over several generations has not furthered the conversion of formerly like interests into common interests, the process by which community is formed.…The people living near each other do not form a single social unit, despite the pressure of outside forces in this direction" [Leacock: 1949:194]

and further,

they visit, not next door to the nearby town, but to Spuzzum, Yale, Musqueam, and when and Indian goes to these places from Seabird, he feels at home with a group whose ties range up and down the river yet do not include the family living near by." [Smith:187].

In 1958, Hawthorn, Belshaw and Jamieson noted the isolating effects of the reserve system but that "the Indian concept of community is too limited and needs widening" He recommended that greater mobility between reserves be allowed. [Hawthorn:1958, p. 443]. It appears that "family", so integral to the collective identity of the Stó:lo, can also be divisive when overlaid on other important elements, like place. Family factions haunt governance on most reserves to this day.

[13] Reported in 1996 and presented in the text : You are asked to Witness.
[14] September 2000 issue of Sqwelqwel ye Stó:lo, The candidates for chief open forum. Names removed.

Just as family ties are not necessarily community based, they are not necessarily racially based. History confirms that the contemporary reality of "marrying out and marrying in" has been a fact of life since virtually the first point of contact in 1847.

> *…their arrival [the 25 men who established Fort Langley] was cautiously accepted by the Aboriginal people, but within a year relationships were established through marriage of the forts men to local Stó:lo women. The Company gained the benefit of extended family ties, local knowledge and access to resources. The Stó:lo gained easier access to new technology and the goods they were adopting into their lifestyle".*[15]

Clearly, the pre-contact alliance forming continued with apparently little concern for race. And why would race matter? In this early fur trade period, cooperation and collaboration was the mainstay and mutual respect prevailed. Intermarriage was very quickly, a norm of Fort life.

> *…there were English, Scotch, French and the Kanackas (Hawaiians) present, and their offspring, and so thoroughly mixed with the native Indian blood, it would take a well versed zoologist to decide what class of people they were…*[16]

In her 1945 work, Leacock related to how Seabird residents had many Chinese relatives. Sqwélqwel te Stó:lo referred, in a report of a meeting, to "the green eyed chief." The respected Stó:lo elder Blossom Hall, ethnically Chinese, spoke about her Stó:lo identity, in a broad Barbadian accent. "Marrying in" was her beginning, and 47 years on the Soowalie reserve with many grandchildren is her certainty that she is truly Stó:lo. Children of Philipino, Italian, Chinese, and a great many "white" mixtures in families exist with little apparent sense that these children are "less Stó:lo" than any other, (unless politicized by discussions of "membership") . Most challenging of all to the assumption that race is crucial was the comment of Chief Peters that "people who are born in a different colored skin, but who have the Stó:lo heart" can be adopted and thus, "become Stó:lo ".

The racial mixing with the newcomer from the time of first contact makes the durability of Stó:lo identity as separate from race even more notable. Nevertheless, racially based membership criteria, ie. blood quantum, in Stó:lo Nation citizenship are important to some. This is problematic. Les Pal, for example, indicates that it is the requirement in his family to present every girlfriend or boyfriend to grandmother, who determines if "there is any reason these two should not be joined together." Sadly, another youth suggested that the only way forward for her in a large extended family seemed to be to avoid "marrying Indian". Blood quantum would appear to be a non starter, and never a fundamental part of Stó:lo collective identity.

[15] Fort Langley Interpretive Center
[16] CC. Gardiner, a gold seeker from Prince Edward Island who was invited to the brigade ball in Fort Langley in 1858, as recorded in the Fort Langley interpretive center.

4. Ritual: Does being Stó:lo mean a life of ceremony?

The prevalence of ceremony, particularly the potlatch, has guaranteed Coast Salish culture a place in virtually every history book referring to Aboriginal traditions of the Northwest. It has been variously interpreted as a way of distributing wealth, a ticket to high status or to remove shame, and even just as a good way to bring families together in the rainy winter weather when hunting and gathering was not possible. The potlatch is only now being understood as a highly evolved method for a hunter-gatherer family to store its wealth, "in someone elses stomach"[17] because of reciprocal obligation when lean times set in.

> *In pristine form, the Potlatch had mainly served non zero sum [ie. cooperative] ends. It was a time to share useful information, and since the "generosity" was ultimately reciprocal, it was a rudimentary way of using surplus to dull future risk…the economy was "largely based on credit, just as much as that of civilized communities.*[18]

These "potlatches and other heathen practices" [19] were nearly extinguished through generations of residential school and misguided missionary activity by those with a world view that wealth should be hoarded, not shared. This added further anomie to an already diminished culture. Stó:lo began to value their time spent in the cash economy of the hop yards and berry patches as a way of recreating some of the social ties that were part of these ceremonials. Over time, other ways of coming together were found in the gatherings around canoe races and more recently soccer matches. Winter dances have come into vogue and provide a link for a new generation to its rich ceremonial past. Not all youth are interested, nor able, to follow a traditional path. Herb Joe, a child welfare worker, suggests that there are two patterns for coming of age in contemporary Stó:lo society. One pattern puts an emphasis on getting an education in the non Indian world. Another is becoming more deeply attached to traditional spirituality, including challenging rites of passage and the requirement for extensive training periods to learn the old ways and become winter dancers. As these "new traditionalists" come of age, comfortable with the fact that "being Stó:lo" is a tough challenge, there is the potential that cultural initiation to Stó:lo Nation citizenship might not seem so impossible a dream as it does to the boomer membership of Stó:lo communities today.

5. The Counterfactual: What does it mean to be not- Stó:lo?

Even with the many pathways to being Stó:lo described above, there are also boundaries. In history, the power of the *Stl'áleqem* [mythic, dangerous creatures] to set some places and people apart from trespassing was part of the life ways of every Stó:lo . Sonny McHalsie tells the story of how the *Stl'áleqem* threat could even create private spaces if not private property. The *Stl'áleqem* serpent that would attack any person it did not

[17] Peter Farb, *Mans Rise to Civilization,* p. 66
[18] Analysis credited to Franz Boas and brought forward in the study of Robert Wright into human destiny as "cultural evolution".
[19] Interview with "Captain John" at Coqualeetza Institute in 1898 and retained in Sto:lo Nation Archives.

recognize, outside a particular nuclear family, was a strong deterrent to invasion to what became a well stocked hunting reserve enjoyed by those the serpent did recognize and allowed free passage. Such stories are difficult for the outsider to understand. But for many contemporary Stó:lo, they still have power. If the neck hairs of Stó:lo stand on end while walking down a particular forest path, while the non native companion feels nothing, this is interpreted quite naturally as, "you are not Stó:lo". Likewise, in a number of focus groups and conversations, even among all-native groups, it was important that the interviewers were aware of who was "not Stó:lo [20]. Likewise, "not Stó:lo " seemed at times to be a dismissal. "He is not Stó:lo " was frequently the end of the matter in regards to veracity of information being provided by that person. At two canoe race weekends, the announcer would call out "the Stó:lo canoe" in opposition to "the Saanich canoe" or "the Cowichan canoe" leaving the only identity mystery "the Chehalis canoe" which came from Stó:lo heartland.

Identity seems to involve more than Harmon's "two masks", and might well be an impediment to moving forward on treaty and self-government, given the absolute need for clarity about who will be part of the benefits and obligations and who will not partake. Eligibility and enrollment is a challenge to transform feelings and beliefs and the realities of life ways into rules that include and exclude. McIlwraith's conclusion that "Stó:lo people themselves recognize what it means to be a Stó:lo person, despite the fact that the identity with which they are now feeling comfortable is not that of the culture of, say, 1895, or even 1945". [p.65] must be extended to include a consensus on who belongs and who does not for the purposes of treaty negotiation and self-government.

One historic approach to becoming Stó:lo as opposed to a birthright was the way in-laws were treated. Ties through marriage (in-laws) were part of the continual effort of families to expand their resources, security or status and to tie down inherited rights and names. While the most important in-law ties were the parents of the newlyweds, rights were not obtained in that generation. Neither did they normally belong to the newlyweds. It was the children of the union that inherited the rights, ie. a two generation process. Could citizenship in contemporary Stó:lo nationhood be an earned right over two generations?[21]

C. The Politics of Identity in Treaty and Self-government Negotiations

The historic Stó:lo collective identity is in many ways the root of contemporary identity. However, the fit is not complete.

> *Stó:lo…is a collective name for all Halq'emélem-speaking people living along the lower 170 km of the Fraser River…what is the extent of Halq'emélem? Yale, all the way down to the mouth, extending across to the [Vancouver] Island. So you got an idea of who are the Stó:lo.*[22]

[20] Particularly in a focus group with the all native students of the Adult Basic Education class.
[21] In the Indian Act, status is lost over two generations, so this would be an ironic historical twist.
[22] Interview of Sonny McHalsie with Thomas McIlwraith in March 1995.

This broad scope of Stó:lo geographic identity breaks down in the economics agenda of the treaty process. It is a tendency noted in history as well.

> *The extremely superstitious and deceitful character of the natives here, renders it difficult to obtain authentic information from them Indians. It is hard to believe everything they say but this account of their numbers would seem more correct than their boasted oral computation, which would exceed it two fold…they might be thought to have sprung from the same common stock, and are all connected and related when it suits their policy to be so, but when the back is turned they are all enemies. [Census Document, 1839]*[23]

In present day treaty negotiations, the idea of emergence from a "common stock" breaks down rather quickly. Rather than increasing numbers within a single negotiation for the purposes of benefits, however, the tendency is to increase treaty tables. The result is a fractured and drawn out, some say doomed, reality of 50 negotiations. Fractured identity has a high cost. Considering these costs, The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which is an Aboriginal led review of Aboriginal realities, concluded:

> *The Commission considers the right of self determination to be vested in Aboriginal nations rather than small local communities. By Aboriginal nation, we mean a sizeable body of Aboriginal people with a shared sense of national identity that constitutes the predominant population in a certain territory or group of territories." [RCAP Vol2.p.182].* [24]

Within the Stó:lo treaty process, the McHalsie geographic description of Stó:lo territory avoids two realities. One is that of tribal affiliations within Stó:lo Nation, which though fraught with semantic difficulty still matters to many. Chief Mussell, (whose Band is not in the Stó:lo treaty table although it receives social services through Stó:lo Nation), noted an important tribal identity over and above that of Bands, naming Kwantlens, Pilalt, Matsqui, Taits, and of course Chilliwack to make his point. He believes these are stronger identities and thus it will always be difficult to hold Stó:lo Nation together. Joe Hall, though confirming his primary identity at the Chilliwack tribe level, could still express his own Stó:lo -ness as deriving "from his lineage as part of the Tzeachten band, within the Chilhkwayukh (Chilliwack) tribe, of a Halq'emeylem language group in the Stó:lo area." Though Clarence Pennier acknowledges tribal affiliations, his own attachment within the treaty process remains with Scowlitz Band. Is Stó:lo Nation, as historian Keith Carlson suggests, really just a "tribe of tribes?" or is it "a tribe in spite of tribes"? Does this multifaceted reality of tribes give lie to the idea of Stó:lo Nation identity in spite of all the efforts to find unity in diversity?

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[23] This Census Document listed 24 groups that include Chemanius, Cowitchin, Nanimoes, Nanoose, Sechelts, Musqueams, Chilliwack, Lillowets, etc. The Census document is available in the Stó:lo Nation archives.

[24] Though there are approximately 1000 aboriginal communities in Canada, RCAP sees scope for no more than 60 to 80 nations. RCAP reported its five years of deliberation in 1997.

This leads to a second issue, the overlaps in territorial claims. These are primarily with Musqueam, Katzie and of course Yale, who all are proceeding independently in the treaty process. However, other overlaps are acknowledged with a breathtaking litany of Peters, Union Bar, Skway Chehalis, Skwah, and Yale, Tsawwassen, Squamish, Coquitlam, Semiahmoo, New Westminster, Nlaka'paxum and In-Shuck-ch.. The further insistence from the Cowichan and Chemanius Bands, (the Island branches of the Coast Salish family), that they are a separate Hul'quimi'num treaty group just adds to the costs and frustrations of treaty negotiation around multiple tables. Collective identity that is not a consensus of the people can deteriorate into "me first" mentalities that make nation building problematic all over the world. It is a major Stó:lo Nation challenge too.

Stó:lo's political collective identity problems, as previously noted, stem from history when reserves were set out on what seemed to be identity lines as evidenced in village and resource sites, but were not. In a letter to his Superintendent General in 1878, a frustrated Sproat reported:

> *As the Indians on this Lower portion of the river are one people, and though claim to belong to particular villages, move about constantly from one place to another, and as many Indians come from outside places to the Lower Fraser in search of employment at sawmills and canneries, I propose before assigning land to any of the tribes, to ascertain who ARE Lower Fraser Indians, and take a view of the people as a whole.* [25]

Government representatives now negotiate the basis for Stó:lo Nation's self governing future at the treaty table with the following Bands:

Aitchelitz,	Chawathil,	Cheam,	Kwantlen,
Kwawkwawapilt,	Lakahahmen,	Matsqui,	Ohamil,
Peters,	Popkum,	Scowlitz,	Seabird Island,
Skawahlook,	Skowkale,	Skway,	Soowahlie,
Squiala,	Sumas,	Tzeachten,	Union Bar
Yakweakwioose.			

The total population of Stó:lo Nation members within this treaty process is 4259, with 1778 living off reserve. This is smaller than the City of Duncan on Vancouver Island. Perhaps this is a reality check. Can micro-self government be sustainable? Can it deliver the life style that most Stó:lo , as also "citizens-plus" of Canada , have a right to expect?

D. The way forward: You can't get there from here.

This paper has drawn on history to describe elements in the collective identity formation of the modern Stó:lo. The assumption of a collective identity is explored by juxtaposing historical and contemporary perspectives. The link between collective identity and self government is twofold. Firstly, there is the philosophical question about whether there is enough of a collective identity, for a self-governing Stó:lo Nation to be sustainable

[25] Sproat's notes held in the Stó:lo Nation archives

politically. More immediately, it has to do with the task of determining who will benefit from Stó:lo Nation's treaty. Thus, how this substantive issue of treaty negotiation is handled can be considered as the canary in the mine.

Other Aboriginal groups who have gone down the path to modern treaties and self government assert that a citizenship code (eligibility) is a key first step [26] Why then, has there been so little effort to complete this code among the Stó:lo? A draft Citizenship Code exists in a file but no discussion could be found in the public dialogue mechanism of Sqwelqwel te Stó:lo . There is no indication that citizenship is relevant on any Stó:lo Nation office wall, although the "fisherman with a spear" logo marks every piece of literature and property, and though many oaths, and operational mandates and team work aphorisms are prominently displayed. In focus groups in 1998, 30 chiefs and band counselors considered eligibility and enrolment as part of a larger workshop on Treaty. They did not make progress beyond stating "issues and problems". Commitments in the Sqwelqwel te Stó:lo to hold community sessions seem not to have actually happened. [27] Finally, and perhaps most perplexing of all, after almost a generation since Bands have had the ability to develop their own Membership Codes, with Indian Act changes in 1985, only half of the Stó:lo Bands have done so.

The setting aside of eligibility and enrolment issues raises the unpalatable but important question, "do Stó:lo people really <u>want</u> treaties and self-government?" The status quo, after all, appears to be workable, with a flourishing cultural revival and efficient delivery of a full range of services that have been downloaded from the Province. Life seems good as long as the entitlements keep flowing. The advent of the promised Governance Initiative may make reserve life even more liveable for the rank and file, and further dampen the urge to strike out into uncharted and high risk self-government territory.

In view of the above question, balanced by the more positive observations at the outset of this research about collective action all over Stó:lo Nation, a number of questions might be tabled for community discussion before proceeding further with the citizenship code:

1. Who are *we*? Are we a *'we'*, or are we a collection of *'I's'*?
2. What are we hoping to achieve in our treaty and our self-government?
3. In whose interest is this?
4. Who will decide and how will decisions be taken?
5. What is the *self* in self-government?

There have been other Aboriginal groups who have gone down the path of self-government in tribal territories of the US and in Canada. Others are far from realizing that ideal but have at least completed their citizenship codes. Finally, there is a growing

[26] The Dene/Metis reflection on its process says, "Eligibility has always been one of the major problems…and has been one of the reasons why the two organizations have had so much difficulty in working together…It was crucial…to determine who would benefit…then it became easier to discuss the various elements"

[27] There is no record of such sessions. A key informant who manages membership codes and Indian Act for Stó:lō Nation said that she had never been consulted.

body of evidence related to the importance of collective identity, developed from the grass roots, in governance of other societies around the world, particularly the tribal societies of the USA. The lessons are clear:

1. Community involvement is vital

Virtually every document consulted for this research placed this as a priority. Community involvement starts at the very beginning of the journey, perhaps at the imagining stage via answering the questions posed above. It continues through the months or years long effort to "do it" with all the human frailties and bureaucracy that will get in the way, past ratification, and will remain important forever to hold the system accountable for the application of the code.

2. The process to develop a citizenship code needs organization.

It just doesn't happen by desire alone. The elements that are most crucial within this are leadership, a timeline for completing each stage of its work, and a methodology viewed as independent and just. There need to be ways of reviewing decisions, but a "decision is final" point needs also to be agreed.

3. The process needs "first citizens"

The basic community (called "base enrollees" in the Indian Act) of citizens needs to be decided. However unjust this might feel to some, there must be the collective beginning (as in any group that breaks free in a new nation). Band membership is ground zero. Every new nation builds from whoever is there at the time of its birth. This base group then determines its "immigration" code as a way of thinking about who gains citizenship.

4. The commitment of the membership to nationhood is key

Most countries with strong sense of collective identity make membership "hard to get". The following ideas of how tradition could be linked to contemporary needs around the citizenship challenge are no more than a catalogue of what seems to work elsewhere.

-Some countries insist that their young serve in the army. Is this an echo of the traditional "coming of age" training of Stó:lo tradition?

-Urban housing cooperatives require regular volunteer time to support the community well being, from every member who gains the privilege of membership. Could Stó:lo Nation use its own citizens to keep its community healthy, without the honorarium mentality that prevents so much self-started social action within communities at present?

-Some countries, even provinces, require their citizens to learn the language. Canada requires immigrants to demonstrate knowledge of French or English. If Halq'eméylem is worth saving, is it worth speaking?

-Most countries ritually endorse new citizens. Canada has ceremonies and asks that oaths of allegiance be taken. Should Stó:lo Nation consider reviving its potlatch tradition as a way to pass on this special right, and publicly witness the nation's wealth?

-Some countries demand that would-be citizens are sponsored or at least mentored. Could elders passing knowledge and grandmothers taking charge of the upbringing of the young be a new format for citizenship-education?

-Some countries demand a period of probation, sometimes a generation long. Stó:lo Nation might consider accepting a broader range of individuals than is comfortable to many present insiders, but accord full citizen status only to the children of the new members, and then only at their age of majority when they can make a serious choice.

-Some churches make a distinction between adherents and members, with only the latter having a franchise. All, however, pay tithes. Is there space in Stó:lo thinking to have different degrees of citizen? Can willingness to pay tithes be part of all citizenship?

E. Conclusion: Gathering at the River

If Stó:lo Nation hoped for easy answers about collective identity, and how to use it to define citizenship in order to apportion the lucrative benefits of treaties, they are not available in this research. Yet the primary issue--collective identity-- must be tackled before the financial dealings of agreements in principle negotiations begin, and the membership code policies of 'who gets what?' get written. Though Stó:lo Nation has a ways to go in solving the membership riddle, its cultural revival will help it to do so.

According to the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, "culture matters" for two reasons. First of all, culture supports identity, and without this there can be no "self" in self-government. Secondly, those institutions of self-government that match, or comfortably fit, the culture are the ones—the only ones perhaps—that can be sustained. This goes for the institution of citizenship a much as for any other aspect. Once again, the process of thinking about citizenship is perhaps as worthy a venture as the product of a citizenship code. But it takes the involvement of every single Stó:lo.

The Fraser River is central to Stó:lo-ness. A vignette captured in a Stó:lo Nation archived tape sends a fresh message from an old memory. Mrs. Amy Cooper, no longer alive but preserved in oral history, is asked if she can remember any of the songs from the worn Methodist hymnal rescued from the Coqualeetza Residential School where she spent her girlhood, and put into her hands to examine. With some hesitation, she thumbed through the old book till she found the one song that had meant so much in her childhood that it had stayed with her for a lifetime. In faltering Halq'eméylem, she struggled for words. Then she picked up the thematic thread and began to sing with an elders strength…"Shall we gather at the River?"

Appendix A
Questions Used as Interview Guideline

I have developed some questions to help me in my research, "What does it mean to be a Sto:lo person?" or, perhaps—"what does *Sto:lo-ness* mean to you in your contemporary context?

Before we begin, I will ask for your signature on a consent form developed jointly by my Univesity and Sto:lo Nation. It will protect you from any misuse of what you may tell me, and also assure that the material can be kept by Sto:lo Nation archives and used in accordance with their policies.

You can put any conditions on this interview, including asking that it not be taped or declining to answer any question. In any case, I will share with you my notes so that you can correct my impressions right away if there is a need to do so.

I hope that the interview will not take longer than an hour of your time.

1. When you think of yourself as a Sto:lo person, what is your first identity?
   Probe: Band, Tribe or Nation, --cultural Sto:lo ?

2. How do you know you are Sto:lo? (characteristics of Sto:lo-ness?)
   Probe: Are there degrees of Sto:lo-ness? Are some people more Sto:lo than others?

3. How does your band determine who can be a member?

4. Which group within the idea of Sto:lo, (eg. Band, or Sto:lo Nation) do you think, should have jurisdiction over such treaty related issues as:
   --Over land and resources, like fishing rights?
   --Over matters like social welfare, education, health delivery, support to the elderly?
   --Governance matters like setting regulations and policies?

5. What benefits should Sto:lo identity guarantee once there is a treaty?
   Probe: Show the page listing the subatantive issues:

(For Independent Bands)

6. Why is your Band independent from Sto:lo Nation?
   Probe: Is it an identity reason for this?

7. Is there anything else that you would like to say about "Sto:lo identity?"

Thank you for your time.

<u>Questionnaire used in interviews with</u>: Clarence Pennier, Adult Basic Education Focus Group, Joe Hall, Roy Mussell, Annette Peters, Leona George, Sonny McHalsie.

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