

Ethnohistory Field School Report

2013

“My Grandchildren are Having Grandchildren”: Rena Point-Bolton’s Message to the Young People

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



We have to learn to live together in a good way.

T'xwelátse (Herb Joe)¹

And so, I think communication with the adults – with the Elders – is one of the things that young people today should do more. They should be involved with their Elders: they should take care of them, learn to get along with them, and this way it builds good character, patience, and understanding...

...To me, it's a lack of communication. That's one of the stronger things that we have lost, with our young people.

Xwelíqwiya (Rena Point-Bolton)²



Figure 1: Rena weaving at Government House, Coastal Peoples Fine Arts Gallery, Web, http://www.coastalpeoples.com/media/artists/Rena_weaving_at_government_house_037.jpg

INTRODUCTION

The storied artifacts of Rena Point-Bolton's journey to Master weaver have been displayed and archived throughout the world, in many different mediums, and for many different reasons. Known internationally for her weaving, Rena has lived much of her life

¹ Stó:lō Nation / Stó:lō Research & Resource Management Centre, The Reach Gallery Museum Abbotsford, *Man Turned to Stone: T'xwelátse*, (Chilliwack: Stó:lō Nation and The Reach Gallery Museum Abbotsford, 2012), 21.

² Rena Point-Bolton, interview with author, Skowkale Reserve, May 22nd, 2013. 06:00-07:15.

in the public's eye, displaying both her baskets as well as her weaving practices in galleries, museums, and public performances. Rena's life and works of art have been catalogued and recognized in museums and documentaries throughout the world including the *Reciprocal Research Network*, developed through the collaboration of the Musqueam Indian Band, the Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council, the U'mista Cultural Society, and MOA; *Hands of History*, produced by the National Film Board of Canada; the British Columbia Achievement Foundation, recognizing BC First Nations Artists; the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (MOA); and Simon Fraser University (SFU), having honoured Point-Bolton as both a mentor and Master Weaver (2009). While each of these institutions has its own mandates and goals, they are connected by their desire to promote and support the progress of the traditional teachings that Rena has spent her life researching and mastering.

The effect of Rena's dedication to teaching her craft – the ancient knowledge passed on to her from her mother and grandmother – can already be seen in the generation of teachers and leaders that have followed her. Her impact on many of the communities she has either visited or lived in can be seen through their efforts to continue weaving and teaching both the skills and culture to others that are willing to learn. As Rena travelled throughout the province, during her time as the President of the Indian Arts and Crafts / BC Homemakers Association (beginning in 1968 or 1969),³ she committed not only to reviving the cultural traditions that had been made illegal via the potlatch ban but also to organize the bands into forming a group that had enough

³ Point Bolton, Rena and Richard Daly, *Xwelíqwiya: The Life of a Stó:lō Matriarch*, (Edmonton: AU Press, 2013), 143.

political power to create a government (political) party.⁴ Although Rena has retired from formal politics, focusing now on her weaving, these initiatives that she championed continue to promote the revitalization of First Nations' culture throughout the province.

Connecting her craft to her message for the young people, Rena's motivation for sharing her teachings represents the culmination of her work as not only a weaver but as the hereditary carrier for the Wolf People (Sumas). Upon being approached to participate in this project by SRRMC Director Dave Schaepe, Rena says that she accepted the invitation in order to send a message to the young people that Stó:lō culture – and First Nations' culture – is a way of living that was taken away and not something that was willingly discarded: “we must always let other people go ahead and you stand by and be humble and be gracious and so this is what was our weakness when the new people came in. They knew this and so they took advantage of us and we lost everything, as a result, and so our young people have - it, it's been very difficult...”⁵ Rena, as both hereditary carrier and respected Elder, sees that returning the ancient knowledge to the young people may, at times, be painful, but that “teaching ... children who they are, and what their duties are to the people” will foster a positive change in them. Rena demonstrates that the traditional indigenous ways of knowing do not have to exist subjugated to contemporary practice but can continue to exist as central teaching in First Nations communities across Canada.

⁴ The Union of BC Indian Chiefs currently remains in operation, stating that their vision is to “support the work of [their] people, whether at community, national, or international level, in [their] common fight for the recognition of [their] aboriginal (sic) rights and respect for [their] cultures and societies.” Union of BC Indian Chiefs, “About UCBIC,” paragraph 1, UBCIC, no date, <http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/>

⁵ Rena Point-Bolton, interview with author, Skowkale Reserve, May 13th, 2013. 1:15-6:00.

As with Herb Joe's (T'xwelátse) statement, "we have to learn to live together in a good way," Rena relates her message with humility. Both Herb Joe's and Rena's statements are derived from years of experience. Embedded within such messages, are complex lessons about the relationship between each Elder and their audience. The responsibility of carrying and passing on Sumas knowledge influences not only Rena's motivations for reviving her culture and sharing it with her students but her interactions with her family and community. Essentially, Rena's and Herb Joe's messages cannot be taken out of the context of their lives: to say that "[young people] should be involved with their Elders" implies a network of relationships that have been built up over the course of both the Elders' and young people's lives, something that cannot be achieved without time and dedication to *the work*. To live together in a good way – to be respectful of others and to have built those meaningful relationships – acknowledges profound shared experiences and past. This paper seeks not only to help Rena convey her message to the young people but also to reify her message through the lens of her life as an activist, an artist, and a leader within her community.

Finally, several of Rena's stories have been recorded and are included as appendices to this paper. While each story does not necessarily explicitly relate to Rena's message for the next generation, they represent a piece of history that provides further context for Rena as both a woman and an Elder. Their inclusion outside the main body of this paper signals that they represent a different journey – one that lies outside the scope of this paper – but one that cannot be dismissed, nonetheless.

MOTIVATION

... and so in a way, it is like a regeneration or restoration that I'm trying to do, for that you know to dig up so that I can restore it, um but I'll just back up a bit. By trade I am actually a teacher so I got my undergraduate and Masters' in Education. And so I will always feel similar to my grandmother – that I'm a teacher...

Saylesh Wesley⁶

This paper is largely driven by Rena's motivation to express her concern at the changes that have resulted from "four or five generations of being literally forced off [their] own culture. They have lost a lot of the old, ancient ways of thinking and doing things and today ... they live in a different world - they live in a material world where money is ... God of everybody."⁷ Such a dramatic shift in culture, accompanied and even precipitated by government legislation designed to eradicate First Nations culture and practice, remains at the forefront of Rena's mind, and her message relies on the knowledge that it is not just the art of weaving that must be revived but broader cultural practices. When interviewing Saylesh, one of Rena's grandchildren, it was wholly apparent that, in learning to become a weaver, the relationship between the two women is not solely that of an Elder teaching a task but of a teacher educating the next generation on *how to teach*. In my first interview with Rena, she stated:

And so I just think about these things and I think maybe somebody would tell them, you know, or remind them that we were good people. Maybe we weren't civilized like Europeans were, *but we had our own civilization*. We had our way of doing things and fitting in with nature and keeping our beautiful country green and the same for thousands and thousands of years. And they should start thinking about this, you know? And maybe they could do studies and try to bring back some of the Elders might remember some of the things that their, their ancient people did. Even if it's just a little bit, if it'll help them to go back and take

⁶ Saylesh Wesley, (grand-daughter of Rena), interview with author, May 13th, 2013. 1:34.

⁷ Point-Bolton, interview, May 13th, 2013. 1:15-6:00.

pride in who they are, and realise that there's nothing wrong with being First Nations people.⁸

Rena's message about the importance of learning from Elders is not new. The Coqualeetza Education Centre and the Stó:lō Nation and Tribal Council, for example, have been emphasizing this for more than forty years. But in arguing that the Elders can be utilised as a resource for thousands and thousands of year's history is reminding a new generation that by ensuring that these histories are not lost contemporary Stó:lō people will have an opportunity to bring a more complete history forward with them, effectively recontextualizing their own experiences beyond the frameworks of knowledge forced upon them by an often hostile government and mainstream culture.

Ultimately, Rena's commitment to communicating these lessons and thoughts to the next generation benefits both the young people, whom she argues are struggling to live in a society governed by consumerism, and the Elders, many of whom were directly subject to residential schools and other harmful experiences. Rena says, "[t]here's a lot of the Elders are still afraid, you know, to talk to anyone... So I think if they could, you know, try to start finding ways to the past - a little bit of their past, ways of teaching - you know, I think this would help."⁹ Through Rena's vision not only would there be better communication between the young people and Elders but better lives for young and elderly alike as the Elders themselves would benefit from the care, respect, and understanding of the young people. Rena speaks of communicating her teachings in terms of the duty that she owes to her people – the same duty that she instilled in her own children. In passing the knowledge from one generation to the next, as Rena

⁸ Point-Bolton, interview, May 13th, 2013. 24:00. Emphasis added.

⁹ Point-Bolton, interview, May 13th, 2013. 31:00.

suggests, it would help both the Elders and the young people with whom they share their stories.

BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

When I got my driver's license, she asked me to drive her to Vancouver. She had a red Toyota car, but she couldn't drive herself. But she used to go out to these meetings, and she'd been invited to sit and have dinner with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Myself, I wasn't invited, but I drove!
Xwelixweltel (Rena's son, *The Honourable Steven Point*)¹⁰

With her biography due out in October 2013, it would make little sense to reiterate that information here and would contain neither the breadth nor the depth that Richard Daley has accomplished through his many years' research.¹¹ Rather, a recounting of Rena's early life, and some of the ceremonial rights that she experienced inform and contextualize her teachings in a concise, yet appropriate, manner. This paper, Daley's biography, and the countless interviews and conversations that Rena has engaged in with her family and members of the community all serve as attestations to the tireless work that underlined her accomplishments. As her son Steven notes, driving with Rena to such auspicious meetings was a lesson in itself (for both him and those that will follow him): "... I encourage our young people to grasp the moment, to move into those positions that are becoming available in government, to take our rightful place as part of this country today, to stand—up on the shoulders of our ancestors, proudly wearing our own regalia and living the values and the teaching that have been

¹⁰ The Honourable Steven Point, "Remarks by BC Lieutenant Governor, Steven Point," *British Columbia Creative Achievement Award for First Nations' Art (2010) — An initiative of the British Columbia Achievement Foundation*, 2013, <http://www.bcachievement.com/firstnationsart/video.php?id=22>

¹¹ Point Bolton, Rena and Richard Daly, *Xweliqwiya: The Life of a Sto:lo Matriarch* (Athabasca University Press, 2013).

passed down to us.”¹² The traditional lessons that Rena first learned from her grandmother and subsequently from her mother and other members of her family after her grandmother’s passing offer those that have heard her message an idea of the specific obligations and responsibilities that Rena was committed to passing on to the next generations as she grew older.

Born in 1926, Rena was raised, until the age of 9, by her grandmother, Ann Jamieson.¹³ Rena describes not only her early life but also explains the methods of raising children as she discusses growing up during a time when some Elders still arranged marriages and when subsistence living was still common.

Well, my early life, I was taken from my mother. This was the way things were done in the old days. The grandparents raised the children. The young people were married very young ... They were too young, emotionally, to raise them. And so, this was the grandmother’s duty. This was the traditional way of raising children. The grandmother, of course, she didn’t raise her children — her mother did. And so, now her daughter was having children, so now she was allowed to raise them, and she’d be in late twenties or early thirties or whatever, you know. So she’s old enough to understand children and be patient and yet discipline them, you know. ... So, this was the way it was done, and I was, perhaps, one of the last generation. I was in the last generation that practised this sort of thing. The churches came in, and the Indian Agents and the police said, ‘well, you have to raise your own children, and you blah blah, but everything has to change.’ And so, I was lucky enough, I got in on the last — I was one of the last generation — in my generation to have this [traditional life] taught to me. ... I lived in the Indian

¹² The Honourable Steven Point, “Remarks by BC Lieutenant Governor, Steven Point,” *British Columbia Creative Achievement Award for First Nations’ Art (2010) — An initiative of the British Columbia Achievement Foundation*, 2013, <http://www.bcachievement.com/firstnationsart/video.php?id=22>

¹³ Rena has stated in this set of interviews that she lived with her grandparents until she was nine; however, in this interview (May 13) as well as in other media, she has expressed either that she was eight when she was taken to residential schools or that she does not remember specifically if she was eight or nine which stems mainly from the differences between the school and calendar years. See also Rena’s remarks on the BC Creative Achievement Awards’ website upon her receipt of the 2010 lifetime achievement award <<http://www.bcachievement.com/firstnationsart/video.php?id=21>>.

longhouse by the river, on the North side of the Sumas Mountain — and I didn't get picked up by the missionaries 'til I was nine.¹⁴

Spending her early life in the longhouse, learning the lessons of patience, humility, and graciousness from her grandmother, Rena emphasizes that, although her grandmother raised her, her mother's role in her life could be likened to a babysitter, aunt, or even big sister. Essentially, parenting skills were taught to the next generation through the action of raising the children a generation removed so that they would be prepared to raise their own grandchildren – a system that Rena remarks was irrevocably disrupted upon the arrival of the missionaries (particularly with their residential schools).

While marriages were permitted between men and women as young as fifteen or sixteen years old, Elders were actively involved in the matters of childrearing and family size to an extent that the churches did not approve of. Not only were marriages arranged, but family sizes were controlled by the Elders. Rena has often remarked that she felt lucky to have grown up learning the old ways from her grandmother and that she was of the last generation to benefit from these teachings – being raised by grandparents – and living in a community that relied on the Elders to control family sizes, something that changed with the arrival of newcomer settlers to Stó:lō land. Rena describes the process of allowing a couple to have no more than four children in order to avoid having more children than the hunters and fishers could provide for. As Rena explains, “It was difficult, in the old days, to have large families, because they — they um — didn't have the modern tools and the weapons to, to get a lot of food. They trapped, and they set nets and so on for the food. And so, they did discourage the young people from having large families that would become difficult for the hunters and

¹⁴ Point-Bolton, interview, May 13th, 2013. 06:00-12:47.

the fishermen to support.”¹⁵ Without a doubt, family size – as well as marriage arrangement – had a direct impact on the larger community and was therefore taken into account by the Elders. Family size, she said, was limited through a combination of birth control and medicines to prevent additional births.

WOMEN AS KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Beyond being raised by her grandmother, Rena’s responsibilities as the hereditary carrier for her people led her to be trained to be respectful and obedient by her aunt and mother after her grandmother’s passing, she says,

because the hereditary carrier must carry everything from one generation to the next.

And so, I have to teach my oldest daughter everything I know or the one who is capable of learning. ... This was the way we did. It was a matriarchal society. We weren’t a powerful women [sic]: we were hardworking, and we were the ones who were responsible for the knowledge of our people, the stories, and the teaching of the children. And the bloodline went through the women.¹⁶

Although the role of the hereditary carrier has changed over the course of the last one hundred or more years of colonization that have taken place throughout North America, the responsibility of passing knowledge from one generation to the next remains with the women, and perhaps more importantly, the Sxwóyxwey masks continue to be passed matrilineally from mother to son. The lessons that Rena’s female family members taught her have continued to inform how she interacts with her environment. As written accounts of history become preferenced over oral histories, Rena continues to emphasize the importance of teaching the generations that follow her those lessons she learned from her Elders. Not only was the hereditary carrier required to pass on

¹⁵ Point-Bolton, interview, May 13th, 2013. 06:00-12:47.

¹⁶ Point-Bolton, interview, May 16th, 2013. 14:50-18:00.

history and knowledge of the band but also the physical skills of tasks such as weaving, cooking, and preparing of herbs and medicines gathered from outside of the village. As Rena remarked, “you don’t just learn overnight, you know. It takes a long time,”¹⁷ and learning the difference between edible and non-edible mushrooms and the like could mean the difference between providing for ones family or bringing harm accidentally.

Emphasizing that “we weren’t ... powerful,”¹⁸ Rena affirms that, although women were largely responsible for the tasks that contributed to the successful passage of knowledge from one generation to the next, there were (and remain) more complex dynamics between not only Elders and young people but men and women within each community. Additionally, as bloodlines were traced matrilineally, a woman who was named as the hereditary carrier for her people was tied more directly to the place she lived and did not leave her village, even for the purpose of marriage. This practice provided the framework for the ceremonial Sxwóyxwey masks to be passed on matrilineally along with traditional teachings and knowledge. Both the government (Indian Affairs) and missionaries that visited villages such as Rena’s disrupted this dynamic between the hereditary carrier and her village by enforcing laws that resulted in the removal of the woman from her home village upon her marriage (if the husband – likely – was from a different place). Rena explains how the new laws affected the violent erasure upon her way of life:

they [hereditary carriers] were never allowed to leave the village, because the teaching that the women carried had to stay in the village, but when the missionaries came — and the department of Indian Affairs — they made the women leave. When they married they said ‘no, you have to go with your husband. That’s the new law.’ And so, our hierarchies broke up, and people lost

¹⁷ Point-Bolton, interview, May 16th, 2013. 4:30-9:58.

¹⁸ Ibid.

everything. ... And so, it was many generations before our people began to realise they'd have to go back a bit to kind of pick up some of the old ways. ... But because my grandmother was so strict with me when I was little, I just did it. You know, I didn't think there was any other way. I just did what she taught me...¹⁹

In essence, Rena argues that “pick[ing] up the old ways” are necessary if First Nations people are to rebuild the identities that were lost (i.e. stolen), and a cultural renaissance,²⁰ built from active practice and returning knowledges will follow. While the idea of “active practice” is deliberately vague, Rena’s experience and recollections focus on doing the work and training the young people (as she herself was trained) to return to and participate in their communities.

Rena has explained her puberty training in great detail, impressing upon her audience, in this case myself as interviewer, the importance of the tasks that she was required to perform for her aunt as well as the difficulty of many chores that are taken for granted today:

well, I moved in with my aunty, and every morning I had to get up and make the fire — they didn't have electric ranges in those days — and I had to start the fire and put water on and cook her breakfast. And then I had to serve her and make sure it was done the way she wanted it. ... I had to prepare — she taught me to have everything planned ahead, so that I could prepare everything I was going to

¹⁹ Point-Bolton, interview, May 16th, 2013. 14:50-18:00.

²⁰ Randolph Starn argues that, “Rather than a period with definitive beginnings and endings and consistent content in between, the Renaissance can be (and occasionally has been) seen as a movement of practices and ideas to which specific groups and identifiable persons variously responded in different times and places. It would be in this sense a network of diverse, sometimes converging, sometimes conflicting cultures, not a single, time-bound culture.” Key to the success of a renaissance, given Starn’s definition, is that cultures are neither bound by time nor forced to reach a widespread consensus in order to experience cultural revival. However, governmental resistance to reconciliation continues to impede such movements toward such a revival. Randolph Starn, “Renaissance Redux,” *The American Historical Review*, 103, no. 1 (1998): 124, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2650779>.

cook. ... I had to go out and look for Indian teas: different kinds of teas and prepare them.²¹

PLANNING AHEAD

Although many of the tasks that Rena was taught to complete were more difficult – washing clothes by hand with a scrub board, for instance – a significant part of her training was focused on having “everything planned ahead.” While Rena reiterated that she was to take care of not only tasks for her aunt but all the cooking and cleaning, the process of planning ahead was woven into each anecdote along with the expectation that the chores would be accomplished in an obedient and timely fashion:

I guess I must have been about thirteen. ... And, my aunty had very little to say to me except she would just show me what to do, and then, if I had questions, she would answer me, but she didn't make too much conversation. She just said 'when you work, you work. You don't stand around and talk.' And um, so this is what I did.²²

Drawing upon the lessons that her grandmother had taught her, before she had been taken to residential school, Rena incorporated those teachings into the preparation and work that she was doing for her aunt. Although she was learning new skills specific to caring for a home and future family – for example, different methods of making bread, loaves, and bannock – many of those activities rely upon the foundational knowledge and teachings that Rena had first learned from her grandmother: obedience, humility, and a deep humbleness before nature.

²¹ Point-Bolton, interview, May 16th, 2013. 18:20-27:50.

²² Ibid.

OBEDIENCE

Rena describes the time she spent completing her puberty training with her aunt earnestly:

I felt pretty much alone, ... but I kept going like I had learned from my grandmother. You do what you're told: you don't answer back your elders. You must be polite and never ever act like you know more than they do, or you never say 'oh I already know how to do that.' You just do what you're told.²³

This lesson seemed, perhaps, the hardest learned. Work and obedience were (and remain to the present time) outcomes from Rena's teaching that she continues to practice even as she settles into her "retirement."²⁴ However, learning to manage a home and family, planning ahead, and learning how to proceed as a mature woman was an exercise in working and accomplishing tasks alone where social spaces were seemingly absent from Rena's puberty training.

As serious as Rena's time with her aunt was, the end of her training was marked by a feast that was attended by the ladies from the village (approximately six of them), and the blueberry feast signaled both the end of Rena's training as well as the beginning of her life as a woman. After a day of picking blueberries, Rena was directed to sit and allow the other women to prepare the feast for her:

So they washed the blueberries, and they sugared them — mashed them. Then they made fried bannock and tea, and we sat around the table and they served me, and they honoured me, and they said 'you are a woman now. So, we will talk to you the way we talk to a woman.'²⁵

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Rena had remarked both in interviews and casual conversation that she has retired; however, from gallery displays to special orders, Rena remains busy with her weaving and still gathers, splits, and dyes her own materials in the traditional manner, teaching those willing to learn from her (including her granddaughter Saylesh Wesley).

²⁵ Point-Bolton, interview, May 16th, 2013. 18:20-27:50.

WIFE AND MOTHER

The blueberry feast served the purpose of formally ending Rena's puberty training and marked the shift in register for not only communication between Rena and the other women but also Rena's responsibilities within the community. Although Rena's grandmother had always impressed the importance of behaving obediently in public upon Rena, she was now expected to act as a wife and mother (as those roles were quick to follow the conclusion of her puberty training) and help the other women in managing the domestic activities within the village:

And so, all these older women talked to me about what I was going to become. I would get married and be a wife, and I would have children. And all the duties I learned to do I would have to continue with them. I would have to learn to work with the women in the community and maybe teach them the things that I had learned if they didn't know how to do them. I would have to help them if they were having problems, and they told me a lot of different things — like my personal hygiene — and things that I would have to do — go swimming — and I'd have to be clean. I'd have to go and bathe everyday, if I could, in the creek or the river or wherever I was. And uh, always be careful with my appearance — always look nice — and be presentable to other people. And so, they talked to me like this. They each took a turn — each elder woman sitting around a table — took a turn giving me advice on how to handle myself, how to carry myself as a hereditary carrier, a high woman of my people. And I didn't realise this until they started telling me, and so they told me 'you have a lot of responsibility now, and you can't be lazy.' And so, I left from there, and they brought me back to Sumas — to Kilgard. And this is where I was from.²⁶

Rena emphasizes several important behaviours in this extended passage: the teaching that she learned from her grandmother, aunt, and mother would become the basis of learning to work with the other women in her community once she returned home. Both in public as well as in the home Rena was expected to continue supporting her family (both older and younger than herself), and that the position of hereditary carrier demanded a level of commitment that surpassed that of the other women in the village.

²⁶ Ibid.

TURNING THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN TOOLS AGAINST THEM

Indeed, Rena internalized those lessons that her grandmother had begun and her aunts and other female relatives had completed, turning humility and obedience into powerful tools of dissent in the years following the “removal” of the potlatch ban.²⁷ This dissent was effectively achieved by turning Indian Affairs’ own programs against the institution of the government. Rena discusses how the Indian Homemakers Association was started and how these social meetings between women from far-reaching parts of British Columbia began a time of social activism and protest for First Nations’ people throughout the province:

A long time ago, when our people were still very shy and very quiet, Indian Affairs decided to have... the Indian Homemakers in every village, they called them, and they give the ‘religious sewing machine,’ and material - enough money to buy thread and needles and scissors and so on - this was a gift from Indian Affairs. ... Once a year they'd have a convention, where they go and meet from all over BC.²⁸

In this regard, what the Indian Agent would likely have deemed a “social space” was actively utilised as a space of work – not only in terms of producing homemade items but also as a way of connecting First Nations women from around the province. By supporting conventions and meetings where women were allowed to meet, the agent effectively created a space for dissent without realising it: as Rena stated, the “gifts” from the agents were designed to foster “homemakers” groups within the villages – a

²⁷ While the potlatch ban was removed in 1951, this did not necessitate acceptance of potlatching practices on the part of the government. Activism remains necessary to this day to enact change in many cases (ie the IdleNoMore campaign). Following her Grandmother’s example, award-winning recording artist Inez Jasper has released “Dancing on the Run,” promoting awareness surrounding the potlatch ban and its effect on Stó:lō people both during and after the ban was legally enforced. See also: *Burn Me Down*, Inez’ second studio album, demonstrating art can function as activism as well as a tool for connecting the young generation with Stó:lō culture and language.

²⁸ Point-Bolton, interview, May 13th, 2013. 32:00-41:40.

role that Rena had already been prepared for. From these meetings, Rena was able to reintegrate the weaving and sewing that she had been taught earlier in her life in a manner that was deemed acceptable by the Indian agents:

And so, um one time we were doing that [monthly meetings where members gave updates and shared what works they were accomplishing] and I said: you know, every year we have the same old tea ..., why don't we do something from our own people? We could knit Indian sweaters, and toques, and socks, and make baskets. You know, do a few little things and have an Indian theme, you know? And so they thought about it for a while, and said: yeah, we should do that. So, we did.²⁹

Rena took this opportunity to return to the weavings and activities that she had been taught, and, although the potlatch ban was still in effect, the homemakers were able to make many of the textiles that they had been banned from making. This was an important first step in forcing policy changes at the governmental level that had outlawed First Nations' culture practice.

OBSERVING AND ACTING

Cultural practice and, if not even more significant, religious practice were not the only deficiencies that Rena noted were being experienced by First Nations people across the province. The creation of reserves and segregation had also resulted in abhorrent living conditions for many of the people living on the reserves, and extreme racism in urban centres had resulted in poor living conditions in cities as well:

So we decided — we had a meeting where we decided — we're sick and tired of being told by the government what we can do and what we can't do. We had poor housing. We had no running water in the houses. We had no health, no education. Nothing. Ah, we — we were just — we were just slaves that the government put us on Reserves, and we weren't allowed to do anything!³⁰

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

The homemakers associations became instrumental in not only protesting the conditions on the reservations but bringing awareness to the largely white populations living in the cities. The annual “teas” that the women hosted became an opportunity to draw in ladies from the newcomer communities and share some of the traditional crafts and textiles that were being made – items whose complexity rivaled that of those crafts coming out of the colonial project. Rena, being young and “bold,”³¹ describes how she dared the authorities to arrest her while bringing attention to the improved version of the teas that were being held by dressing up in a “Native costume”³² in defiance of the laws she remembers as having limited First Nations people from dressing in regalia or demonstrating their indigeneity.

ACTIVISM

Rena’s bold actions brought in new people and in our interviews she emphasizes that the public was responsive to (what they likely perceived as new or exotic) textiles that did not feature the admittedly boring bobbles being sold by other groups. This prompted an increased level of activism, directed at bringing better living conditions, education, and treatment of First Nations people, as Rena discusses in the following extended passage:

So, we started getting riled up about it. So, what we did, we rallied. We got in touch with all the other Homemakers clubs and on every Reserve in British Columbia, and we had a big rally in Tzeachten, all. And, um, and all the women were my age and a little bit rebellious, and they were getting sick and tired of being so poor — not being able to get jobs because we weren’t educated. ... And

³¹ Point-Bolton, interview, May 13th, 2013. 40:00. See also, *Hands of History*, produced by the National Film Board of Canada, 1995.

³² Point-Bolton, interview, May 13th, 2013. 32:00-41:40.

so we decided, we're going to go out on our own. And when Indian Affairs found out about this — they cut us off. ... So we said well we don't need you anymore. We were sick and tired of the way you've been treating us anyway. ... We changed our name. And we got registered in the provincial government as a non—profit organization. ... We registered in Ottawa, so nobody could touch us anymore. *Boy did we raise hell.*³³

Without government “support,” the homemakers associations were able to organize themselves much more freely, and ultimately change occurred (before and after the removal of the potlatch ban) because of the work that the homemakers associations accomplished. Rena explained that the organization (both the homemakers and the “Indian Arts and Crafts” section of which Rena was the president) “fought for education, housing, ... medical, ... [and] the court workers – we called them – because when our people were arrested they didn't know who to go to or they didn't know anything about [the] courts.”³⁴ These court workers would liaise with both the arrested person and the court to ensure that any Native person having been arrested would have proper support and not just be “thrown in jail,” as was the usual outcome.³⁵ The Homemakers Association and Rena enacted many changes that that remain significant today:

So we, we did an awful lot for our people in British Columbia. We, um, we organized the Chiefs meeting — Union of BC Indian Chiefs meeting. Our goal, was to get all these Big Chiefs, from all over British Columbia, and form our own party — our own government party. This was the reason why we did that, and our first meeting was held in Kamloops.³⁶

While the meeting of the chiefs from throughout BC experienced only moderate success, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs remains active to this day as one of the many changes that Rena and her fellow homemakers brought about.

³³ Ibid, emphasis added.

³⁴ Point-Bolton, interview, May 13th, 2013. 43:00-49:00.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

BASKETRY AND WEAVING



Figure 2 Rena Point Bolton's basketry, http://www.preview-art.com/previews/06-2010/bg/AGGV_SMASH-renopoint550.jpg

I was considered a great find in 1950—60s that I still remembered how to weave bull rushes. I was found weaving a basket that I had dug the roots and split and everybody said 'oh we have an expert here — an artist.' I had never considered myself an artist; I was only doing what I was taught to do, but because no one else was doing what I was doing I was called an artist. To this day I don't think of myself as an artist. I just think of myself as being obedient to the teaching of my elders, and I'm passing on my teachings to the next generation.

Rena Point-Bolton³⁷

Although Rena was the president of the Indian Arts and Crafts portion of the homemakers association, weaving is not an act of dissent, nor is it a form of activism for her. The deeply spiritual nature of going to the forest, digging and cutting the roots that are needed to weave the boxes, pots, and other containers (including the ones pictured above), and weaving the roots once they have been prepared remains separate from the organization and rallying that came out of the Homemakers Association. While speaking with Saylesh Wesley (one of Rena's many grandchildren), it became quite

³⁷ Rena Point-Bolton, *Hands of History*, directed by Loretta Todd, (National Film Board of Canada, 1995), DVD, 3:00-3:56.

clear that Rena's ability to pass on her teachings to the next generation – a direct product of her training as the hereditary carrier – is not only singular but has also deeply impacted her relationship with her family and children. As Saylesh stated, “by trade I'm actually a teacher, so I got my Undergraduate and Masters' [degrees] in Education. And so I will always feel similar to my grandmother that I'm a teacher...”³⁸ While speaking with any member of Rena's family that I was able to meet, Rena's dedication to teaching – and her legacy of teachers – was not only unquestioned, but her willingness to share her knowledge with and to teach others how to weave who are committed to the same teachings of obedience and humility that Rena learned was revered as precious to family, community, and strangers coming to experience her work around the world.

THE LESSONS OF WEAVING

Stepping back to the beginning, Rena described learning to weave as a process that her grandmother began with her at a very young age: discipline was the goal of learning to tease apart wool in preparation for spinning, and Rena progressed from spinning wool on a spindle whorl (*sélseltel*) for her grandmother to working on a loom and knitting sweaters.³⁹ Rena describes teaching others to weave in much the same way that she herself learned, and, now that the bark and roots that are the staple of her basketry are so difficult to acquire because of spreading urban centres and shrinking accessible forested areas, the discipline and care that must be taken with each harvested root has grown exponentially. Even Rena has admitted in past interviews that

³⁸ Wesley, interview, May 13th, 2013. 1:34.

³⁹ Point-Bolton, *Hands of history*, DVD, 16:45.

“learning to sit for great lengths and keeping [her] fingers busy was the hardest,”⁴⁰ but her obedience and respect for her elders were key in understanding how to weave responsibly and to fulfill the needs of her community.

Rena learned the Salish weaving from her elders at a young age; the Tsimshian weavings (those of her husband’s people) however, were much more difficult to learn. To accomplish this Rena describes how she had to spend countless hours at the provincial museum (Royal BC Museum in Victoria), locked in a room with fragments of woven mats to begin the process of learning how to weave in the Tsimshian way:

So I knew Peter McNair , who was the curator at the provincial museum in Victoria, so they let me go up into the closed tower and, and then they’d say ‘well, you know, we’re going to go for lunch now. There’s a few old pieces here and there if you want to look at them, and they’re all just pieces — rotten pieces — and are falling apart. If you want to look at them and see how they’re made, we’re not going to be here to watch you do it.’ So, they’d lock the door — lock me in the tower and then go for lunch!⁴¹

The fragments were key in revealing to Rena how the Tsimshian weaving worked. Until that time, Rena had only been able to find one elderly woman that was willing to share her knowledge with Rena. According to Rena, the influence of Christian religion and the Indian agents had silenced the rest of the communities to the point that the Tsimshian knowledge of weaving had been lost, “they had thrown all their culture away”⁴² out of fear. With the knowledge of the Northern-type weaving and the fragments she studied at the museum in Victoria, Rena spent the following fifteen years learning and reviving the Tsimshian style weaving, one that she describes as “beautiful” and complex.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Point-Bolton, interview, May 16th, 2013. 1:20:00-1:24:00.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Rena's persistence has provided many with the opportunity to learn the Northern-type weaving in addition to the Salish weavings that Rena has also taught to people in the past, and without her tireless work – attributed to her dedication to passing on her knowledge to the next generation – both types of weaving would be much less well-known and not understood for their versatility of use and beauty.



Figure 3 Rena Point Bolton, BC Achievement Foundation,
http://www.bcachievement.com/firstnationsart/2010/event/_MG_6898.jpg

Leading from these many years dedication, Rena's work can be viewed both online and in galleries throughout Canada (as well as overseas), and Rena herself has been presented with the British Columbia Creative Achievement Award for First Nations' Art (BCCA) (2010) for her lifetime dedication to the revival of the Salish and Tsimshian styles of weaving. Pictured above with her son, the Honourable Steven Point (then the Lieutenant Governor of BC), Rena remarked that the honour was akin to a graduation,

and that she now considered herself a weaver, finishing a work that she had begun with her grandmother nearly 83 years earlier.⁴⁴

WEAVING AS HEALING

Weaving, as Rena has stated in more than one interview, is a form of meditation for her, and the spiritual aspects of weaving require a person to be of good mind and health in order to facilitate the health of the object that they are creating. The commitment that Rena feels to both her elders as well as the younger generation can be seen in every object that she weaves (with painstaking precision and care). The act of meditating while weaving brings to mind the spirituality of Rena's process once again, and Saylesh affirmed that Rena's reverence for not only the weaving but also the relationship between teacher and student that was present while weaving with her grandmother reinforces what an honour it is to learn these lessons.⁴⁵

CONCLUSION

Abundant experience of this kind [regarding the ability of children to integrate various lifelong teachings and beliefs at an early age] suggests that we could, if we chose, make Gaia [nature] an instinctive belief by exposing our children to the natural world, telling them how and why it is Gaia in action, and showing that they belong to it.

*James Lovelock*⁴⁶

In his text *The Revenge of Gaia*, James Lovelock warns of the duality of nature and culture. His assertion that children can be taught to revere nature by exposing them

⁴⁴ Rena Point-Bolton, "Remarks by Rena Point Bolton, 2010 Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient," *British Columbia Creative Achievement Award for First Nations' Art (2010) — An initiative of the British Columbia Achievement Foundation*, 2013, <http://www.bcachievement.com/firstnationsart/video.php?id=21>.

⁴⁵ Wesley, interview, May 13th, 2013. 32:00.

⁴⁶ James Lovelock, *Revenge of Gaia*, (London: Penguin, 2007), 175.

to the “natural world” has concrete implications when thinking about Rena’s desire to see the young generation “build[] good character, patience, and understanding”⁴⁷ as well as a self-confidence that has been stolen from many young First Nations people today. Rena’s reverence for nature, and her commitment to the young people, has been attested to throughout her work with the Homemakers Association, the Indian Arts and Crafts, and her revival of the Tsimshian weavings. However, it is the lack of communication between the elderly and the young that concerns her. As Lovelock believes that a child’s ability to integrate early teachings have lifelong implications, so does Rena believe that the early lessons that helped her communicate with her grandmother and learn her obligations as an hereditary carrier for her people were instrumental in continuing to heal the damage done in the early part of the twentieth century by colonial powers.

Drawing from her experiences, the sum of Rena’s life offers a unique attestation to the idea that traditional practices that were outlawed by Indian Affairs agent and church officials remain an important force within not only Rena’s day to day existence but in the manner that she and her family are teaching a path of recovery. To reiterate Rena’s goal in sharing her life story, it is the early lessons that Rena learned with her grandmother and then her aunt that have had a lasting impact on the way that Rena both understands her family (and community) and interacts with the people and environment surrounding her: “So I think if they [young people] could, you know, try to start finding ways to the past - a little bit of their past, ways of teaching - you know, I

⁴⁷ Point-Bolton, interview, May 22nd, 2013. 6:00.

think this would help.”⁴⁸ In the process of looking forward – some of Rena’s grandchildren now have grandchildren of their own – she emphasizes that looking back to the teachings that she learned when she was a young girl may help the young Stó:lō people build upon those lessons and make the changes that “asking questions and ... getting into politics”⁴⁹ have not yet accomplished. Rena concludes her biography by speaking of her return to her family in Skowkale (Chilliwack), and in doing so, stresses that traditional knowledge should be carried forward and returned home: “Our people – no matter where we get to, eventually we come home. That is our way.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Point-Bolton, interview, May 13th, 2013. 27:50-31:00.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Point Bolton, Rena and Richard Daly, *Xwelíqwiya: The Life of a Stó:lō Matriarch*, (Edmonton: AU Press, 2013), 230.

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Appendix 1

During my second interview with Rena, Rhea Lonsdale (filmographer) and I asked Rena to share a story with us if she was willing. Almost as amazing as the story itself was Rena's account of the last time she had told the story to a student for academic purposes. Evidently, Rena had shared this story with a young person who was looking for a story that had not been told before. The student then took that story back to the class and completed the assignment but received a below average mark – and much lower than the student had envisioned given that they had found an unknown or little known story and made a connection with an Elder (the perceived relevance of the assignment). The rationale for the low mark seemed to be based on the story itself: Little Deer does contain some violent and mature themes (to adopt a contemporary value judgment on the content of the story), and the teacher in question apparently deemed this content non-valuable. As Rena tells this story, it is important to understand that her reluctance in telling it came not from the story itself but from the reaction of another adult in a position of authority, the impact of which remained clear in her mind.

Rena: I'll tell it to you, and if you think it shouldn't be in there just take it out.

Well this, this is one of the stories that was told to me so that I would behave as a woman and things that I should not do. There was this — they, our stories were always about animals. Animals and insects and whatnot so anyway — there was deer.

She was very beautiful little deer [sic], very dainty, and her mom and dad loved her, and they spoiled her very badly. They didn't teach her too much: they just let her be free

to do what she wanted to do.

And, whenever she did anything she shouldn't do, they'd just simply tell her "Oh, that's okay, never mind." And, they'd tell her "that's alright. It doesn't matter. It's nobody's business — it's just ours, you know. No one will say anything to you."

So she never learned that there were things she shouldn't do.

And then when it came time for her to get married, um, her mother didn't tell her too much about a husband or how she should behave. She was very beautiful — pretty, little deer. So they thought she could do anything she wanted to do — it was ok.

So anyway, she married a wolf, and the wolf took her home. And, he had a big house, and he told her:

"You have to stay here now. You're my wife, and when I go hunting, you just stay here. You can't go anywhere."

And so, she was happy for a while. They — everybody treated her, like, the way she wanted to be treated. People thought she was like a little child, but then they thought, oh well, you know, she's just a young girl. But then, when it came time for her husband to go hunting, he told her:

"Well, you stay here now. Don't go anywhere. I'm gonna go hunting, and I'll be gone for a few days."

So, she said, "Alright."

So, he left.

He went hunting, and he was gone for more than a few days, and she began to feel restless. And so, she just took off, you know. She went into the woods, and she was

playing with other deer.

And she went and saw her mom and dad, and they told her, “You better go home, because you don’t live here anymore. You live with your husband.”

And she said “Oh, oh alright.”

So she went back home, and her husband was home, and he told her “I told you to stay home, you know.”

She said, “Well I didn’t do anything wrong. I just went out and visited other people.”

He said, “Well, after this you’re to just stay home.”

So he — several times — he went hunting, and whenever he’d leave, she’d leave. So, one time, he got quite upset because he knew she wasn’t just going out to visit friends — she was going out with *other deer*. And he, he began to get angry with her.

And so, he told her, “You’re not supposed to do that when you’re married. You just stay with me.”

So she was — she was upset. She was angry because she thought she could do whatever she want[ed] to do. You know, if she wanted to go out with somebody else — that was her business.

Anyway, he told his brothers, “You stay with her, and make sure that she doesn’t leave the house. And, stay on the bed right there with her.”

And so, they, uh, they each took a station on the bed, where she was lying. And they, sort of, sat on — each sat on — a foot of hers. And, they were getting tired. And, she was wide-awake. Oh, and he told the crow, up in the smoke hole, where the smoke goes through the smokehouse.

He said, “You stay up there, and you watch. If she tries to run away again, wake — if

the brothers go to sleep — wake them, you know?”

And so, the crow was sitting up there in the smoke hole. And then she, in the meantime, she uh, her brothers—in—law, started going to sleep. So, she pulled her feet out.

And then she said to the crow, “Are you awake?”

And he said, “Oh yes, I’m awake.” You know, so she laid there for another fifteen minutes or so, and she called him again. And this sounds funny in English, but when it’s done in our own language [Halkomelem], it’s kind of humorous.

Anyway... she said, “Are you still awake?”

And he said, “Oh, one of my eyes are asleep, but the other one’s wide awake.”

And so, she thought: *Oh no, when is he going to go to sleep?* So she laid there for another fifteen or twenty minutes, and she called him again and he didn’t answer. So she had her feet out, so she creeps out and goes out the — out of the longhouse — and she goes tearing down out to meet her, her boyfriend. And, uh, then the crow woke up, and he looked there, and she was gone! And he yells at the brothers, and they woke up, and then they decided: *Oh we’re gonna get into trouble ‘cuz we went to sleep.* So they went tearing out and looking for their brother, and he hadn’t gone too far. They figured where he was. So he came back, and he caught her with this other fella.

And he told her, “I’ve warned you several times how to behave. You’re a wife now — you don’t behave like this. So I’m going to — I’m going to put a stop to this. I cannot go hunting ... never knowing what you are doing.”

And so, he took her. He climbed up a very tall cedar tree. And you those cedar trees — right up, some of them have no limbs. They’re just sharp points sticking up. He

climbed up there, and he cut the bark off. He peeled all the bark off, and he put her on there. And he put the point of the tree right through her, and she was sitting up there, howling and screaming for her father. ... He came down, and he cut all the limbs off, and he peeled all the bark off. And when a cedar tree's peeled, it's very slippery. And so, she was bleeding, and her blood was coming down the tree.

And he told her, "I cannot, uh, I cannot stand a woman who does this to her husband," and he says, "I don't think the rest of the people will care, you know. They will understand what you've been doing."

And he left her. And she was crying for her father, and she was — she was screaming, and he could hear her. So he went and he — her father heard her, and he came. Then he found her sitting up on the tree, and he could see her blood coming down. And so he tried to get different animals and birds to get her, but they couldn't get her down. I forget all of the little creatures that went up. One was a squirrel, and one was a snail I think.

Um, but when the big spider came along, he told him, "I can get her. I'll bring her down. I have a big basket on my back."

So, he had many legs. So he climbed to the top, and he got her down. He pulled her off the tree. Then he put her in his big basket, and he climbed down with her, but she had already died when he got her down. And so, her father took her home. And he buried her, or whatever he did with her. And the — where her blood was, below the cedar tree — the wild Indian blackberries, we call them (we have a name for them), they're on a vine, and they creep all over the place — especially under cedar trees. And they have beautiful blackberries. And their blackberries sprang—up from her blood, and

they were all over and under the cedar tree. And then, the old people say, when a girl is going through her time, like her first time — when she's going through her first puberty, she's not to eat those berries because she will be tainted like the deer.

And so, we were not permitted to eat those, and today nobody knows about that — it's just a lost story now.⁵¹

⁵¹ Rena Point-Bolton, interview with author, Skowkale Reserve, May 16th, 2013. 46:20-59:00.

Appendix 2.1

The following four stories all occurred in the Cultus Lake area and were collected during the last two interviews that I conducted with Rena.⁵² Whereas Little Deer appears to have happened long ago (and was recounted to Rena as advice before her first marriage) during the time when animals were able to interact in a different way than they are able to today, the Cultus stories have happened over a longer period of time, ranging from the formation of the lake to the disappearance of soldiers canoeing during on the lake during the Second World War.

Rena: They call Cultus Lake that because, in our language, Cul — it means bad, bad or evil depending on how you phrase it. And, there's a lot of stories about the lake... We called it Cul [qél], you know. But, when the new people came, they called it Cultus...

The Cultus Lake — there was new people moved in. We don't know who they were, but they were walking. They were probably Dene, and they asked if they could live here, if they could stay here for a while. They were tired of roaming. And so the Ts'elxweyéqw people — the people that come from here — they said "it's okay to stay up there, but don't interfere with the people down here."

So they up around, like, Columbia Valley, and around that area down to where Cultus Lake is, and they just minded their own business and didn't bother anyone. And, there was no lake there; it was just a mountainous area. And then, one day, one of the

⁵² On May 23rd Sabrina Kehoe sat in on the interview, and on May 24th the interview was conducted with fellow field school student Dallas Posavad.

young boys whose — it was the way of the people, long ago when the boy came into puberty, they, if he was going to be trained for anything, like a shaman or a worker of some kind — they would send him into the woods for two weeks, and if he survived then they would train him. And so, um, he would have to live in those woods, you know. Maybe he'd just have a knife, or whatever was used for a knife. And so, he was coming home, anyway, from his training, and he saw a great big crack in the ground. And it was deep, and it wasn't there before. So, on his way home, he told his dad.

He said, "There's a great big crack in the road!"

This was long, long ago, and so his dad said, "Well, take me there and show me."

So he took his dad, and the crack had gotten wider. And, you'd have to jump across it, because it was getting so wide. And so he got worried, and he went home.

And he told his wife, "I think we better move away from here. Something bad is going to happen."

And so he gathered up his wife and children. They moved down this way towards — more like towards Sardis — below Vedder, like coming this way [Skowkale].

And he told the other people, "I think you should move away from here: there's a great big crack along the trail."

And they laughed at him and they said, "Oh well, you're just worrying about nothing. Nothing's gonna happen."

So anyway, he took his family and moved down this way, and in the middle of the night they heard a great, big explosion! And the earth just shook, and he was just terrified. But they didn't do anything, 'cuz it was nighttime. So, he waited til morning, and he and his son went back up that way, and there was a huge hole! And there was —

water was coming in. And that's how Cultus Lake started, yeah. And all the people that were living there disappeared...

And they were the only family left, and they are the — they were called Swóles. Today they are called Wallace — the Wallace family. They're a little different: you can tell when you see them. They're a little bit darker than our own people. Our people, here in the valley, are more, kind of medium coloured, and they were kind of a little bit oriental—looking. But they were dark, kind of tall people with longer legs, and they were... sort—of East Indian—y—looking, and they were just a little different — had a different language. And so, the only family left got saved from that are the Wallaces...

That's part of their history...

And that's why we call Cultus Lake 'Cul' [qél].⁵³⁵⁴

⁵³ <qél>, free root //qél//, VALJ /'be bad (of water, person, anything), be dirty (of house, clothes, person, etc)'/ syntactic analysis: adjective/adjectival verb, attested by Elders Group (3/1/72, 2/26/75, 3/72, etc.), AC, BJ (5/10/64), other sources: ES /qél/ bad, ASM ['be dirty']; see Galloway, *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem, Volume 1* (2009), 431-432.

⁵⁴ Rena Point-Bolton, interview with author and Sabrina Kehoe, Skowkale Reserve, May 23rd, 2013. 1:22:00-1:27:00.

Appendix 2.2

Rena: They say that the Cultus Lake, there's an underground channel that goes right to the ocean, but they don't know how deep it goes. When, uh, during the 40's, when there was a big army base here, um, two — two soldiers went out on a canoe, and they were horsing around, tipping the canoe, just laughing, and just being silly, and they fell in. And they uh — they didn't come back up again. And uh, and so they sent divers down there to look for them, and in about two days or so, they found them. But they were just bones; there was no flesh on them. And, but they were just newly dead, like they could tell.

And some of the divers said, "We will never, ever go down there again, because there are trees all over down there."

They're petrified, I guess.

And they said, "It goes straight, straight down. It seems like there's not bottom down there."

"And it's just awful," they said, "It's [a] horrible, horrible feeling."

And they said they would never go there again, but they did bring the bones up. It was all in the newspaper here. And we all know... Our people would never swim in that place, 'cuz there's a lot of stories about Cultus Lake [laughs]...⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Rena Point-Bolton, interview, May 23rd, 2013. 1:28:00-1:30:00.

Appendix 2.3

Rena: Anyway, there's um, the stories go that hunters — young men hunters that go up there [Cultus Lake] — um, they're either on a canoe, or walking, or whatever, but if they're on a canoe. Their paddling's quiet. There's no noise up there, you know, when you're on the canoe. Just all you hear is the paddle. And, they'd hear a girl singing, and we call that t'i:lem q'i:lemé [Halkomelem – spelling unsure], that means 'singing maiden.' ...

And, and so the hunters — whether he's alone or with someone else — they'll stop and listen, and they'll hear this beautiful voice coming over the water, you know. And so they follow, where it's coming from. And uh, and so, they come up to this rock: there's a beautiful girl sitting there with long, long hair. And, she's combing her hair. And, she's singing. Beautiful, beautiful girl. And, she's — I guess she's kind of like a mermaid, I don't know — but she doesn't have anything on, and so they get enchanted by her, and they go pull up right close to her — as close as they can. She slides into the water, and when she comes up, she is a huge, um I don't know how you'd say it in English, but we call it st'l'áleqem: um, a huge, like a creature from the depths...

Sabrina: Like a sea monster.

Rena: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They don't even really describe her because she usually eats them up, or maybe one will get away, you know. But, this huge monster will just gobble them up, and this is one of the stories that our Elders used to tell us not to go swimming in Cultus Lake. I don't know if there's anybody left that has seen this maiden, but anyway, this is one of the stories we heard...⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Point-Bolton, interview, May 23rd, 2013. 1:30:40-1:33:43.

Appendix 2.4

Rena: My grandfather told me, and I don't know which end of the lake this happened either, but um. This old fella had gone up there and set up camp, and he set his net out, and it was still daylight so he decided to go hunting and see if he could find something to eat. So, he took off into the woods, and he was gone for quite a while. When he came back, he thought he'd check his net, and uh, he went out on the canoe and checked his net and here there was just nothing but heads on there. All the fish's bodies were all gone. They were eaten up, and so he was... he got a little bit upset, because he wondered *what was it that was doing that, you know?*

And so anyway, he thought *I'm going to catch whoever did this, you know.* So he took the fish heads off and then threw his net out again, and the next morning, he decided he'd go into the woods again, but he wouldn't stay long. And he went out for a while, and he came back. And he was hiding up a little ways, and he watched. And it wasn't long, and um, a whole bunch of little babies crawled out of the water, and they were laughing, and they were talking in some kind of a language, I guess, or making noises, or whatever. And uh, he — he waited. They went after the net, and they ate the fish and left the heads. And then they came up — some of them were crawling up on the beach — towards his camp. So he waited until one came quite close, and then he pounced on it, and he caught it. And ah, this little creature, it looked just like a little baby.

And it said, "I'm not a baby. I'm not a human. This is just a form that we've taken."

And it said, "Let me go." You know?

And it, like fog started coming out of its mouth. And he said, "We'll do terrible things to the weather if you don't, you know."

And he said, "I'm not going to let you go. I don't care what you do. You've stolen my fish, and I need it you know." He said.

So the creature said, "We won't touch your fish anymore. Just let us — let me go."

And so, he made the little creature promise, and it did. So he let it go, and it crawled back to the water and went... Of course, when all the other babies [had] seen it being captured by this man, they all took off back into the water. And as they got into the water, and when you're in Cultus Lake, you can see way, way down deep. And as they got down deep so far, they turned into great big bugs, like beetles. Huge, huge beetles. And, that's the story that I heard when I was a little girl, from my grandfather. But the strange part — remember I told you about the army men? The soldiers that fell in? — And when the divers went down and found them, there was just bones left. And it was just a couple of days that they had been down.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Rena Point-Bolton, interview with author and Dallas Posavad, Skowkale Reserve, May 24th, 2013. 8:55-13:30.