

LEADERSHIP REVIEW

The Indian Act Election System, Traditional Stó:lo Socio-political Structures, and Recommendations for Change

Prepared for the Stó:lo Tribal Council by Keith T. Carlson
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INTRODUCTION

As part of the Intervenor Participation Program the Sto:lo Tribal Council has initiated an ethnohistorical study of traditional Sto:lo leadership practises. The focus of this study has been on 1) Sto:lo Traditional political society. 2) The question of hereditary leadership. 3) The impact of the Indian Act election system and other associated governmental legislation directed at Aboriginal People. 4) A public education program supporting self government. The research and analysis in this study fits well with the Stó:lo Tribal Council's "Vision 2000 Strategic Plan" which explains the purpose of the Tribal Council and states the goals they hope to achieve by the year 2000. The program's primary focus is outlined in a "Mission Statement" where the three main goals of the Tribal Council are identified: 1) to re-affirm Stó:lo cultural values; 2) to re-establish self-government; and 3) to restore healthy communities.

The Tribal Council has recognized that all of the problems facing the communities it represents are interconnected, and therefore must be dealt with as such. Social and cultural issues cannot be addressed without looking at economic problems. Economic problems require effective political action; and political action cannot be effective if communities are plagued with social and economic problems, etc.... Thus, the Stó:lo Tribal Council has attempted to fulfil its mission by carefully attacking the roots of the various problems in a co-ordinated and balanced manner. After a problem is defined, specific culturally relevant solutions are devised to remedy the situation.

One such problem has been identified under the subject heading of Self-government. It has been determined that "Indian Act Council election regulations divide families and communities". This "results in limited participation from the membership on the development of Indian government structures/ visions/ policies." In other words, the Indian Act election system is destructive to the traditional social fabric of Stó:lo communities. It breaks down the extended family social units and pits people and families against one another rather than encouraging people to work together towards common goals. Over time, more and more people have become disillusioned with Indian Act Band Governments, and increasingly members of Stó:lo communities are excluding themselves from the political process to the detriment of themselves and their communities.

History has shown that a style of government suitable to one group of people is not necessarily suitable for another. In almost every instance where a government structure has been imposed upon a people, it has resulted in resentment and ended in failure. The great diversity of constitutional styles found in just the democratic countries of the world is testimony to the

imperativeness of a people being free to create governments suited to their particular requirements. The system best suited to the people of Great Britain, for instance, is not the proper system for France or Brazil. No one group of people has the authority or ability to decide what is best for another group. Even within Canada it is accepted that many of the laws and governing structures of one province are different from those in another.

Within this report readers will find an overview history of Aboriginal-European relations as they pertain to the development of Indian Policy and Indian Act government in the Fraser Valley. Those aspects of the Indian Act Election System which are especially incompatible with Stó:lo culture (such as plurality elections) will be discussed and explained. Following the overview is a detailed description of traditional Stó:lo social and political structures as explained by current Elders and described in historical documents and anthropological studies. This report concludes with a series of recommendations for current band Governments. The first are meant for those Councils which are not quite ready to completely throw out the Indian Act Election System. They are suggestions, which if adopted would alter some of the basic premises of the Indian Act and make it more compatible with Stó:lo culture. The second set of recommendations consists of governmental models designed to completely replace the Indian Act with systems and structures adopted directly from traditional Stó:lo society, but adapted to meet the requirements of the present.

THE INDIAN ACT AND MUNICIPAL STYLE ELECTION SYSTEMS

The "Indian" legislation enacted by the Canadian Government and its Colonial predecessors has gone through distinct and identifiable evolutionary changes. Initially designed to "protect Indians", in the past two centuries policy has shifted to emphasize "civilizing" and finally "assimilating" the aboriginal people into the broader Anglo-European society around them. It is also important to note that virtually all such legislation was created with Central Canadian Aboriginal people in mind. That is not to say that the policies were necessarily constructed in a manner the Six Nations people and their neighbors would consider in their best interests, but rather that the laws were designed to suit the needs of central Canadians of European decent and conform to their notion of what was best for the Aboriginal people they were displacing. In this way the Pacific Northwest Coast Aboriginal people were doubly insulted, for British and then Canadian laws sought not only to irrevocably alter their culture and lifestyle, but were created by a distant people unconcerned and unfamiliar with their particular situations.

British policy concerning the Aboriginal people of Canada was initially constructed with European geopolitical issues in mind. In the mid-1700's Britain and France were engaged in a fierce competition to become the pre-eminent western power. The impact of this conflict did not remain confined to Europe but spilled over into North America—by the 1750's the size and value of a nation's colonial Empire had become a central measure of a country's power and influence. As more and more British settlers arrived along the eastern seaboard, the Aboriginal people began to resist encroachments onto their traditional lands. Soon they began to turn toward the more stagnant French population centers seeing in them a natural ally against the apparently more expansive British. Strengthening this alliance was the recognition that many English merchants were dealing unscrupulously with Aboriginal people. To counter the potential disaster that a Franco-Aboriginal alliance posed to their long term goals in America the British Parliament prudently decided to "make relations with the Indians an Imperial responsibility."¹

Essentially this meant the English government would adopt a policy of "protecting" the Aboriginal people from European advancement onto their lands while simultaneously regulating Aboriginal-European trade in an effort to prevent the typically fraudulent European practices. Protection was to be accomplished through the establishment of boundary lines between Indian lands and European settlements which could only be altered through official

¹Tobias, 1976, p.13-14.

treaties in which the Crown accepted Indian surrender of title. These policies were soon made law through the adoption of the Royal Proclamation of 1763,² the document upon which all subsequent Indian legislation, negotiation and litigation was to be based.

Early in the nineteenth century, Quebec Jesuit Missionaries were joined by Evangelical Protestants in Upper Canada. The Anglicans had direct links to powerful men and institutions in England. They saw their purpose not only to "Christianize the Indian," but also to instill European values. One of the most influential British lobby groups of the day was the "Aboriginal Protection Society" which insisted the imperial mother country had an obligation to "protect and civilize" Canada's Aboriginal people.³ Growing numbers of humanitarians and people influenced by England's Romantic poets and authors protested the British and American policy of squeezing the Aboriginal people farther and farther west onto increasingly smaller tracts of land. As an alternative they advocated "civilizing" the Aboriginal people so they could deal more effectively with Euroamerican society. In their opinion, this was the only morally acceptable path since all other alternatives would ultimately result in the extinction of the Aboriginal people.

By the 1830's such lobby groups were beginning to see legislative results. The Imperial Parliament now instituted several experiments in civilization which became the basis for Canada's future "Reserve Policy". Great Lakes Aboriginal people were encouraged to settle onto central plots of land especially set aside for their use. On these reserves people would be taught basic farming and cooking skills while receiving religious and rudimentary academic instruction. These prototype reserves became "social laboratories" where well intentioned ethnocentric European religious zealots sought to strip away the fabric of Aboriginal society and replace it with the "civilized" trappings of western culture. In subsequent decades, precedent setting policies would be created which sought to protect and civilize Aboriginal people by restricting their access to alcohol, and regulating their contact with certain segments of western society deemed to have a less than uplifting and moralizing influences on the Aboriginal character.

In the 1850's, Upper Canada's legislature intensified its efforts to civilize Aboriginal people. The early reserve model had proven a disappointment and it was believed that greater success could be achieved if reserves were less isolated and located closer to Euroamerican settlements. The logic being that if Aboriginal people were exposed to "Civilization" on a more regular basis they would adopt western ways of thinking and acting. Full and complete assimilation would occur naturally as soon as Aboriginal people were given the opportunity to recognize the superiority of European Civilization. This

²Alvor, 1908, p.31-35.

³Tobias, 1976, p.14.

shift in policy reflected a fundamental re-evaluation of where Euroamericans saw Aboriginal people fitting into future Canadian society. **No longer were the alternatives seen as a choice between extinction or becoming better able to cope with western society, now Indigenous People could either cling to their traditional culture and slowly disappear, or they could "evolve" and become Europeans.**

In 1857, the United Canadian Legislature passed a law designed to expedite the process of assimilation—the "Civilization Act."⁴ This law was designed to ensure the demise of Aboriginal culture and heritage. Yet, ironically, it was instrumental in allowing Aboriginal people to retain the social, political, and psychological distinctions essential to their cultural survival. It did this by creating a distinct legal status for Indians. The new law defined precisely who were "Indians" while articulating a rigid criteria for their promotion to full citizenship. To be recognized as "civilized" an Aboriginal person had to be able to read and write in French or English, be free of debt, and be of good moral character. So long as he failed to meet any of these requirements he was legally and socially "Indian". Given that fulfilling the requirements for citizenship were (as anthropologist John L. Tobias points out⁵) beyond the reach of many, if not most, contemporary colonials of European decent, it is not surprising that the vast majority of Aboriginal people either refused to become civilized or were unable to meet the requirements of assimilation. To become a citizen, Aboriginals were expected to be more civilized than Europeans. Yet whatever their reason, or excuse, for resisting the pressure to assimilate, the Aboriginal people who retained their status were ensuring that a strong cultural foundation remained for future generations to rebuild.

By the time the eastern colonies united in Confederation in 1867, Canada's Indian policies had been established. However, it was clear by this time that the emphasis had shifted from simply protecting Indians and their land to civilizing the Aboriginal people and preparing them ultimately for assimilation into Euroamerican society.⁶ **The most blatant expression of the assimilation policy is found in the the enactment of the 1869 legislation, "an Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians."** In this Act the Governor in Council was granted the right to impose the practise of local elected governments upon Aboriginal communities—a process that was intended to lead Indians to abandon their "traditional tribal political systems", exchanging "responsible for irresponsible government" in preparation for being absorbed into the western municipal government structure.⁷ **The "elected band council was regarded as the means to destroy the last vestige of the hereditary**

⁴An Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indians of this Province, and to Amend the Laws Respecting Indians" (S.P. C. 1857)

⁵Tobias, 1976, p.14.

⁶Madill, 1980, p.1.

⁷Daughterty, 1980, p.3.

system." With the destruction of the power of hereditary Chieftains, the road would be clear to eliminate all other aspects of traditional society.⁸ To ensure traditional leaders did not obstruct the march of civilization, the Governor in Council was also empowered to remove those Aboriginal leaders deemed unfit or unqualified to hold office. Masquerading as a process whereby alcoholic or otherwise incapacitated leaders could be removed from positions of influence, this provision of the Act was typically used to undermine the authority of those traditional leaders who opposed what they rightly perceived as attempts to destroy their people's way of life.

After 1871 and the annexing of British Columbia into Canada, eastern authorities recognized that there was a marked difference between the Aboriginal people of the West Coast and those in central Canada. Indeed, B.C.'s Aboriginal people were seen as inferior to the Six Nations Tribes and were actually excluded from the new "Indian Act" until such time as the Governor in Council became convinced they were "advanced enough in civilization" to be included. Consequently, Indian legislation was again modified in 1876 to reflect these perceived realities. Under the new "Indian Advancement Act" the election system could no longer be imposed, but was only engaged if a band requested it. However, the provision regarding the removal of Chiefs was now expanded to include "Life", or hereditary leaders, if the Governor in Council judged them incompetent.

In 1880, the Act was again amended with regard to Aboriginal government. The size and consistency of band governments was clearly defined and "life chiefs were prohibited from exercising power in any form whatsoever unless they had been elected." Scholars have concluded that this was a blatant attempt by Ottawa to "eliminate or diminish the influence of hereditary Chiefs." While it is unclear if this provision originally applied to only hereditary leaders living in communities that had adopted the election system, any debate over this subject would ultimately prove moot, for in 1895 the wording was amended to ensure that all bands, regardless of their political structure, were included. Clearly it was presumed that elected councils would destroy the last remnants of the traditional political system and set in motion the process of adopting municipal style councils wherein Aboriginal People would abrogate all special rights and privileges. (Näive and uninformed Canadian officials assumed Christian missionaries and the reserve system had already effectively destroyed all other elements of traditional society).⁹

Up until the beginning of the twentieth century, almost every feature of the Indian Act and the Indian Advancement Act (unified with other Aboriginal legislation into a single "Indian Act" in 1906) had been designed with Aboriginal people living east of Lake Superior in mind. Yet this did not

⁸Madill, 1980, p.2.

⁹Daughterty, 1980, p.4.

prevent British Columbia's Indian Superintendent, Israel Wood Powell, from attempting to make the proverbial square peg fit into the round hole. For good or bad, Powell attempted to modify the way the Act was applied in B.C.. In general he behaved less paternalistically toward western Aboriginal people than his eastern counterparts did toward their supposedly "more advanced" Aboriginal population. In response to criticisms that West Coast people were generations behind the Six Nations in social evolution, **Powell stated that B.C. Aboriginal communities had always acted quite independently of one another and since B.C. Aboriginal People outnumbered Euroamericans he had always thought it in the best interests of racial peace to promote the "independence and authority" of each Chief.**¹⁰

While Powell conceded that in his opinion most coastal bands were not yet ready for municipal status he believed some were. If these few could be granted municipal status immediately he believed they would serve as models for the other "less advanced" communities. Like his eastern contemporaries, Powell too saw the Aboriginal peoples' future as a choice between slow extinction and assimilation into Canadian society. Thus, while promoting strong local Aboriginal leadership primarily for security reasons, Powell agreed that hereditary Chiefs only acted to "discourage the ambition of young men who might want municipal government."¹¹ He held out the hope that, given the opportunity, Aboriginal people would choose to participate in local elections and coercive assimilation would never have to be used. He assumed that, provided with the electoral means, youthful Aboriginal men would reject their hereditary leaders and in so doing would simultaneously reject the "upholders of... ancient ignorance and barbarism."¹²

When the "Act for Conferring Certain Privileges on the More Advanced Bands of Indians of Canada with a View of Training them for the Exercise of Municipal Power" or the "Advancement Act" was passed in 1884, it was still assumed that only certain central Canadian Aboriginal populations were prepared for the "obligations" of civilization, yet the first to adopt the measures were the Cowichans of Vancouver Island. Powell had been particularly anxious that one of the bands under his jurisdiction be the first to accept Ottawa's offer to promote Aboriginal "advancement in civilization and

¹⁰R.G. 10, vol. 2116, file 22, p.155: Synopsis of Reports on Proposed Municipal System for Indian Bands, 1881. Powell was implying that for the safety of White settlers it was in society's best interest to promote strong local leaders rather than permit regional or tribal alliances to develop. The limited forces at the western settlers disposal made it prudent to keep the Indian communities isolated politically and militarily. A united force of hostile Natives was a frightening thought to outnumbered and scattered Euroamerican British Columbians living in the era of the Riel Rebellion, the Nez Perce uprisings and the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

¹¹Daughterty, 1980, p.11

¹²ibid., p.13.

intelligence with a view to their eventually attaining... equality... with the white portion of the population of the country."¹³ Not surprisingly the next three bands to adopt the provisions of the Advancement Act were also from B.C.—on the Nass River and at Port Simpson.

At this time many traditional B.C. Chiefs began to take direct action to protect their hereditary powers and privileges, for, like the Canadian officials, they too recognized that in many ways they were the only things standing between their people's traditional culture and assimilation. As B.C. Indians were somewhat of an anomaly (not fully covered by the Advancement Act) Ottawa agreed to permit them to hold special elections in accordance with their own customs. However the ultimate goal of assimilation was still the same and in most cases the elections were initiated not by Aboriginal people but by the local Indian Agent. Not surprisingly, B.C. Chiefs elected by "custom" had even less legal authority than those elected in the eastern provinces, and were in fact regarded as "appointees of the Government."¹⁴ As such, if the Chief's policies and ambitions were perceived as an obstacle to assimilation they were not always accepted by Ottawa. After choosing a leader B.C. Aboriginal people had to wait while the Indian Agent reported their decision to Ottawa along with his views as to the "suitability of the candidate." Ottawa then confirmed or rejected the appointment as it saw fit. Typically, if the Agent recommended against the appointment, some paternalistic explanation was given to the band as justification for rejecting its decision, such as the candidate being either immoral (if he had more than one wife or kept slaves, etc.) or incompetent (if he could not read and write, etc.). In other words, those Chiefs continuing to live according to traditional cultural dictates and norms were singled out and rejected. Such actions sent clear messages to B.C.'s Aboriginal population: reject the past or have it rejected for you.

One typical and well documented case of Canadian authorities intimidating a traditional leader from the Fraser River area is found in the conflict between Chief Benedick of Boothroyd and Agent H. Graham. Chief Benedick perceived that his community's people were slowly being stripped of their Aboriginal rights. To protest this he recommended that they continue fishing despite federal bans following the disastrous Hell's Gate's slide.¹⁵ The Chief also directed the community to reject offers from Ottawa for enfranchisement, and in other ways to reject attempts at assimilation. Responding to Benedick's obstructionist tactics, Agent Graham, threatened to remove the Chief from office under provisions of the "Advancement Act".

¹³R.G. 10, 3815, file 56, p.883: Circular letter to the Indian Superintendents and Agents from the Deputy Superintendent General Vankoughnet, Jan 16, 1885.

¹⁴Daughterty, 1980, p.57.

¹⁵The Hell's Gate slide was precipitated when Canadian National Railway began excavating and blasting the canyon wall in their attempt to create a suitable surface for their rail line.

When Chief Benedick died in 1924 his wife successfully suggested to the community that her son-in-law replace her husband. When the community agreed, Graham complained to Ottawa that his authority as Indian Agent was being undermined by traditionalist elements. Ottawa sided with Graham and organized a new election with the Indian agent as Chairman. In this second ballot, Benedick's son-in-law was rejected in favor of John Mitchell, but Graham was still not satisfied and imposed a one year restriction on Mitchell's term. **To further insult the village and weaken the traditionalists' position, Graham also compelled the new Chief to swear an oath to the effect that he was "beneath" the Indian Agent.¹⁶**

With Ottawa pushing B.C.'s Aboriginal people to assimilate for their own good, Western officials were attempting to undermine traditional society to reduce the possibility of unified military or political action by the Aboriginal population against the province's small settler population. It is not surprising that between 1880 and 1940 the election system was implemented in many Aboriginal communities. If people did not move toward municipal style government and reject traditional practises many hereditary leaders found themselves politically emasculated and replaced with malleable puppets of the Indian Agents. Coinciding with this assault on traditional governing practises were the enactment of federal laws specifically designed to undermine and discredit Western Aboriginal society; the most obvious of these was the banning of the Potlatch.

The Potlatch was a central feature of West Coast culture, and though it was practised in varying forms by different tribal groups it was universally banned as being contrary to Christian and Canadian values. A number of long established missionaries on the coast had come to understand that there was nothing evil about the Potlatch, but certain recently arrived Protestant missionaries saw the ceremony as the Devil's work. They convinced some newly converted Aboriginal People to publicly denounce the ceremony and ask for it to be banned. Canadian government officials were told that the Potlatch strengthened the power of hereditary leaders and consequently stood in the way of assimilation. Likewise the Potlatch was denounced as somehow communistic in as much as it redistributed wealth and apparently made "paupers" of people.

The final assault on traditional culture came when the Government determined that Indians could be assimilated much quicker if they were removed from the culturally conservative environment of the reserve. This took two forms, the first was compulsory enrollment in residential schools for Aboriginal children where youth were stripped of their heritage and compelled to act like Europeans. The second, was the alienation of the

¹⁶Reuban Ware, "Chief Benedick of Boothroyd & the Department of Indian Affairs, 1921-25" B.C. Historical News, 1979, November.

reserve itself through leasing. The Superintendent General was authorized to lease reserve land to non-Aboriginal people for the alleged purpose of generating revenue for the community. However, it appears the primary reason was to squeeze the Aboriginal people onto smaller plots of land and eventually off the reserve where they would, it was hoped, practice animal husbandry and accept western concepts of private property.¹⁷

By the early twentieth century, certain Aboriginal people found the pressure to assimilate overwhelming. Many present Stó:lo Elders relate stories of how they felt it prudent to hide their Stó:lo ancestry during these years. Being Stó:lo was a stigma affecting everything from one's chance for employment and promotion to one's ability to sit in a pub and have a drink among friends. "No one wanted to be Chief" one Stó:lo Elder and a past Chief confided. "It was bad enough having whites treat you differently because you were Indian, you didn't want to make matters worse by being 'really Indian'; by being a Chief!"¹⁸ A feeling of hopelessness and despair characterized the outlook of many Aboriginal people who had remained on the reserve. The predictions of the missionaries and government officials seemed to be coming true: if they didn't assimilate they were going to slowly disappear as a distinct people. As one Elder phrased it: "The teachings of the Elders appeared irrelevant to many of us... the world had changed"¹⁹

The Second World War refocused attention on Aboriginal people, for the contribution of Native soldiers and sailors did not go unnoticed after the conflict ended. In 1946 the government established a Joint Parliamentary Committee to study and make proposals on the way Indian affairs were administered and to propose revisions to the Indian Act. Many Aboriginal people saw this as a great opportunity, however, for the most part those Aboriginal groups who testified before the Committee advocated only changes in the way the Indian Act was administered, not the philosophies behind it. Consequently, the revised "Indian Act" of 1951 remained dedicated to promoting assimilation, all that changed was the way assimilation would be achieved. Now, rather than being forced to assimilate, Aboriginal people would be gently encouraged.

Groups such as *The Native Brotherhood of B.C.* approved of the new Act. In testifying before the Joint Committee they had asked that reserves and band councils be "regarded as... municipal council[s] with similar powers within their territory." They felt band governments should have "law-making and law enforcement powers similar to those of municipal councils."²⁰ Self-

¹⁷Tobias 1976, p.22.

¹⁸Interview with Wess Sam. August 3, 1992.

¹⁹ibid.

²⁰R.G. 10, Vol. 6811, file 470-3-6, vil.1, pt.2. v. 13: Brief of Native Brotherhood of B.C., May 1-2, 1947.

government was now being defined as municipal government, and cultural preservation was seen as something separated from the political sphere. The only strong voices asking that Aboriginal People be allowed to retain, or return to, their traditional modes of governing came from a few isolated groups with the Six Nations organization.²¹ At that time many Stó:lo bands embraced the quasi municipal election system with its associated new powers. Elders speak of hereditary Chiefs being voted out of office and replaced by young Stó:lo men and women who were as anxious to throw away their cultural heritage as the Indian Agents had been. When traditional leaders rose at gatherings to speak and offer advice to their successors, they were sometimes told by the new young leaders to "sit down and be quiet! You have had your turn, now let me try." To many traditional Chiefs, such acts of disrespect were proof of the triumph of the election system's efforts to destroy their cultural heritage, and out of shame and in a form of protest many fell silent offering no more assistance.²²

Throughout the 1950's and 60's most B.C. bands, including many Stó:lo, tried to work within the parameters of the new election system. For most intents and purposes, band governments acted as federal municipalities, passing by-laws and spending money for band improvements without undue influence from the Department of Indian Affairs. To federal bureaucrats and politicians it appeared assimilation was almost complete, and in the spirit of a job well done, the Trudeau government, in 1969, unveiled a major policy proposal—the now infamous "White Paper". In it, Ottawa proposed that within five years the entire Department of Indian Affairs be abolished and all special rights and privileges for Aboriginal people be removed—assimilation would be complete.

One might suppose that the "White Paper" would have been greeted with applause among the supposedly integrated Aboriginal communities. Indeed the response of one major B.C. Aboriginal organization was to request that band councils be granted enough power to enter into agreements with non-Aboriginal municipalities, and that they be permitted to incorporate as municipalities with all the power of provincial municipalities²³ Yet the early 1970's also witnessed a re-evaluation among Aboriginal people of the benefits of assimilation versus the advantages of remaining culturally distinct. This was not simply an Stó:lo phenomenon, for other ethnic, linguistic, and otherwise identifiable minority groups were also questioning the wisdom of rejecting their heritage. Indeed, many such groups were not only retaining their heritage, but flaunting it. Thus, when the "White Paper" suggested Indians completely integrate within five years a backlash developed.

²¹Madill, 1980, p.79.

²²Interview with Henry and Christine Pettis, Seabird Island, August 10, 1992. Interview with Sylvester Joe, Seabird Island August 11, 1992.

²³Madill, 1980, p.80.

Demands for Aboriginal Self Government and cultural self determination suddenly moved from the fringe to the Aboriginal political mainstream. Aboriginal people and a growing segment of the non-Aboriginal community began recognizing and articulating that there was more than mere sentiment involved in Aboriginal People wanting to preserve their traditional political and cultural systems. An awareness began to develop that Canada's Aboriginal people were not, and never had been, an inferior people, they had simply evolved along different socio-political lines than Euroamericans.

Since the 1970's it has been frequently acknowledged by Stó:lo leaders and a large proportion of the Stó:lo people that the municipal style election system is incompatible with maintaining healthy traditional communities. Centuries old ethnocentric beliefs that Aboriginal people had to choose between assimilation into western society and actual physical extinction are now recognized as ridiculous and racist. Aboriginal people are now asserting their right to correct past injuries by selecting forms of government best suited to meeting their social, political, economic and cultural requirements.

TRADITIONAL STÓ:LO SOCIO-POLITICAL SOCIETY, and THE INDIAN ACT ELECTION SYSTEM

Need For Change.

An overwhelming majority of Stó:lo informants emphasize that the Indian Act election system is incompatible with their traditional governing practices and culture, and damaging to their community's social, spiritual, economic and financial well being. Upon being asked what they believed the biggest problem of the current elected band government system was, almost all informants concurred that the system fostered distrust between those who are in the positions of power, and the community at large—in particular, between the community and Chiefs. Elders related stories of corrupt Chiefs who allegedly embezzled money from their band, using the funds to benefit only themselves and their families. Greed was described as having reached epidemic proportions among the Councillors and Chiefs of recent generations. Ever since the Department of Indian Affairs permitted local bands to manage their own budgets, certain Chiefs have been accused of stealing and misappropriating band money. In general, it appears that many Chiefs and Councillors were neither respected nor trusted by substantial segments of their communities. In particular, those people who had not supported the Chief in the past election felt especially resentful and suspicious of their leader. These people believe that their Chiefs and Councillors meet behind closed doors, unfettered by public scrutiny and therefore unconcerned with public criticism. There they supposedly divide public funds among themselves and their families, and make deals designed to perpetuate their hold on power.

Chiefs, on the other hand, emphasize how difficult it is to retain respect while operating under the Indian Act election system. Many claim the Indian Act ties their hands and therefore creates the negative image of the "greedy Chief". Chiefs claim that as soon as the elections are over those people who supported a non-elected candidate begin to unjustly complain that they are neglected by the winners. It is the election system, and not their own political agendas, they state, which is responsible for fostering the resentment. Both current and retired Stó:lo leaders express frustration at the way the Indian Act has thwarted past efforts to include a broader cross section of the community in council. Yet, despite their best efforts, Chiefs claim the "system" wrongly paints them as "betrayers of their heritage" in the eyes of some of their people.

It is not the purpose of this study to investigate particular accusations of graft and corruption. While such an exercise could potentially clear up many misunderstandings and expose certain unlawful activities, it would just as likely result in misplaced and unfounded rumors being translated into hurtful public accusations. Such actions, therefore, could well intensify

feelings of mistrust and alienation within the bands making it all the more difficult to change the system and begin the process of community healing and reaffirmation of cultural values. Thus, to maximize the possibility of this project resulting in meaningful discussions and, ultimately, structural political change, the problems associated with the Indian Act Election System will be discussed only in general terms without reference to specific individuals or incidents. In other words, emphasis will be placed upon finding a cure for the disease rather than a treatment for the symptoms.

Plurality elections and majority based decision making

At the heart of the distrust and alienation mentioned by nearly every informant, is the apparent incompatibility of plurality elections and traditional Stó:lo philosophies concerning "consensus", and family-based decision making.

Often referred to as the "first past the post" system because the candidate with the most votes automatically wins, plurality elections are the accepted political norm in the former British Colonies of North America. Because of their near universal acceptance on this continent, it is difficult for many non-Natives to recognize the inherent incompatibility of the plurality system with traditional Stó:lo cultural practices. Yet Stó:lo Elders maintain plurality elections contribute to cultural erosion. Such elections reject family based consensus decision making in favour of a system which politically alienates relatively large segments of the population. To the Stó:lo Elders, it is intellectually inconceivable that any government can be viewed as legitimate when a leader can be chosen, for example, from a list of three candidates and be declared winner despite up to 66% of the people voting against him.

ie. <u>elected:</u>	<u>not elected:</u>
Candidate "A"—34% of votes	Candidate "B"—33% of votes
	Candidate "C"—33% of votes
Total—34% of votes	Total—66% of votes

If there are more than three candidates the likelihood of a Chief being elected with an even smaller plurality of the votes increases proportionately. For instance, in a four person race it is possible the Chief will be elected despite 74% of the voters rejecting him.

ie. <u>elected:</u>	<u>not elected:</u>
Candidate "A"—26% of votes	Candidate "B"—25% of votes
	Candidate "C"—24% of votes
	Candidate "D"—24% of votes
Total—26% of votes	Total—74% of votes

Recent Stó:lo elections have demonstrated that even when there are only two candidates it is not uncommon for the victor to receive only 51% of the community's support—hardly a strong endorsement.

Compounding the problem, under the Indian Act election system political power at the band level resides with the entire elected council, not just the

Chief.²⁴ In elections for Councillor it is not unheard of for members to be selected with pluralities even smaller than those received by most Chiefs. In a typical three person Stó:lo council (two Councillors and one Chief) it is possible that if five people run the two winners will each have only 21% support.

elected:

Candidate "A"—21% of votes

Candidate "B"—21% of votes

not elected:

Candidate "C"—20% of votes

Candidate "D"—19% of votes

Candidate "E"—19% of votes

In accordance with Federal legislation, elected band councils operate essentially the way municipal governments do—members meet periodically to create or modify band by-laws and determine how band funds will be apportioned. Decisions are made by councillors based upon the principle of majority rule. In a three person council, if the elected Chief and one of the councillors represent the same interests, (ie. derive their support from the same extended family) a situation can easily arise where one family is in a position to essentially pass legislation and allot funds as they see fit, without effective checks on their power.

effective council control:

Chief—34% support (family "A")

Councillor—21% support (family "A")

ineffective opposition:

Councillor—21% support (family "B")

Clearly, in a community with five or so families it would be relatively easy, under the plurality system, for one large interest group (family) to completely dominate council, and monopolize power. Indeed, it has been reported that the second councillor representing one of the other families often feels so politically redundant and left out (in that he cannot stop or initiate legislation) that he quits attending meetings. Alternatively, in as much as his opposition vote is essentially useless to stop a Chief and Councillor who consistently vote together, the third Councillor often finds he is no longer consulted or included in Council meetings. In such cases the family represented by the opposition Councillor (and the other non-represented families) feel increasingly alienated from the decision making process. This in turn intensifies the mistrust people feel toward their Chief, and further undermines the leader's respect within the community.

If councils are to be regarded as more legitimate and responsive, they will have to more accurately reflect the social composition of the communities they represent. If this were accomplished, it is almost certain that the Chiefs and Council members would regain the respect traditional leaders lost after adopting the plurality election system. Thus, it is essential that people properly understand the underlying principles of Stó:lo social and political

²⁴Councils vary in size according to population; all current Sto:Lo band governments have between three and six Councillors including the Chief.

structure before a model for a new governmental structure can be created that

Social Structure.

Very little has ever been recorded concerning the actual workings of Stó:lo socio-political structures. Ethnographer Charles Hill-Tout and anthropologist Wilson Duff have determined that traditional Stó:lo society was centered around the extended family unit, and broken into well defined strata's which they defined as "Chiefs, notables, and base folk."²⁵ Within these strata well defined vocational experts existed, and families operated on the principle of "communistic privilege", that is, people's needs were cared for and decisions were made on a consensus basis where certain people, because of their elevated rank, had greater influence than others. Yet, none of the studies of the Stó:lo (including Hill-Tout's and Duff's) have ever attempted to explain the way the social and political structures actually functioned. Consequently, this study relies heavily upon the information acquired from current Elders in interviews. These ethnographic interpretations will be supplemented with information from the historic record whenever possible.²⁶

As far back as archival records go, and as far back as the Elders can remember, the extended family has always been the focus of Stó:lo social life. This is displayed even in the construction and occupancy of their traditional dwelling places. For most of the year Stó:lo people lived in giant communal long houses.²⁷ Hill-Tout speculates such structures were developed primarily for defensive purposes, as it was much easier to protect relatively small communities of people from their more populous enemies if they were grouped together in fortified buildings²⁸ However, as Hill-Tout also points out, throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, after the threat of such attacks had greatly diminished, these dwelling places were retained and continued to serve as the focal point of Stó:lo social and political functions. In the most protected sections of these buildings resided the head of the extended family—his physical location representing his central position in the lives of all his followers.

Stó:lo extended families were characterized by distinct, but fluid, levels of stratification. Each nuclear family within the extended family structure, and each individual within the various nuclear families, was ranked. Unlike

²⁵Hill-Tout, 1902, p.357.

²⁶See for instance, Diamond Jenness, 1934/35; Marion Wesley Smith and Elenor Leacock, 1947; Oliver Wells, fieldnotes, various years; Reuban Ware, 1973, 1977; Brent Galloway, 1976.

²⁷Ancient archaeological records confirm that similar structures as those observed by HBC employees in the early nineteenth century and described by Hill-Tout at the turn of the last century have been in existence along the Fraser River for centuries.

²⁸Hill-Tout, 1902, p.360.

Aboriginal societies farther up the coast where rigid clan structures were developed, the Stó:lo based social rank primarily upon the degree of respect an individual received. Their system, therefore, was much more subjective than those of more strictly hereditary Aboriginal societies. Among the Stó:lo high rank could not be inherited, rather it had to be earned. As Wilson Duff illustrates:

Individuals and families differed in social rank because they differed in the degree to which they possessed the qualities which were admired and respected. Those who were the most highly respected, the high born and the great and good self-made leaders, were called by the honorific term *sie'm* [siyá:m].²⁹

As Duff implies, birth into a highly respected family gave individuals distinct advantages, much the way children of wealthy families today have better chances of receiving a higher education and getting high paying jobs. Indeed the Stó:lo believed that good and bad character traits were passed on through blood lines. Therefore people seeking to raise their social status faced the difficult task of proving that they were not effected by the tainted blood of their parents. Yet the Stó:lo were also very sensitive to individual effort. It was possible for a man from a comparatively low ranked family, through determination and ability, to rise in stature and become a member of the elite.

As people grew older it was assumed they would become both wiser and wealthier, and as such Elders and heads of households were among the highest ranked. While the wisdom people acquired came from training and simply from living, prestigious wealth could only be accumulated through hard work. Men labored to accumulate items of value in order to prove they were worthy of respect. They demonstrated this wealth by marrying as many wives as they could afford and having large families, building bigger long houses, and distributing their earnings at Potlatches. Thus, while someone born to a father who lacked wealth and/or wisdom was stigmatized by lacking a family role model and having bad blood, he still had the opportunity to prove himself and elevate his status. But to achieve the pinnacle of respect and be called *Siyá:m* a person had to be recognized by others as being both wise and wealthy.

The upper class, or nobility, derived their status through their own efforts. Typically they were the heads of respected families as well as specialists within particular fields. For example, a *Tewít* was a man who specialized in hunting and/or fishing, and who had simultaneously proven himself morally upright, kind and trustworthy³⁰ *Shxwlá:m*, *syuwí:l*, and *sywéwe* were varieties of Stó:lo doctors or shamens, who specialized in particular

²⁹Wilson Duff, 1952, M.A. Thesis, p.176.

³⁰Interview with Edna Bob, Seabird Island, August 12, 1992.

aspects of traditional healthcare. The differences between these figures was similar to that between modern general practitioners, psychiatrists and cardiologists. Someone referred to as *Sta'miq* on the other hand, combined in himself roles approximating a cross between war chief and leader of organized crime. He was a man who made his fortune raiding other communities of valuable objects and slaves for resale into his own community.³¹ When these specialists (with the possible exception of the *Sta'miq* who was often feared more than respected) had proven that they had become wealthy through hard work, they were usually granted the rank and title of *Siyá:m*.

There is no single definition of *Siyá:m*, and, as shall be illustrated later, *Siyá:m* was simultaneously a social and a political term. Wilson Duff's informants defined *Siyá:m* as having three meanings: "a boss or leader; a well to do person; a good, honest man."³² Anthropologist, Marian Smith, recorded informants defining *Siyá:m* as meaning: "a rich man; a man with good will and a good mind; a leader of the tribe."³³ Charles Hill-Tout simply translated the term as meaning "chief".³⁴ My own interviews with current Elders confirm what these definitions suggest: that the term *Siyá:m* is in reality a vaguely defined word used to describe highly respected individuals. It would be applied subjectively to various people, each of whom could have been respected for different things in different ways. For the purpose of this discussion it will be used in the broad sense that most Elders have defined it, namely, to describe universally recognized and highly respected members of traditional Stó:lo communities, usually heads of extended families.

The only person who outranked a self-made *Siyá:m* was the *Yewal Siyá:m*—defined by Hill-Tout as the "Lord Paramount" of the village.³⁵ Born into the top ranking family, he had been specially prepared to lead his community. Initially his hereditary advantages might be regarded as contradicting the statement that any man could elevate himself socially, but in fact it simply illustrates that a great emphasis was placed upon wisdom in its broadest sense. A *Tewít* or *Syuwí:l* may have been wealthy enough to rise in rank to

³¹Community leaders did not participate in raids or small skirmishes. These were usually the prerogative of the *sta'miq*—an individual whose disposition found him frequently in the center of conflicts. The *sta'miq* was described by elders as possessing almost the exact opposite characteristics valued in a *sie'm*. From the testimony of most elders I would speculate that the *sta'miq* typically did not have the skills or temperament to become a *too'weet*, and instead chose to accumulate wealth by raiding people in other communities. Sometimes a *sta'miq* would become so dangerous that his own people would banish him from the village, or be forced to either move away themselves, or kill him.

³²Wilson Duff, Unpublished Field Notes, Note Book #4, informant Ed Lorezetto.(Royal British Columbia Museum).

³³Marian Smith, Unpublished Field Notes, Reel A-1920, folder S, Chilliwack, re. leadership.

³⁴Hill-Tout, p.39.

³⁵Hill-Tout, p.358.

be the head of their family, and be accorded the title of *Siyá:m*, yet, to rise to the head of an entire community required special skills and knowledge which in almost every instance could only be acquired through special training.

Initial Training

The Stó:lo people always placed great emphasis on the training of their youth. Recent generations have not received as full or rigidly adhered to traditional training because of the destructive pressure Non-Aboriginal society has placed on the extended family structure. In the past, all children, regardless of the rank of their parents, received essentially identical early training and education. This primary training was roughly equivalent to what in English might be referred to as learning to be a good citizen. Elders have also characterized it as "religious preparation".³⁶ Children were taught to discipline themselves and to behave within the confines of cultural norms. Through elaborate metaphorical stories centered around animal characters the youth were taught to distinguish between right and wrong, not only in the actions of others, but in those of themselves. Likewise, to strengthen their bodies and develop physical and moral fortitude, children were obliged to undergo physical training. Typically this included jumping into lakes or streams twice a day all year round, and spending time alone in the forest, fasting and praying. While in the forest they awaited the appearance of a guardian spirit who would assist them in choosing an appropriate vocation.

Training was conducted not by the parents, but by the grandmothers and great grandmothers.³⁷ (Parents were expected to focus their attention on providing for the physical needs of the family all the while continuing the process of acquiring wisdom themselves. Their turn to teach would come after they had matured spiritually and been provided with grandchildren of their own.) It was the grandmother's responsibility to help nurture children's appreciation of their guardian spirit and assist in determining what particular "gifts" their grandchildren possessed. Was the child showing signs that they were particularly suited to public speaking, or were they more inclined to working with their hands as a carver? Did they show attributes of being a leader, or did they tend to follow the lead of others? Were they spiritual? Could they become a healer or shaman? On certain occasions when the grandmother herself was not particularly well versed in a field, she would call on other women of the community to assist her in her evaluations.

Upon reaching puberty children were judged by a joint council consisting of all the women Elders of the community. This was the final evaluation before children were "streamlined" into training programs for specific vocations. At

³⁶Interview with Wess Sam, Soowahlie, August 3, 1992.

³⁷It is important to note that the Sto:Lo made little distinction between brothers and sisters, and cousins. Therefore great aunts were also heavily involved in providing children with their formulative education.

this time, all of the grandmothers preliminary evaluations would be measured alongside those of other Elders. They would likewise be judged according to their compatibility with the preference of the child's guardian spirit as expressed in dreams.

Vocational Training

After a decision had been made regarding the vocation most suited to a child, arrangements would be made to begin an apprenticeship under the grandfather (or an appropriate specialist from within the extended family). Thus, while "initial religious training was universal, vocational training was specific".³⁸ Then as now, people were heavily influenced by their family environment. Just as the son of a modern fisherman typically becomes a fisherman himself, and the children of university instructors usually attend university, in traditional times it was likely that Stó:lo children would follow in their father or mother's footsteps. If a boy's father was a *Tewít*, he would likely grow up to be one as well. If a child was the eldest son of a high ranking *Yewal Siyá:m* it would be unusual if that child did not prepare to succeed to the position himself. As one Elder explained it, "You start preparing for your allotted role while still in the mother's womb. A hunter's son had nobody to teach him to be a leader... even if he had the same skills he would not have the training."³⁹ Moreover, since "good and bad blood was inherited", it was unlikely the son of a *Sta'miq* would ever consider, or be permitted to consider training to become *Yewal Siyá:m*.

After the onset of puberty children became increasingly aware of differences in social rank. Those who had shown little promise of excelling in a field now received little formal instruction. Instead they began spending more of their time tending to the most mundane tasks of village life, and, as food supplies were abundant for most of the year, they spent much of their time just "loafing". Increasingly such people were referred to as being *s'ú:met* (lazy) and recognized as "lower class commoners".⁴⁰ Those who had gone on to train for vocations as *Tewíts* (hunters or fishermen) were beginning to accumulate items of value as payment for the items they supplied the community. Likewise they continued to learn and grow in wisdom. Others who were apprenticing to become *Shxwlá:m*, *syuwí:l*, or *syéwe* (doctors, seers or shamen) were instructed in the ways of assisting emotionally, spiritually and physically distraught individuals.⁴¹ With each passing year, these

³⁸ibid.

³⁹ibid.

⁴⁰Interview with Edna Bob, Seabird, (phone conversation) Oct, 19, 1992.

⁴¹As Charles Hill-Tout points out, physical injuries resulting from obvious causes such as cuts or broken bones were not treated with the same seriousness as emotional and spiritual, and otherwise non identifiable illnesses. A physical injury was easy to explain, and required no interpretation. Thus these sorts of medical problems were relegated to the lowest priority for treatment by Native Shamen.

healers would learn new remedies, and special prayers and incantations. As they developed these skills, they helped other community members who required their services, and in return were compensated with items of value.

Those few children who were training to become community leaders were expected to learn in detail the history of their people. They were encouraged to speak in public so they would develop a strong voice and diplomatic skills. They also had to develop intuition and instinct so they could "read people". Moreover, it was expected they would also master the skills of a hunter or fisherman in order to demonstrate that they appreciated and recognized the skills and contributions of the tradesmen. On certain occasions the *Yewal Siyá:m* would call on one of these trainees to preside over the settlement of a minor quarrel between people, or to make opening remarks on his family's behalf at inter family or village gatherings. As the candidates took on roles requiring greater responsibility, they would receive payment for their time and participation, thereby gaining both wealth and wisdom.

Vocational Testing

When the grandfather or trainer determined their apprentices had mastered all the necessary skills of his vocation, a final examination was held. At this point all the young men who were training to become carvers or hunters etc... would compete with other young men both from within the same extended family, and from the broader community. If a boy was successful in demonstrating that he possessed superior skills than his competitors, and if he had proven himself to be of good character, he was elevated to the status of a specialist. At this point, he outranked those who had not completed their training. He also had his position vaguely fixed somewhere in the hierarchy of the upper class. Although still outranked by older brothers (and cousins) or uncles, his position in both the family and the village social structure would be adjusted according to his personal development. When the time arrived that the head of a family recognized he no longer had long to live, a formal ceremony was usually convened to announce an heir publicly. If the leader of the family died suddenly without naming an heir, the family Elders would meet and select one. It was at times such as these that one's individual merits clearly counted for more than heredity, as an eldest son could be passed over in favour of another relative if the family felt that person would better represent their interests and ensure their name was not disgraced.

For the young men training to become community leaders, a similar process was followed, only in these cases the tests were more rigid and subjective. Aside from requiring a thorough knowledge of history and the ability to demonstrate a clear "magnetic" voice, prospective leaders also had to show that they were intelligent, charismatic and well liked. Leaders could not be dull, and were not tolerated if they were arrogant. A *Yewal Siyá:m* was also expected to be essentially pacifist, all the while willing to lead his people in battles if no honorable and peaceful alternative presented itself.

Clearly it would have been difficult to design a single examination to adequately adjudicate all of these diverse criteria, therefore, Elders watched the "response of the people to their [prospective] leader", judging whether the people were beginning to respect him.⁴² In the end the *Yewal Siyá:m*, with the advice of the Elders, would decide who would succeed him. However, not infrequently one candidate would stand out as a skilled speaker and diplomat while another proved himself more capable in relating history. In such cases a final decision might be put off indefinitely or until the *Yewal Siyá:m* died. It was during such times of transition that the greatest opportunities for social and political advancement arose. For instance, if the *Yewal Siyá:m* and his trained successor were both killed in a raid by enemies, the community Elders had the right to determine that someone outside the leader's family was most capable of meeting the community's leadership needs at that time. That other person, possibly just a *Tewít*, would then be elevated in status accordingly. Similarly, when a community had grown so large that it strained the resources of the surrounding streams and forests, one or more families occasionally decided to split off and form their own community. These people would likely continue to recognize the *Yewal Siyá:m* from their former location as their "main leader", but they would undoubtedly select a leader of their own to address their immediate and local needs.

Political Structure

As illustrated above, traditional Stó:lo political structure was so closely related and intertwined with the social structure that it was difficult to differentiate between them. To the Stó:lo, political power and authority were based upon social status. The more respect a person received from his peers the greater his social rank and political power. However, heredity played an important role as well.

Political power was exercised in its most basic form at the extended family level. The eldest and most respected male member of the family (referred to by current Elders as "the grandfather") presided over all family discussions. His influence was restricted only by the degree to which he was respected. If his respect was high he would use this influence to direct family affairs and lead discussions until consensus was reached. Widely respected among not just his family, but among the heads of other extended families, he was among the class referred to by ethnographers as "nobles or headmen". Typically, he was addressed by his contemporaries as "*Siyá:m*". As Hill-Tout points out "any man, other than a slave, could win such a position for himself by the acquisition of wealth and by the generous and discreet

⁴²Interview with Wess Sam, Soowahlie, August 5, 1992

distribution of the same.⁴³ As an individual became wealthier, his personal status and political influence rose as well. Thus, while family leaders could not dictate to their family, they usually carried such great influence that others would defer to their opinions. It was acknowledged that these individuals, by the very definition of their social position, acted in the best interest of their entire family. (See figure one)

The *Yewal Siyá:m*, was one level above the heads of other extended families. As Wilson Duff explains:

within each extended family there was no doubt one man who made the everyday decisions on matters involving the family. In multi-family villages, these heads were no doubt loosely ranked by prestige, with one man standing above the others and holding the most sway over the village as a whole. This man, who might be called the village leader, spoke and others listened, he suggested and exhorted and the others took action.... His power over unrelated families was less, depending upon his personal reputation for wisdom in leadership. Yet, apparently he did tend to develop a 'habit of leadership' over the whole village and undertook certain duties as a village official.⁴⁴

In essence, the "village leader" held and exercised his authority among the entire community the same way the leader of a family did among his relatives. Descriptions of various *Yewal Siyá:m* indicate that their role was indeed more synonymous with that of a modern "director" or "chairman" than a "ruler". Hill-Tout described a typical *Yewal Siyá:m* as an "overseer or father of a tribe" whose office was "more sacerdotal than imperial". The power of a *Yewal Siyá:m* was restricted by cultural dictates requiring consensus among family leaders on all major decisions. He had no means of compelling compliance other than relying on others to respect his exalted social status. He held his position only as long as his community let him. He could be deposed by the "Elders and chief men of the tribe" at any time should he ever ever prove himself incompetent by acting selfish, or mean, or neglectful of the material well being of the tribe.⁴⁵ (See figure two)

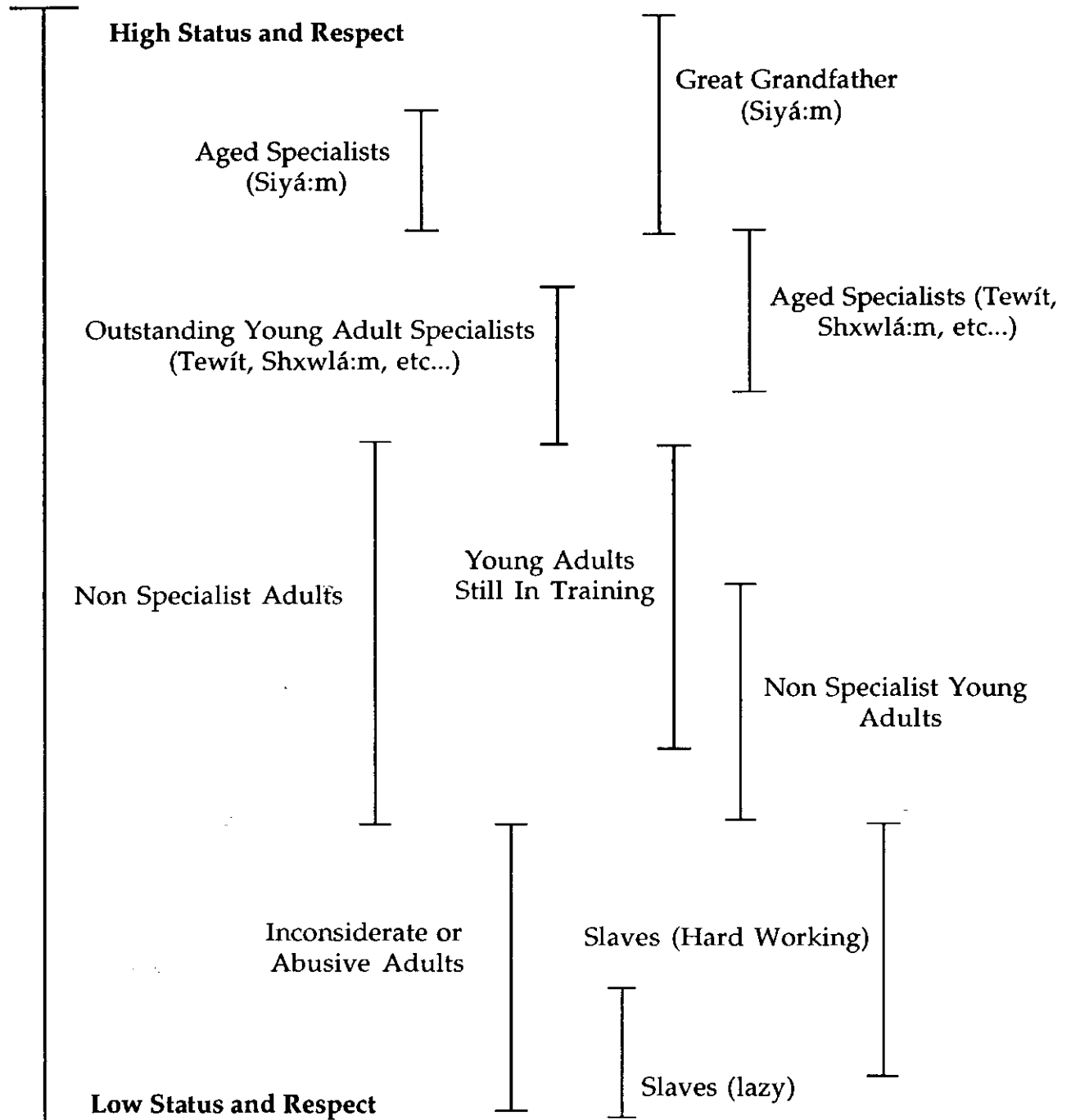
⁴³Hill-Tout, p.357

⁴⁴Duff, 1952, Thesis, p.180.

⁴⁵Hill-Tout, p.357

Figure One

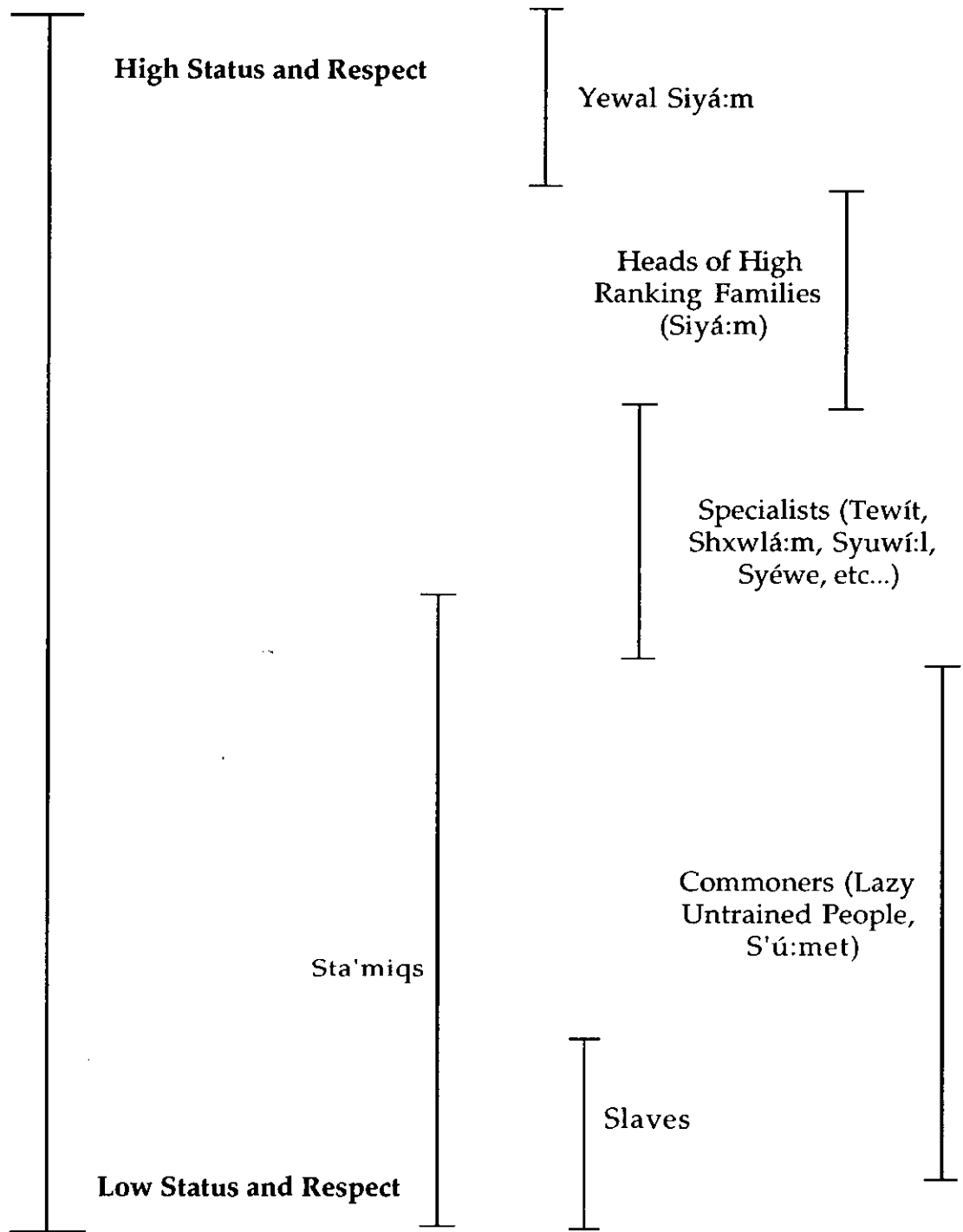
**Traditional Extended Family
Scale of Social Status and
Political Influence**



This chart shows the approximate social status and political influence of typical individuals within a traditional Sto:lo extended family. The large bar on the left illustrates the range of respect a person was measured against. The smaller bars illustrate the approximate range of a given individual. Note the possibility for overlap.

Figure two

Traditional Community Scale of Social Status and Political Influence



This chart shows the approximate social status and political influence of groups of people within a traditional Sto:lo village or community. The large bar on the left illustrates the range of respect a person was measured against. The smaller bars illustrate the approximate range within a given vocation. Note the possibility for overlap.

Informants correctly emphasize that in traditional times the Stó:lo never had political positions equivalent to modern Indian Act Chiefs. Without strict codes or laws defining the prerogatives of a *Yewal Siyá:m* there were great differences in the governing styles and *de facto* powers of the political leaders, both over time and between tribes. Wilson Duff, explains that the "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."⁴⁶ Duff also recorded that if a person's behavior was judged inappropriate by the community, little more could be done (or was needed to be done) to modify that behavior than to lecture the individual.⁴⁷ If public lectures failed to achieve the desired result, the community (usually through the *Yewal Siyá:m*) might try to banish or expel an offending individual. However, if the offending individual refused to leave, the rest of the community would just as likely elect to relocate themselves rather than remain with a person who rejected society's definition of acceptable behavior. In certain extreme situations (if people did not want to relocate) the offending person might even be killed.⁴⁸

The historical record confirms the memories of Elders who recall that each *Yewal Siyá:m* exercised power differently depending upon his personality and the extent to which he was respected by his community. Simon Fraser, searching for a route to the Pacific in 1808, described the Chiefs he encountered as appearing to "have various degrees of power among their people".⁴⁹ Fraser's description of Stó:lo leaders suggest their political power ranged from something equating respected advisor all the way to unchallenged director. Twenty years later, the official journal of the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Langley, illustrates that the individual nature of Stó:lo leader's character and power had not altered. For example, *La'pit'chin*, the leader of the *Kutchu* living up Pitt River, was recognized as subordinate to *Wit'tle'kan'um*, the main leader of all the Kwantlens.⁵⁰ As late as the 1860s the independent leaders of the Stó:lo governed in ways indicative of the respect the community gave them, and their own personalities. For instance, when the British Columbia Colonial Government began surveying the first Stó:lo reserves, traditional leaders were informed that all reserved lands were to be used for the communal benefit of the entire community. Most leaders agreed with this as it conformed to traditional interpretations of land and

⁴⁶Duff, 1952 Thesis, p179-180.

⁴⁷Many current elders look back with fondness upon the "lecture system". They remember that people were so concerned with retaining the respect of the community that if they were publicly humbled by a committee of elders they almost always corrected the offending behavior.

⁴⁸Duff tells a story of a village community that moved away from a mean person as well as a story of the Yale war chief being killed by his peers. (Duff, 1952, Thesis, p.205, 206.) Some current elders say Ohamil was originally settled by people banished from other communities.

⁴⁹W. Kaye, Lamb, ed. Letters and journals of Simon Fraser, 1806-1808. p.97.

⁵⁰Fort Langley Journal p.52, 53 (BCARS)

resources use, yet, *Massell*, the powerful leader of the *Katzie* people was quite adamant in telling the government surveyor that the "reserve belonged wholly to himself personally".⁵¹

Responsibility of *Yewal Siyá:m*, and the possibility of losing rank and authority

As mentioned, a person's authority and rank diminished whenever they lost people's respect. A leader's primary responsibility was to provide for the material well being of the community. He was responsible not only for the general welfare but the actual "comfort of the tribe", and therefore directed all undertakings in the realm of the "common interest".⁵² *Tewíts, Shxwlá:ms*, and others were responsible for contributing to the physical or spiritual well being of the tribe, but their responsibility was limited to their particular expertise. Moreover, should they prove incapable of fulfilling their role they would not lose political power as much as they would descend in strictly social terms. A *Yewal Siyá:m*, on the other hand, would be stripped of his *raison d'être* (reason for being) if he failed to fulfill his obligations. Upon being deposed the *Yewal Siyá:m* would typically be replaced by an heir of his own choosing, however, it was the responsibility of Elders from the nobility class (*Siyá:m*) ultimately to decide upon a replacement.

It should be noted that Stó:lo informants for the past century have consistently stated that only a tiny percentage of traditional *Yewal Siyá:m* were ever removed from office. Chilliwack oral history records only one such occurrence. Hill-Tout concludes that the low instance of depositions of leaders stemmed from either: 1) selfishness: the *Yewal Siyá:m* being so aware of the dignity and privileges of their office that they were careful not to engage in activities which could lead to their being forfeit, or 2) altruism: the *Yewal Siyá:m* were so genuinely impressed with the responsibilities and duties of their position that they strove earnestly to fulfil them. Hill-Tout feels the latter explanation goes farther than the former in explaining the attitude of a typical *Yewal Siyá:m*, and I would agree. Yet regardless of why traditional leaders were seldom replaced, the fact remains that a large percentage of Stó:lo people today do not respect their Indian Act Chiefs and want desperately to remove them from office in the next election. Modern leaders have lost the respect traditional leaders relied on so heavily.

Aside from being responsible for the welfare of the community and having to demonstrate proficiency in particular fields (ie. diplomacy, oratory, history, hunting/fishing, etc...), *Yewal Siyá:m* were also expected to be of a certain personality type. It was expected that they would be generous and kind, and essentially pacifist in nature. These traits were important because one of the

⁵¹Letter of William McColl to Col. Moody of the Royal Engineers. Royal Engineer Letterbook Vol. 3. May, 13, 1861. (BCARS).

⁵²Hill-Tout, p.358.

central responsibilities of a leader was conflict resolution. If, for example, two people disagreed over rights to a fishing site or hunting privileges their family *Siyá:m* would normally be asked to intervene. If, however, the dispute threatened to disrupt the harmony of the entire community the *Yewal Siyá:m* would step in to resolve the differences. Ordinarily, his commanding knowledge of history and protocol would be all that was required to convince one of the two antagonists that they were in error.

The *Yewal Siyá:m*'s duties were not restricted to simply local matters. In many ways, his most important function was to represent his village's interests at tribal gatherings where, with other *Yewal Siyá:m*, he assisted in creating policy designed to promote and protect the interests of the broader community. At these gatherings, all *Yewal Siyá:m* were ranked according to their personal level of respect, and the size and importance of their community. In theory, a leader from a relatively small community could carry as much influence as the spokesman from a relatively large village. It appears the various *Yewal Siyá:m* were expected to put tribal interests above all else. As common people were free to move whenever they pleased, it is reasonable to assume that the advantages of living in the village of the tribal leader would encourage people to relocate there. Thus in traditional times it is likely that the biggest communities were the homes of the most respected leaders. (See Appendix B for a description of the effects of the creation of bands and reserves on tribal structures.)

At tribal gatherings one man would be selected to represent the entire tribe. He was also called *Yewal Siyá:m*, and was the "first-going chief" of the entire tribe. His influence over the other *Yewal Siyá:m* was roughly equivalent to that of the village *Yewal Siyá:m* over local *Siyá:m*.⁵³ While this person could not arbitrarily make decisions affecting any particular village or individual, his high degree of respect placed him in a position similar to that of a chairman at a conference. He controlled the direction of discussion and formulated summaries of decisions based upon his interpretation of what the various leaders wanted, and what he felt was best. While representing his village, he was expected to ensure that group decisions were made in the best interest of the entire tribe. In many ways his position parallels that of a Canadian Prime Minister who represents his local riding, but is expected to put national interests above local. (See figure three)

Role of women

Because Stó:lo women have received so little attention from scholars in the past, and because women in general have often suffered from paternalistic stereotyping by historians, it is useful to discuss the role of women in Stó:lo society. Broadly speaking, Stó:lo women did not have complete social and

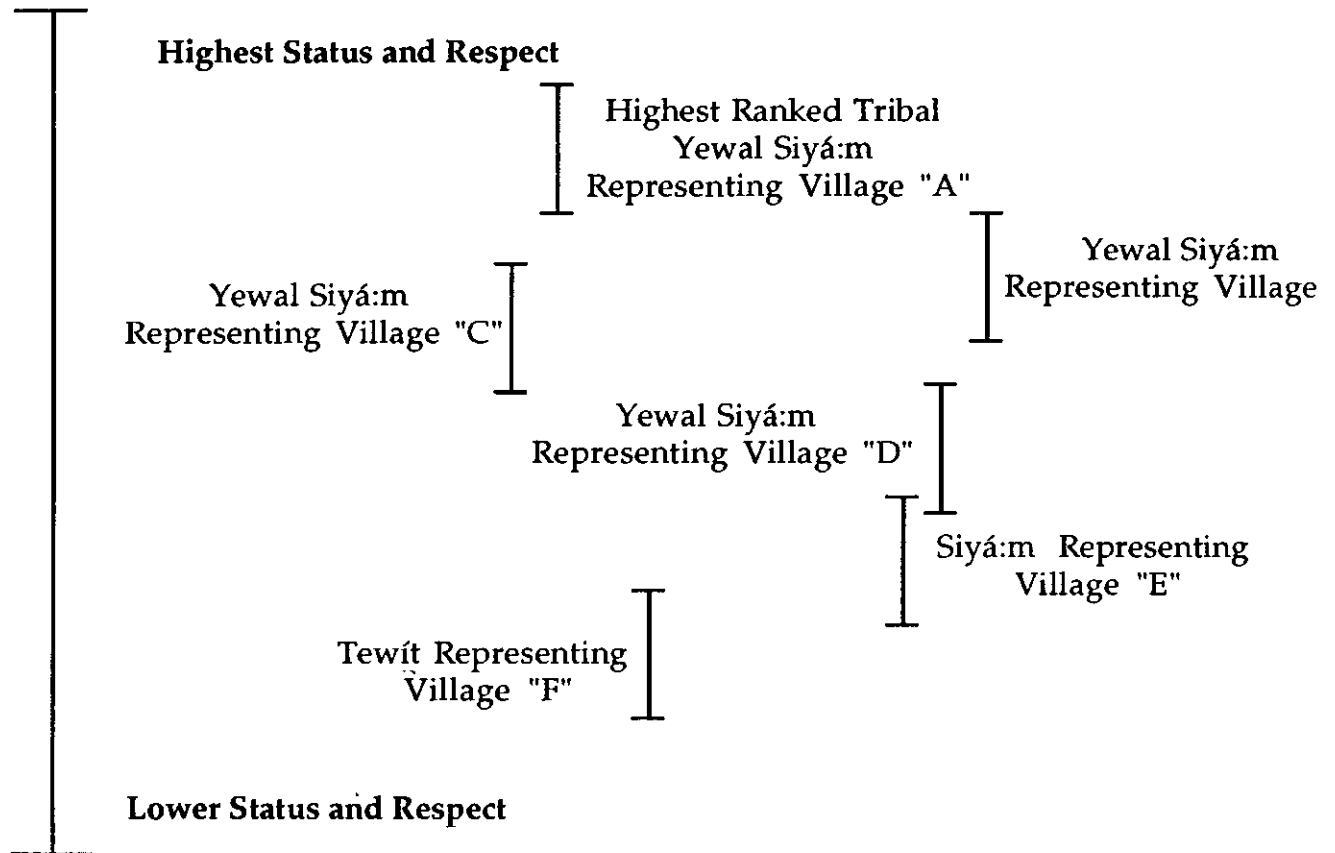
⁵³Ibid, p.358

political equality with men. This does not mean women did not hold positions of power or achieve high social rank, but rather that their roles were different, and the power and authority at their disposal was exercised in different ways. For instance, much has been said concerning the fact that only male heads of households were permitted to speak at official public gatherings.⁵⁴ However, it was universally recognized that a family leader spoke on behalf of his entire family, and therefore everything he said had theoretically been approved previously by the family.

⁵⁴Various interviews with Andy Commodore, Edna Bob, Agy Victor, Nancy Philipps etc...

Figure three

**Social and Political Structure
of Traditional Sto:lo Tribal
Councils**



This chart shows the approximate social status and political influence of traditional Sto:Lo community leaders while sitting in a Tribal Council. The large bar on the left illustrates the range of respect a Yewal Siyám was measured against. The smaller bars illustrate the approximate range of a given Yewal Siyám. Note the possibility for overlap. Aside from the individual character of a village leader, a Yewal Siyám's status and power were also based upon the size, wealth, and prosperity of a community.

It was at family gatherings of family members that women's opinions were strongly expressed. Indeed, current Elders point out that while the formal interfamily gatherings (where only men could speak) have fallen into disuse, informal family meetings have not, and that more often than not families today continue to be controlled, in large part, by powerful matriarches who exercise their considerable power behind the scenes. The quaint analysis one eighteenth century Bostonian trader who described the role of Aboriginal women from the west coast of Vancouver Island is particularly insightful. He notes that the position of women, "though subordinate in some respects, is upon the whole as favorable as that occupied by their sex in... [western] life; nominal submission, and actual control."⁵⁵

Women could also rise in status by becoming specialists. Though physical limitations would have rendered expertise as a hunter or fisherman beyond the capabilities of most woman, there were still other non domestic vocations where they could excel. For instance, of the three types of Stó:lo doctors or shamen, (*Shxwlá:m*, *Syuwí:l*, or *Syéwe*) the position of *Syuwí:l*, typically described as that of a sorcerer or witch, was filled by women as often as men.⁵⁶ A *Syuwí:l* was highly respected by the Stó:lo for such an individual was capable of placing harmful curses on offensive people. Even members of the upperclass and children of *Yewal Siyá:m* were careful never to antagonize a *Syuwí:l*. Some contemporary Elders also claim that certain particularly gifted woman could become *Shxwlá:m* and partake in the actual curing of people.⁵⁷

Although none of the Elders I spoke with were able to recall stories of women reaching the top social and political rank of *Yewal Siyá:m*, there is historical evidence demonstrating that occasionally Salish women did achieve the pinnacle of power. For example, nineteenth century historian, James Gibbs, referred to certain women who through their superior character and a strong mind, "obtained... influence similar to that of Chiefs". The artist Paul Kane, writing in 1858, also described one woman Chief from Puget Sound who was a more powerful potentate than most male Aboriginal leaders. Moreover, the daughters of the Stó:lo leaders who married Hudson Bay employees at Fort Langley were clearly respected within their communities and demonstrated many times their ability to control and direct the slaves they had brought with them as dowry.⁵⁸ In recent years an increasing number of Stó:lo women have stepped out of the home and into the social and political spotlight. A small but significant number of Stó:lo women have actually

⁵⁵William Sturgis, Second Lecture (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, unpublished manuscript, c. 1846.) .p6. (emphasis added by the author)

⁵⁶Hill-Tout, p.361.

⁵⁷Interviews with Edna Bob of Seabird Island August 11, 1992; and with Tilly Guiterez and family, Chawathl, July30, 1992....

⁵⁸Fort Langley Journal, p.85, 91, 140,

become Chiefs, and a large proportion of women now sit as councillors. Yet, even in those communities where women have not yet assumed the actual reins of power their influence continues to be felt strongly behind the scenes just as in traditional times.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING CURRENT STÓ:LO GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES

Some Stó:lo Chiefs and people may not be prepared to completely replace the current Indian Act election system. They would prefer to simply improve upon the existing structures. Some bands see this is a reasonable and practical alternative to running the risk of trying to create an entirely new system. The expression "sometimes it is better to deal with a known evil than risk having to deal with the unknown" provides sound logic to many people. The following is a sample of some suggestions current Stó:lo Elders have made based upon their own analysis of the situation in their own bands.

Stagger Elections of Chiefs and Councillors

It typically happens that the most qualified and most respected individuals in a band run for the position of Chief, while less qualified and younger candidates jockey for positions as Councillors. This results in the candidate(s) who was not elected Chief feeling betrayed by the community and alienated from the decision making process. It simultaneously results in "second rate people" being elected as Councillors in as much as the "better people" all ran for Chief. Many of these and related problems could be reduced, if not eliminated, if the election for Chief were held prior to the election for Councillors. In this way rather than the losers being completely left out of government, as they currently are, they would have the option of running for a position as Councillor on the next ballot. This would conceivably result in higher qualified individuals sitting in Council than is currently the case, and it would also reduce inter-family tensions. Leaders of families who ran for Chief but lost would now be equal members in Council, and families would be less likely to feel their interests were not represented by their elected officials.

Hold only one election for all Council

Rather than stagger the elections of Chiefs and Councillors bands might consider holding only one election for an entire Council. In such an election everybody would be running for the same position. The person who received the most votes would be declared Chief and the people with the next most votes would become Councillors. For example, if a band which was entitled to one Chief and two Councillors held an election, and five people ran, then the three people who received the most votes would all sit on council. The person who got the most votes would be the Chief.

Chief	35% of vote
1st Councillor	25% of vote
2nd Councillor	20% of vote
unsuccessful Candidate	15% of vote

unsuccessful Candidate 10% of vote

Hold Regular Full Band Meetings

Many regular band members feel they are excluded from what occurs behind Council doors. It would appear this issue could be addressed just by holding more frequent band meetings. Many current Elders state that it has been two or more years since a full band meeting was held, and many more years since they were held regularly. Chiefs, in responding to such accusations, claim they do not hold full meetings for one of two reasons: 1) nobody attends them; 2) if people do attend, the meetings inevitably degenerate into hot tempered shouting matches and nothing is accomplished and people leave feeling angry or hurt. It appears that a communication gap has developed between the elected officials and the people. Perhaps one way of rectifying the situation would be to hold full meetings on a regular basis, and ensure that everyone in the community was notified of the time and agenda of the meeting in advance. Elders have stated that they want more than to find a notice stuffed into their mail boxes. They want to be informed of the meetings personally by the Chief or a Councillor. Furthermore, Council often deals with issues that are too technical for some of the more Elderly band members to understand without assistance. They therefore want to be provided with an explanation of the agenda before the meeting begins so they can make informed contributions. It would also appear to be in everyone's best interest if the Chief made it clear at the beginning of the meeting that the agenda had to be followed, and that "New Business" and public discussion would occur only at appropriate pre-established times. If these standard courtesies and practices were followed, it is likely Elders and other members of the community who now feel uninvolved and somewhat redundant would be made to feel they were useful and appreciated members of Stó:lo society.

Lengthen Term of Office

A common complaint of Stó:lo Chiefs is that their term of office is too short. They say they are forced to spend much of their two year term just preparing for the next election, and therefore they do not have time to create long term social and economic policies. The Ohamil Chief and Council have already extended their terms to three years. Chief Audrey Kelly feels that this has provided her with better means of fulfilling her obligations to her band: "One year for learning, and two for action."⁵⁹ She feels it also encourages younger people to enter into band politics as they realize they will have longer to learn and recover from their mistakes before having to face the electorate.

While the three year term is an improvement over the two year cycle, it would appear that an even longer period in office would be better. A four to seven year term would allow the bad feelings and resentment some people

⁵⁹Interview with Chief Audrey Kelly, Ohamil, August 27, 1992.

experience after their candidate is rejected at the polls to die down before the next election. It would likewise give Chiefs a reasonable period of time to begin constructing policies designed to address long term objectives. It often takes longer than two years just to set the ground work necessary for stimulating economic development or housing projects. Social programs can take even longer. If Chiefs knew for certain that they had four or more years to establish such policies before having to justify their actions to the voters they might feel more confident and, conceivably, a lot more could be accomplished.

Re-establish Traditions

Many Elders have expressed the opinion that their band would function better if some of the old traditions were intermixed with the modern system. For example, some Elders look back with fondness on the role "watchmen" played in the communities. Apparently originating with the arrival of Christian missionaries, a watchman was appointed in every community, and was responsible for ensuring people behaved properly. He was a respected member of the community, known to be impartial and fair. It was the watchman's duty to report to the Chief and Council any inappropriate behavior. The Chief would then act on the watchman's report and try to convince the accused person to amend his or her behavior.

Elders say the watchman was a great mouthpiece for those who had no official power, like women and children. If a husband or father was a heavy drinker who became violent or abusive his wife and children were often too afraid to speak for themselves. The watchman would ensure that their concerns were brought before the Chief and addressed.

If the Chief alone was ineffective in getting offending people to modify their offensive behavior, he would call the Elders and heads of families together. Accused individuals would be permitted to speak in their own defence, but if the Council found them guilty, they would be given a public lecture. Being humiliated in such a manner by the community's most respected people resulted in the accused person losing both status and respect. Since status and respect were of central importance to the Stó:lo, most people who received such lectures worked very hard to restore their lost position. Elders claim that the people who received the lecture never resented the people who lectured them. Rather they respected them for being concerned enough with their family's welfare to take action and help them.

Elders claim that watchmen and the lecture system were also used to assist children and young adults who had gone-a-stray. If a person knew of a young boy who was drinking or stealing, he would not turn his back and say "its not my son; its not my problem".⁶⁰ Everyone had a responsibility to talk to the

⁶⁰Interview with Sylvester Joe, Seabird Island. Aug, 1992.

boy and his family, or at least tell the watchman who would talk to the Chief. If the young fellow did not apologize and make efforts to improve his behavior, he too might be lectured by the Council of Elders. As with adults, the children also wished to retain their respect and would take the wisdom of the Elders seriously.

Another traditional activity, closely related to the "lecture system", was a special Potlatch ceremony where people were publicly elevated in rank and status through the washing away of past offences or stigmas. It was at such ceremonies that people who had received public lectures in the past, but had subsequently proven that they had overcome their failings, were brought before the entire community and praised for their improved behavior. They were told by the Chief, or some other respected person, that their respect had been restored, and that they were now a better person. To demonstrate the sincerity of the community it was acknowledged that no one would ever hold the person's past actions against him. They were gone—washed away by his own hard work and perseverance.

The seriousness and effectiveness of such ceremonies is demonstrated in historic accounts describing instances where even the stigma of slavery was on occasion removed. The Stó:lo, as mentioned, believed bad traits were passed on along blood lines. If a father was lazy or cruel, his children had the responsibility of proving they had not inherited those same characteristics. The hardest stigma to escape was slavery, yet occasionally a slave woman or man was able to prove themselves so worthy of respect that their master threw a special Potlatch and elevated them to the rank of a free man—their slave stigma permanently erased.

About fifty years ago "watchmen" and the "lecture system" and special Potlatch ceremonies stopped being used. Elders say this happened because people no longer cared about their position within the community. They say the combined influences resulting from increased integration with Canadian society, racism, economic dependency, and the residential school experience, all lowered their people's self esteem and broke up families. This reduced the effectiveness of traditional means of social control. If these traditional activities could be restored much of the jealousy and greed and resentment that exists between the Stó:lo and their leaders might disappear, or at least become less prevalent. Many Elders now feel there are signs that things are improving and hope these traditional positions and activities will indeed be reborn.

Conclusion

Band Councils should also consider combinations of some of the different suggestions outlined above. Each band faces challenges that are unique. Their response should be tailored to suit their own needs. For example, Chiefs might be elected for four year terms, while Councillors could be elected

every year. This would provide the stability and continuity Chiefs feel they need to develop long term policies, while it likewise would permit the membership (through its Councillors) to keep checks on a Chief. Likewise, resurrecting the position of watchman, the practice of public lectures and special Potlatches, and combining these with existing federal and provincial social services programs might result in the two cultures complementing one another. The result could be healthier communities. Another example would include special full band meetings being held once or twice per annum where the Chief and Council outline their general objectives for the upcoming year, and their vision for the longer term. This would keep the public informed and give them opportunities to express themselves on particular occasions while it left the elected officials free to implement their policies throughout the rest of their terms in office.

PROPOSAL FOR REPLACING THE INDIAN ACT ELECTION SYSTEM WITH STRUCTURES MORE IN KEEPING WITH TRADITIONAL STÓ:LO CULTURE

The Stó:lo realize that many things have changed in the past 150 years. They know it is impossible to turn back the clock and erase everything negative that has happened as a result of the arrival of Europeans. Yet, they also know that their ancestors possessed a sophisticated functioning society long before the Europeans came. They know too that the government structures imposed on them by the Colonial and Canadian governments have not benefitted them. Now Stó:lo want the right to decide for themselves what is the best system. In general what people have expressed is a desire to re-establish a system of government based upon the teachings of the Elders. Interestingly, people are also willing to adopt proven features of western models, such as gender equality, into traditional style governments.

We must remember that the traditional Stó:lo political system functioned because it had the strong Stó:lo social structure to support it. Indeed, one of the reasons for wanting to replace the current government system is to help restore and reinforce traditional values and structures. A system of government adopted from the past and thrust into the present without the necessary social foundation to support it might not work. Yet, much traditional Stó:lo social structure not only still exists, but in many ways thrives. Naturally there will be some difficulties associated with a transition to a traditional style government, but it appears that the short term psychological benefits the Stó:lo will derive from taking control of their own destiny, coupled with the potential for long term social healing and economic growth far outweigh any potential drawbacks.

MODEL A: "Traditional Council with Selected Leader"

Most Elders agree that the present Indian Act election system rejects, and in fact undermines, traditional Stó:lo social and political structures—in particular the extended family. It also functions on the premise of majority (or plurality) rule, rather than on consensus as traditional Stó:lo society did. Thus, Councillors are not respected the way *Siyá:m* once were, and Chiefs are not held in the same regard as the *Yewal Siyá:m* of the past. Consequently, in order to function within the constraints of the Indian Act, Chiefs and Councillors are often compelled to behave in ways that are misinterpreted by their constituents, and, as a result, greed, mistrust and alienation often characterize the relationship between Band Councils and the people.

One obvious way to eliminate some of the problems associated with the Indian Act system would be to replace elected Councils with something which more accurately reflected the social compositions of Stó:lo communities. For example, each extended family could be guaranteed

representation in Council, and each family could decide for themselves (and among themselves) who would represent them on Council. (For examples of how local Stó:lo Councils from various bands might look based upon family size and composition see Appendix A.) This would eliminate the problem of entire families being excluded from the decision making process, and restore the traditional practise of families being directly involved in all decisions.

To ensure that larger families received consideration corresponding to their size each family could be allocated its Council seats according to its proportion of the general population. In this way every family would be represented, but bigger families would have greater representation. To further reduce the possibility of families feeling left out, and to prevent one or two families grouping together and ignoring the wishes of the others, all legislation in Councils should require unanimous agreement before being passed—a simple plurality or majority being insufficient. However, to prevent one or two individuals or families from blocking Council indefinitely, a provision should be made that after three consecutive meetings if consensus cannot be reached then the leader of the Council would be entitled to make a decision based on his vision of what was best for the entire community. All of this would be completely consistent with the way *Yewal Siyá:m* and their Councils operated in traditional times.

To further prevent Council from being bogged down in obstructionist bickering, those families with less than five—or ten—percent of the total population should be given a seat on Council where they are permitted to express their opinions to the rest of Council, yet, where they would be denied actual voting rights. Such families would have to rely upon the wisdom of Council, and their own representatives ability to command respect, to ensure that their opinions were considered.

To ensure that the Chief, or *Yewal Siyá:m*, is highly respected and therefore effective, he should be selected not from among, and by, the general population but from among, and by, the various family representatives in Council. His appointment would require agreement among all the Councillors or else a series of run off election would need to be held (within Council) whereby the Candidate with the least number of votes would be eliminated from each successive ballot until one person received a clear majority. Once appointed the *Yewal Siyá:m* would hold his position only as long as Council felt he was serving the communities best interests. If Council did not like what he was doing they would be free to replace him at any time. The only real power that would distinguish the *Yewal Siyá:m* from other Councillors would be his ability to break Council deadlocks by making decisions on the Council's behalf in the event that consensus could not be achieved. He would also be the official representative of the Council in all its dealings both within the local community and outside.

MODEL B: "Return to Hereditary Leadership Structure"

A few of the Stó:lo I have interviewed have suggested they would like to return to a strict model of hereditary leadership. Upon further questioning I discovered that what most people meant by this was a return to a hereditary Chieftanship. They felt this might go farther than Model A in solving the conflicts and reducing the bickering surrounding their current elections. Likewise, they felt it would restore the respect traditional leaders were accorded. However, there are a few factors which must be discussed before considering reinstating a government based upon a hereditary leader.

First, as has been shown, traditional Stó:lo leaders were *not* selected on a strictly hereditary basis. Being the eldest son of the *Yewal Sie'm* certainly gave a man advantages over others who might challenge his right to lead, but it did not guarantee his success. Hereditary right was severely qualified by the extent of a person's training in traditional leadership fields, and his personal disposition and character. It was not unheard of for the eldest son to be passed over in favour of another brother, or uncle. In some circumstances, a leader was even chosen from among people outside the *Yewal Siyám* immediate family. Likewise, while it occurred only rarely, a leader could be deposed.

Moreover, since the arrival of permanent European settlers in the Fraser Valley in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, it has become increasingly difficult to trace the ancestry of traditional leaders. Traditional nineteenth century Stó:lo leaders found their positions undermined by the appointment of "Church Chiefs" and then "Indian Act Chiefs". On occasion these leaders were not the same people who would have been community leaders had westerners not interfered with Sto:L:o governing practices. For example, it is not even clear if such dominating figures as "Capt. John" of the Chilliwacks was of the traditional leadership line. According to the autobiography he narrated to Rev W.H. Barraclough in 1898,⁶¹ Cpt. John was the nephew of a Soowahlie *Stamiq* (war chief) and only became *Siyám* after spending many years gathering wealth and trying to earn people's respect. He rose to further prominence through the acquisition of wealth during the gold rush, and then became a strong ally and advocate of the Methodist Church. While many people point to him as a hereditary leader, it seems possible that he was simply an intelligent and ambitious man who elevated himself to the pinnacle of power by taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the gold rush and the conflict and competition between Catholic and Methodist missionaries.

The issue of heredity is complicated further by the extent of intermarriage among Stó:lo families in the past 100 years. This, combined with the

⁶¹Rev W.H. Barraclough, ed., "The Conversion of Capt John" as related in Wells, 1987.

matrilineal and patrilineal decent systems used by the Stó:lo, makes it very difficult to determine who has the strongest hereditary claim to assume the position of *Yewal Siyá:m*. Indeed, one of the major election issues in some communities has centered around two candidates arguing over who can most directly trace his roots to a known traditional hereditary leader.⁶²

Even if clear line of decent from traditional leaders can be drawn, people still might reject a heredity government as elitist. Many Stó:lo might be unwilling to live under a system which prevented talented and ambitious young people from achieving political power on the grounds of hereditary privilege. Just as many Canadians like the tradition of a hereditary monarchy, only a few would consider it acceptable if Queen Elizabeth decided she was going to take an active part in the daily governing of Canada.

Relatedly, many Aboriginal women all across Canada have recently become concerned that Aboriginal Self-government could translate into governments without women. They fear that Aboriginal men, in their dealings with the Federal and Provincial leaders, could neglect women's concerns and political agendas. These are legitimate concerns. Women point out that if Aboriginal Self-government becomes based upon strictly traditional hereditary models women will find themselves relegated to subordinate positions. Just as Non-Aboriginal women might agree that there were some aspects of eighteenth or nineteenth century Canadian government they prefer over the present structures, it is unlikely any would consent to reinstating a system where women did not have political equality with men. This provides a good example of an instance where the evolution of certain aspects of western governmental structures (in this case women's rights) can be of benefit to Aboriginal people. It would be wrong to apply a strict interpretation of Aboriginal culture in an instance like this where it clearly disadvantaged a segment of society on the basis of gender.

In summary, it would be inconsistent with traditional Stó:lo practises to try and establish a government based solely on decent from a past *Yewal Siyá:m*. To the Stó:lo respect, not heredity, was the prime criteria for leadership. Therefore, the respect of current individuals should count for more than a person's ability to trace his ancestry to a great leader of the past. While believing that good and bad traits were inherited, the Stó:lo were more concerned with ensuring that their current leader was of the highest quality than in ensuring their leader was a direct descendant of a past great leader.⁶³

⁶²While the problems associated with tracing leader's decent appear daunting now, this matter may become easier to resolve in the near future as researchers at the Sto:Lo Tribal Council continue to gather information on family trees.

⁶³This is in direct contrast with many other Pacific Northwest Coast Aboriginal societies who saw lineal decent from either a mythical or real leader of the past as the most important criteria of leadership

The best way to combine a hereditary structure with an accountable and accessible government would be to involve the local Council in the selection of new Chiefs. If Council was given the authority to first screen and then reject or confirm a leader's choice for his successor many of the potential problems discussed above would be reduced. In traditional times the heir to the *Yewal Siyám* always had to be approved by the Elders of the community, so the establishment of such checks and balances on a modern leader would not be inconsistent. Council should also have the authority to remove and replace leaders who blatantly violate the trust of their people.

Clearly, Council would have to play an important role in the operation of a hereditary based Stó:lo government. Thus it would seem logical that the Council should also be designed in a manner more in keeping with traditional structures. While elections could be continued, this would seem relatively inconsistent with the logic behind selecting the Chief through a hereditary structure. A more compatible system would involve incorporating the extended family Council structure found in Model A and combine it with an essentially hereditary leadership. In this way, not only would the Council become more effective and culturally sensitive, but all families would be involved in the decision making process and accusations of favoritism and behind the scenes dealings would be eliminated. (For examples of how local Stó:lo Councils from various bands might look based upon family size and composition see Appendix A.)

The next factor which must be considered before adopting a hereditary style government is that the criteria people use to judge leaders is not always the same as it was in traditional times. As explained earlier, leaders were trained from a very early age for their position. They had to prove they were good hunters and fishermen. They had to know the history of their people in great detail. They had to be powerful speakers, and most of all they had to be wealthy and wise. In other words, they had to be highly respected. Today people are not trained in the same way. Even recent Stó:lo Chiefs who have succeed their fathers as Chiefs (and in theory have had the best opportunities for training) have often required a number of years of "on the job training" before they were considered satisfactory leaders.

Such a lack of training can be very costly to a community. Today Chiefs must be skilled negotiators, ready to deal with the obstructionist bureaucratic elements within federal government agencies. They require skills in dealing with people suffering from chronic unemployment, chemical dependencies, and abuse. They are also expected to be well versed in the traditional skills of salmon fishing, and the Smoke House. Increasingly, people expect them to possess university degrees in fields relevant to their official duties. In other words, while some of the criteria for gaining respect have remained the same

over the years, many others have changed, and to be successful a hereditary government would have to accommodate these realities.

In summary, if a hereditary structure was to be reinstated it would be essential that an appropriate selection process first be designed to ensure that not only the "correct" person, but the best person, was made *Yoow'el Sie'm*. After the initial leader was selected the next step would be to establish a traditional Stó:lo local Council. A Council which respects the individual needs and make up of the various extended families would appear to be most successful in assisting the hereditary Chief in governing. Next, a formal process of subsequent leadership succession would have to be established. This should be based upon Council participation in both the selection and confirmation process. For instance, if the hereditary Chief's eldest son did not want to become Chief it would be a simple matter of him abdicating his position. If however, the eldest son wanted to succeed his father but the community did not want him, or wanted someone else, a formal confirmation/rejection process be required to enable the Council to bypass the undesirable individual in favour of another brother, or sister, or cousin. If these steps were taken it is likely that the new governing system would far exceed the Indian Act Election System in meeting the cultural, political and economic needs of Stó:lo communities.

Appendix A

The data in the following charts demonstrate theoretical extended family groupings from various Stó:lo communities. The fourth column "Representation in Council" shows the number of Councillors each family would receive in a new family based Council. The numbers are based on population. The fifth and sixth columns demonstrate how the make up of Council would change if the smallest families were denied full voting privileges. The example of Cheam is particularly illustrative and shows that a full Council would have roughly 11 members representing all families. This would ensure each family was involved in decision making and had their opinions and concerns heard. However, it is obvious that a council of that size could become difficult to manage, and the chance of it ever achieving a consensus would be low. If, however, only those families with over ten percent of the population could actually vote the number of people trying to reach a consensus would be cut to 8. While the smaller families might not like the idea of having restricted power, it should be realized that they would be receiving greater input into the decision making process than they have under the Indian Act. Currently it is very rare for a person from a family with less than ten percent of the population to ever be elected a Councillor, much less Chief.

Please note, the break downs of extended families represented below is only a rough approximation based upon an informal survey of a few Elders and band members. Some of the smaller families may feel they are actually part of a larger grouping and wish to be associated with other families thereby increasing their representation on Council. These charts only show tentative theoretical extended family groupings. Ultimately it will be up to the families themselves to determine who belongs where

CHEAM

Family	Total Population	Percent of Total Pop	Representation in Council	Voting Councillors (5% of pop. or more)	Voting Councillors (10% of pop. or more)
Douglas	116	41%	4	4	4
Victors	53	19%	2	2	2
Edwards/Giroux /Williams	36	13%	1	1	1
Aleck	22	8%	1	1	0
Murphy	15	5%	1	1	0
Crey	12	4%	1	0	0
Tommy	3	1%	1	0	0
TOTAL	286	101%	11	10	8

SOOWAHLIE

Family	Total Population	Percent of Total Pop	Representation in Council	Voting Councillors (5% of pop. or more)	Voting Councillors (10% of pop. or more)
Commodore	79	35%	4	4	4
Kelly	60	27%	3	3	3
Wallace	32	14%	2	2	2
Sam	22	10%	1	1	1
Mussell	17	8%	1	1	0
John	16	7%	1	1	0
TOTAL	226	100%	12	12	9

FT. LANGLEY

Family	Total Population	Percent of Total Pop	Representation in Council	Voting Councillors (5% of pop. or more)	Voting Councillors (10% of pop. or more)
Gabriels	26	50%	5	5	5
Thomas	12	23%	2	2	2
Antones	11	21%	2	2	2
Fillardeau	3	6%	1	1	0
TOTAL	52	100%	10	10	9

SCOWLITZ

Family	Total	Percent of	Representation	Voting Councillors	Voting Councillors
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	Population	Total Pop	in Council	(5% of pop. or more)	(10% of pop. or more)
Charlie/Pennier	48	25%	3	3	3
Peters/Phillips	47	24%	2	2	2
Williams	42	22%	2	2	2
Hall	34	18%	2	2	2
Michell	14	7%	1	1	0
Gabriel	5	3%	1	0	0
Willoughby	3	2%	1	0	0
TOTAL	194	102%	12	10	9

SUMAS

Family	Total Population	Percent of Total Pop	Representation in Council	Voting Councillors (5% of pop. or more)	Voting Councillors (10% of pop. or more)
Silver	86	44%	4	4	4
Kelly	46	23%	2	2	2
Ned	43	22%	2	2	2
Williams	21	11%	1	1	1
TOTAL	196	100%	9	9	9

OHAMIL

Family	Total Population	Percent of Total Pop	Representation in Council	Voting Councillors (5% of pop. or more)	Voting Councillors (10% of pop. or more)
Fraser	22	29%	3	3	3
Jones	17	23%	2	2	2
George	16	21%	2	2	2
Kelly/Andrews	15	20%	2	2	2
Pierre	3	4%	1	0	0
Casmire	1	1%	1	0	0
TOTAL	70	99%	11	9	9

POPKUM

Family	Total Population	Percent of Total Pop	Representation in Council	Voting Councillors (5% of pop. or more)	Voting Councillors (10% of pop. or more)
Murphy	8	100%	3	3	3

YAKWEAKWIOOSE

Family	Total Population	Percent of Total Pop.	Representation in Council	Voting Councillors (5% of pop. or more)	Voting Councillors (10% of pop. or more)
Malloway	32	100%	3	3	3

SEABIRD ISLAND

Family	Total Population	Percent of Total Pop.	Representation in Council	Voting Councillors (5% of pop. or more)	Voting Councillors (10% of pop. or more)
Peters	102	21%	2	2	2
Bobb/McNeil	71	15%	2	2	2
Hope/Harris	59	12%	1	1	1
Thomas/Joe	52	11%	1	1	1
Louie	45	9%	1	1	0
MacIntyre	40	8%	1	1	0
Andrews	28	6%	1	1	0
Pettis	28	6%	1	1	0
Joseph	16	3%	1	0	0
Harry	16	3%	1	0	0
Seymour	10	2%	1	0	0
Charles	7	1%	1	0	0
Shaw	6	1%	1	0	0
TOTAL	480	98%	15	10	6

Appendix B

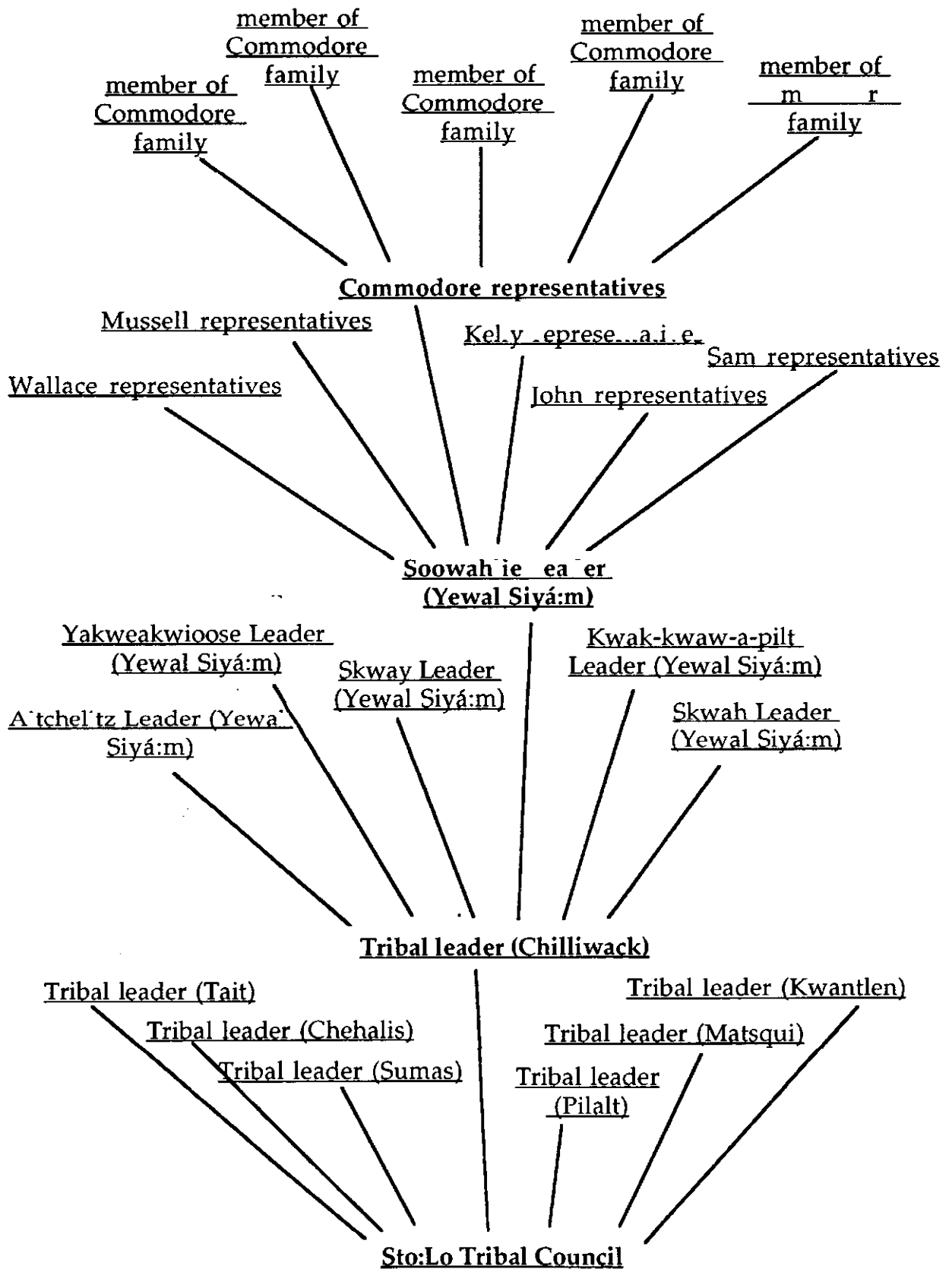
The creation of reserves and artificial "band" structures has greatly altered the physical make up of Stó:lo communities, and more importantly, the social and political influence of families between communities. Traditionally, Stó:lo people could move freely between villages, and indeed such movement was common. Moreover, seasonal migrations associated with the procurement of salmon, or the avoidance of enemies, floods, and mosquitos, ensured a healthy mixing of people and families. Today, for a variety of reasons Stó:lo people are much more likely to reside longer in one place. This has intensified traditional divisions between people and simultaneously created others. For example, even within the Stó:lo Tribal Council there are clear divisions between bands and each band is officially granted equality—one vote per band on Council.

Given the fact that Seabird Island has 530 members while Pokum has only 8 and Yakweakwioose has 32, some might question the legitimacy of such divisions. The Wallace family of Soowahlie has roughly 32 members. Yet, because they are one of that community's smaller families, they have received very little representation in official band councils. By comparison, the Malloways of Yakweakwioose also have 32 family members, but because they make up the entire population of their reserve they control not only the band council, but are also represented with a seat on the Tribal Council. There are dozens of similar examples from the other bands in the Tribal Council.

Perhaps a more equitable and culturally consistent means of dividing representation in the Tribal Council would be to focus on the traditional regional groupings rather than the artificially created bands and reserves. Rather than the Council being made up of ten member bands, it might be better to have representation from each of the broader communities that make up the Stó:lo people. Thus, instead of different Chiefs representing Soowahlie, Yakweakwioose, Popkum, and Cheam all sitting in Council there could be one Head Chief for all the Chilliwack people. Likewise all the Sumas people would select one main leader as would the Pilalt, the Tait, and the Kwantlen, etc...

A few individual Chiefs have discussed their desire to return to such a system. They recognize that the reserve system divides their people and they are anxious to re-establish traditional political structures. However, I would recommend that such changes should be attempted only after the smaller family and local community structures have had time to work themselves into place. Once the extended family groups are reactivated and the local Councils have had time to adjust and accommodate to the creation of family selected Councillors, then efforts might be made to address the re-composition of the actual tribal council.

**Theoretical Sto:lo
Political Representation
(Soowahlie Model)**



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Bobb, Edna. Seabird Island
Charles, Archie. Seabird Island
Charlie, Bill. Chawathil
Charlie, Sophie. Chawathil
Commodore, Andy. Soowahlie
Commodore, Larry. Soowahlie
Douglas, Sam. Cheam
Fraser, Leslie. Ohamil
Gabriel, Maureen. Fort Langley
Gutierrez, Al. Chawathil
Gutierrez, David. Chawathil
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James, Cecilia. Soowahlie
Joe, Sylvester. Seabird Island
Kelly, Audrey. Ohamil
Kelly, Doug. Soowahlie
Kelly, Hugh. Kilgard (Sumas)
Louis, James. (a.k.a. James Fraser) Seabird Island
Malette, Edna. (a.k.a. Edna Douglas) Cheam
Malloway, Frank. Yakweakwioose
McHalsie, Sonny. Ohamil
Pennier, Clarence (Kat). Scowlitz
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Location: KELOWNA, B.C.

Date of Hearing: JUNE 16, 1993

Presentation Topic(s): _____

Presentation Type (please check appropriate block below):

Representing Group/Organization	Individual	Agency

Details of Presenter:

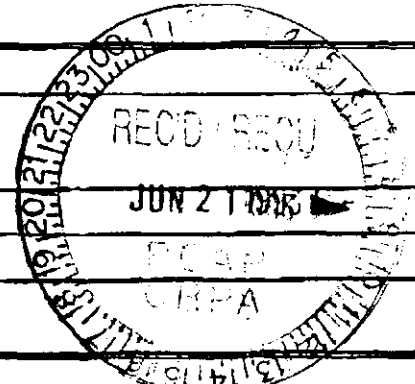
Name of Presenter: CHIEF CLARENCE PENNIER

Address: _____

Phone No: 604-858-3366

Fax No.: 604-858-4790

Organization Name: STO:LO TRIBAL COUNCIL



Presenter's Characteristics (please check appropriate areas):

Female Male

Inuit Status Indian Non-Status Indian Metis

Non-Aboriginal (if possible, specify if presenter represents Aboriginal Peoples: _____)

Area Represented: Urban Rural/Town Reserve Settlement Remote

Is Individual: Elder Youth Disabled Veteran

Organization Characteristics (if applicable):

If presenter is representing an Organization/Group, please check appropriate type:

Local Regional Provincial/Territorial National

Comments/Notes of Presentation:

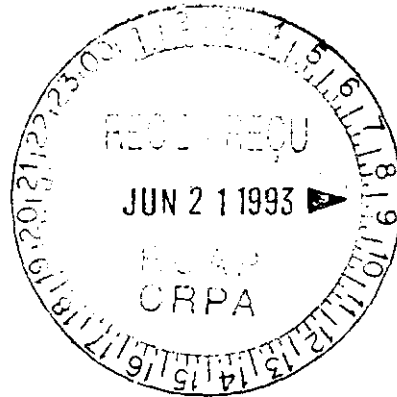
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<u>MEET</u>												
<u>MEETING</u>												
<u>INFO</u>												

Left message to return Call _____

Informed of Hearing, Date, Location: yes no

Confirmed agenda schedule on JUNE 16/93 at 2:30 pm []
(date) (time)

3025-2



	JTF	GE	RO	HW	FS	DH	MC	JB	CR	KL	Walt	
ACTION										✓		
INFO											✓	

Leadership Review

The Indian Act Election System and Traditional Sto:lo Socio-political Structures

Intervenor Participation Summary Brief

Sto:lo Tribal Council
June 11, 1993

REC'D AT
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