

At the Bridge

James Teit and an Anthropology of Belonging

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I

Missing in History

Only those few whites who help us ... uphold the honor of their race.

- Chiefs of the Shuswap, Couteau or Thompson, Okanagan, Lillooet, Stalo or Lower Fraser, Chilcotin, Carrier, and Tahltan Tribes in the interior of British Columbia, assembled at Spences Bridge, May 10, 1911¹

If there is any truth to the saying that a man finishes his house and then he dies, I should worry. The house that is this book has been so all-consuming for so long that when I picture life beyond it I draw a blank. It stretches back to the summer of 1977, when I accepted a contract to transcribe audio-recordings of Syilx (Okanagan)² songs for the Victoria-based BC Indian Language Project.³ With an ethnomusicology degree in progress and a new, portable Uher reel-to-reel tape recorder in hand, it seemed a good fit for my summer on the West Coast. After several weeks of trying to transfer the ever-shifting sound waves to paper, I was not so sure. The job had turned into a cumbersome task that taxed my musical ear and my patience. Many pencils and erasers later, I finished the assignment, tentatively satisfied with my sketches but frustrated with their lack of human connection.

Sensing my discomfort, my employers organized a road trip to introduce me to some singers. We left Vancouver on a hot August afternoon – a party of four that included my partner, Michael – and drove east through the lush Fraser Valley to Hope, and east again through the mountainous Allison Pass to Princeton. After a brief stop there it was on to the old gold-mining town of Hedley in the heart of the Similkameen Valley. The plan was to spend the evening with Harry Robinson, a member of the Lower Similkameen Band, and then to accompany him the next day to the Omak Stampede in central Washington State. As a Nova Scotian raised on flat, white-sand beaches and spindly pine forests, everything about the

Similkameen's topography – its big rivers and steep rock canyons, sage-covered hills and Ponderosa pine forests – looked foreign.

We pulled into Harry's driveway in the dead heat of the afternoon and found him waiting for us at the back of his house. He had spent the morning, he said, preparing various sleeping arrangements so there was no need for a motel. The scene by the back door – brooms, shovels, rakes, and carpentry tools arranged like artwork along the outside wall – spoke to his precision and preparedness. Inside, it was more of the same: photographs, calendars, and sundry items pinned to the walls, and pads of paper and writing utensils sitting neatly on an arborite table in the middle of an otherwise sparse front room. Completing this picture of orderliness was a wall-mounted Regulator clock that chimed at every quarter hour.

With our itinerary settled and our bags in their assigned spots, we chatted our way through dinner and dishes. As dusk turned to dark, the chit-chat gave way to storytelling. It started with a question as to why there were no salmon in the Similkameen River. "It's all Coyote's fault," Harry replied, and just like that, he was off – his answer an hour-long monologue about Coyote's travels along rivers, peddling salmon in exchange for wives. When the locals (Harry's distant forebears) refused to submit to Coyote's terms, Coyote retaliated by creating a dam to block the fish from passing through. Unlike the freeze-dried, sanitized, and mythologized Coyote I had encountered in published folklore collections,⁴ Harry's Coyote was a rowdy, sly, and raunchy fellow. Harry called him "a bad bad boy" and chuckled like one describing a rogue relative. On our drive to Omak the next morning, he told us more stories about Coyote's antics that were etched in the unusual rock formations along our route.

The Omak Stampede was a true Wild West show, complete with a terrifying "suicide race." The race began with a shotgun blast atop Suicide Hill on the north bank of the Okanagan River. Seconds later a large cluster of horses and riders charged into view and, en masse, leapt off the cliff and dashed headlong down the steep, 100-foot slope to the river below. After splashing through the river they galloped to the finish line in the adjacent rodeo grounds, leaving one horse and its rider splayed corpse-like on the sidehill. With the race's reputation for killing many a horse and occasionally a rider, I was relieved to hear that in this case both horse and rider had survived. At the end of the day we piled into our vehicle and headed back to Hedley, with Harry regaling us with yet more Coyote stories.

The visit with Harry was more than a short diversion. As I would soon discover, the Vancouver transcription project had transported me into a

new (old) world. Over the next thirteen years, I returned regularly to Harry's small bungalow, where I would sit night after night listening to a stream of stories about Coyote and the large cast of characters who inhabited his landscape. It led us to publish three volumes of his stories.⁵ The transcription project also introduced me to a wide circle of Harry's contemporaries, who animated my pencil-sketches of songs in ways that I could not have imagined. As I learned months after my first encounter with Harry, another man, James Teit, had drawn these new-found friends – and their songs and stories – together with their forebears.

But back to that first road trip in 1977. After dropping off Harry, we continued on to the Head of the Lake reserve near Vernon to visit Mary Abel. I was keen to meet Mary, as she was one of the singers whose songs I had just transcribed. We intercepted her on her way to feed her cows. A short, stout woman in her mid-sixties, she greeted us with hugs and a boisterous laugh that hinted at mischief. We stayed only long enough for a cup of tea because she was busy with chores that day. On hearing that I was working on a song project, however, she invited me to come back another time.

The next morning, we drove two hours north through lush farming and ranch country into the Shuswap Valley. Our destination was the Neskonlith reserve on the north bank of the South Thompson River, opposite the town of Chase, to visit two Secwépemc sisters,⁶ Adeline Willard and Aimee August. Older than Mary by a decade, they were under the care of several doting daughters and nieces. Except for their matching braids, the two sisters were mirror opposites – Aimee, tall and upright with sharp features and an aura of quiet contemplation, and Adeline, short and stooped with soft, round features and a sprightly demeanour. On hearing that I had spent much of the summer transcribing songs, Aimee announced that she and Adeline wanted to sing a song for us. It was one of their father's songs, she said, that he had sung to them many times when they were children. There was a sadness in their eyes that I later learned was associated with their father's demise. He had enlisted in the First World War and returned with severe headaches that eventually killed him. The two sisters followed this with their Aunt Maggie Moore's berry-picking song, several dance songs, and a stick-game song. They ended with a bear song, which Aimee described as a special song that she and Adeline hadn't sung in years. It's about "the bear ... before he dies ... [when] he knows he's being hunted."⁷

She then started beating her drum and singing, Adeline following along with soft, staccato-like translations: "Wonder what's the matter

with me, the world is so lonely ... why am I stumbling?" Five or so minutes into this and Aimee stopped to explain that there was a second part to the song that the hunters of the bear sing while "they are skinning the bear." Again, she started beating her drum and singing with Adeline translating: "Let them be like you ... every animal like the deer ... They'll be the only ones alive where you used to play."⁸ They ended their singing with a song that they grew up hearing at gatherings.

Two weeks later, I returned to the Interior on my own. My first stop was Mary Abel's ranch. Again she was busy with farm chores and grandchildren. Nevertheless, she welcomed me in. I hesitated even to mention songs because I knew she had no time, but things changed on the third day when we climbed into Mary's pickup with her daughter, Rosie, her foster daughter, Cathy, and three grandchildren and headed up Silver Star Mountain to pick huckleberries. Mary was barely in the bushes when she started humming and singing, and she didn't stop until her baskets were full. Back at her house I had hoped for more singing, but she was so preoccupied with visitors and chores that I didn't ask. It was more than enough that she had incorporated me into her household for the week. But she hadn't forgotten.

After dinner on my last evening, Mary picked up her drum, sank into her sofa, and started singing. It was a "good-time[s] song," she said, that had belonged to her Douglas Lake grandparents. (Douglas Lake was one valley to the west.) Mary's father, Joe, who was fast asleep in his recliner in the corner of the room, suddenly sat up and joined in. He followed Mary with one of his songs. It was a doctoring song, Mary said, that made people cry at winter dances. Joe prefaced his song with a long, meandering, free-form musical improvisation. I realized then why my transcription project had caused me such grief. I had encountered many such improvisations on the tapes and, with great effort, had managed to transfer rough facsimiles into western musical notation. On hearing Joe's live performance, however, I realized the futility of such a task. Joe's songs were complex improvisations that changed slightly with each performance. My transcriptions had caught crude outlines of single performances. This became more apparent when Mary took over from her father and sang a string of dance songs with similar improvisatory segments. She attributed the songs to the old singers of her youth: Jack Buffalo, Narcisse Jack, Isaac Harris, and others.⁹

Mary ended our session with a tiger-lily song. It was a song, she said, that she sang to keep herself and her family safe. "You sing that tiger-lily's song," she said, "and no one will ever get ahead of you." On sensing danger

or trouble within the family, she explained, she would climb up the hills behind her house before sunrise to talk to the tiger lilies through her song. With eyes closed, she started beating her drum and singing. “That’s a short and sweet song,” she explained. “And that’s all I’m going to sing for you.”¹⁰

The next day, I drove to the Neskonlith reserve, where Aimee and Adeline sang more songs. In the discussion that ensued, I asked about mourning songs for humans. “Yes,” Aimee replied, “we have a song like that but we can’t just sing it. We have to *feel* sad to sing that song.” To put themselves in the mood, the two sisters sang a Roman Catholic funeral hymn. They followed with their mourning song. Seconds into the song, both sisters started to sob – and so did I. It’s “the way the Indians cry when they lost a loved one,” Aimee explained on regaining her composure. “It’s not really a song,” she added. “It’s a sighing ... that comes from the bottoms of our hearts.”¹¹

This was the beginning of a journey for which this book is a conclusion.

DEEPER AND DEEPER

On my return to Toronto, I headed to a library to check the sources on BC’s plateau peoples, and I emerged with an enticing lead. A journal article listed an ethnographer, James Teit, as having recorded some two hundred “plateau Indian songs” from south central British Columbia on wax cylinders between 1912 and 1920.¹² It located the collection at the National Museum of Man in Hull, Quebec (recently renamed the Canadian Museum of History), so I quickly booked a train ticket to Ottawa and an appointment at the museum’s archives. On my first morning at the museum, a curator led me to a table in a back corner of its Ethnology wing and handed me a pair of headphones attached to a large reel-to-reel tape recorder. The reel on the machine, she said, was a 1960s copy of Teit’s wax-cylinder originals. I figured I must have been the first in years to set it in motion because the tape cracked and snapped all the way through its cycle. Along with the reel, the archivist handed me a collection of Teit’s photographs and a stack of his original, handwritten field notes.

For three days I lost myself in this assemblage of songs, notes, and photographs. With the singers’ names and community affiliations meticulously cross-referenced to their photographs and their stories of dreams and visions, it offered a full multimedia experience. By following the chronology of Teit’s notes, I could even track who turned up with whom on specific days. Three women, Yiôpā’tko (“Yee-oh-PAT-ko”), Whal-eenik

("Hwa-LEE-nek"), and Koint'ko ("KOINT-ko") were obviously regulars because their names appeared all through his notes – and often together.¹³ Yiôpā'tko's granddaughter, Rosie Joe of the Shackan reserve (near Spences Bridge), confirmed this when I interviewed her a few years later: "Whenever my grandmother had time to spare, she'd go over to Jimmy Teit's house."¹⁴ Of the thirty singers listed in his notes, approximately half were women.

Teit opened each cylinder recording by announcing the name of the song and the name of the singer (for example, "bear song sung by Whal-eenik"). He followed this with a sharp blow of a pitch pipe to allow for later speed adjustments if required. There were numerous extraneous sounds on the recordings, such as drumming, whistling, blowing and inhaling, tongue trills, and laughter. In his notes, Teit explained the significance of everything but the laughter. I wondered if it was triggered by the singers having to stick their heads – sometimes two at a time – deep into the recording machine's prolonged metal horn, and then sing for two minutes straight.¹⁵

It did not take long to see connections between the singers and songs on Teit's recordings and those of my recent trip. For example, Yiôpā'tko sang the same lullaby, with the same trill of the tongue, to Teit that Aimee and Adeline had sung for me; she also sang the hunters' "bear song" to Teit that Aimee and Adeline had sung for me. In fact, Yiôpā'tko had described it to Teit in almost identical terms, as

a kind of mourning song sung by all present when a bear (of any kind) is killed ... The singer (slayer of the animal) always put words in the song addressing the bear ... praising him for his generosity in pitying the hunter and allowing himself to be killed, excusing himself (the hunter) for having killed his friend (the bear), and asking that he (the hunter) will have continued success in hunting.¹⁶

Koint'ko sang the mourning song for Teit that Aimee and Adeline had sung for me. She also explained, as they had, "nearly all the women ... sang [it] in unison ... to show sympathy with the bereaved."¹⁷

It was uncanny to think of these women, seventy years and several valleys removed, yet intimately connected by their stories and songs. It was also uncanny to think of their songs as connecting them all to a much deeper past. Yiôpā'tko had described the "bear song" to Teit as an "ancient song" that had "originated in very remote times" through a bear who told

a man “to sing this kind of song when he killed a bear.”¹⁸ She told Teit that her lullaby was as “old as the tribe.”¹⁹ Whal-eenik sang a twin song that she said was given to the people by the grizzly bear at the beginning of time,²⁰ and a “sweathouse song” that she said “Old Coyote” had taught the people “in mythological times.”²¹

This was very old material from peoples who, for millennia, had inhabited the hills and valleys that I had just encountered for the first time.

Koint’ko sang Teit a song with links to Mary Abel’s tiger-lily song. She described it as originating on a trip she took alone into the mountains to gather huckleberries. All was well until it started snowing:

It continued to storm fiercely and to snow for four days. She determined to see the storm out and go home with a quantity of berries so she stayed there. The fourth day of the storm, in the evening, she felt tired, lonely and hungry. [Teit noted at the start of the story that she had taken only two days’ worth of food for two nights of camping.] She had a small fire burning and, feeling drowsy, she fell in a half sleep alongside the fire. She suddenly was awakened by someone speaking to her. The fire had burned rather low and it was becoming dusk. She looked and saw a woman standing some distance off and looking at her. The woman said “My friend you have stayed here a long time seeking me and you have experienced hunger, and fatigue and cold. However, you will be rewarded on the morrow for the wealth will be good and you will find what you seek. I welcome those who come to see me. All people are attracted by me. I wield power over all. The best people think of me and they come here to see me. I draw them here and they cannot resist.” The woman then commenced to sing this song and said “when you seek me sing this song.” Kointko then followed her in the singing and thus learned the song. The woman disappeared in the darkness and after a while the singing ceased in the distance. The woman was in her prime and very good looking. She was the Tsaltsā’la [huckleberry].²²

By the end of this archival immersion, I was smitten with the songs and notes and entranced by the man behind it all. What, I wondered, had motivated him to undertake such a project? I returned to British Columbia the following December, eager to share my discovery with Mary, Aimee, and Adeline. My first stop was once again Mary’s home at the head of Okanagan Lake. As news of the old Jimmy Teit recordings spread through her community, people turned up in droves, many with cassette recorders in hand, to hear them. Mary’s daughters, Rosie and Hilda, and her son,



The scene in Mary Abel's kitchen on the evening of July 25, 1979, when her neighbour Eva Lawrence and her old friend Nellie Gutterrez (from the Nicola Valley) dropped by to listen to the Teit cylinder recordings. From left to right, Nellie, Mary, and Eva. | Photograph by Wendy Wickwire.

Victor, were the first to arrive. Mary Paul, Eva Lawrence, Annie Swallowell, and Mary Louise Powers from down the road soon followed. Their excitement was palpable, especially when the oldest members of the group recognized some of the voices on the recordings. Mary Louise Powers described Alex Kwikweítês'ket ("Kwee-kway-TES-ket") as her uncle; others remembered Therese Kei.mat'ko ("Kai-MAT-ko") as a Douglas Lake woman who had visited their reserve often. Some even knew the stories of lost loves and heartbreaks behind Kei.mat'ko's "lyric songs."

After a week at Mary's, I headed to the Neskonlith reserve to play the old recordings for Aimee and Adeline. Like Mary and her friends, the two sisters reminisced at length about their many connections to the singers and songs. Teit's collections took me the next summer to Lytton, Merritt, Spuzzum, and Coldwater – communities closer to Teit's base at Spences Bridge. Many at Lytton recognized one young singer, Silka-peskit as Tommy Lick, a noted Indian doctor ("shaman") who had lived most of his adult life at Lytton.²³

Old Tommy was the closest I came to meeting one of the singers on Teit's wax-cylinder recordings. On my first drive through Lytton, I stopped beside a small shed advertising "Baskets for Sale." On finding it closed, I headed to the house across the street to ask about it. I knocked on the front door and a faint, eggshell voice beckoned me in. The scene inside was almost as colourful as the basketry sign. An elderly woman sat in an armchair at the far end of the front room with a partly made basket in her



Hilda Austin with her mother, Tcei.a, c. 1913. | Photograph by J.A. Teit, #23206, James A. Teit Collection, courtesy of the Canadian Museum of History.

lap and a bundle of roots soaking in a pan of water by her feet. As she spoke no English, I had to use other means to ask my question. Her quizzical smile turned into full laughter as she tried to decipher my facial contortions and hand-wagging. I later learned that she was Dora Lick, Tommy Lick's widow, and that I had missed meeting Tommy by only five years. Tommy had died in the spring of 1974 at age ninety-nine.²⁴ Tommy also had a close connection to Teit through marriage: he was the son of Whal-enik (another singer), who was the sister of Teit's wife, Antko.²⁵

Teit continued to open a world of connection for me. During a visit with Nlaka'pamux elder Hilda Austin, I surprised her with a copy of a photograph that Teit had taken of her when she was about a year and a

half old and sitting in the lap of her mother, Tcei.a (“CHAY-yah”), whom Teit listed as a twenty-one-year-old member of the “Potatoe Garden Band” near Spences Bridge. As it happened, this was Hilda’s first image of her mother. The photo brought her to tears as she had lost both parents in the 1918 flu epidemic.²⁶ After their deaths, Hilda and her younger sister, Millie, lived with their grandmother, Cha-pell, in the back hills of the Okanagan.²⁷ Like Tommy Lick, Cha-pell was an Indian doctor. She had bucked the residential school scoop by hiding her two grandchildren from the annual fall roundup of school-aged children. As a result, Hilda grew up speaking the Nlaka’pamux and Syilx languages but little English. Through her grandmother, she knew not only the old songs and the singers but also intimate details of the traditions behind them. She sang her versions of Yiôpâ’tko’s cradle song, Whal-eenik’s twin song, and many others.²⁸

It was now clear that I was on the trail of a most remarkable ethnographer. My bibliographic survey had uncovered eleven major monographs in Teit’s name. Six were full ethnographic surveys of individual groups (based in British Columbia, Washington State, Idaho, Oregon, and Montana) and five were specialized studies of basketry, ethnobotany, oral narratives, body-painting, tattooing, and rock art.²⁹ I also tracked down references to hundreds of pages of field notes and large artifact collections housed in museums in New York City, Chicago, Boston, Washington, DC, Victoria, and Ottawa, along with links to ethnobotanical collections and wildlife reports in Vancouver, Ottawa, and New York City.³⁰ Yet Teit, it seemed, was unknown. How could this be?

These discoveries sent me back to my Uher recorder with renewed enthusiasm. When I later enrolled in a doctoral program in ethnomusicology, I mapped out a dissertation that integrated Teit’s early recordings and notes with the living song traditions. This blend of old and new enabled me to spend half of my time at my own desk, working through Teit’s cylinder recordings and notes, and the other half at the kitchen tables of Mary Abel, Aimee August, Hilda Austin, Annie York, Nellie Gutterrez, Harry Robinson, and others discussing songs.³¹ My portable Uher served an important role at both ends. I lugged all ten pounds of it (along with heavy boxes of reels, microphones, and microphone stands) into households throughout the Interior. As word of the old recordings and photographs spread, people materialized from everywhere to hear them. I was unprepared for some of the responses. For many, the old songs and singers evoked painful memories of childhoods stifled by residential schools.

A NEW CONTEXT

A few years later, I encountered Teit in a new context. Unlike my first encounter, which had centred on elders' (mostly women's) reflections on songs and singing, this one centred on a large river valley that had given many songs and stories to the Nlaka'pamux peoples over the centuries. The Stein River watershed was still a living whole, unroaded and unlogged – the last of its kind in Nlaka'pamux territory. My acquaintance with it began with one of my regular trips to the Interior to visit Nlaka'pamux elders Hilda Austin and Louie Phillips at Lytton. Michael, who often accompanied me on these trips, had set up a campsite across the Fraser River from Lytton. One day, as he read by our tent, a local Forest Service employee stopped by to chat. When Michael asked about the status of the valley, the forester told him that road-building was imminent as the valley was slated for logging.

An environmentalist with experience in protest movements, Michael headed up the river the next day to see for himself what was at stake. He returned from his hike determined to find out more. This led him to a small group of Vancouver-based Stein advocates who, under the auspices of the BC Mountaineering Club, the Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC, and other outdoors groups, had spent close to a decade writing reports and organizing meetings to challenge the government's plans for logging the area.³² On hearing that there was little local resistance and no public campaign to preserve the river and the valley, he and I chewed it over and then made a life-changing decision: we would move to Lytton to start building a local resistance movement. In collaboration with Chief Byron Spinks of the Lytton Band and Chief Leonard Andrew of the Mount Currie Band, Michael set up a hiking program the following summer to take local kids into the far reaches of the Stein. The project took Michael and me (with our baby Leithen on our backs) on extended hikes along the lower reaches of the river, up its many side-creeks, and high into the alpine meadows and ridges.

In the decade-long campaign that ensued, Teit's monographs and notes became indispensable as we interviewed elders who had spent their lives in and around the river.³³ In preparation for his 1900 monograph on the Nlaka'pamux (*The Thompson Indians of British Columbia*), he too had interviewed people at Lytton and around the mouth of the Stein about their knowledge of the valley. He had also travelled upriver to sketch the

Stein's rock art panels and then tracked down elders to explain their meanings.³⁴

Teit's depiction of the Stein trail as a quick, three-day route to the Coast gave our campaign a boost as it allowed us to cast it as a heritage trail and a heritage valley that, along with its cedar, fir, and pine forests – and the river itself – would be destroyed by logging. Teit's interviews with local Nlaka'pamux people about the rock art panels along the route and in the caves above the river provided hard evidence of the valley's long-standing role as a spiritual refuge. His monographs and song notes gave us a glimpse of the life that had revolved around the many large winter house depressions at the Stein's mouth. His detailed sketches of pit-houses helped explain how such depressions shielded people during the frigid months of winter. His discussions of the human use and occupation of the lower and upper reaches of the valley in the summer and fall for hunting, fishing, and cedar root gathering, and all through the year for puberty training, were valuable sources on the valley's important role in sustaining the peoples who lived adjacent to it. His interviews with elders included stories that grandparents had passed on about seeing Simon Fraser and his crew stop at the mouth of the Stein and Lytton in June 1808. Those stories spoke to the fears and anxieties that arose as people tried to figure out who these strangers were and where they were headed. Teit also recorded the fears that ensued fifty years later as the Nlaka'pamux witnessed huge numbers of newcomers pass through their territory, eyes gleaming at the sight of gold deposits and open rangeland (and whose descendants were now intent on "developing" the community's last "wild" refuge). His detailed depiction of the Nlaka'pamux annual subsistence cycle allowed us to see what had been consciously and systematically dismantled by settler colonialism.

In 1983, all that remained of the once-vibrant Stein village on the grassy flat above the river's mouth was the shell of St. David's Anglican church, a network of dried-up irrigation ditches, and a small, still-functioning cemetery. In his 1917 monograph *Folk-Tales of Salishan and Sahaptin Tribes*, Teit mentioned two rocks adjacent to the footpath to the little church that bore the footprints of two ancient transformers.³⁵ Our Nlaka'pamux friends, Louie Phillips and Hilda Austin, corroborated Teit's documentation by taking us to see the rocks.

Two research contracts – one in the winter of 1986 with Chief Ruby Dunstan of the Lytton Band and Chief Leonard Andrew of the Mount Currie Band to review all ethnographic and archaeological sources on the Stein, and the other in the summer of 1988 with Chief Bob Pasco of the

Nlaka'pamux Tribal Council to interview elders about their knowledge and use of the Stein – sent me back into Teit's ethnographic monographs and field notes with a new purpose: to find more connections between the 1980s Nlaka'pamux use and occupation of the Stein Valley and those of a century earlier. As I worked my way through the 1988 field project, I could not help but wonder if Teit had had future land-use conflicts in view, given his detailed documentation of the place names, maps, plants, and seasonal cycles of the valley.³⁶ After all, his life at Spences Bridge had been filled with similar campaigns. It turned out he was an expert on that too.

Sadly, my old German Uher did not accompany me on this trip. I now travelled with the latest innovation in portable recording technology – a tiny Japanese Sony Walkman Professional. A little clip-on device replaced my two large stand-up microphones, and a small box of cassette tapes replaced my suitcase of reel-to-reel tapes. Again, an old world made way for a new.

AMERICAN GIANT

By the late 1980s, I had most of Teit's publications and field notes in hand, but I was shy on biographical material. Beyond a master's thesis and a few short magazine and journal articles, there were few secondary sources on Teit.³⁷ Given his twenty-eight-year research collaboration with Franz Boas (1858–1942), the famous Columbia University professor and the founding “father of American Anthropology,” I assumed that I would find some of the missing pieces of the Teit story in the large literature on Boas and Boasian anthropology. Boas met Teit at Spences Bridge in the fall of 1894 and, within two days, hired him to write a major report on the Nlaka'pamux. He was so pleased with the finished product that he kept Teit writing reports until his death in 1922. It filled an important gap for Boas as his own fieldwork in the region had not gone well.

My search for Teit in the history of Boasian anthropology unleashed a story of its own. It quickly became apparent that if Teit appeared at all in that literature, it was as a passing footnote or as an “informant,” “sheep-herder,” “technician,” or “squaw man” (depending on the source), who had provided the esteemed Franz Boas with the field data that allowed him to write a series of “splendid” monographs on the plateau peoples.³⁸ After reading Teit's correspondence with Boas, I knew that this was wrong. Those splendid plateau monographs were fully the work of Teit, compiled through years of field research, often on horseback, in some of the

remotest regions of the province. Boas had indeed edited and shepherded them through the publication process, but he had not written them. Because there was little in the texts of these monographs about the author behind the texts, they were similarly unhelpful. Initially, I thought this might have been a conscious decision on Teit's part to keep himself – and his local sources – out of his texts.

The more I learned about Franz Boas's agenda for anthropology and his editorial practices, however, the more I saw other reasons for such gaps and silences. As a highly educated scientist trained in mathematics, physics, and geography, Boas's goal for his new university-based anthropology was to purge it of the subjective personal "bias" instilled by amateur ethnographers, especially missionaries and government agents who saw the world of Indians through a Christian, colonial lens.³⁹ Boas advocated for a "studied neutrality" in anthropological reporting with the narrator posing as "an impersonal conduit" who "passes on more-or-less objective data in a measured intellectual style that is uncontaminated by personal bias, political goals, or moral judgments."⁴⁰ The diversity of personal names and stories only interfered with his search for scientific truths.

All this helped explain the absence of Teit in his monographs. It did not, however, explain his absence in the histories of Americanist anthropology. I soon discovered that I was not the only one with this concern. Teit's son Sigurd, in Merritt, British Columbia, was on the same path. Sigurd and I had met in the early 1980s when I contacted him for help with my song project. In 1989, he reversed roles and contacted me for help with the "missing Teit" problem. Having recently retired from a life as a logger, Sigurd had turned the search for his father – who had died in Merritt when Sigurd was seven – into a full-time hobby. His review of the literature on Boas and American anthropology had left him with an uneasy feeling about his father's place in history. Knowing of my interest in his father, he proposed that I write a book aimed at raising Teit out of obscurity. I agreed on the spot without realizing the implications of what I had promised or how long it would take to complete. It was one thing to bite off small chunks of Teit's massive legacy; it was another thing to digest his story whole.

EX-PATS

In our initial discussions, Sigurd tried to draw me into Teit's early life in Shetland – but I was so fixed on Teit's full life in British Columbia that I

did not pay much attention. What seemed significant was not that Teit was born and raised on Shetland, but rather that he had left in 1884 at age nineteen to work for an uncle at Spences Bridge, British Columbia, and, except for one short trip eighteen years later to visit his parents, he had not returned. An island archipelago located 321 kilometres north of Aberdeen, Scotland, and 354 kilometres west of Bergen, Norway, Shetland is known for its treeless rolling heather-and-grass moorlands, its many lochs and streams, dramatic cliffs and rock outcroppings, long white sand beaches, and distinctive mammals, birds, fish, and flora, not to mention its remoteness. Other than its connection to the United Kingdom (as Scotland's most northerly island), it was about as far removed from British Columbia as one could get.

Raised on his mother's stories of his father's reminiscences of the "Old Rock," Sigurd knew that Shetland was an important piece of the Teit story. He organized a research trip to Lerwick, his father's hometown and Shetland's main commercial centre, in May 1992 to find out more. From start to finish, the trip felt like a homecoming.⁴¹ It had been more than a century since his father had left his family home, but unlike the biographical void in North America, two generations of community historians in Lerwick had kept his father's name and legacy alive. Sigurd's surname drew him straight into this sphere. During a visit with Mona Dalziel, an elderly Lerwegian, she recalled that her friend John Graham, a retired school-teacher and local historian, had stories about a "Tait" who had changed his name to "Teit." A short telephone call to Graham, and Sigurd headed off to the Shetland Archives to meet him.

The scene at the archives unleashed a flood of stories about Teit. Brian Smith, the head archivist, greeted Sigurd with numerous letters and documents related to his father. Like Mrs. Dalziel, Smith was curious about Teit's decision to change his name from "Tait" to "Teit." Sigurd explained that his father had made the change on arriving in British Columbia, to which Smith replied that it was most unusual "for a person of [his] age to have known about and to have wanted to change his name in 1884." Another Shetland historian, Roy Grønneberg, turned up for the occasion. He had a special interest in meeting Sigurd as he had published an article on James Teit in 1978.⁴² Graham took one look at Sigurd and announced that "had it not been for your accent, I could believe that I was talking to another Shetlander!" Graham was keen to tell Sigurd about his recent visit to British Columbia, as it had included a road trip from the Coast to the Rockies. He was excited about the trip as he knew it would pass through Spences Bridge, the home of a famous Shetland expatriate. His friends

stopped in the village, whereupon Graham hopped out of the car and asked a resident if there was a “memorial” in the town to “Jimmie Teit.” The response was “No, the only memorial to Jimmie Teit that you will find around here is in the hearts of those old Indians down by the river,” and he pointed toward the reserve.⁴³

Much of the conversation on that spring day in the Shetland Archives centred on the efforts of an earlier Shetland history buff, Peter Jamieson (1898–1976), to preserve the memory of Teit. Among Jamieson’s papers, now housed at the archives, was a set of files that showed him stumbling on Teit in 1930 while working on a research project on Shetland’s pioneer socialists. Jamieson had struck up a correspondence with Sam Anderson, a Shetland expat who had lived for a while in Vancouver before emigrating to New Zealand in 1921. In a letter in November 1930, Anderson had highlighted “Jeemie Teit” of Lerwick as a prominent member of Vancouver’s socialist community and “one of the most wonderful men I have ever met.” He wrote that in British Columbia Teit was known as not only “the best guide in the Northwest” but also “a great linguist and an anthropologist of distinction.” His “book on the Thompson River Indians” was “the authoritative work on the subject” and a staple of “American college” curricula.⁴⁴ In subsequent letters about the socialist movement, Anderson continued to mention Teit. “Of all the men I have met so far,” he wrote in 1942, “the two who impressed me most were Haldane Burgess and Jamie Teit. Jamie Teit was a name to conjure with in British Columbia both among the Whites and among the Indians ... The Indians loved him.” Anderson wrote that just before departing for New Zealand, he paid a visit to Teit at a Vancouver hotel to say goodbye to his friend. “I was amazed at the sight,” wrote Anderson. “All around the hotel ... on the pavement were Indians sitting crunched with their backs against the building patiently waiting for news of their best friend. Jamie was dying of cancer.”⁴⁵ Anderson ended with a comment that was clearly aimed at enticing Jamieson into a larger project: “What a companion [Teit] was! What a storyteller! What a Scholar and Scientist! ... I hope that someday someone will write his life.”⁴⁶

Jamieson took the bait. In the summer of 1946, he sent out written calls to Shetland ex-pats, Tait/Teit family members, and government officials, requesting information on Teit. He then spent the next ten years crafting their responses into a coherent and colourful story. He published the first instalment, “James Teit of Spence’s Bridge, B.C.: A Remarkable Shetlander,” in the April 1957 issue of the local newspaper, the *Shetland News*, and he published a second instalment, “Jimmy Teit of Spence’s Bridge, British

Columbia” in the January 1960 issue of *New Shetlander* magazine.⁴⁷ In both articles he presented James Teit to his Shetland readership as one of the island’s “most distinguished sons.”⁴⁸

In his BC respondents’ descriptions of Teit’s physique – a “broad-shouldered, muscular and hardy” man with “fair, freckled” (or “fern-tickled,” as Shetlanders would say) skin, blue eyes, and brownish hair – Jamieson saw “a true Norseman.” In their character descriptions – his “twinkling eyes,” his “fine, hearty ... humour,”⁴⁹ his “soft ... slow movements,” his “great patience,” and most of all, his intense modesty,⁵⁰ Jamieson saw a “true Shetlander.” Sam Anderson was Jamieson’s best source. He described Teit as “a legend” and “one of the most unassuming men [he had] ever met.”⁵¹ Add a fiddle to the mix, wrote one respondent, and Teit was the first to kick up his heels and the last to stop. Another letter described Teit as “a champion dancer of the Shetland reel.”⁵² William Irvine, a Shetland expat who, in 1946, was the federal MP for British Columbia’s Cariboo District, recalled Teit as a “great character and a philosopher.”⁵³ All of Teit’s former Shetland friends noted his passion for his Shetland dialect. Some said he spoke it better than anyone they knew.

Jamieson made good use of all of this information in his two articles on Teit. He also incorporated some stories he found at the Shetland end – for example, that Teit’s many friends in Lerwick had been sad to see him leave as he was the life of any social event or jaunt “da Sooth End boys got up” – in his articles. He also learned that Teit had sent a copy of his 1900 monograph, *The Thompson Indians of British Columbia*, to his “boyhood friend” Alexander Ratter, who had promptly placed it in “the Reading Room at the South Esplanade,” where it gained the reputation of “the work of a Lerwick man, Jeemie Teit o’ da Sooth End; aald John Tait’s son ‘at good awa to Canada.’”⁵⁴

Sigurd knew about Jamieson’s 1940s efforts to reconstruct the story of Teit, as Jamieson had contacted his mother, Josie, for information. He had also contacted Sigurd.⁵⁵ Seeing it all replayed in the Shetland Archives in 1992, however, was another experience altogether.

AND BACK TO BRITISH COLUMBIA

In addition to the Shetland side of the story, Sigurd opened a large window on the family side of the Teit story. A letter to a Tait relative in New Zealand turned up a lengthy correspondence that Teit had carried on with his uncle Robert Tait (his father’s brother, then based in Wellington, New Zealand)

on family history.⁵⁶ Sigurd had also pursued his uncles and aunts, cousins, and siblings for more information and photographs. Memories within Sigurd's circle of siblings were slim, however, as only three – Erik (born in 1905), Inga (born in 1907), and Magnus (born in 1909) – were old enough in 1922 to retain tangible memories of their father. As mentioned earlier, Sigurd was only seven years old when his father died, and his little brother, Thor, was only three.

Through Sigurd, I arranged several interviews with Inga at her home in Aldergrove (on the outskirts of Vancouver) in May 1991. She remembered her father as an absent “Papa” who died before his time. She also remembered that, during the short periods when he was at home, he had been an attentive “Papa.” She recalled their trips together into the woods and meadows, where he would collect plant specimens and carefully stick them in his backpack. Back at his “office,” he labelled them and packaged them up in boxes for shipment to colleagues in Victoria and Ottawa for further identification.⁵⁷ Inga had vivid memories of the small cottage adjacent to the family house at Spences Bridge that her father called his “office”:

You came in the door there [to] one room, a big room. [Papa] had Mr. Murray's big desk over on the side ... and a big table in the centre with books all over the shelves all along. From there down it was storage bins and stuff from a counter and below the counter were bins of storage, baskets of stuff, Indian stuff hanging there ... There was a kitchen and a bedroom there too in that building ... in case people came who had no place to stay.⁵⁸

Everyone loved Papa, said Inga. His office was always filled with people, she said, many of whom kept him up all night long.

Inga took me to see an old friend, Joe Karaus, who had moved with his family to Spences Bridge from Austria in 1915. Joe's father worked for Joe Martel on the latter's ranch. Karaus was only fifteen when he arrived there, but he had crystal clear memories of his first image of Teit:

Jimmy, the first time I seen him we were at Martel's [ranch] in the winter of 15/16 and he had a big St. Bernard dog and he had a pack on [to transport some] pieces of venison ... That's where I first met him walking, you know. I met him lots of times after that. He worked with me on the ranch sometimes.⁵⁹

I was hoping for some negative impressions – some balance perhaps – but it never materialized. Karaus responded like everyone else: “I love Jimmy,”

he said. "He's sure a good man." The Indians "adored him," he said. "They worshipped him," he added. "Anytime you go by there, horses were tied up – saddle horses – or democrats." Like Inga, he had vivid memories of Teit's "office." "Do you remember the big doors?" he asked Inga, "and the cast iron full of quicksilver that [your father] used for a doorstep?"

At Spences Bridge, I found only one old-timer who knew Teit. He was Tom Curnow and he lived down the road from the Teit family residence. He recalled Teit as an easygoing, likeable neighbour who stuck mostly to himself. Curnow noted that Teit always wore moccasins and a fringed buckskin jacket, and he seemed permanently glued to his "office." "He looked after the Indians," said Curnow.⁶⁰

In the late 1970s, two local historians, Katharine Howes and Pat Lean of Merritt, interviewed Robert Taylor, who had lived next door to the Teit family when the family relocated to Merritt in 1919. Taylor recalled Teit as "not a tall man, rather heavy-set with a ruddy complexion" and "the looks of an outdoorsman." He also recalled that Teit was always on the road. He regretted not paying more attention. "I feel badly now," he said. "Here was this man living next door to us carrying on very important work and I was not even interested."⁶¹

Among the documents that Sigurd Teit passed on to me were petitions, declarations, and correspondence that showed his father working closely with four political organizations – the Indian Rights Association, the Interior Tribes of British Columbia, the Nishga Land Committee, and the Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia – from 1909 until his death in 1922 to help settle their outstanding land-title problem (95 percent of British Columbia's land base at the time was untreated). For thirteen years, Teit organized major trips with the chiefs to Victoria to lobby Premier Richard McBride and his successors, and to Ottawa to lobby Prime Minister Robert Borden and Duncan Campbell Scott (head of Indian Affairs) on the chiefs' right to have their land-title question settled in the British high courts. Because only a handful of the leaders of these four organizations could speak English, he acted as their translator. As I soon discovered, Sigurd was one of the few people who knew anything about Teit's involvement in the campaign. There were only a few scattered references in the Canadian historiography about Teit's political activism.⁶² To find out more, Sigurd had tracked down the Haida leader Peter Kelly in November 1953. Kelly had worked closely with Teit on the political campaign. His response was like all the others: the Interior chiefs "had infinite trust in Jimmy Teit ... I have never seen anything like it before, or to this day."⁶³

It was a sad day when Sigurd died in the fall of 2002, because he had provided much of the momentum that kept me going. It was even sadder a few years later when word arrived from the Shetland Archives that a large, three-volume letterbook kept by John Tait (Teit's father) had surfaced in Lerwick. The letterbook shed new light on Teit's youth as it contained copies of multiple letters the senior Tait had sent to his young son in British Columbia. After years of trying to piece together details of his father's youth in Shetland and his transition to British Columbia, Sigurd would have relished his own grandfather's comments to his brother-in-law (Sigurd's great-uncle), John Murray, in British Columbia on the eve of young James's departure to Canada in December 1883. John Tait expressed his sorrow at seeing his eldest child leave the family fold and his worry that because James was such a "truthful and gentle" lad with an "easy and mild disposition," he was "apt ... to be misled."⁶⁴ Sigurd would also have enjoyed some of the family secrets that came to light through his grandfather's letterbook.

Sigurd also missed out on a book project that would have pleased him. In 2007, Judy Thompson, curator of the Canadian Museum of Civilization's subarctic collections, published *Recording Their Story: James Teit and the Tahltan* under the auspices of the museum. A beautiful 205-page coffee-table book featuring Teit's life story set against a rich collage of stunning colour images of Tahltan artifacts and photographs, the book provided a first step in bringing Teit's legacy to public attention.⁶⁵ Two of Thompson's museum colleagues, Leslie Tepper and Andrea Laforet, had also curated exhibits and published catalogues and book chapters highlighting Teit's prominence as an ethnographic collector.⁶⁶ Given the place of Teit's collections – of song recordings, baskets, artifacts, textiles, photographs, and field notes – in Ottawa's national museum, it was not surprising to see its curatorial staff take the lead in bringing his story forward.

THE REVERED AND THE FORGOTTEN

It was a different story in the North American anthropological community, where Teit was all but forgotten.⁶⁷ Such silence raises questions about the authority of mainstream history and historiography – who is celebrated and who is not and why. Anthropology, like all disciplines, has a long list of eminent ancestors. Franz Boas, the anthropologist at the centre of the Teit story, is one of its most celebrated, and for good reason. From his

academic base at Columbia University in New York City, he set the still-infant field of anthropology on a new course by unseating its early scientific claims of social evolutionism.⁶⁸ His critique of racism later inspired the American civil rights movement and the campaign to end racial segregation. Boas's student Margaret Mead is another eminent ancestor. From her base at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, she gained a high public profile through her pursuit of a research agenda and a public platform in the 1960s that challenged American sexual norms and helped pave the way for an insurgent feminist movement and the 1970s "sexual revolution." Frank Cushing's five-year sojourn with the Zuni peoples of New Mexico in the 1880s earned him the title of the discipline's first participant-observer. Edward Curtis's name soared into the spotlight in the 1970s when North Americans rediscovered his twenty-volume *North American Indian* with hundreds of sepia-toned photographs of his subjects in "traditional" attire set against backdrops of canoes and bulrushes, teepees and open plains.⁶⁹ My own hometown's Royal British Columbia Museum, in Victoria, attests to Curtis's continuing allure. Its First Peoples Gallery features floor-to-ceiling reproductions of Curtis photographs – portraits of men wearing his imported wigs and air-brushed nose-rings, and women wearing his stock cedar-bark cape and silver earrings.

Canada has its own pantheon of anthropological heroes. From his institutional base at Canada's Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa from 1911 until his death in 1969, anthropologist Marius Barbeau became the nation's authority on "folk" and "Indian" traditions.⁷⁰ Like Edward Curtis, he made documentary films about "Canada's Indians" and published books on "Indian life and legends." He took liberties that burnished his reputation, arguing, for example, that the Haida and Tsimshian peoples of the British Columbia coast were descendants of Genghis Khan and that totem poles were postcontact inventions rather than ancient, cultural creations.⁷¹ Barbeau often gave stage performances of the songs and stories culled from his field notes and recordings. Although his theories have long been debunked, his hand-hewn reputation lives on.⁷² Edward Sapir, a former student of Boas and a prominent figure in the Teit story, is a highly respected anthropological ancestor in Canada whose theoretical work, unlike that of Barbeau, has stood the test of time. In his capacity as head of the federal government's Anthropology Division from 1911 to 1925, he appointed the country's first team of ethnographers and archaeologists (Harlan Smith, Marius Barbeau, and Diamond Jenness, as well as Teit) and, through them, issued some of the first serious reports on the country's Indians.⁷³

Two notorious imposters had ties to this group. Archibald Belaney (“Grey Owl”) and Sylvester Clark Long (“Long Lance”) spent much of their adult lives studying and marketing Indian culture through stage performances and books. An Englishman by birth, Belaney emigrated to rural Canada, changed his name to “Grey Owl,” and assumed a new identity as a transplanted Indian of part-Scottish, part-Apache descent. With his unique man-of-the-woods persona in place, he toured Canada and England in “authentic” Indian dress to perform the story of Canadian Indians. His *Pilgrims of the Wild* sold in the 1930s at the rate of five thousand copies per month. Sylvester Clark Long enjoyed similar literary success. Born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in 1890, he entered Canada as “Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance,” a full-blooded Blackfoot Indian. Like Grey Owl, he gained a huge following in 1928 through the publication of his autobiography, *Long Lance*, chronicling his life as the son of a great Indian chief. People flocked to hear his stage performances. His star plummeted in 1929 while working on a film about traditional Ojibwe life when one of his fellow crew-members challenged him on his identity. It turned out that he had no Indian heritage at all.⁷⁴

My family has a small place in the Grey Owl story. In 1937, Michael’s uncle, Mort Fellman, a young reporter for the *North Bay Nugget*, unearthed a detail about Grey Owl that hinted at trouble. Grey Owl was now using the surname McNeil, and Fellman had found evidence that his real name was Archie Belaney. In an interview with Grey Owl at a hotel in North Bay on March 4, Fellman asked him to explain this discrepancy. According to Fellman’s photographer, who accompanied him to the interview, Grey Owl quickly ended the interview and left. Fellman returned to the *Nugget* office hoping to release the story of Grey Owl’s fraudulence to the world. Instead, his editor insisted that he keep the story under wraps because Grey Owl was too positive a Canadian icon to dethrone, especially in the trough of the Great Depression. Fellman dutifully waited until Grey Owl’s death the next year to release his story. It caused a sensation, but did little damage to Grey Owl’s standing.

Pauline Johnson (1861–1913) was a highly respected authority on Indian life and legends during Teit’s time. The daughter of a prosperous Mohawk chief and an English mother, she grew up in a stately house, “Chiefswood,” near Brantford, Ontario. Educated by governesses, she read all the classics and at an early age began writing and reciting poetry. She carried on to a career as writer and stage performer. Through costume changes – buckskin dresses for performances of Indian poems and Victorian attire for Tennyson et al. – she highlighted the different sides of her background. Her stage

persona, combined with her published books of poems and stories, gained a huge following in North America and England. One of her poems, "The Song My Paddle Sings," became a Canadian classic. Her funeral in Vancouver in 1913 was the largest in the city's history.

In any celebration of heroes, there will always be some who are invited into the pantheon and others, just as deserving, who are left at the door. To gain entry, one must know the rules of the game and be willing to play by them. A century ago, one had to accept both the foundational premise that modernization was inevitable and good, and its corollary that Indian cultures were destined to disappear. As British cultural historian Catherine Hall explains, between 1880 and 1914, "most of the world outside Europe and the Americas was formally partitioned into territories controlled by major European states, the United States and Japan," with "approximately a third of the world ... dominated by the British."⁷⁵ For settler societies to possess lands in their new territories, "they needed to map them, to name them in their own language, to describe and define them, to anatomize the land and its fruits, for themselves and the mother country, to classify their inhabitants, to differentiate them from other 'natives', to fictionalize them, to represent them visually, to civilize and cure them."⁷⁶ In Canada as in other parts of the so-called civilized world, imperialism was the new nationalism; the "colonial theatre" was its "laboratory" in waiting. Imperialism needed a new science with a new script. It found that in the new discipline of anthropology.⁷⁷

Western imperialism and its ideology of social evolution and racial superiority justified the treatment of Indians as less than human. Its string of racialized labels – "klootchmen," "siwashes," and "squaws" – entrenched this position.⁷⁸ Unlike the fur traders, miners, and missionaries, anthropologists benefitted from the physical and cultural demise of the original inhabitants. Their goal was to "salvage" information about "the natives" before their disappearance; it was not to advocate for their survival or oppose the forces driving their demise. It was no coincidence that the museum became anthropology's first institutional home. From London's British Museum to New York's American Museum of Natural History, the display of Indian life and artifacts gave city dwellers a concrete view of the strange and fascinating worlds beyond their "civilized" reach. On one floor were exhibits of dinosaur bones and ancient rocks; on the next, spears, baskets, and arrowheads. Like fossil displays, dioramas of hunters chasing buffalo or miniature villages of teepees depicted a bygone world where life was untamed, spare, and short. Anthropologists played a leading role in the imperial mission by capturing the precontact purity of the North American

Indian, preserving it in camphor-filled glass containers, and putting it on artful display for a curious public.⁷⁹ It explains why the Coyote of the old storytellers like Harry Robinson represented, in Franz Boas's eyes, an archetype of precontact purity.

James Teit saw himself as neither a hero nor a mortician. It took me a long time, and a trip to Shetland, to appreciate why.

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY

Today we understand the limits of the scientific pursuit of disembodied knowledge. We acknowledge the value of the “phenomenological knowledge” that comes with living in (and with) the world. We recognize history as rising not only from the conquests of empires and armies but also from the efforts of peasants, barefoot doctors, Indigenous peoples, and activists to resist such conquest. We see the planetary consequences of a modernist narrative of progress that has long been taken for granted. In Teit's time, the Nlaka'pamux and their neighbours fought hard for the survival of their territories and cultures. Because of the remoteness of their struggles, few in the cities understood what was at stake. Even fewer felt the pain of their losses. Struggles continue over the impacts of logging, transmission lines, oil and gas exploration/extraction, and mining; inquiries such as the Indian Residential Schools' Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women mark some progress for Indigenous survivors and grieving families. History is still being made. The stakes now are higher, with a wider impact. The lessons of history should be clear: a society that erodes the health of its territories will not long survive their passing.

Teit's exclusion from anthropology's pantheon of heroes is offset by his hallowed place in local Indigenous communities. His monographs and field notes are staples of band offices, band schools, and home libraries; his works on basketry, clothing, subsistence cycles, ceremonialism, place names, storytelling, pictography, songs, and ethnobotany have inspired many theses and dissertations;⁸⁰ his maps, place names, and subsistence studies have provided the grist for environmental battles, land-claims cases, and “land-use and occupation” reports.⁸¹

I witnessed some of this fervour in the spring of 1991 when I co-organized three “Trail of Songs” workshops with Nlaka'pamux colleagues Mandy Jimmie, Darwin Hanna, and Carol Holmes at Lytton, Quilchena, and Vernon. Our goal was to bring the old Teit song recordings, notes, and



Teit in his hunting attire, c. 1890s. Sigurd Teit donated his father's L'Assomption sash, his buckskin rifle sheath, and his buckskin shirt to the Nicola Valley Museum and Archives. | Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Sigurd Teit and James M. Teit.

photographs to the attention of schoolteachers and language instructors so they could incorporate them into their curricula. People gathered from miles away to hear the old recordings.

With themes of “place” and “belonging” now at the forefront of many Indigenous projects, both academic and non-academic, Teit’s legacy is attracting attention beyond the local communities. In the spring of 2016, his research on rock art was the focus of an international rock art symposium co-hosted by the Nlaka’pamux Nation Tribal Council (Lytton), UBC’s Museum of Anthropology (Vancouver), and the National Centre of Prehistory (France). Teit’s collections of stories, songs, and petitions

have recently inspired three new theatrical works by two prominent Indigenous playwrights. They have also been the focus of several week-long music/theatre workshops at Lytton.⁸² Nlaka'pamux playwright Kevin Loring, the current artistic director of the National Arts Centre's Indigenous Theatre Department, organized the Lytton workshops under the auspices of his Vancouver-based theatre group, the Savage Society. And interest in Teit continues to build. The University of Nebraska Press has a new book in progress that will highlight Teit's unpublished field notes, letters, maps, songs, and museum collections. Of the five contributors to this book, two (John Haugen and Angie Bain) are of Nlaka'pamux heritage.⁸³

Local historians in and around the small towns where Teit lived – Spences Bridge, Merritt, Telegraph Creek – continue to keep Teit's life and legacy alive.⁸⁴ The Nicola Valley Museum and Archives in Merritt now markets itself as a James Teit research centre. In addition to a large collection of print material on Teit, it displays some of his signature belongings: his multicoloured wool L'Assomption sash and embroidered buckskin shirt that he wore on his hunting trips, his Bible (bearing his two signatures – “James A. Tait, Lerwick, Shetland” and “James A. Teit, Spences Bridge, BC”), his gold pocket-watch given to him by his father as he left Shetland, his hunting knives, his buckskin rifle sheath, his 1910 diary, his photographs of hunting trips.

Spences Bridge does not have a museum but perhaps it doesn't need one. From the “James Teit” sign nailed to the fence in front of his old family bungalow, to a federal government plaque down by the river commemorating his legacy, to a gravestone in the local Anglican church cemetery dedicated “to Antko, Beloved wife of J.A. Teit,” to a beautiful meadow in the Twaal Valley above the village, to the gravesite at “Hilltop Gardens Farm” (his in-laws' family farm) up the highway, there are Teit markers all through the town. As Shetlander John Graham found several decades ago, Teit is firmly lodged in the “hearts” of the local peoples. This is their story, as I hope Teit himself would want it.

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