

Place Based Experience - July 15th, 2020

I explored my local park, McCartney Creek Park, and its surrounding forested area, which sits upon the unceded territory of the Tsleil-Waututh nation. While I was not able to unearth a legend describing the story of this land, I was able to find out a lot about this territory. The Tsleil-Waututh (or səliłwətaʔt) cite that they have occupied this traditional land since “time immemorial” (twnation, n.d.). Tsleil-Waututh consider themselves leaders in combining traditional Indigenous and western sciences in archeology and cultural heritage projects. Development, and political decisions regarding this land, from large tunnel replacement projects to simple things like moving a park bench or organizing a 5k race, are done so with assurance that members of the Tsleil-Waututh nation will have a voice in these processes.

Oral history, according to the Tsleil-Waututh homepage, describes the nation as having been as large as 10,000 people, whose survival was maintained through hunting, trade, and resource preservation. Numerous archaeological sites with evidence of ancestral gatherings support claims that this distinct nation has inhabited this land prior to even recorded settler history of European lands.

twnation. (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2020, from <https://twnation.ca/>
<https://twnation.ca/about/our-departments/treaty-lands-resources/>









I feel connected to this place. My earliest memories away from home consist of going there. McCartney was likely one of the first family names other than my own I ever memorized. I would be four or five years old before any indication that I lived on unceded ancestral Tseil-Waututh territory reached my state of awareness. My scouts training, and outdoor play with siblings and friends, often took us to both McCartney park, and the Whey-ah-Wichen park nearby. Signs and education from the scout leaders and my parents helped me quickly learn about this traditional land. On this land I don't feel like a visitor or outsider. However, I do feel like my life is distinct from those whose ancestors were also not visitors and who also occupied this land, in that my treatment of this land must coexist and listen to the voice of members of the Tseil-Waututh nation.



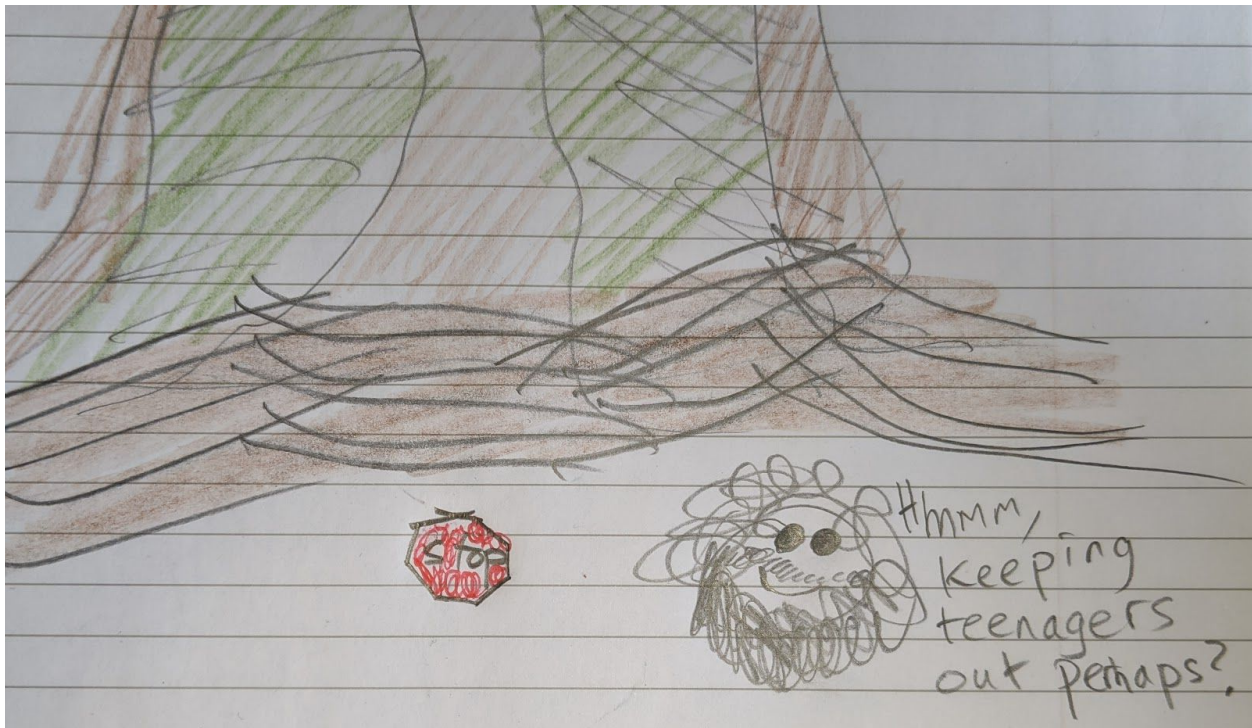
Feelings of nostalgia, peace, celebration, and recollection roll up into a physical sensation that occurs upon seeing the park's walkway. I wasn't alone when I explored today, although I'd ventured out by myself. This place speaks to me through the changes and combinations of traditional Indigenous and western sciences and philosophies. Suburban neighbourhoods occupied almost exclusively by people with settler backgrounds line the streets surrounding this park, First Nations reserves I remember my friends houses being in were farther from this and the Whey-ah-Wichen parks than these suburban zones. Because of this, a grappling feeling of sorrow and desire arise within me when I think about these lands. I am also shaken by unavoidable thoughts regarding the attempted destruction of the Tsleil-Waututh nation during the colonization of this land.



I feel this plethora of emotions, thoughts, and grappling notions are best expressed by me through the written word. As such, colloquial coined terms such as “innerstandings” don’t hold as comprehensible meaning to me as defined terms like “understandings” or first-hand experience.

I feel most connected to the sk’ad’a principle of honouring history and story through learning. My own life experiences almost always have some affect when it comes to my decision making and goal setting. An area within the forested part of the park that I hadn’t seen in over 10 years helped me learn numerous things right then and there. My history with that one zone was going there as a teenager to do things I wasn’t allowed to do, maybe with one person, maybe with a group of friends. Today, this area has a fence put up around it, and I wonder if it’s considered private property, or if the fence was for safety, but this change helped me look through the history of this zone, and my personal history with it, to lead me to choose not to climb the fence to see the section I used to go to.







I reached over the fence to take this picture.

Finally, as I reached through my mind to explain how I might have honoured story and the past in my exploration of this area, I was left with more questions than answers. So for this documentation of my experience I will end on a set of questions whose answers will likely come and go throughout my life in a variety of ways:

How can I feel authentic in my honouring through learning? Is it enough that I am personally content with how I've learned? Who is out there that may push me to go deeper in learning about and learning through place?