

- 2012 *The Production of Power in the Late Period Coast Salish Ways of Death*. Paper presented at the Ritual Spaces and Places Workshop, Simon Fraser University, February 26, 2012.
- 2010 *Fuel for Thought: Douglas-fir Culturally Modified Trees at Cape Calver, British Columbia*. Paper presented at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Society for Ethnobiology Conference, Victoria, May 6, 2010.
- 2010 Guide: Ethnobotanical and archaeological walking tour of Rocky Point, British Columbia. 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Society for Ethnobiology Conference. Victoria, May 8, 2010.
- 2009 Co-organizer of session at the BC Studies Conference, *Place, Landscape and Experience: Embodying Field Research*. Victoria, May 1, 2009.
- 2009 *What the Dead Want: Reflections on Building a Burial Cairn*. Paper presented at the BC Studies Conference, Victoria, May 1, 2009.
- 2008 *Douglas Fir Culturally Modified Trees: Some Initial Considerations*. Paper presented at the Northwest Anthropological Conference, Victoria, April 24, 2008.
- 2008 *Immortal Landscapes of the Precontact Straits Salish*. Paper presented at the Northwest Anthropological Conference, Victoria, April 26, 2008.
- 2008 *Immortal Landscapes: Burial Cairns and Precontact Straits Salish Social Identity*. Paper presented at the Society for American Archaeology Annual Conference, Vancouver, March 30, 2008.
- 2007 Poster presentation, Graduate Student Social Sciences Symposium, University of Victoria, March 30, 2007.
- 2007 Colloquium presentation, Department of Anthropology, University of Victoria, March 16, 2007.

#### Publications

Mathews, D., S. Greer, R. Hebda and A. Mackie

In press His Travel Route: Retracing the Footsteps of the Kwäday Dän Ts'inchj Person. In *The Kwäday Dän Ts'inchj Discovery: Teachings from the Long Ago Person Found*, edited by S. Greer, R. Hebda and A. Mackie. Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria.

Mathews, Darcy

Forthcoming Body, House, Community, Cosmos: Scales of Power Relationships in Late Period Coast Salish Funerary Ritual. In *Ritual Space and Place*, edited by Brian Hayden and Suzanne Villeneuve. Alta Mira Press.

James, T., I. Hutchinson, J. V. Barrie, K. W. Conway and D. Mathews

2007 Relative Sea-Level Change in the Northern Strait of Georgia, British Columbia. *Geographie Physique et Quaternaire* 59(2-3):113-127.



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

## PROGRAMME

The Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
(Department of Anthropology)

**Darcy Lane Mathews**

2006

University of Victoria

MA (Anthropology)

1993

Simon Fraser University

BA (Archaeology)

***"Funerary Ritual, Ancestral Presence, and the Rocky Point  
Ways of Death"***

Thursday, July 31, 2014

10:00AM

Harry Hickman Building, room 116

#### Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Quentin Mackie, Department of Anthropology, University of  
Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Ann Stahl, Department of Anthropology, UVic (Member)

Dr. Peter Stephenson, Department of Anthropology, UVic  
(Member)

Dr. Eric Higgs, School of Environmental Studies, UVic (Outside  
Member)

#### External Examiner:

Dr. Barbara Mills, School of Anthropology, University of Arizona

#### Chair of Oral Examination:

Professor Brian Richmond, Theatre Department, UVic

## **Abstract**

Around 500calAD, the Coast Salish peoples of southwestern British Columbia began to inter their dead within funerary petroforms. These burials, consisting of arrangements of stone and soil built over the dead, marked a transition from inhumation burials within village midden deposits, to above-ground cemeteries located around village peripheries. This upward and outward movement of the dead is exemplified at the Rocky Point Peninsula on the southernmost tip of Vancouver Island. It is one of the largest mortuary sites on the Northwest Coast of North America, with 553 funerary petroforms distributed within and between two large neighbouring cemeteries.

Focusing analysis on the mesoscale encompassing these two largest cemeteries, I consider local-level depositional practices—the bringing together of stone and soil for the burial of their dead—employed by these communities of ritual practice. Cluster analysis was first used to identify patterns in the external material attributes of these burials. Point Pattern Analysis was then employed to explore the spatial variation of the types of features identified by the morphological analysis. The results of these analyses point to a fundamental bifurcation in both funerary petroform morphology and placement. Funerary petroforms with rounded outlines, which tend to be relatively small and medium-sized, cluster together and produce clusters of clusters at larger scales within each cemetery. This is in contrast to straight-sided funerary petroforms, which tend to be significantly larger, and are spatially repelled by both clusters of the smaller curvilinear features, as well as other comparable straight-sided features. The most striking result comes from the analysis of funerary petroform visibility. There is a paradox in visibility when viewed from both travel routes around or through the cemetery, as well as between clusters of funerary petroforms within the cemetery. As above-ground features, often built in patterned ways, funerary petroforms are intentionally hidden from sight. Significantly, many were placed at the very threshold of visibility, neither completely visible nor completely hidden. There is a kind of anti-monumentality, with the most morphologically distinct funerary petroforms—very large straight-sided mound-like features—being the least visible burials, perceptually isolated from the living as well as from clusters of other funerary petroforms.

Contextualizing these results with a thematic analysis of ethnographic and contemporary Coast Salish funerary practices suggests that the death of some Rocky Point peoples provoked ritual actions to anchor the dead in funerary petroforms. It was a 'public secret' that the dead were present around the periphery of every village and it was these layers of concealment—the corpse within the funerary petroform, and the funerary petroform placed at the threshold of visibility—that made the building of these features an effective ritual practice. These were layers of protection not only for the corpse, but also for the living. This Coast Salish sense of monumentality was the matrix by which the hidden dead were deeply felt.

With the ritualized building of funerary petroforms at Rocky Point, the ancestral dead were increasingly entangled in the relations of power among the living. This depositional practice was an important first step in creating a sense of immortality writ large on the landscape. Funerary petroforms were built within a liminal period of ritualization using stone, a material metaphorically equated with attributes such as transformation and containment. This was a critical process of transforming the dead from corpse to ancestor and the living from mourner to inheritor. While other Northwest Coast peoples had clans, and therefore a sense of house group immortality, the Rocky Point peoples had ancestors anchored to place, touchstones by which powerful and proprietary family and house-owned names, histories, and connections to place were transmitted through time. The building of funerary petroforms—and by extension access to the requisite ritual expertise—produced and

legitimizing a division between classes based on historical connections to place and the curation of hereditary names, titles, and other intangible property. This created a sense of timelessness in relations of power, and the emergence of an upper class who 'knew their history,' in contrast to those who had 'forgotten' it—or lacked access to the ritual knowledge and other prerogatives necessary to make a more indelible historic connection to place.

In the transition from inhumation to funerary petroform depositional practice, ritualization was as a process central to defining history and place. The entangling power of the dead, however, is not limited to the past. The building of funerary petroforms is a process that continues to enmesh people, places, and materials through time, and in ways that people moving stones and soil a millennia ago could not have foreseen. The dead at Rocky Point have remained powerful actors, with funerary petroforms serving as nodes in the currents of power between Coast Salish peoples and settler society, and the legitimation of ownership and the rights associated with historical connections to place.

## **Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships**

Canada Graduate Scholarship, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (2006-2009)

Centre for Studies in Religion and Society *Vandekerkhove Family Trust* Graduate Student Fellowship (2008-2009)

Sara Spencer Foundation Award (2008)

University of Victoria Fellowship (2010)

## **Presentations**

- 2014     *Ancestral Presence and the Public Secret: Hiding the Dead in Plain Sight.* Paper presented at the Society for American Archaeology Annual Conference, Austin, Texas, April 25, 2014.
- 2014     *Ancestral Presence, Power, and Ritualizing the Dead at Rocky Point.* University of Victoria, Department of Anthropology Colloquium, January 6, 2014.
- 2013     *Power, Place, and Ritual in the Late Period Straits Salish Ways of Death.* Simon Fraser University, Department of Archaeology Colloquium, February 7, 2013.
- 2013     *Funerary Ritual, Tradition, and Ancestral Presence: The Late Period Production of Power in the Salish Sea.* Paper presented at the Society for American Archaeology Annual Conference, Honolulu, April 5, 2013.
- 2012     *Ritual Written in Stone: Materiality in Coast Salish Funerary Ritual.* Paper presented at the University of British Columbia Archaeology Day, The Archaeology of Ritual and Ceremonial Life, March 10, 2012.
- 2012     *Body, House, Community, Cosmos: Scales of Power Relationships in Late Period Coast Salish Funerary Ritual.* Paper presented at the Ritual Spaces and Places Workshop, Simon Fraser University, February 24, 2012.