

Unit 1: Video 2 Transcript

Q3: Describe meeting with Aboriginal Elders of south-central British Columbia in the 1970s and 1980s. How did the meetings help your research?

A: The Elders in south-central British Columbia have given me so much—gave me so much that I think I think about every day, just because so much of it was a storied past. And those stories have carried meaning—still carry meaning.

Harry Robinson, who I just mentioned, who to me was a treasure trove of stories, and a wonderful human being, and so brilliant in so many ways. At one stage when so many stories were going by, I was confused at, how do you make connections here? What's really going on with all these stories? And it made me feel much better when he said, "You'll need a lot of time. You need to—" in his own broken English style. "You need to step back. You need a lot of time. Over years you'll kind of see what I mean, what I'm getting at with these stories." Which—another aspect I loved about them was he really intended these stories to be heard by people on my side of the equations. White people have to hear these stories. And for me, trying to make connections—and I haven't written much, other than the introductions to our collaborations together. I've written in those kind of—to me it's my—where I come from. Where these stories could be, you have to understand a little bit about me to understand how—who the listener is in these stories. How they came out. And Harry really gave me the feeling that you need a lot of time, and I have had a lot of time. I'm reaching the end of my career, and I would say they've infused and informed so much of who I am.

And not just Harry, but in the—close to Kamloops and Chase. Amy August, who gave me the gift of—sitting with her for days and days, over a large extended time—a life story, her life story, which will be told in digital form. I'm actually working with the Neskonlith Band to get them that material. It won't appear in book form. It shouldn't appear in book form. But just this life story spread over so many years in that region, was just sort of a beauty, a nugget that—again, a story that people need to hear. And she told it in a way that she wanted, very conscious of delivering this story to people in her community, but outsiders as well.

Singers and storytellers from Lytton, the Stein Valley, which we were very much involved in, just happened to be there during the whole Stein Battle issue. The stories that I had the privilege of hearing all around—in the context of that valley. What these stories meant, also opened up a whole new

avenue of just a peoples' relationship. The Indigenous peoples' relationship to this landscape. What that valley meant in terms of places, and names, and people, and stories, and just this long-term connection that was always their beginning point. And the valley as a spiritual place, which we can look on lightly on our side of the equation. But on their side of the equation, just carried so much depth and meaning.

Just for me, that region, although I live in Victoria, that is the region where I think my heart lies because when I was younger in my very formative stage, I really did walk around and wander around. And spent so many times—so many days in kitchens in reserve communities where people really did share really so much with me. That I think I've tried to carry forward in my publications and in my courses in a way that's sort of respectful and that can give a sense of what lies for the outsider on that side of the equation. And in terms of history and historiography, how do you think about your past? How do they think about their past? How do these differ? How do they come together? What's the value of us listening to that? In my courses, what do we say about a history that's written mostly from the perspective of our side of the equation? What happens when you sort of go to that side and hear how it's told? It's been really an important part of what I teach and what I do and what I've done over my whole teaching career.