

BALLOON BOMBS, THE ALASKA HIGHWAY, AND INFLUENZA:

Tsek'ehne Perspectives on the 1943 Flu Epidemic

DANIEL CHESTER FOREST SIMS

TOWARDS THE END OF THE Second World War, the Japanese employed a strange new weapon in an attempt to hurt the North American populace – balloon bombs. Generally viewed as an ingenious attempt to provoke terror, among the Tsek'ehne these bombs are connected with the 1943 influenza epidemic. There is one small problem. Officially, the balloon bomb campaign commenced in November 1944 and continued until April 1945. Furthermore, given the association of the construction of the Alaska Highway in 1942–43 with the outbreak of virgin soil epidemics among Northern communities, it would seem logical that the outbreak was simply a result of the arrival of construction crews. Even accepting that both arguments are based on problematic interpretations of the past, in both cases historians have disregarded Tsek'ehne views on the matter. The reality is that, despite Tsek'eh oral histories of the bombs being available to non-Tsek'ehne historians since at least 1943, due to the lingering legacy of colonialism the latter were free to disregard them. Rather than being the fault of any particular historian, this oversight is indicative of the divide that exists between Indigenous and Eurocentric worldviews and their corresponding knowledges. Indeed, because of the way history is produced in colonial situations, even claims of inclusion are problematic unless Indigenous sources and perspectives are genuinely employed. The continuation of this failure to include Indigenous knowledge is incompatible with reconciliation attempts in Canada and highlights a fundamental flaw with regard to how history is produced in this country.

Although Japanese balloon bombs were not as well known as the V-1 or V-2 missiles used by Germany during the Second World War, the logic behind them was similar: vengeance. After the success of the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo in April 1942 had demonstrated that the Americans could bomb the Japanese islands, the Japanese wanted a way to strike back at the American mainland. While ideally the Japanese hoped that the bombs would lead to widespread destruction, their primary purpose was

psychological. In short, the Japanese military wanted to make Americans feel unsafe on the home front.¹ Recognizing this simple fact, and not wanting to alert the Japanese of the “success” of their plan, the militaries of both the United States and Canada quickly moved to convince the news media of both countries to remain largely silent regarding the situation. This silence would continue until a balloon bomb killed six civilians near Lakeview, Oregon, on 5 May 1945, at which time both countries deemed public safety more important than wartime secrecy.²

These were not just simple balloons. Using the latest information about the jet stream and modern technology, the Japanese had developed a way to launch them from the main island of Honshu and to keep them in the jet stream until they were over North America, at which point they would descend and, the Japanese hoped, wreak havoc on an unsuspecting population. As a result, they were the first truly intercontinental weapon of war, travelling at times more than seven thousand kilometres.³ As far as we know their ordinances were incendiary and/or anti-personnel, but there was serious concern that they would employ chemical or biological weapons.⁴ According to Canadian Army Captain Charles East, who recovered balloon bombs across northern British Columbia, the potential for biological warfare was the main reason that the American and Canadian militaries kept their existence on a need-to-know basis.⁵ Moreover, while some might question this assertion, it is important to bear in the mind that even Prime Minister Mackenzie King was warned

¹ It is important to remember, however, that these still did damage. Ross Coen, *Fu-Go: The Curious History of Japan's Balloon Bomb Attack on America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 7–8, 11–15, 39, 56, 128–29, 192; Charles East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two* (Prince George: College of New Caledonia, 1993), 1, 3; Robert Mikesch, *Japan's World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks on North America* (Washington: National Air Space Museum, 1973), iv, 1–6; Daniel Moskowitz, “An Ill Wind: As Japanese Terror Weapons Descended through American Skies, the US Government Struggled to Balance Secrecy with Public Safety,” *World War II* 32, no. 5 (2018): 55–56; James Powles, “Silent Destruction: Japanese Balloon Bombs,” *World War II* 17, no. 6 (2003): 64.

² Coen, *Fu-Go*, 5, 8, 149, 159–82; Mathias Joost, “Western Air Command and the Japanese Balloon Campaign,” *Canadian Military Journal* 6, no. 2 (2005): 62; Mikesch, *Japan's World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks*, 25–27; Moskowitz, “Ill Wind,” 56; Powles, “Silent Destruction,” 64; Larry Tanglen, “Terror Floated over Montana: Japanese World War II Balloon Bombs,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 52, no. 4 (2002): 77–79.

³ Coen, *Fu-Go*, 16–45, 115, 185–86, 200–1; East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*, 2–4; Mikesch, *Japan's World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks* 1, 3–6; Moskowitz, “Ill Wind,” 55; Powles, “Silent Destruction,” 64; Tanglen, “Terror Floated over Montana,” 77.

⁴ Canadian War Museum: Library and Archives (CWM), 20140405-006, newspaper articles reporting on Japanese balloon bombs, 3, “Germ, Fire, Death Dropped on BC by Jap Balloons”; Coen, *Fu-Go*, 89–92, 116, 123, 137–39, 145, 155, 192–93; East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*, 4; Joost, “Western Air Command,” 60; Mikesch, *Japan's World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks* 1–3, 25, 29; Moskowitz, “Ill Wind,” 55; Tanglen, “Terror Floated over Montana,” 76–77.

⁵ East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*, 4.

of the danger in a top secret memorandum, which assured him that the real reason for the balloons was meteorological research.⁶

Complicating what we know about the balloons is the fact that the Japanese built them to self-destruct.⁷ As the *Globe and Mail* put it at the time, “the only balloons found on the ground are defective ones which failed to explode.”⁸ Even when they did detonate, those that fell during the winter of 1944–45 did not necessarily leave much damage if they fell in areas of heavy snow.⁹ As a result, evidence of their existence would be minimal, especially in remote areas. For these reasons, as well as the fact that they could fall anywhere west of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River, there is still no consensus on how many balloons actually fell in North America.¹⁰ Indeed, as popular historian James M. Powles points out, it is quite possible that the remains of undiscovered bombs will be found in the future, especially in remote areas.¹¹ This claim might sound outlandish, especially considering that the Second World War ended over seventy years ago, but as recently as 2014 the Royal Canadian Mounted Police called in members of the Royal Canadian Navy to dispose of a balloon found by forestry workers in the Monashee Mountains near Lumby, British Columbia.¹² Not helping the situation is the fact that, at the end of the war, Japan destroyed all records associated with the program.¹³

The secondary literature surrounding balloon bombs is quite limited and is dominated by military historians like United States Air Force Major Robert Mikesh, who began research into the bombs while stationed in Japan, and Captain Charles East, who had personally served

⁶ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG 25-A-3-b, vol. 5739, file pt. 1, Japanese Balloon-Bombs, file 22-T(s), memorandum for the prime minister, 20 January 1945.

⁷ Powles, “Silent Destruction,” 64.

⁸ CWM, 20140405-006, 2, “Forest Fire Staff Raised to Meet Balloon Bombs,” *Globe and Mail*, 30 May 1945.

⁹ CWM, 20140405-006, 4, “Japanese Send Bomb Balloons over America: Persons West of Great Lakes Warned of Sporadic Attacks Carried by Wind,” *Gazette* (Montréal, QC), 23 May 1945; CWM, 20140405-006, 7, “Japanese Balloons Drop Bombs in West: Some May Still Be Unexploded, Warns Defense Dept.,” 22 May 1945.

¹⁰ Coen, *Fu-Go*, 117, 199, 213–45; East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*, intro; Moskowitz, “Ill Wind,” 56; Powles, “Silent Destruction,” 64; Tanglen, “Terror Floated over Montana,” 76–77.

¹¹ Powles, “Silent Destruction,” 64.

¹² “Military Unit Blows WWII-Era Japanese Balloon Bomb to ‘Smithereens,’” *Globe and Mail*, 10 October 2014.

¹³ This claim is based on Ross Coen’s book *Fu-Go*. It should be noted that an undated newspaper article found in Library and Archives Canada that discusses the world of Cornelius Conley claims he gained access to papers kept at the Japanese War Historical Museum. Coen makes no mention of these papers, despite using an interview Conley conducted in 1961. See Coen, *Fu-Go*, 191, 200–1, 262; LAC, RG 24-G-3-1-a, vol. 20397, clipping of article by T. Sgt. Cornelius W. Conley, “Japanese Bomb US and Canada. Short History on Use of Balloon Bombs by Japanese during Second World War,” file 956.009 (D138).

in the Canadian Army retrieving the bombs.¹⁴ As can be seen in Major Mathias Joost's 2005 article "Western Air Command and the Japanese Balloon Campaign" and historian Ross Coen's 2014 book *Fu-Go: The Curious History of Japan's Balloon Bomb Attack on America*, this focus on military history remains.¹⁵ In recent years, scholars have also examined the topic in the context of regional¹⁶ and popular history.¹⁷ The closest thing to a common theme in all of these works is the argument that the bombs had the potential to start massive wildfires but failed to do so.¹⁸ As Charles East notes:

I read an article about these balloons some time ago. It was obviously written by someone who was not acquainted with the actual recovery work. The article stated that the balloons were a futile effort and never did one cent worth of damage. I do not agree, even though we never had occasion to prove that a number of fires of undetermined origin were the result of balloon bombs.¹⁹

Apart from Powles's 2003 article "Silent Destruction," which argues that if the balloons had been deployed throughout the summer of 1945 they would have succeeded in their objective, this line of reasoning is dated, and perhaps its rather lacklustre nature explains the relative lack of work done on the subject.²⁰ Recent histories tend to focus on the military response of the United States and Canada,²¹ including censorship of the news media.²² Joost, for example, argues that, despite technical difficulties in detecting the balloons, Canada's Western Air Command successfully responded to the threat without relying on the United States

¹⁴ For example, Walter Grunden's *Secret Weapons and World War II: Japan in the Shadow of Big Science* not only notes the general lack of academic military histories of Japan during the Second World War but also mentions balloon bombs only once – and then just in reference to biological warfare. See East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*; Walter Grunden, *Secret Weapons and World War II: Japan in the Shadow of Big Science* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 2–4, 191, 269nn8; Mikesch, *Japan's World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks*, iv.

¹⁵ Coen, *Fu-Go*; Joost, "Western Air Command."

¹⁶ Coen's article is actually contained in the larger monograph *Fu-Go* as chapter 5. Ross Coen, "If One Should Come Your Way, Shoot It Down: The Alaska Territorial Guard and the Japanese Balloon Bomb Attack of World War II," *Alaska History* 25, no. 2 (2010): 1–19; Tanglen, "Terror Floated over Montana"; Richard Yates, "Oregon Voices: Klamath Falls Goes to War – A Personal and Newspaper Reminiscence," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 107, no. 3 (2006): 410–23.

¹⁷ Powles, "Silent Destruction"; Moskowitz, "Ill Wind."

¹⁸ East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*, 1–3; Mikesch, *Japan's World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks* 1; Powles, "Silent Destruction."

¹⁹ East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*, 1.

²⁰ Ibid., 1–3; Mikesch, *Japan's World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks* 1; Powles, "Silent Destruction."

²¹ Coen, "If One Should Come Your Way"; Joost, "Western Air Command."

²² Moskowitz, "Ill Wind"; Tanglen, "Terror Floated over Montana."

Air Force and, in doing so, helped prove its worth as a fighting force.²³ Similarly, Coen, in his 2010 article “If One Should Come Your Way, Shoot It Down,” concludes that the large number of Indigenous people who enlisted in the Alaska Territorial Guard not only contributed to its success but also, through the connections it created, laid the foundation for Indigenous land claims after the war.²⁴ Hand in hand with these direct reactions to the perceived threat was the level of secrecy both militaries succeeded in creating around the events. According to both reporter Larry Tanglen’s 2002 article “Terror Floated over Montana” and political scientist Daniel Moskowitz’s 2018 article “An Ill Wind,” this outcome was largely due to the willingness of the journalists to comply with the request for secrecy, and the resulting silence surrounding the subject matter helped convince the Japanese to abandon the balloon attacks in the spring of 1945.²⁵ Richard Yates expands upon the question of perception in his memoir “Klamath Falls Goes to War,” in which he recalls that, despite official secrecy until the end of the war, the residents of Klamath Falls, Oregon, talked about the balloons, especially after hearing about them via Japanese radio broadcasts.²⁶

Out of the eight unique secondary sources mentioned above only East’s *Japanese Balloons of World War Two* and Coen’s *Fu-Go* mention Indigenous people in any meaningful way, with both primarily examining the role they played in the detection and recovery of bombs in British Columbia and Alaska, respectively.²⁷ East, however, with the exception of a guide named William George and someone whom he simply decides to call “George,” largely chooses not to name the Indigenous peoples whom he encountered and upon whom he relied while recovering balloons.²⁸ This attitude is notably absent from Coen’s book, which, with the brief exception of a Canadian government report of food poisoning that was initially believed to be caused by the bombs, either names Indigenous individuals or refers to them without reducing them to race.²⁹ Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, it is East who relies most on oral history (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous), albeit often his own. And although

²³ Joost, “Western Air Command,” 66.

²⁴ Coen, “If One Should Come Your Way,” 17.

²⁵ Tanglen, “Terror Floated over Montana,” 77–79.

²⁶ Yates, “Oregon Voices,” 420–23.

²⁷ As noted, Coen’s article “If One Should Come Your Way,” is chapter 5 in his book *Fu-Go*. East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*; Joost, “Western Air Command”; Powles, “Silent Destruction”; Mikesch, *Japan’s World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks*; Moskowitz, “Ill Wind”; Tanglen, “Terror Floated over Montana”; Yates, “Oregon Voices.”

²⁸ East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*, 8, 10–13, 15, 23–24, 26, 34, 42–44.

²⁹ Coen, *Fu-Go*, 109–126, 154–55, *passim*.

Coen does use some interviews and personal communications, his work is primarily based on a solid assortment of state archival records and secondary sources.³⁰ The result, however, is the same. Since neither work uses Indigenous sources in a significant way, Indigenous perspectives and histories of balloon bombs are effectively absent from both. Nor is this unique to either source. As numerous decolonial scholars have noted, the Eurocentric nature of knowledge production and education in the academy excludes Indigenous knowledge and, in so doing, effaces it.³¹ Some scholars argue that research ethics boards perpetuate this situation.³² To quote Indigenous philosopher Shawn Wilson in *Research Is Ceremony*, “as part of their white privilege, there is no requirement for [non-Indigenous scholars] to be able to see other ways of being or doing, or even recognize that they exist.”³³ With regard to balloon bombs, this

³⁰ It is only surprising in the sense that it is often said that BC historians disregarded oral history until the 1990s. It could be argued either that East was the exception rather than the rule or that he does not count as an academic historian. Of course, all of these lines of reasoning ignore the fact that oral histories predated contact with Europeans and were used by early BC historians like Adrien Gabriel Morice and Hubert Howe Bancroft. Nevertheless, as Iain McKechnie so wonderfully points out in his recent article, “Indigenous Oral History and Settlement Archaeology in Barkley Sound,” even today oral history faces resistance from some members of the academy. See Iain McKechnie, “Indigenous Oral History and Settlement Archaeology in Barkley Sound, West Vancouver Island,” *BC Studies* 187 (2015): 193–94, passim; Jennifer Brown, “Doing Aboriginal History: A View from Winnipeg,” *Canadian Historical Review* 84, no. 4 (2003): 621; East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*; Ken Coates, “Writing First Nations in Canadian History: A Review of Recent Scholarly Work,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 1 (2000): 109; Coen, *Fu-Go*, 182, 191–94, 201, 258n18, 262n13, 263n19, 267–68; Coen, “If One Should Come Your Way”; Susan Neylan, “Colonialism and Resettling British Columbia: Canadian Aboriginal Historiography, 1992–2012,” *History Compass* 11, no. 10 (2013): 835, 840n5; Chad Reimer, *Writing British Columbia History, 1784–1958* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 11–13, 31–32, 66–67, 85–86.

³¹ Some of the sources also use the term “anti-colonial.” See Godwin Agboka, “Decolonial Methodologies: Social Justice Perspectives in Intercultural Technical Communication Research,” *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 44, no. 3 (2014): 302; Francis Akena, “Critical Analysis of the Production of Western Knowledge and Its Implications for Indigenous Knowledge and Decolonization,” *Journal of Black Studies* 43, no. 6 (2012): 599–602, 606; Jason Chalmers, “The Transformation of Academic Knowledge: Understanding the Relationship between Decolonising and Indigenous Research Methodologies,” *Socialist Studies* 12, no. 1 (2017): 98, 101; Samantha Cutrara, “The Settler Grammar of Canadian History Curriculum: Why Historical Thinking Is Unable to Respond to the TRC’s Call to Action,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 41, no. 1 (2018): 268; G.J.S. Dei, “Rethinking the Role of Indigenous Knowledges in the Academy,” *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 4, no. 2 (2000): 113–14; Michael Hart, “Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge, and Research: The Development of an Indigenous Research Paradigm,” *Journal of Indigenous Voices in Social Work* 1, no. 1 (2010): 4; Riyadh Shahjahan, “Mapping the Field of Anti-Colonial Discourse to Understand Issues of Indigenous Knowledges: Decolonizing Praxis,” *McGill Journal of Education* 40, no. 2 (2005): 223, 226; Leanne Simpson, “Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Marginalization, Appropriation and Continued Disillusion,” in *Indigenous Knowledge Conference, University of Saskatchewan, 28–30 May 2001* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 2001), 134–35.

³² Chalmers, “Transformation of Academic Knowledge,” 102.

³³ Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2008), 44.

oversight is problematic since many of them fell in areas where Indigenous peoples constitute a major part of the local population either outright or outside of local urban centres. In Canada, one such area is the North, including the relatively forgotten and understudied provincial norths.³⁴ It is here that one can find the homeland of the Tsek'ehne – the Finlay-Parsnip watershed and its surrounding areas.

This fact is not apparent when one reads the most recent academic book on balloon bombs, historian Ross Coen's *Fu-Go*. The maps included within it clearly place known landing sites either outside or along the marches of Tsek'ehne traditional territory.³⁵ Yet when one compares these maps to one of the sources upon which Coen based them, Robert Mikesch's *Japan's World War II Balloon Bombs on North America*, it becomes apparent that for some unknown reason Coen moved the location of the bomb that fell near present-day Kwadacha (labelled as "Whitewater" in the accompanying tables) to southern British Columbia (see Figure 1).³⁶ It would appear he made this change on the basis that the official name of Kwadacha, Fort Ware, has no apparent connection with the earlier (and, after 1938) unofficial name of Whitewater.³⁷ In other words, Coen simply relocated the explosion site to another Whitewater. Yet, when one searches for the name (including variants of it) in the official databases of geographical names of the Canadian or BC governments, the locations given are nowhere near the new location of the bomb.³⁸ It is even more confusing when one considers that Mikesch is not the only source that Coen cites that mentions this location. Captain

³⁴ Ken Coates and William Morrison refer to the provincial norths as the forgotten North. As Liza Piper notes, one interesting aspect of "the North" is that in many locations Indigenous people still form the majority of the population. See Ken Coates and William Morrison, *The Forgotten North: A History of Canada's Provincial Norths* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1992); Liza Piper, "Coming in from the Cold: The Landscape of Canadian Environmental History – Canada and the Circumpolar North," *Canadian Historical Review* 95, 4 (2014): 568.

³⁵ Coen, *Fu-Go*, 220, 237, passim.

³⁶ Ibid., 213; East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*, 31; Mikesch, *Japan's World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks* 74, 79.

³⁷ According to Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) records it was known as the Fort Grahame Outpost until 1929, then Whitewater until 1938, then Fort Ware. The first change seems to be connected to the company's acquisition of the independent Whitewater trading post owned by Elizabeth Overn. Canada Post changed the name because of the existence of another Whitewater in British Columbia. See Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA), Post: Fort Ware (BC) Finding Aid, 1999; "Local Happenings," *Prince George Citizen*, 27 January 1938; *Overn v. Strand*, [1931] SCR 720, Available here: <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/7109/index.do>

³⁸ Coen, *Fu-Go*, 220, 237; BC Geographic Names Office, "BC Geographical Names Search," *Geographical Names*, <http://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/>; Natural Resources Canada, "Query by Geographical Name," *Geographical Names*, <http://www4.rncan.gc.ca/search-place-names/search?lang=en>.

Charles East also mentions it, but he uses the official name of Fort Ware and clearly places it on the Finlay River.³⁹

There are many ways of explaining why this site is absent from the literature surrounding the bombs. The entire issue is reminiscent of the divide between *mētis* (local, relational, and practical knowledge that cannot be learned from a book) and *techne* (abstract, universal, and technical knowledge that can easily be learned from a book that is readily employed by the state) that James Scott discusses in detail in *Seeing Like a State*.⁴⁰ While not technically pure *mētis*, since a researcher can easily learn the information about the Whitewater-Kwadacha connection from a book, it is also not really part of the *techne* produced by the (colonial) state to facilitate state power and control.⁴¹ Put simply, since neither “Kwadacha” nor “Whitewater” are the current official names for the village known as Fort Ware, they do not bring up any connection with the latter when you search for them in the official Canadian or BC government databases of geographical names.⁴² Rather, one has to search for Fort Ware to find any connection between it and Whitewater and, even then, Kwadacha does not appear.⁴³ This situation is interesting because Kwadacha is the official name of the Kwadacha First Nation, the members of whom live in the village and call it “Kwadacha.” The fact that this name is still not present in either official geographical name database highlights not only the continuing power of the colonial state to name things without regard for the local inhabitants but also a major source of anger among many of the Tsek’ehne.⁴⁴

In addition to the balloon bomb that fell near Kwadacha, there are oral histories of others having fallen in the Finlay-Parsnip watershed. Tsek’ehne Elders, for example, speak of the bombs that fell along the Finlay River between Kwadacha and Old Ingenika, up Pesika Creek, and at Weissener Lake (see Figure 2).⁴⁵ As a member of the Tsek’ehne First Nation of Tsay Keh Dene, I can say that these oral histories are common knowledge and are taken as a matter of fact. In short, the

³⁹ For some reason Coen also does not cite East’s experiences at Takla Lake. See Coen, *Fu-Go*, 268–69; East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*, 5–13, 31.

⁴⁰ James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 311–24.

⁴¹ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 2–4, 313, 320–23, *passim*.

⁴² BC Geographic Names Office, “BC Geographical Names Search,” Natural Resources Canada.

⁴³ BC Geographic Names Office, “Fort Ware,” *Geographical Names*, <http://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgwns/names/54738.html>.

⁴⁴ Ray Izony, “Changes in Tsay Kehnnay Dene Governance and Society” (unpublished manuscript, n.d.); Mary Jean Poole, interviewed by author, Kwadacha, BC, 8 March 2013.

⁴⁵ Izony, “Changes”; Willie Pierre, interviewed by Maureen Pierre, Ingenika, BC, 11 December 1984, *Ingenika Band* (*Gem Book* produced by Tsay Keh Dene).

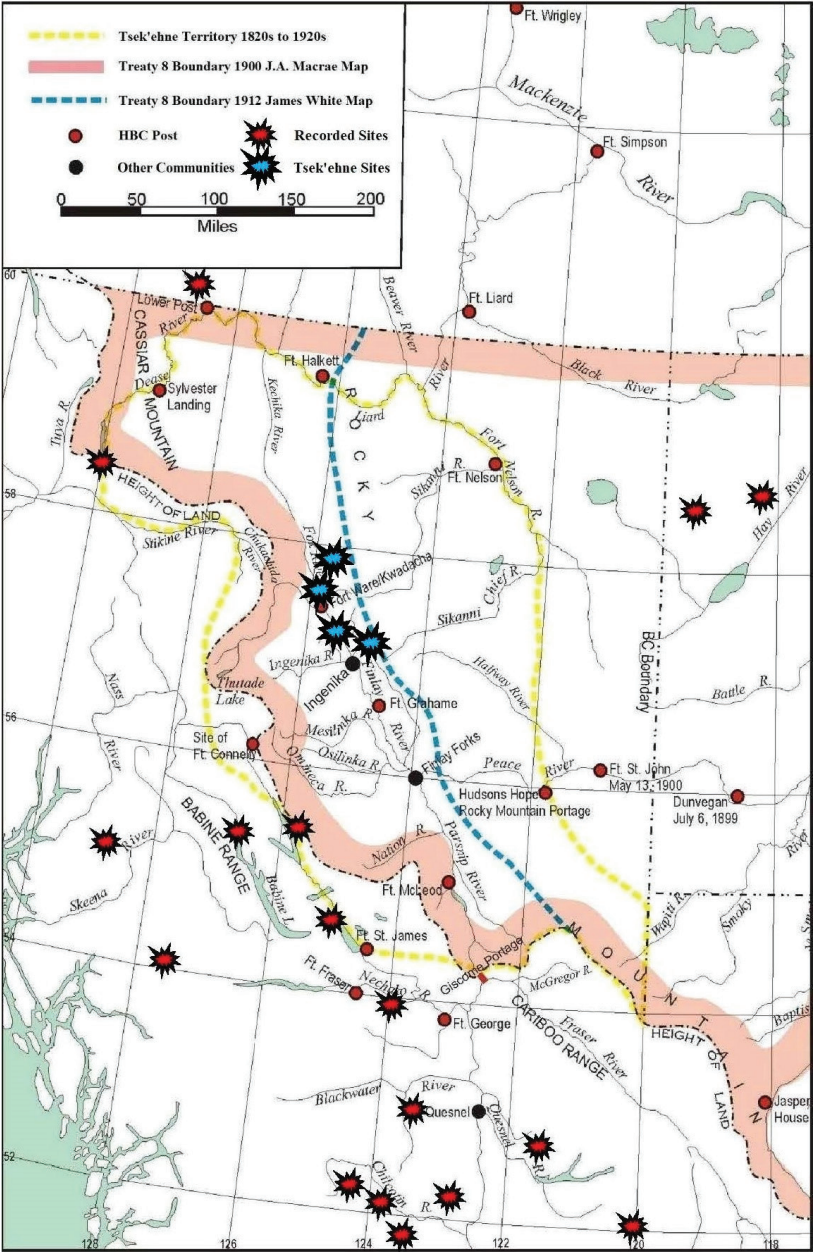


Figure 2. Tsek'ehne traditional territory in relation to officially recovered bombs and Tsek'ehne oral histories. Original map by Dr. Gerhard Ens for author. Adapted by author. Source: Coen, *Fu-Go*, 220; Izony, "Changes," Mikesh, *Japan's World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks*, 79; Pierre, interview; Sims, "Tse Keh Nay-European Relations," 179-80.

Tsek'ehne need no further evidence to prove they fell, although the speaker will often note the location of physical evidence. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this article I note that outside sources corroborate these oral histories. As outsiders visited the Finlay-Parsnip watershed in the postwar period, they noted the physical evidence of Japanese balloon bombs. Author R.M. Patterson, for example, noted in his 1949 journal that the Van Somers family had a cabin on the Finlay River on the edge of a clearing created by one of these bombs and now full of raspberries.⁴⁶ Eight years later, in response to the announcement of Axel Wenner-Gren's proposal to construct a monorail to Yukon, reporter Jack Scott reported that, throughout the area, similar clearings were visible from the air.⁴⁷

One could argue that the whole matter is simply an oversight and/or honest mistake. In a certain sense, this explanation makes sense. Name changes can be confusing. However, it does raise the question of how to reconcile this conclusion with the fact that one could consider the omission to be an example of colonial erasure: the denial of Indigenous histories in order to legitimize colonialism.⁴⁸ It is here that a close reading of Scott's work comes in handy. One of the types of *mētis* that Scott uses to help define the term is Indigenous knowledge.⁴⁹ This example makes sense. Like Scott's *mētis*, Indigenous knowledge is local, relational, and practical. It is also highly personal, community- and land-based, and created/recreated depending on context. All these connections create a certain lifelong responsibility for the learner, particularly with regard to reciprocity.⁵⁰ The literature that has emerged in recent years theorizing

⁴⁶ British Columbia Archives (BCA), R.M. Patterson Papers, MS-2762, box 4, diary: Finlay's River, includes notes from early writers on the Finlay, 19 July to 26 September 1949, file 5, R.M. Patterson, 8 August 1949.

⁴⁷ Northern British Columbia Archives (NBCA), Ray Williston Fonds, 2000.13.2.2, 1956–57, scrapbook, box 4, Jack Scott, "It's Vast, Challenging: Jack Scott Visits Wenner-Grenland," *Vancouver Sun*, 19 February 1957.

⁴⁸ Lisa Kahaleole Hall, "Strategies of Erasure: US Colonialism and Native Hawaiian Feminism," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 275; Gail Griffin, "Speaking of Whiteness: Disrupting White Innocence," *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 31, no. 3 (1998): 3–4; Joshua Inwood, "'It Is the Innocence Which Constitutes the Crime': Political Geographies of White Supremacy, the Construction of White Innocence, and the Flint Water Crisis," *Geography Compass* 12, no. 3 (2018): 4–5; Andrea Smith, "Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy," *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett and Laura Pulido (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 57.

⁴⁹ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 311–13.

⁵⁰ Kathy Absolon, "Indigenous Wholistic Theory: A Knowledge Set for Practice," *First Peoples Child and Family Review* 5, no. 2 (2010): 76, 85; Akena, "Critical Analysis," 600–2, 616; Chalmers, "Transformation of Academic Knowledge," 99–100; Cutrara, "Settler Grammar"; Dei, "Rethinking the Role," 113–14, 117; Michael Hart, "Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge,

Indigenous knowledge also helps to contextualize the question of whether the omission of Tsek'ehne oral histories is indeed an oversight and/or an honest mistake rather than colonial erasure. As theorist G.J.S. Dei and others argue, since knowledge and knowledge systems are situational and based on perception, they are not universal or absolute. Indeed, it was the very claim to universal and absolute knowledge made by non-Indigenous scholars in the past that led to the dismissal of Indigenous knowledge.⁵¹ In Canada, this assertion has produced a system within which even a conscientious scholar can easily perpetuate a Eurocentric knowledge system simply by not challenging it.⁵² As Wilson states, "the problem ... is that we can never really remove the tools from their underlying beliefs."⁵³ Indigenous knowledges come in many forms, ranging from revealed sacred knowledge to empirical evidence. As Indigenous scholar Leanne Simpson and others note, forcing these knowledges into some sort of preconceived format is highly problematic, regardless of one's intention. A key reason for this is the lack of context. Indeed, it is because of this lack that even using aspects of Indigenous knowledge that easily fit into the dominant knowledge system is not genuine inclusion, even if supporters of the system celebrate it as such. The rationale is that, in removing Indigenous knowledges from their context, you are also removing a significant portion of the information contained within them.⁵⁴ As Simpson states: "The processes of documenting and

and Research: The Development of an Indigenous Research Paradigm," *Journal of Indigenous Voices in Social Work* 1, no. 1 (2010): 2–3, 7–9; Julie Kapyrka and Mark Dockstator, "Indigenous Knowledges and Western Knowledges in Environmental Education: Acknowledging the Tensions for the Benefits of a 'Two-Worlds' Approach," *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 17 (2012): 98, 100; Shahjahan, "Mapping the Field," 215; Leanne Simpson, "Aboriginal Peoples and Knowledge: Decolonizing Our Processes," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 21, no. 1 (2001): 139–42; Leanne Simpson, "Anticolonial Strategies for the Recovery and Maintenance of Indigenous Knowledge," *American Indian Quarterly* 28, nos. 3/4 (2004): 380; Simpson, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge," 135; Aman Sium, Chandni Desai, and Eric Ritskes, "Towards the 'Tangible Unknown': Decolonization and the Indigenous Future," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): ii; Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 8–9, 11, 38–40, 58, 73, 77, 80, 87–88, 91, 99, 127.

⁵¹ Akena, "Critical Analysis," 599–602, 604, 606, 615; Elizabeth Carlson, "Anti-Colonial Methodologies and Practices for Settler Colonial Studies," *Settler Colonial Studies* 7, no. 4 (2017): 496; Dei, "Rethinking the Role," 120, 128; Shahjahan, "Mapping the Field," 223, 226; Simpson, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge," 134; Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 58, 73.

⁵² Agboka, "Decolonial Methodologies," 299–304; Carlson, "Anti-Colonial Methodologies," 496; Dei, "Rethinking the Role," 129; Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 13, 16–17, 38–39.

⁵³ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 13.

⁵⁴ Agboka, "Decolonial Methodologies," 299–304; Akena, "Critical Analysis," 599–600, 616; Dei, "Rethinking the Role," 114; G.J.S. Dei and Alireza Asgharzadeh, "The Power of Social Theory: The Anti-Colonial Discursive Framework," *Journal of Educational Thought* 35, no. 3 (2001): 299; Michelle Pigeon, "Moving between Theory and Practice within an Indigenous Research Paradigm," *Qualitative Research* (2018): 4; Shahjahan, "Mapping the Field," 225;

integrating remove knowledge from the people. When the knowledge is removed from our people, the power of our knowledge is lost. Our knowledge becomes assimilated and it is of very little use to those who are trying to advance their interests.”⁵⁵

The physical remains are an archive of place of Japanese balloon bombs among the Tsek’ehne.⁵⁶ The oral histories the Tsek’ehne have connected to these sites are not grandiose, romantic, or supernatural; rather, they are short and to the point, and the point is not merely that they landed in Tsek’ehne territory. While Elders might talk about a hung-up balloon here or a bomb casing there, what is more important is that these weapons of war have come to symbolize a tragic event in Tsek’ehne history. As a nation the Tsek’ehne were not heavily involved in the Second World War, a conflict many Elders cite as an example of European barbarism. Prior to McLeod Lake’s adhesion in 1999/2000, the majority of the Tsek’ehne had yet to sign a treaty with the colonial state. Even in the recent West Moberly BC Supreme Court case, the court was careful to note that even if it considers parts of Tsek’eh traditional territory to be included in Treaty 8 that its ruling in no way made the Tsek’ehne treaty people.⁵⁷ In other words, there is no treaty relationship between them and the Crown. This simple fact, combined with a local recruiting officer who had been instructed not to recruit Indigenous individuals, explains why only two community members volunteered to fight in the Second World War: Andrew Solonas Sr. and Achille Chingee, with Achille being discharged for poor hearing prior to being sent to Europe.⁵⁸ Despite this low level of involvement, the Japanese balloon bombs made the entire Tsek’ehne homeland a front line in this faraway war. It was within this context that a tragedy occurred in 1943. In that year an influenza epidemic struck, and fifteen members of the Fort Grahame and Fort Ware Bands died over a three-month period.⁵⁹

Simpson, “Aboriginal Peoples and Knowledge,” 139–44; Simpson, “Anticolonial Strategies,” 380–81; Simpson, “Traditional Ecological Knowledge,” 133–35; Sium, Desai, and Ritskes, “Tangible Unknown,” ii; Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 8–9.

⁵⁵ Simpson, “Aboriginal Peoples and Knowledge,” 140.

⁵⁶ William Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), xix–xx, 227.

⁵⁷ *West Moberly First Nations v. British Columbia*, 2017 BCSC 1700 at para. 12.

⁵⁸ BC/Yukon Command, *Military Service Recognition Book*, vol. 6, 150; R. Scott Sheffield, “‘Of Pure European Descent and of the White Race’: Recruitment Policy and Aboriginal Canadians, 1939–1945,” *Canadian Military History* 5, no. 1 (1996): 12.

⁵⁹ This number is from the oral tradition. Official death records note nine influenza deaths during this period but cause of death was not always clear. For example, Old Lady and Old Man Poole are reported as dying on 11 and 12 March, respectively. Old Lady Poole officially died of old age, while Old Man Poole officially died of influenza. See BCA, British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency Death registrations, 1872–1988, GR-2951, 1943–09–027081; BCA, GR-2951,

This number might sound fairly minor, but, when one considers that there were only around three hundred Tsek'ehne at the time, with around one hundred sixty belonging to these two bands, it represented about 5 percent of the total population and 9 percent of the two bands.⁶⁰

As Tsay Keh Dene Elder Willie Pierre recalls, this event was directly connected to a balloon bomb that fell along the Finlay River.⁶¹ It is also part of a larger corpus of common knowledge among the Tsek'ehne about the war, which includes, among other things, the highly questionable execution of Alex Prince as well as reports that Japanese airmen landed on Thutade Lake and tried to recruit local men.⁶² In this particular instance, the Tsek'ehne see the balloon bombs as yet another way that colonialism, in this instance a faraway colonial war, negatively affected them. Recently, various members of the community have brought this up in conjunction with environmental assessments for the Kemess North Mine.⁶³ In one instance, someone even equated it to biological warfare.⁶⁴ Willie remembers that state experts came and extracted the balloon for testing.⁶⁵ We know from other sources that the Canadian state was quite concerned about these balloons employing biological weapons and that this response was standard practice in Canada whenever one was reported.⁶⁶ There are just two small problems. Although they do not explicitly discuss the Tsek'ehne, the official histories of the Japanese balloon bombs nonetheless challenge Tsek'ehne histories of the bombs due to the fact that they state that the campaign did not start until November 1944 and none of the bombs contained biological weapons.

1943-09-027155; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-027156; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-027291; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-027314; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-027386; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-027395; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-027396; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-027397; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-027409; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-027411; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-02475; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-027584; BCA, GR-2951, 1943-09-028080; Willie Pierre, interview.

⁶⁰ These numbers are based on the total Tsek'ehne population in 1941, which was 304 for Fort Connelly, Fort Grahame, and McLeod Lake together and 159 for Fort Grahame alone. At the time, Indian Affairs did not consider the Fort Ware band to be separate from the Fort Grahame band and enumerated them as such. See LAC, RG 10, vol. 7127, Stuart Lake Agency – Elections of Chiefs and Councillors for the Various Bands in the Area, file 985/3-5, pt. 1, letter to the Secretary, Indian Affairs Branch from Indian Agent Robert Howe, 2 October 1941; Daniel Sims, “Dam Bennett: The Impacts of the Williston Lake Reservoir on the Tsek'ehne of Northern British Columbia (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 2017), 95–96.

⁶¹ Willie Pierre, interview.

⁶² BCA, GR-2951, 1945-09-995009.

⁶³ Kemess North Copper-Gold Mine Project, “Joint Review Panel Hearings Conducted Pursuant to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the British Columbia Environmental Assessment Act: Proceedings at Hearing,” vol. xii, 2286–87.

⁶⁴ Joan Kuyek, “Submission to the Joint Panel Review on Kemess North Mine,” Smithers, BC, 22 November 2006, 5.

⁶⁵ Willie Pierre.

⁶⁶ Coen, *Fu-Go*, 155; East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*, 4; Joost, “Western Air Command,” 60.

What is to be done? One potential, but highly problematic, solution to this contradiction is to simply state that the Tsek'ehne are wrong because what they know contradicts what non-Tsek'ehne experts know. Sure, people died of influenza in large numbers relative to the overall Tsek'ehne population, but this must have been due to something other than a Japanese balloon bomb. In this context, the balloons continued as an archive of place but were increasingly detached from empirical evidence and took one more step towards the precession of simulacra.⁶⁷ Something identified as a balloon bomb exists (or existed) and continues to symbolize the start of the flu epidemic, but in reality the assumed causal relationship between the two is at best mere correlation.

Proponents of this line of reasoning are helped by the fact that they can readily point to the virgin soil epidemics in northern British Columbia and Yukon that occurred in the winter of 1942–43 as a result of the influx of workers who were building the Alaska Highway. It is this, they say, that was the real cause of the 1943 flu epidemic.⁶⁸ One can even point to preliminary survey crews for the highway, who, prior to the selection of the final route east of the Rockies, had worked extensively in the northern Rocky Mountain Trench examining the southern end of the Tintina route – the heart of the Tsek'ehne homeland – with bases at Finlay Forks, Fort Ware, and Old Ingenika. There is just one small problem. This work was conducted between 1939 and 1941, when their entry into the Second World War made the Americans decide on the current route of the highway, along the eastern edges of Tsek'ehne traditional territory.⁶⁹ This raises the question of why the influenza epidemic did not occur earlier among the Tsek'ehne. Even if one assumes that the 1943 outbreak was due to a specific strain of the virus that was not present between 1939 and 1941, there is still the question of how the construction crews, who had limited contact with the Tsek'ehne, managed to infect them.

⁶⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Fraser Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994), 6; Turkel, *Archive of Place*, 227.

⁶⁸ Ken Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840–1973* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 102; K.S. Coates and W.R. Morrison, "Native People and the Alaska Highway," in *Consuming Canada: Readings in Environmental History*, ed. Chad Gaffield and Pam Gaffield (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1995), 321–23; Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 66; Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2000), 23; John Marchand, "Tribal Epidemics in the Yukon," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 123, no. 16 (1943): 1019–20.

⁶⁹ NBCA, Helen Mustard Collection, 2004.24.16, Alaska Highway Survey in British Columbia – G. Smedley Andrews, box 1; G.S. Andrews, "Alaska Highway Survey in British Columbia," *Geographical Journal* 100, no. 1 (1942): 7–19.

One should not misconstrue this question. The argument that many northern Indigenous groups are isolated is easily overstated and helps bolster colonial narratives of wilderness and settlement that are themselves part of colonial binaries that portray Indigenous people as part of nature.⁷⁰ Yet, while it is true that, due to the Rocky Mountains and the unnavigable Peace River Canyon, Tsek'ehne interactions with the lands east of the Rockies were relatively limited, the Tsek'ehne frequently shopped at local trading posts located throughout their traditional territory and/or travelled south along the rivers to Summit Lake and present-day Prince George.⁷¹ Indeed, when it came to the fur trade, the Tsek'ehne were in continuous contact with Europeans since 1806, when Fort McLeod, the oldest permanent European settlement west of the Rockies in Canada, was established. These fur traders were the first Europeans to live among the Tsek'ehne and they were followed by prospectors looking for gold, missionaries looking for souls, independent traders looking for profit, surveyors looking for information, rivermen hauling supplies, and settlers looking for land. True, communities like Finlay Forks and Manson Creek never became the metropolises that it was once hoped they would, but they existed nonetheless and, in the interwar period, were increasingly connected to the rest of Canada.⁷² For example, while the *Prince George Citizen* reported that mail only reached Finlay Forks six times in 1921, by 1937 it was delivered monthly via airplane not only to Finlay Forks but also to McLeod Lake and Fort Grahame.⁷³ The following year service was extended to Fort Ware, and by 1941, residents in these communities received mail twice a month.⁷⁴

These connections were not purely economic, and by the interwar period not only were individual Tsek'ehne travelling on vacation to the local regional centre, Prince George, but non-Tsek'ehne were vacationing in the "wilderness" of the Trench. Taking advantage of the situation, rivermen like Dick Corless had begun transporting tourists like Count Nicholas Ignatieff, who, in 1937 and 1938, took his students from the prestigious Upper Canada College in Toronto on field trips

⁷⁰ Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 6–7.

⁷¹ The dominance of this transportation route is common knowledge. For an expanded discussion of this see Sims, "Dam Bennett," 65, 76–78, passim.

⁷² *Ibid.*, chap. 1.

⁷³ "Finlay Forks Trader Wants Calendar for 1922: Has to Get His Calendar a Year Ahead, Otherwise He Loses Track of Days in the Spring," *Prince George Citizen*, 24 June 1921, 6; "Aviation Development," *Prince George Citizen*, 10 June 1937, 2.

⁷⁴ "Northern Air Services Will Assist Trade: Speeds Up Communication between North and South Business Centers," *Prince George Citizen*, 11 August 1938, 1; NBCA, 2004.24.16, box 1, Andrews, 11.

on the Parsnip, Finlay, and Peace Rivers.⁷⁵ Count Ignatieff was not alone, and, in 1937, while on vacation in the area, four undergraduates from Yale were defeated in a baseball game by members of the McLeod Lake Tsek'ehne.⁷⁶ Clearly, the Tsek'ehne were in regular contact with Europeans. And, while it is true that the permanent settler population in their homeland was small, it not only had connections with the wider world but also included individuals who moved back and forth between the two. It is therefore unclear why the sudden influx of road crews along the northeastern edge of their traditional territory would lead to a virgin soil epidemic, especially since the traditional territory of the Tsek'ehne was clearly not virgin soil.

Beyond this argument for isolation, there is the issue of the reliability of the evidence against Tsek'ehne oral history. Aside from the balloon bombs that were collected or logically deduced by the wreckage and/or damage left behind, much of the information we have about when the campaign started and whether it employed biological weapons is based on the oral testimony of individuals based in Japan or on evidence that was gathered at the end of the war.⁷⁷ Both sources are far from absolute. In the case of the physical evidence it is important to remember that, by definition, basing the commencement and conclusion of the campaign on what was found is an argument from ignorance and therefore hardly definitive. It is one of the reasons most scholars refuse to make a firm statement regarding the total number of bombs. Do not get me wrong. In this context, it is still perfectly acceptable to come to a conclusion, as long as you are willing to admit that new evidence might render it incorrect. On the other hand, arguments based on Japanese testimony reveal that oral histories can be perceived differently depending on who is conveying them. After all, the Japanese had just been defeated in a war in which they had not only employed biological weapons but also tried to cover this up by destroying records, committing those involved to secrecy, and, in some instances, deliberately providing misleading

⁷⁵ These trips were heavily reported on by the *Prince George Citizen*. I have included a few examples from the *Globe and Mail* and the *Leader*. See "First Visit to Civilization," *Leader* (Prince George, BC), 16 June 1922, 1; "Down over the Top to Northern BC: Count Ignatieff Organizes Another Tour for College Students," *Prince George Citizen*, 3 March 1938, 1, 5; "Student Party Will Explore North Country: Trip Outlined Will Cover Six to Seven Hundred Miles by Packhorse and Boat," *Prince George Citizen*, 17 June 1937, 1, 4; "Toronto Boys to Take Canoes on Second Lap of Western Trip," *Globe and Mail*, 10 August 1937, 3; "UC Students Explore BC: Party of 37 Being Trained in Prospecting and Surveying," *Globe and Mail*, 24 July 1937, 24.

⁷⁶ "BC Indians Attack Yale Men Who Lose 10–6 in Nine Innings," *Globe and Mail*, 20 August 1937, 15; "Notes and Comments," *Globe and Mail*, 21 August 1937, 6.

⁷⁷ Coen, *Fu-Gu*, 191–94.

information.⁷⁸ Yet American officials seemingly accepted the Japanese testimony provided about the balloon bombs without critical analysis.⁷⁹ One could only wish that Indigenous oral histories had been similarly accepted.⁸⁰

It might not be so bad if the only problem were that certain scholars continue to challenge the validity of Indigenous oral traditions and/or Indigenous knowledge. Not only can both stand up to this, but critical analysis is something Elders and traditional knowledge holders have been doing for millennia. Indeed, it is this scrutiny that has led to some, like anthropologist Robin Ridington, suggesting that other scholars refer to Indigenous traditions as “orally curated Indigenous histories.”⁸¹ The fact of the matter is that, when it comes to Indigenous knowledge, it is still perfectly acceptable for an academic to forgo considering it, even with regard to topics in which the absence of assimilated information is detrimental to one’s findings. Among the Tsek’ehne, oral histories of balloon bombs are common knowledge, yet they are completely absent from non-Tsek’ehne histories of the bombs. As a result, it is quite easy for historians like Ross Coen to relocate the Whitewater incident. His *techne* is lacking *mētis*, in this case Indigenous *mētis*, and, as a result, the accuracy of his text suffers. Beyond this, the fact that it is still easy for academics to completely disregard Indigenous knowledge flies in the face of reconciliation since it privileges settler knowledge and presents Indigenous people as at best ignorant and at worst unworthy of consideration.

Perhaps even more problematic is the fact that, because of the Eurocentric nature of the dominant knowledge system, no justification is needed for this omission. The six sources that do not mention Indigenous people in any meaningful way never attempt to justify this oversight.⁸² Thankfully, in recent years this exclusion has started to become less

⁷⁸ Rachel Pawlowicz and Walter Grunden provide a wonderful summary of the infamous Unit 731, which carried out these attacks. See Pawlowicz and Grunden, “Teaching Atrocities: The Holocaust and Unit 731 in the Secondary School Curriculum,” *History Teacher* 48, 2 (2015): 273–78, *passim*. See also Grunden’s *Secret Weapons and World War II*, II, 194–96, *passim*.

⁷⁹ Grunden, *Secret Weapons and World War II*, II.

⁸⁰ While Ridington is not the only individual to talk about how the Indigenous oral histories are mistreated, his article is a good starting point. See Robin Ridington, “Dane-zaa Oral History: Why It’s Not Hearsay,” *BC Studies* 183 (2014): 37–63.

⁸¹ The classic stereotype being the informant who is repeatedly corrected by her or his spouse during an interview. Ridington, “Dane-zaa Oral History,” 43.

⁸² Coen, *Fu-Go*, iii, *passim*; Coen, “If One Should Come Your Way”; East, *Japanese Balloons of World War Two*; Joost, “Western Air Command”; Powles, “Silent Destruction”; Mikesch, *Japan’s World War II Balloon Bomb Attacks*; Moskowitz, “Ill Wind”; Tanglen, “Terror Floated over Montana”; Yates, “Oregon Voices.”

acceptable, and some scholars have started providing an explanation when they fail to take Indigenous knowledge into consideration. Jonathan Peyton, for example, notes in his book *Unbuilt Environments* that, since he relied on archival sources and not on Tahltn oral traditions, he is limited in his ability to speak about the Tahltn.⁸³ Given the topic of the book, this statement is quite reasonable. As Keith Thor Carlson, John Lutz, and David Schaepe have recently stated in their introduction to *Towards a New Ethnohistory*, proper research involving Indigenous peoples is interdisciplinary, self-aware, community-driven, and relational. More important, it is time consuming.⁸⁴ It is this last characteristic that reveals the insidious nature of the academy. While every university in Canada seems committed to some form of reconciliation and/or Indigenization, each is also increasingly committed to student researchers being finished as soon as possible and professional researchers meeting deadlines and/or producing evidence of their research in order to retain their jobs or receive a promotion.

It is this lack of time that makes it hard for researchers to work with Indigenous communities. While there might be a lot of information that is privileged, there is also a lot of common knowledge, which, by its very nature, is easily accessible to anyone who is part of the community. For example, although the Tsek'ehne oral histories of balloon bombs are common knowledge among the Tsek'ehne they are also shared with non-Tsek'ehne. To argue that it is difficult to gain access to them is similar to arguing that it is difficult to gain access to a state archive: it reveals more about the person making the argument than the accessibility of the information. After all, both have regulations regarding who can gain access to them, with certain rules regarding how this is to occur. The biggest difference is the ability of the state to enforce these restrictions. Nevertheless, community-based research need not be a painful process. It can be as easy as requesting permission to talk to people and doing what is asked in return, even if this means finding a new research topic.⁸⁵ To argue otherwise is to create your own restrictions.

The omission of oral traditions was not always common. The first non-Indigenous history of northern British Columbia relied heavily on

⁸³ Jonathan Peyton, *Unbuilt Environments: Tracing Postwar Development in Northwest British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 165–66.

⁸⁴ While the specifics might vary depending on the community, the introduction to Carlson, Lutz, Schaepe, and Naxaxalhts'i's recent edited volume, *Towards a New Ethnohistory*, wonderfully captures best practices. See Keith Carlson, John Lutz, David Schaepe, and Naxaxalhts'i, eds., *Towards a New Ethnohistory: Community-Engaged Scholarship among the People of the River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 26–27, *passim*.

⁸⁵ This statement includes research boards as well as Indigenous communities.

Indigenous oral histories. Written by Oblate missionary Adrien Gabriel Morice, for much of the twentieth century his *History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia* represented a high mark for the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in settler histories.⁸⁶ True reconciliation means making sure Indigenous knowledge is not only acknowledged but also taken seriously, even when it contradicts established settler knowledge. Tsek'ehne oral histories may fly in the face of existing histories of Japanese balloon bombs. And while it is true that the topic does not necessarily represent the most important aspect of Tsek'ehne or Canadian history, the exclusion of these histories from settler histories of the bombs is emblematic of the way Canadian history has been conceptualized and/or produced in the past and, according to scholars like Samantha Cutrara and Victoria Freeman, the present.⁸⁷ Until this situation is changed, and it is no longer possible for historians to simply disregard Indigenous knowledge, claims of reconciliation are merely a rebranding of colonial histories that efface Indigenous histories either directly or through the creation of simulacra.

⁸⁶ Adrien Gabriel Morice, *History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia (Formerly New Caledonia), 1660–1880* (London: John Lane, 1906).

⁸⁷ There are many examples of the general exclusion of Indigenous knowledge in Canadian history. I have cited two notable examples directly relating to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the perceptions of history in Canada's largest city. See Cutrara, "Settler Grammar"; Victoria Freeman, "Toronto Has No History! Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, and Historical Memory in Canada's Largest City," *Urban History Review* 38, no. 2 (2010): 21–35.