

MALI QUELQUELTALKO:

The Writings of a Nineteenth-Century Nlaka'pamux Woman

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THIS ARTICLE WAS INSPIRED by articles written by Mali that were published in the quarterly journal *All Hallows in the West*, which came out of All Hallows in the West, a school for Indigenous girls opened by the Anglican Church in 1884 in Yale, British Columbia.¹ In the Archives of All Hallows Convent in Ditchingham (Norfolk), England, there are two photographs of Mali that can be dated to about 1896 when she was in her early twenties. Each image is reproduced on a four-by-five-inch card with “J.O. Booen, Chilliwack B.C.” printed across the bottom.² On the back of one is written “All Hallows Yale BC, N[R]osie, Matilda, Josephine, Mali”³ (Figure 1). The second photograph shows one of the four girls – Mali, the subject of this article – dressed in a smart Victorian day gown and posed against a rock backdrop, holding a bouquet of leaves (Figure 2).

What do Mali’s writings tell us about what it was like for a Nlaka’pamux girl to navigate her time and place, living along the Quoo.OOy⁴ (Fraser

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¹ Closed in 1920, All Hallows School has been the subject of considerable scholarship. See Jean Barman, “Lost Opportunity: All Hallows School for Indian and White Girls,” *British Columbia Historical News* 22, no. 2 (1989): 6–9; Jean Barman, “Separate and Unequal: Indian and White Girls at All Hallows School, 1884–1920,” in *Indian Education in Canada*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Herbert, and Don McCaskill (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 110–27; Andrea Laforet and Annie York, *Spuzzum: Fraser Canyon Histories, 1808–1939* (Vancouver: UBC Press and Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1998), 161–63; Jennifer Iredale, *Enduring Threads: Ecclesiastical Textiles of St. John the Divine Church, Yale, British Columbia, Canada* (Harrison Mills, BC: Fraser Heritage Society, 2004), 13–21.

² The Chilliwack Museum and Archives has a collection of over three hundred photographs by James Orville Booen, a US photographer who had a studio in Chilliwack between 1895 and 1897.

³ There is little information on Josephine and Matilda; however, research on Rosie (née Oppenheim) is being conducted by her descendant, Bonnie Campbell.

⁴ Quoo.OOy is the Nlaka’pamux name for the river. Personal communication with John Haugen, 14 July 2019.



Figure 1. Mali and friends c. 1896. (Mail is seated on the lower left). With permission of Community of All Hallows (Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, England).



Figure 2. Mali c. 1896. With permission of Community of All Hallows (Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, England).

River)⁵ during the railway construction “rush” and in the face of colonial incursions into Nlaka’pamux territory? Since time immemorial, the Fraser River Canyon was home to the Nlaka’pamux people, who lived and traded with the Halkomelem-speaking people downriver and other First Nations upriver. Their lives changed dramatically following Simon Fraser’s passage through their communities,⁶ as they became subject to the process of colonization – advanced by gold miners, railway builders, missionaries, and immigrant settlers – with their racism and colonial ethnocentricity. The Nlaka’pamux girls who wrote about their homes, community, and traditions for *All Hallows in the West* learned through their education at the school about what was valued by Western European culture. These articles provide a rare first-person perspective on their lives and on how they adapted to the colonial impact and consequent changes to Nlaka’pamux society and culture. New contributions to our knowledge and understanding of British Columbia can be found by following the faint trail of one girl – Mali Quelqueltalko – who wrote for *All Hallows in the West*.

Mali has left a small but significant legacy of published articles about her life and her people at the turn of the twentieth century. This is rich material, and it gives us insight into the perspective of a young Indigenous woman who lived during a tumultuous period in BC history. Completely unknown today, she was nonetheless one of the first women writers, if not the first Indigenous female writer, published in British Columbia.⁷ Her collection of writings deserves attention not only for its first-person

⁵ Contested by anthropologists, historians, present-day First Nations, and their Indigenous antecedents, the name by which the river is now known originated with Simon Fraser’s 1808 exploration. The Halq’eméylem name for the river is *Sto:lo* – also the name by which the Halq’eméylem-speaking peoples of the Fraser Valley and Lower Fraser Canyon identify (Stó:lō, or River People). In the Dakelh (Carrier) language, the river is known as Lhtakoh (Where Three Rivers Meet); in Tsilhqot’in (Chilcotin) it is known as ?Elhdachogh? Yeqox (Sturgeon River).

⁶ Wendy Wickwire, “To See Ourselves as the Other’s Other: Nlaka’pamux Contact Narratives,” *Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 1 (1994): 1–20.

⁷ Other published female writers of Indigenous ancestry who lived in and wrote about British Columbia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include Martha Douglas Harris, Pauline Johnson, and Okanagan-born Christine Quintasket. Harris was the daughter of James Douglas and Amelia Douglas. Amelia was half-Cree, and her stories appear in Martha’s *History and Folklore of the Cowichan Indians* (1901). Johnson, daughter of a Mohawk chief and an Englishwoman, was well known for her writing and her public speaking, and spent the last years of her life in Vancouver, writing *Legends of Vancouver* (1911). Christine Quintasket, Mourning Dove, was a member of the Colville Confederated Tribes and was of both Okanagan and Sinixt descent. See Jay Miller, *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), xx and xxi. Another Nlaka’pamux woman, Lily Blatchford, was a translator for the McKenna-McBride Commission in 1913. Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*, 187.

perspective on Nlaka'pamux culture but also as an Indigenous narrative that reflects on the impact of colonialism on the Nlaka'pamux world. Mali understood that her audience did not respect her culture and looked at her and her world through an ethnocentric lens premised on white supremacy and racism. Nonetheless, she asked her readers – Anglo and Anglican – to learn to understand and respect her culture and people.

As historians Jean Barman, Jan Hare, and Susan Neylan point out, the voices of Aboriginal people have long been silent in the historical record, and only by a close reading of archival records have historians revealed “the ways they understood their own reality, dealt with cultural intrusions and constructed their own world.”⁸ Mali's articles, besides being compelling as early published Indigenous writing, provide a first-person voice through which she expresses an understanding of her own reality. This involves her addressing and adapting to cultural intrusions as she constructs her world. In one article – about a community gathering in Spuzzum – she persuasively argues for her community and the Indigenous way of life. It can be read as a call for Indigenous rights and as a defence of Indigenous culture.

Mali was born around 1875 in Spuzzum, some sixteen kilometres north of Yale,⁹ into an important Nlaka'pamux family. She was the daughter of Xixne? (Chief James Paul, Paul Heena)¹⁰ and skilled basket weaver Kaleshe (Susan Paul).¹¹ Mali's father succeeded his grandfather Kowpelst as chief in an election on 14 January 1896.¹² He remained chief until his death in 1926 and was succeeded by his son, Mali's half-brother. Mali's childhood was spent in the Nlaka'pamux community on the south side of Spuzzum Creek with her extended family – parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins – joining relatives up and down the river for harvesting and socializing, engaging in such activities as berry picking, fishing, salmon-drying, trading, and attending social gatherings.¹³ The older generation of Nlaka'pamux still lived in s?istkn,¹⁴ pit houses dug into

⁸ Jean Barman and Jan Hare, *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 254.

⁹ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Sixth Census of Canada, 1921, Ottawa; LAC, RG 31, series 203, Statistics Canada Fonds, fol. 14; Census Place: Dewdney, Fraser Valley, British Columbia, p. 11.

¹⁰ Irene Bjerky, “James Paul of Spuzzum, 1834–1932, Xixne?,” in “Colourful Characters in Historic Yale,” Community Memories, Virtual Museum of Canada. http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_stories/pm_v2.php?id=story_line&lg=English&fl=0&cx=00000517&sl=3978&pos=1&pf=1.

¹¹ Ibid., “Susan Paul (Kalalshe), 1847–1931.”

¹² Mali's paternal great-grandfather was James Kowpelst, identified as “chief” in the 1881 census.

¹³ Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*, 180.

¹⁴ Ibid., 24–25.

the ground. The languages Mali would have heard as a child included Nlaka'pamux, Halkomelem, and Chinook.

Nlaka'pamux villages were interconnected through kinship. In the early nineteenth century, Spuzzum territory extended well beyond the winter village at the mouth of Spuzzum Creek to include fishing stations, meadows where roots were gathered, berry grounds, trout-fishing pools, campsites, and work sites for making tools and equipment that ranged in size from knife blades to canoes. The use and occupation of this territory extended to remote places in the mountains where pubescent children and adults went to learn how to communicate with supernatural beings and to benefit from their power. Although the Nlaka'pamux economy expanded in the nineteenth century to include farming, gold panning, and various kinds of work for cash, the fishing sites along the river and the mountain areas around Spuzzum remained central to their economy. Nlaka'pamux territory offered abundant resources for living well, but to do so required the transmission and continuity of an intimate knowledge of the entire territory, no matter the distance from village sites. There was no concept of "wilderness," and important places all had names, whether villages, fishing stations, summer camps, mountain ridges and passages, berry-gathering areas, or even resting places along a trail.¹⁵

Mali was born into a period of turmoil over land rights and cultural survival for the Nlaka'pamux. Just five years before she was born, the reserve at Spuzzum was surveyed (7–9 July 1870) by the magistrate at Yale, Peter O'Reilly, under the direction of the chief commissioner of lands, Joseph Trutch. Laforet and York point out that the reserve system ignored the economic basis of Nlaka'pamux land use and denied them access to the resources upon which they relied to live.¹⁶ In July 1879, when Mali was four, "more than a 1000 Nlaka'pamux gathered in Lytton, with 1500 horses," to meet with Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, who was working for the Indian Land Commission. The Nlaka'pamux meeting resulted in the first Nlaka'pamux elected chief and council, whose rules one historian describes as "a remarkable concoction of Victorian propriety, Canadian paternalism, and indigenous tradition."¹⁷ The constant incursion of colonial control and governance challenged most aspects of Nlaka'pamux

¹⁵ Ibid., 34.

¹⁶ Ibid., 173–74.

¹⁷ Douglas Harris, "The Nlha'kpmx Meeting at Lytton, 1879, and the Rule of Law," *BC Studies* 108 (Winter 1995/96): 24.



Figure 3. Indian Reserve Commissioners' Camp in Spuzzum, n.d. *Source:* Image E-01929 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum and Archives.

life,¹⁸ and it confined the people to reserves.¹⁹ Mali's father, James Paul Xixne?, and her great-grandfather, Kowpelst, hereditary and then elected chiefs for Spuzzum, made it their life's work to "achieve recognition and resolution on their claims to the land."²⁰ This was Mali's childhood, learning from conversations and experience the Nlaka'pamux values, worldview, and way of life that her family members were actively working to protect from colonial destruction.

Adele Perry,²¹ in her study of the Douglas-Connolly family, points out that historians have found families a useful frame for putting women into the practice of history. Historians and anthropologists recognize

¹⁸ See Sarah Pike, "Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, BC Indian Reserve Commissioner (1876–1880) and the Humanitarian Civilizing of Indigenous People." LL.M. thesis, University of British Columbia, 2018.

¹⁹ Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*. The authors note that the Nlaka'pamux concept of governance and leadership was overlaid by the complementary systems of the colonial government and church (180–82).

²⁰ Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*, 185.

²¹ Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth Century Imperial World* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 257.

kinship as important to understanding the complex reasons and complicated ties that bind and bend people and communities and shape our history. Mali came from a large and important Spuzzum family whose members were leaders who worked to attain Indigenous rights and title and who made conscious changes to important aspects of their lives. For example, they converted to Anglicanism largely in order to be heard in the colonial world. From within this politically active and culturally traditional context and childhood, Mali was enrolled in All Hallows in the West in Yale in June of 1885. She was eleven years old. In an 1899 article published in *All Hallows in the West* by “Katherine Aged 14,” the author writes about the origins of her school and refers to her schoolmate Mali:

The Sisters came out in the year 1884, three of them from England²²... When they [came] out they used to live at the Passnage [*sic*], and they used to have their classes at the Indian Church, and many people use[d] to come ... Christian and Alice were the girls to come to the School and Mali was the second. There never used to be a White School then, now there is, great many of them do come to this School too, because it is the best School in the whole of British Columbia.²³

Laforet and York point out that “during the 1870’s it became clear that the Nlaka’pamux saw a direct connection between their adoption of Christianity and resolution of their claims to the land.”²⁴ Believing that becoming Anglican would help with their land claims, Spuzzum and other Nlaka’pamux people began joining the church in the 1870s, and by 1871 there was an Anglican church in Spuzzum. Mali’s father and mother, Xixne? and Kalalshe, were confirmed as Anglicans in September 1877, at which time they adopted the Anglican names of James and Susan Paul.²⁵ In 1884, the *Churchman’s Gazette* reported that the “Indians in Yale had petitioned for the establishment of a school for their children,” one of these people was James Paul, and the petition led to the establishment of All Hallows in the West in Yale.²⁶ (Figure 4).

Two of the nine pupils attending the school in 1885 were from Spuzzum, and Annie York recalled that James Paul Xixne?’s daughter, Mali, was

²² “Three members of the Community of All Hallows Ditchingham Sisters, Amy, Alice and Elizabeth arrived in the Diocese last month and have been established in the Mission House Yale; where they will conduct a School for Indian Girls.” See *Churchman’s Gazette*, November 1884, n.p.

²³ Katherine was one of the Indigenous students of the All Hallows Mission. See *All Hallows in the West* 1, no. 2 (Michaelmas Tide, 1899): 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 115–16.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁶ Peake, *The Anglican Church in Canada* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1959), 73.



Figure 4. All Hallows School, formerly Brookleigh in Yale BC. Watercolor painted in 1891 by teacher Althea Moody. With permission of Community of All Hallows (Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, England).

one of them. In time, all of James Paul Xixne?’s daughters attended All Hallows, as well as the two older daughters of Amelia York, Rhoda Urquhart and Clara Clare, and James Paul’s granddaughter, Agnes (?imnmetk^{wu}).²⁷

Laforet and York note the dilemma that Xixne? and Kalalshe must have faced when making the decision to send their daughters to board with the Sisters at All Hallows in the West: “The loss of control over education, beginning within a decade of the arrival of settlers, brought one of the most fracturing challenges to Spuzzum families. Before the 1860s, and for some time after, instruction was in large part the responsibility of the grandparents, including great-aunts and great-uncles.”²⁸

As one of the first students enrolled in the school, Mali was part of the first generation of Nlaka’pamux children to be educated in a boarding school, which meant that she was separated from her family, instructed in an English-speaking curriculum (which included reading, writing, and arithmetic), and taught “modern” household skills to prepare her

²⁷ Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*, 161.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.



Figure 5. The entrance to the Fraser Canyon showing the town of Yale. Watercolor painted in 1891 by teacher Althea Moody. With permission of Community of All Hallows. (Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, England).

for domestic employment.²⁹ Mali's traditional Nlaka'pamux education began to be overlain by a Western European Christian education and the values that went with it.³⁰ However, her summer visits home to Spuzzum, sixteen kilometres upriver, meant that she continued to participate in and receive Nlaka'pamux teachings.³¹

In the late nineteenth century, Yale was an established town defined by its location at a bend in the Fraser River. A Hudson's Bay Company fort, then a gold rush community, a transportation hub, and service town, by the time Mali arrived to attend All Hallows in 1885, Yale was inhabited almost entirely by men from all parts of the world who were there to build a railway. Historian Wendy Wickwire writes: "A flood of human greed and desire swept up the Fraser Canyon with the miners, invading the hitherto quiet, isolated river terrace homes of the Nlaka'pamux. Women

²⁹ *All Hallows in the West, Michaelmas Number* (1901): 47. The school magazine notes that, at the Indian School Closing in 1901, prizes were given for excellence in the domestic subjects of needlework, housework, bread-making, laundry-work, and early rising along with writing, reading, and scripture prizes. See also Barman, "Separate and Unequal."

³⁰ One exception to this was that All Hallows in the West included coiled cedar root basketry in its curriculum.

³¹ Laforet and York, *Spuzzum: Fraser Canyon*, 163.



Figure 6. All Hallows School (formerly Brookleigh) in Yale BC with Mission School students and staff, showing Mali in centre. c 1886. With permission of Community of All Hallows (Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, England).

and girls were quick and easy targets.”³² Wickwire goes on to chronicle the impact of the colonial invasion of the Nlaka’pamux: “Rape, murder, and plunder were undoubtedly wide-spread but they were but a prelude to an even more horrific fate. At the peak of the goldrush, a massive smallpox epidemic struck British Columbia ... Because there was no systematic record-keeping at the time, the full story of the losses will never be known.”³³ It was into this chaotic environment that three nuns from Ditchingham, England, arrived to set up their Anglican mission school for Indigenous girls in the small parsonage next to the Church of St. John the Divine in Yale. It was in the parsonage that Mali first attended All Hallows in the West. By 1890, the Sisters and their students had moved into the quaintly named “Brookside,” former home of CPR contractor Andrew Onderdonk. In front of Brookside ran “the new highway to the Orient,” as the railway line was named by artist Althea Moody,³⁴ a teacher at the school.

³² Wendy Wickwire, *At the Bridge: James Teit and an Anthropology of Belonging* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019), 38–39.

³³ *Ibid.*, 39–40.

³⁴ Jennifer Iredale, “Across the Bright Continent: Althea Moody, Missionary and Artist in Western Canada,” *Ormsby Review* 194 (October 2016), <https://bcbooklook.com/2016/10/04/althea-moody/>.



Figure 7. All Hallows Indian School c. 1890. Mali upper right behind Sister Margaret. With permission of Community of All Hallows (Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, England).

Between 1884 and 1899, the Sisters sent student letters to be published in *East and West*, the *Churchman's Gazette*, and *Work for the Far West*,³⁵ all of which were intended to promote the Anglican mission work in British Columbia and to solicit donations to support the school. The school quarterly journal, *All Hallows in the West*, was published between 1899 and 1910 and included a summary of the curriculum as well as letters and occasional articles written by the students.³⁶

Mali was the first of the All Hallows students to have her writing published. Sister Amy, the Sister Superior at All Hallows in the West, sent the letter to the editors noting that “Mali is nearly sixteen years old. She has been with us four years and a half.” Her first piece was published in 1890 under the name Mali Quelqueltalko, the surname being a Nlaka’pamux female name.³⁷ We may never know if using

³⁵ *Work for the Far West, 1898–1914* (Tewksbury, Gloucestershire, England). This was a quarterly magazine published on behalf of the Diocese of New Westminster Missionary Association by Mowbray’s in Oxford.

³⁶ Twenty-eight of the *All Hallows in the West* issues can be found at Canadiana online, http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/00cihm.8_04504. Copies can also be found in the holdings of the archives at the museum in Yale; at All Hallows, Ditchingham, England; and at the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster Archives (Vancouver).

³⁷ Quelqueltalko, or Quelqueltalco, is a Nlaka’pamux name, “ko” [kwu] being a common suffix meaning “water,” in the case of a woman’s name. A transcript of the “All Hallows Register” (Bjerky) notes Quilquiltatco as a last name for two students, Molly (December 1891) and Mary Anne (September 1894). This could be Mali and her sister Annie Marion Dodd.

Quelqueltalko was a personal choice on her part, but by doing so she identified as Nlaka'pamux and set the scene for her future work as an ambassador and activist for her people.

December 18, 1890. I think the most interesting thing to us just now is the Indians' Christmas-tree. The Sisters did not know what to do for the Indians this Christmas; they had no woolen scarves or pretty handkerchiefs ... Then Sister Superior said on Sunday, "We will light the tree with Chinese lanterns, and hang on it buns and jam tarts, and tin mugs, and brew a can of hot coffee, and stand it underneath the tree." Then everyone laughed and thought it would be nice about the coffee and tarts, but not to put them on the tree ... Now I have thought of another thing that is interesting. There are two old Indian men here, and the white people think they are exactly alike, but they are no relation to each other. Three years ago, they were baptized, and George, the Indian interpreter, and one of the Sisters were witnesses. The old men were called by new names; one was Thomas and one was David. When they came out of the Church, somehow, they got mixed up, and Sister and George did not agree which was Thomas and which was David. The old men laughed so; they don't know anything about English names, but they are glad to be Christians. Now Sister has made two nice warm caps for them and she says she wants Thomas to have the one with fur and David one with red wool; but she says as they always get mixed up she will put "David" on the fur, and "Thomas" on the wool cap, and then she is sure the right old men will get them.

Mali Quelqueltalko.³⁸

In this first article, which she wrote at age sixteen, only four years after she started learning English and being immersed in the Anglo-Christian school environment, Mali is already able to write to please her teachers. Yet she subtly pokes fun at the Sister Superior for being unable to recognize differences between Indigenous people. Mali's letter invites the reader to laugh along with the men and their disregard for the Christian and English names that had been imposed on them. Though she interprets the joke for her Anglo readers, she is writing from an Indigenous perspective, using humour "as a comic outlet to

Usually the register would record the students' last names as the father's Indigenous first name or anglicized last name. In this case, Mali would have been known as Mali Xixne? or Mali Paul. The All Hallows in the West Register lists her as "Mali Paul, Date started, June 1885." Personal communication 29 January – 2 February 2019 with John Haugen and Andrea Laforet.

³⁸ *East and West*, [Magazine of the Community of All Hallows, 1886–1919. Now in the Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, England] January 1891, 5.

confront the incursions and stupidities of earnest missionaries.”³⁹ The reader is as amused as Mali at how the two old men make the nun look foolish. Although she has adopted and adapted to colonial ways, in this little article Mali remains centred in her Indigenous identity. This is less evident in some of the articles she wrote later, when she was living and working as a servant in Vancouver.

As one of the first graduates of All Hallows in the West, Mali exemplified the success of the school in training its students for employment as “domestics.” By 1897, Mali had left the school to work for the family of a Dr. Underhill in Vancouver.⁴⁰ One of her schoolmates writes about being shown around Vancouver by Mali: “On Wednesday afternoon we went to Vancouver, on the tram. I met Mali there, both Mali and Rose are nurse-maids now. I had my tea at Mrs. Underhill’s ... Mali wanted to show me the monkeys at Stanley Park, but we could not go. Katherine.”⁴¹ Mali often wrote to her schoolmates and sisters telling of her activities, including attending plays and recitations, and some of these letters were published in *All Hallows in the West*:

I meant to have written to you ages ago to tell you all about the first play I ever went to at the Vancouver Opera House. The play was “Faust.” I dare say you have heard about it. It was wonderful, and the last scene was very good and lovely. The scene in “Brocken” was fearful and awful, the stage was simply in flames and fire, and to see the Devil and all the horrible things ... I went to hear Mr. Hannibal Williams of New York recite. The piece was of “Henry iv in 5 parts.” He recited them well. I went the next evening to hear Mrs. H. Williams recite “As you like it.” She said her piece very good too ... I took my Shakespeare with me and was glad I did. Mrs. Underhill kindly gave us our tickets, so it didn’t cost us a cent to go. Now my dear little Sister, Good night, lots of love. Mali.⁴²

Mali’s review of the entertainments she attended in Vancouver demonstrates a remarkable interest and understanding of Western literature. Her education at All Hallows in the West had given her the context and understanding to enjoy both Goethe and Shakespeare – her worldview

³⁹ Wickwire, *At the Bridge*, 281.

⁴⁰ According to the school publication, “Mali, after two years of faithful service at Dr. Underhill’s, came back to visit the old School for a few days, and then went on to the Indian ranche at Spuzzum to gladden her old parents eyes and hearts for a month.” See *All Hallows in the West* 1, no. 2 (Michaelmas Tide, 1899): 25.

⁴¹ *All Hallows in the West* 1, no. 3 (Christmastide, 1899): 46–47.

⁴² *All Hallows in the West* 1, no. 1 (Ascensiontide, 1899): 13–14. There is also an earlier reference to a \$9.50 contribution that Mali made to the School Building Fund.

appears to have become more Westernized. But things changed in her life yet again.

By 1900, Mali was back in Yale where she returned to live and work with the Sisters at All Hallows in the West.⁴³ For the winter of 1900–01, she joined the domestic staff at her alma mater.⁴⁴

In December 1900, she interpreted the address given by the old chief known to the nuns as “Blind Tom” to those gathered for the Christmas party in the large schoolroom at All Hallows. She interpreted his words this way:

My friends: – This is a great night for us and for our Sisters. They are ours, they came from a great distance a great many years ago, years when I could see their faces as well as hear their voices, to live amongst us, to teach us, to help us to bring up our children, and to make good music for us in our hearts and with our tongues. They left their own land and their own people, and though our land is good with its swift rivers and its great mountains, what is the land without the people [kindred]? But our Sisters never looked back, they came to us and with us they stayed.⁴⁵

One of the nuns observed that, “although no feeble translation can give the melody of that eloquent outpouring – in the case of old Tom, a poem to eye and ear alike, as the blind chief stood in the midst of us, with his beautiful white face and long white hair ... his love a rich gift – his gratitude princely. What more words are needed? The chiefs are speaking for themselves and their ‘families.’”⁴⁶

The depth of respect that the Sisters at All Hallows in the West had for Mali makes it evident how well she learned to be of service to them: “I must not omit a word of praise for Mali, she has been such a helpful, faithful little mission worker for the past twelve months. Our most reliable interpreter, ready to serve on all occasions, so quiet and modest, yet self-possessed and capable, she moved among her own people on Tuesday afternoon, a perfect little lady in her own rank of life, and we could not help noticing with how much respect they all treated her.”⁴⁷ Because Mali could translate from Nlaka’pamux to English, she could

⁴³ *All Hallows in the West* 2, no. 1 (Ascensiontide, 1900): 3, “Mali spent two weeks with us bringing her baby-charge Enid Underhill with her.”

⁴⁴ *All Hallows in the West* 3, no. 3 (Christmastide, 1901): 64, “Mali is also added to our domestic staff this winter.”

⁴⁵ *All Hallows in the West* 3, no. 1 (Ascensiontide, 1901): 21–22.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 310.



Figure 8. “Old Pupils of All Hallows’ School, Yale, BC, Now in Domestic Service” (Mali seated on left). From the Dept. of Indian Affairs Annual Report, 1902.

act as a cultural translator, bridging between her people and the Sisters at the school and, by extension, between her people and colonial society.

Then, in the Christmas edition of *All Hallows in the West*, Mali writes that she has returned to live with her community in the Fraser Canyon. Barman writes that, “increasingly, pupils’ aspirations were directed homeward rather than toward the larger society.”⁴⁸ This would have been a crucial decision in her life – to return to her home community and to the traditional way of life that such a move would entail. All Hallows

⁴⁸ Barman, “Separate and Unequal,” 125.

had trained her for work as a domestic for well-to-do colonial households – something Mali had successfully undertaken for two years. She then spent a year doing mission work at her school; but now, at twenty-five, she chose to return to her family and community in Spuzzum.

By 1900, the members of the Nlaka'pamux community had failed to see the resolution of their land claims – despite their conversion to Christianity and their willingness to work with government. Mali's father, Chief James Paul,⁴⁹ was very concerned with matters of land claims and fishing rights. He provided frequent testimony,⁵⁰ worked with other chiefs, and provided ethnographic information to anthropologist James Teit as a means of petitioning the government of the time.⁵¹ Even today, these matters have yet to be resolved. Mali would have been aware of her father's activities when she chose to return to her Nlaka'pamux community.

Historian Susan Neylan has pointed out that “the mission environment provided Native women with new opportunities to exercise power and influence that were challenged or restricted in other social milieux.”⁵² Schooling at All Hallows had taught Mali to speak, read, and write in English, and the school journal gave her the opportunity to be heard not only in British Columbia but also in England. In an article published in *All Hallows in the West* in 1900, she presents insights into Nlaka'pamux cultural traditions from the perspective of a knowledgeable and Western-educated Nlaka'pamux woman fully aware of the contrasting value systems of the Anglican missionizing audience for whom she is writing. She uses the power of the written word with the intent of creating understanding, appreciation, and respect for Nlaka'pamux culture. It is an autobiographical essay that illuminates her culture. But beyond that it may be read as the voice of an Indigenous woman speaking out on behalf of Indigenous culture and rights.

⁴⁹ Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*, 180: “[James Paul Xixne?] succeeded his grandfather, possibly Kowpelst, in an election held on 14 January 1896. DIA reports indicate that Paul, as he was known, was elected in 1895 [*sic*] for life.”

⁵⁰ Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*, 100, 180–81.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 186. According to the authors, “James Paul Xixne’s name appears as a signatory (as Paul Hihena) to three of the several representations made by interior chiefs in the early twentieth century as part of a concerted effort to bring their claims to land to the attention of British Columbia, Canada and Britain.” See also Robert Galois, “The Indian Rights Association, Native Protest Activity, and the ‘Land Question’ in British Columbia, 1903–1916,” *Native Studies Review* 8, no. 2 (1992): 1–34; and Wendy Wickwire, “‘We Shall Drink from the Stream and So Shall You’: James A. Teit and Native Resistance in British Columbia, 1908–22,” *Canadian Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (1998): 199–236.

⁵² Susan Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 106.

After an absence of many years, I went back to live among my people for a few months, and I saw again some of their customs which must appear to white people as very strange, and sometimes very wrong – but I think it is because they do not understand.

The Potlatch is always one of our chief affairs. It is our way of paying for the burial of our dead. The Indians would not think it honoring the dead, just to pay in money the people who help to bury their dead, just the same as they pay the people who build their house – that is a common way, but to pay for a funeral they have to save for years, and the workers are willing to wait for long time, years and years, to be paid in what we think the right way. I think you would call it etiquette, and the Indians are very particular about it.

The Potlatch and the Indian dance always go together, and they are always held about the fall of the year, I don't know exactly the reason why, may be because it is for the dead, but the Indians would never think of having the Yale Indian dance any other time than near winter time or at the first snow-fall.

I will try and tell you in a few words about the Indian dance. It is not fun like the white peoples' dance, it is always rather mournful and makes you feel inclined to cry. The dance I went to this Fall was given by Chief Sam. It was a big affair, but he had his son Peter and his daughter Mary to help him. He had many friends from North Bend and Spuzzum, and all the Yale people, and some from the Lower Fraser too.

The guests were all comfortably settled in old Tom's big house. Poor Tom can no longer see. It is astonishing how he went about talking to his dear "tillicums,"⁵³ and knowing almost everyone around him. So, Tom entertained them until supper time. Chief Sam would often come in and tell his guests, in a long speech, how glad he was to see them, and thank them for coming, because he knew they had come a long way from their homes to comfort him. You see it was something like a funeral feast, although Chief Sam's wife died nearly nine years ago. The funny part was that Sam could only talk in Yale Indian, and a great many of his friends were Thompson and they could not understand but they knew he meant something kind.

⁵³ "Tillicum" is a Chinook Jargon word for friend, adopted by way of trade relations.

When supper was over the dance began, first some planks were put around the room in front of the people who were sitting on the ground, and then small sticks were given to them, there was no kind of music but every one just beat time, who knew how, to the dance, and every one who could sing the dancer's song joined in it, but if any one made a mistake in beating time, that offended the dancers. The first one who danced at this party was an old woman, and she began moving slowly waving her arms about to the time of the beating sticks, and the singing and all was so mournful, then it got a little louder and faster, and then louder and faster still, but altogether in time, singing, beating and dancing. When the old woman got tired, someone else began, and so on till all had their turn. I do not mean everyone danced, only those who knew how, and they were mostly the very old people. Old Tom, blind as he is, danced as good as ever, better even than the others. One man danced too much, he danced until he could not stand, he was like a naughty child, wanting sweets and not knowing when he had had enough, but no one else did that I am glad to say. It was very late when everyone went to sleep. The next day there was nothing done, but dancing and singing and beating time began in the evening.

And it was that second evening, Chief Sam and his sons piled blankets, and Indian-made blankets in a heap in the middle of the room, and the real business of the potlatch began. All those who had helped to bury Sam's wife, and his brother's wife and child had to receive first. Tom made a speech explaining everything, then one by one each blanket was lifted up and given to the person it was intended for, after Sam's *debt* was paid, what was left was given away to other people. Sam's potlatch was not a very grand one, because he is an old man and poor, but everyone got something, either in money or strips of Indian-made blanket, no guest went away, empty-handed and he was glad, he said, that nothing went wrong, no gambling or drinking until they fell ill.

Though the dancing and the song is so sad it always makes the people cry, and sometimes become hysterical, it is not that the dance is wrong, but the people have to learn self-control.

Formerly the Indians used to go and dig up their dead and wrap them round in new blankets to keep them warm, but now the Government does not let them do like that, and being Christians, they begin to

understand slowly, that they must leave their dead undisturbed, and in God's care until Resurrection Day.

Potlatch is an old custom and I do not think the Indians will ever give it up; but it is changing in some ways, and people are not so extravagant as they used to be in giving them. It is a very solemn kind of meeting of the living in memory of the dead.

There is some one at home who is thinking of having a small potlatch for his little son, who died a long time ago. I think if some of our friends, I mean our real white friends like the Sisters and Miss Moody would come, they would see for themselves; you cannot understand unless you see, and the Indians would be so glad, and there would be a chance to teach them more to be good Indians and Christians too, and not what they often feel, that to be Christians they must leave off being Indians and try to be like white people, giving up even what is harmless in their old customs.

Mali.⁵⁴

There is a quiet boldness here. Although Mali had by then internalized Christianity, her position was that if “our real white friends” understood the importance of a custom such as the potlatch, then her people would not be subject to the conflict of being either a “good Indian” or a “good Christian.” They could be both. At the time Mali's article was published, the potlatch was illegal in Canada. It had been made illegal in 1885 through an amendment to the Indian Act – an amendment that was not repealed until 1951. First Nations saw this law as an instrument of oppression, promoting intolerance and perpetuating injustice.⁵⁵

In Mali's article one can hear an echo of Kwakwaka'wakw woman Jane Cook, who “made strong statements about the ‘awful results’ of colonialism and the missionary condemnation” of Indigenous beliefs, and about the white man's misunderstanding of Indigenous people.⁵⁶ In her article Mali is making a case for Indigenous culture and standing up for Indigenous rights.

Mali made other efforts to act as an ambassador for her culture – for example, in her work with Charles Hill-Tout, who consulted her in his

⁵⁴ *All Hallows in the West* 2, no. 3 (Christmastide, 1900): 66–67.

⁵⁵ Further reading: Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, *An Iron Hand upon the People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre).

⁵⁶ Leslie Robertson and the Kwagu'l Gixsam Clan, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 8.

study of Nlaka'pamux culture. He credits her in his "linguistic notes on the Lower N'tlaka'pamukQ," writing: "I am largely indebted to an educated young woman named Ma'li, who was for many years at the mission school at Yale, for my knowledge of the grammar and structure of Thompson. She is a member of the Lower N'tlaka'pamuQ."⁵⁷ Mali's work with Hill-Tout may be understood as furthering her work towards improving understanding between the cultures, just as may her articles in *All Hallows in the West*.

Throughout the years that *All Hallows in the West* was published, Mali's name appears in the regular "letters from children of the Indian School." In August of 1902, a student by the name of Mandy writes that she and Katie arrived safely at St. George's School after seeing "Mali and others at North Bend."⁵⁸ Then, in 1911, "News of Old Girls" contains references to many of the graduates of the Indian school, including Mali: "Mali we saw at Lytton last autumn, where she was staying with Sarah [Mrs. F. Seward] for a change after coming out of the hospital where she had rheumatic fever very badly."⁵⁹

On 29 December 1910, Mali married George McInnes at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Mission, British Columbia.⁶⁰ George McInnes worked as a patrolman on the Canadian National Railways;⁶¹ his family lived in the Harrison River area, perhaps at Leq'a:mel Reserve.⁶² In 1912, Mali gave birth to a daughter, Margaret.⁶³ Census records indicate the family also included a boy – William, born in 1907 – who may have been either George's brother or his son.⁶⁴ The family lived on a Spuzzum reserve called Stout 8, in the Fraser Canyon located south of Spuzzum, where Mali and her family played an active role in the Anglican church in Spuzzum as well as in upholding Nlaka'pamux traditions and practices.

⁵⁷ Charles Hill-Tout, "Appendix II: Notes on the N'tlaka'pamuQ of British Columbia, a Branch of the Great Salish Stock of North America," in *Report of the Sixty-Ninth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science held at Dover in September 1899*, Appendix II (London: John Murray, 1900), 518.

⁵⁸ Mandy writes that "Katie is going to work in the kitchen, and I am to do the sweeping and dusting." *All Hallows in the West* 4, no. 2 (Michaelmastide, 1902): 147–18.

⁵⁹ *All Hallows in the West*, *Indian School Number* (Easter, 1911): 29.

⁶⁰ George McInnes was born in 1885, the son of a Scots farmer John Allen McInnes and an Indigenous mother Mary Sia'molawut. He was Roman Catholic and his name is listed in the records for St. Mary's Residential School, Mission. Ancestry.com.

⁶¹ Personal communication with Marion Dixon, 3 September 2018, Ross Road, Hope, British Columbia.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 12 September 2018.

⁶³ LAC, Sixth Census of Canada, 1921, Ottawa; LAC, RG 31, series 2013, Statistics Canada Fonds, fol. 14; Census Place: Dewdney, Fraser Valley, British Columbia, p. 11.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

In the same year Mali was married, Annie York recalled a winter dance held in nearby Spuzzum and hosted by Mali's father James Paul Xixne?. This was an event at which Mali's family would have played a major role in gathering and preparing food and making sure the guests were well taken care of. Annie York's information corresponds with what Mali wrote many years earlier in her *All Hallows in the West* article, although, unlike Mali, she does not use it to put forward a case for the preservation of her culture. York writes as follows:

People came from as far as North Bend, seventeen miles upriver, and Chilliwack, sixty miles or more downriver. In preparation Xixne?'s family got together long goat-wool blankets to serve as seats and ultimately as gifts for the guests and long woven mats to serve as a place to put the food for the feast. In the room where the dancing was to take place, the men and women who sang sat at one side, beating time with hardwood sticks on long logs decorated with diamond-shaped designs ... When the dancing was over, food was served. Outside the house where the dance was held, there was a large fire where people cooked meat and fish. The hosts and their relatives also provided dried huckleberries, dried eulachon, dried fish eggs, dried shrimp ... crackers, and bread ... Food was placed in large dugout wooden dishes with carved figures at each end. The food was placed on a long mat, and many of the guests sat on folded blankets on the floor, and people of particularly high rank were assigned places at the table. The person who supervised the cooking and distribution of the food was a woman from upcountry whose husband had come ... as a guest. Each guest brought a cup and a container for taking home the food given away at the end of the feast.⁶⁵

After her marriage and the birth of her children, Mali disappears from the written record. She lived a long life in the Fraser Canyon, participating in major family events, following the annual Nlaka'pamux food-harvesting cycles, which included gathering berries and drying fish to supplement the railway income George brought home. Her household was well ordered and a busy meeting place for friends and relatives.

Mali's relative Annie York writes about Nlaka'pamux fishing traditions: "The first salmon, you can't eat that alone. Divide it among all the people. Have a feast. The chief says the prayer. Chief Paul used to do it. Did that until 1940 ... Also do it with deer, berries. If I go picking

⁶⁵ Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*, 156–57.

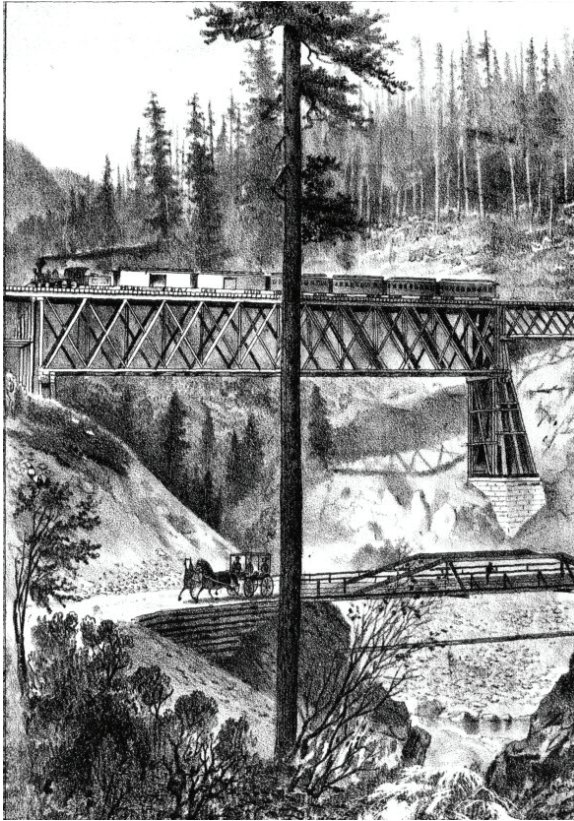


Figure 9. Canadian Pacific Railway – “Across from Spuzzum.” Source: Wikimedia.org. Original from the February 1884 edition of *West Shore*.

huckleberries. I have to give the first berries to an old man or an old woman.”⁶⁶

From Jane, another All Hallows student, we learn about berry picking:

I was up the mountain about three weeks ago. There were seven of us went up. At 3 o'clock in the morning we got up, then got our breakfast and we were waiting for it to get light till about half past four, then we started off ... We reached the top of the mountain after 12 o'clock in the day ... We did not find many berries, not much grow this year. We came down next morning.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Recorded in Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*, 152–53.

⁶⁷ *All Hallows in the West* 3, no. 3 (Christmastide, 1901): 79.

Annie York also remembered that:

At Christmas time Aunt Mali [Chief Paul's daughter] would put cedar boughs around the windows and a Christmas tree in the corners ... And these ladies, Paul's daughters, all went to the church before Sunday evening. They prepared the church, had the little church clean for Sunday. And Paul's nephews and nieces would all come and bring refreshments on a Sunday – some bread, doughnuts, cakes and fruit, because he had a table twice as big as our table.⁶⁸

Although we have no record that Mali was a basket maker, her mother and siblings were well known and accomplished basket makers: collecting and preparing cedar roots for basketry would have been part of life in Spuzzum and at Stout. Mali's sisters – Annie (Marion Dodd), Rosalie, Maria, and Sarah – learned basket making from their mother Susan Kaleshe, and basketry was part of the curriculum at All Hallows in the West. A fine basket in the All Hallows Archives in England has designs very similar to those on Susan Paul's baskets at the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa.⁶⁹

Basket maker Marion Dixon recalled knowing Mali when she lived on the Stout reserve in the mid-1950s, when Marion was in her early teens.⁷⁰ Mali would have been close to eighty at that time. As Marion recalls:

Mali was a nice lady. She knitted. I met her when I was 14 in Stout. She taught me how to salt meat. I knew how to dry meat on sticks outside and how to can meat. My brother gave me a leg of deer. She [Mali] had salt and a round crock. She put about an inch of salt in the bottom and pushed the meat into the salt. She cut the meat into 4 pieces and put it in the salt, not touching the edge of the crock. Add salt on top then put 4 other pieces of meat of different sizes and in different locations. Up to the top of the crock. Then to use the meat we soaked it a number of times before cooking. Soak it over night and change the water a few times, then cook.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 130. This reference is to the Anglican church in Spuzzum, built in 1860 and with an active congregation in the 1920s and 1930s.

⁶⁹ Cedar root coiled baskets made by Kalashe Susan Paul are in the collections of the Yale Museum, British Columbia, and the Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, Quebec. John Haugen, Lytton, provided the information that the Susan Paul basket in the CMH collection is similar in design to the basket in the All Hallows collection in Norwich, England.

⁷⁰ In her early teens Marion moved from Spuzzum, where she had been raised by her grandparents, to live with her mother Lena Hope (née Johnnie) in Stout. Marion was born in 1941, so this story would have taken place around 1954–56, just a couple of years before Mali died. Personal communication with Marion Dixon, 3 September 2018, Ross Road, Hope, British Columbia.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Delores Firkin recalled crossing the fast-running Fraser River in the 1950s with her young husband for the purpose of cutting and chopping wood for George and Mali McInnes,⁷² an elderly couple who lived in their own home on the Stout reserve.

Another relative, Kathleen “Katie” Yeoman (née McInnes), talked to her daughter Sherilea about how she loved visiting and staying with “Aunt” Mali at Stout, where Mali taught her young relative how to kneel beside the bed to recite the Lord’s Prayer. Mali also taught Katie good manners and housekeeping skills and created a safe and warm sanctuary. Although they never met, Sherilea, who has undertaken family research as a means of reconnecting disconnected relatives who are dealing with intergenerational trauma – had a visionary experience of Mali. In this experience she was surrounded by a group of people in a bright yellow sunlit circle. Out of this group a beautiful lady with a very big smile and a big fashionable hat came forward and reached out to take Sheri’s hand. She said, “Everything is going to be ok.” When Sherilea described the woman to her mom, her mom told her: “That was your aunt Mali.”⁷³

Still remembered as a capable and admirable Nlaka’pamux knowledge keeper, Mali died on 30 April 1958 in Chilliwack, British Columbia, having lived into her eighties.⁷⁴ Her death certificate is signed by her daughter Margaret, or Molly Thompson,⁷⁵ living in Boston Bar. She is buried beside her husband and near her parents in the Spuzzum Cemetery.⁷⁶

Scholars such as Laforet, Wickwire, and others remind us that, although Indigenous people at this time were experiencing the incursion of colonial ways, many adopted these in an Indigenous way, thus creating a hybrid suitable to the time and still rooted in their Indigenous identity.⁷⁷ Mali’s life was just that – a hybrid suitable to the time and still rooted in a Nlaka’pamux identity. As the first published Indigenous woman writer in western Canada, she leaves a small legacy of articles – a contribution to the historical record of British Columbia that helps us to understand what it must have been like to navigate the tensions of her world. Writing to accommodate the Christian, Western, and racist sensibilities of her readers,

⁷² Personal communication with Delores Firkin, December 9, 2018 by telephone from Victoria.

⁷³ Personal communication with Sheri Wowchuk, 13 July 2019, at the author’s home in Victoria, BC.

⁷⁴ Province of British Columbia, Registration of Death, Certificate 58-09-005983, Chilliwack.

⁷⁵ Margaret married Wesley James Thompson on 7 July 1935, at the age of twenty-three. At the time of Mali’s death, Margaret is recorded on her mother’s death certificate as living in Boston Bar. To date I have been unable to track Mali’s direct descendants.

⁷⁶ George died on 19 December 1957, at the age of seventy-four, in Chilliwack, British Columbia. Death Index, 1872–1990, via Ancestry.com.

⁷⁷ Laforet and York, *Spuzzum*, 7-8; Wickwire, *At the Bridge*, 276-281.



Figure 10. Mali c. 1950. With permission of Sheriliea Wowchuck.

she adopted and adapted a colonialist convention to present a compelling case for Indigenous traditions and society. In her writings we can read an argument for Indigenous rights and a defence of Indigenous culture.

These are some of the earliest published works on Nlaka'pamux society, concurrent with or even predating ethnographic texts. These letters and articles, with their first-person perspective, and with their voice for



Figure 11. Mali's grave in the Spuzzum Cemetery. Photo by J. Iredale, 2018.

Native traditions and rights, end with the closing of the school. There is nothing else like this in the ethnohistoric record, and it is not until the collaborations between Nlaka'pamux people and anthropologists in the middle of the twentieth century that we again hear reflective first-person narratives on Nlaka'pamux society and first-person voices making a case for the preservation and revitalization of Nlaka'pamux culture. Mali Quelqueltalko may claim to be the first Nlaka'pamux writer to do this.