

OLSON, JULIANNE GRACE, D.M.A. Positive Emissions: Local Musicians' Contribution to Defeating the Largest Proposed Coal Export in U.S. History at Cherry Point, WA. (2019)  
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When big business puts the bottom line above the environment, musical eco-activists can work to unite and protect the community. On the shores of the Salish Sea in the Pacific Northwest, singer-songwriter Harlan James, the folk band BandZandt, The Lummi Youth Canoe Family and Dana Lyons, drove a movement which created empathy and resilience throughout the region. Through performing participatory songs at public forums, on street corners and in every town along the proposed train route, their formidable presence and persistence invited others to join the movement.

The Lummi Nation led the fight, as the export would have wreaked havoc in sacred First Nations' fishing waters. These local musicians stood in solidarity with the tribe by making music as an act of resistance from the proposal's onset in 2011 until its defeat in 2016. As the coal export was backed by business conglomerates worth over one trillion dollars in assets, this victory was truly monumental. The defeat of the export marked one of the first times that the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers yielded to First Nation treaty rights. This triumph elicits noteworthy questions. What can be learned about the role of music and musicians in situations of environmental activism? What can be learned about how a group of musicians can create enough solidarity within a community that big business is halted? How can we as musicians, educators, and students, build consistent bridges that take us out of the classrooms and off stages into the community? The local musicians offer one example as to how such questions can be

addressed and their contributions at Cherry Point are a testimony to the power of the amalgamated voice.

POSITIVE EMISSIONS: LOCAL MUSICIANS' CONTRIBUTION TO DEFEATING  
THE LARGEST PROPOSED COAL EXPORT IN U.S. HISTORY  
AT CHERRY POINT, WA

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

On May 9, 2016, a *Seattle Times* headline read, “Tribes prevail, kill proposed coal terminal at Cherry Point. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sided with Northwest tribes Monday in a decision to block the largest proposed bulk-shipping terminal in North America at Cherry Point.”<sup>1</sup> Having grown up just outside Lummi Nation where Cherry Point is located, this headline was unexpected (see Figure 1).

Knowing that in recent decades the existing oil refineries had dismissed Lummi’s treaty rights, I was astonished by the news that the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers blocked this \$665 million proposal. As is true of most first nation tribes in the Americas, Lummi Nation, a nearly twelve-thousand-year-old tribe,<sup>2</sup> has fought for its cultural, sovereign and environmental survival since the onset of colonization by foreigners in the 1800s.<sup>3</sup> Given the region’s history of big business coercively residing in sovereign tribal waters, this win was truly profound and uncharacteristic of past proceedings.

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<sup>1</sup> Lynda Mapes (May 9, 2016). “*Tribes prevail, kill proposed coal terminal at Cherry Point*”. *Seattle Times*. Accessed April 2, 2018. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/tribes-prevail-kill-proposed-coal-terminal-at-cherry-point/>

<sup>2</sup> Michell Kretzer, <https://www.peta.org/blog/lummi-tribe-works-to-free-lolita/> March 14, 2018https Accessed February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Barry Pritzker, *A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture and People*. 2000. (New York, NY: Oxford Press) ISBN 019513897x



Sources: Esri, Washington Department of Ecology

MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Figure 1. Proposed Bulk Coal Terminal and Existing Oil Refineries in Cherry Point.<sup>4</sup>

When visiting my family in 2014, signs either for or against the coal export could be found all over Whatcom County. The opposing sides were tangible within the community. The signs either stated “No Coal Train,” or “Stop the War on Workers.” Seeing these signs, I assumed the coal export would be constructed just as the refineries had regardless of the efforts from Lummi Nation and environmental groups who would

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<sup>4</sup> Nowlin, Mark, Sources: ESRI, Washington Department of Ecology. (May 9, 2016). “*Tribes prevail, kill proposed coal terminal at Cherry Point.*” *Seattle Times*. Accessed April 2, 2018. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/tribes-prevail-kill-proposed-coal-terminal-at-cherry-point/>

try stop it. I needed to understand how a relatively small community accomplished this “David and Goliath” victory.

Having always respected how powerful music making can be for all parties involved, I wondered what the musical soundscape surrounding the Cherry Point movement might have been like. I turned to YouTube and typed “coal train Bellingham” into the search engine and the second video to appear was my high school band director, Doug Sutton’s, community band, BandZandt, with their song “No Coal Train.”<sup>5</sup> With a classic country twang from lead singer, Robin Wallbridge, and a catchy hook, this led me to my next question: “Did local musicians contribute to this defeat?”

Shortly thereafter a mentor recommended Mark Pedelty’s book, *A Song to Save the Salish Sea: Musical Performance as Environmental Activism*. Pedelty described how musicians surrounding the Salish Sea were working tirelessly to protect their local region. Reading Pedelty’s book led me to other scholars who wrote about the work of musicians creating awareness, protecting a region and creating empathy through the act of music making. The readings corroborated the notion that the work of musicians did indeed contribute to the Cherry Point defeat. While listening to the voices of Salish Sea artists online, their strong voices and powerful messages were captivating. Admittedly, having trained technically and classically for fifteen years, the idea of exploring artists using a non-classical approach was an exciting new territory for me.

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<sup>5</sup> BandZandt, “No Coal Train,” Jan. 28, 2012, music video, 2:55, Accessed May 31, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11Rfs5A44PI&t=3s>

Consequently, I was also aware that “applied research can be difficult . . . because of biases against applied research”<sup>6</sup> in music academia, especially in classical performing arts, due to the lack of concreteness and abstract characteristics of such research.<sup>7</sup> In a vocal performance degree program, research often tends towards classical uses of the voice in such styles as baroque, bel canto,<sup>8</sup> or modern and the history, repertoire, language and phonetics surrounding those eras. Research taking place outside such topics rarely seems a viable option. However, several scholarly works in the field of ecomusicology and ethnomusicology convinced me this research was important to pursue as bridges between classical and non-classical arts need to be built. Pedelty argues, “We choose our ethics as musicians, scholars, activists and people. So, yes, applied ecomusicology is tendentious, just as tendentious as environmental studies, economics, or any other pursuit of knowledge . . .”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Higgins also encourages scholars to take their “work beyond the academy,” and borrow good ideas from one another so that new research can be created.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, as Jennifer Post describes in *Ethnomusicology: A Contemporary Reader*, “new advocacy . . . is used to seek solutions to contemporary social problems.”<sup>11</sup> Their arguments convinced me to seek out local

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<sup>6</sup> Lee Higgins, *Community Music: In Theory and in Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 124.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> “Bel canto,” means “beautiful singing” and is a style of singing associated with romantic era composers as Donizetti and Bellini.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Jennifer C. Post, ed. *Ethnomusicology: A Contemporary Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 10.

musicians in Bellingham who used vocal performance as a vehicle in stopping the coal export firsthand.

After completing the necessary protocol of obtaining an IRB clearance (International Review Board) in order to interview human research subjects,<sup>12</sup> the next step was to meet the artists.<sup>13</sup> What I found in Bellingham was a generous treasure trove of musicians who were whole heartedly dedicated to writing, performing and making music in protection of their community. When contacted about interviews, each artist was more than willing to share their stories with me. Additionally, they recommended fellow musical contributors whose efforts also aided the exports' defeat. Overall, by the end of two and a half months of field research, I had interviewed over twenty artists in the Salish Sea Region. However, four of those artists were more heavily involved with the activism surrounding the Cherry Point export. Therefore, their interviews are found in the chapters to come and their contribution to defeating the largest coal export in U.S. history is unquestionable.

Prior to dialoguing with the musicians, I compiled a long list of questions which I *assumed* would be beneficial in defending my hypothesis.<sup>14</sup> However, I quickly discovered that my list of questions did not prove beneficial when my subjects were

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<sup>12</sup> "Human subjects" is the term IRB uses for interviewing a person of interest surrounding a research topic.

<sup>13</sup> "The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is an administrative body established to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects recruited to participate in research activities conducted under the auspices of the institution with which it is affiliated." "The International Review Board," 2019. Oregon State University, accessed Jan 7, 2019, <https://research.oregonstate.edu/irb/frequently-asked-questions/what-institutional-review-board-irb>

<sup>14</sup> See IRB interview questions in Appendix A.

profoundly varied and unique. Rather, I soon learned the best method was to simply ask, “how did music help defeat the coal export?”

This community of artists sought to promote the well-being of the world around them and protect the Salish Sea ecosystem and its inhabitants. While their motivations were shared, their musical tactics varied wildly. Some used catchy hooks, others meditative songs in the form of a prayer, and others, musical humor. What remained constant was that each musician knew who the leaders of this movement were, the Lummi Nation.

The artists often referenced Jewell Praying Wolf James of the Lummi Nation and his call for communal solidarity at the onset of this environmental movement. Both native and non-native musical contributors said that their efforts were building upon the work Lummi Nation elders were already doing to fight the proposed coal export. This collective fight would go on for five toilsome years until it ended in victory on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016. To better understand the gravity of this victory, let us look at what provoked the community to organize their grass-roots movement.

On July 16, 2011, in Bellingham, Washington, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services (PDS) received a report of extensive clearing and grading activity at the site for the proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal.<sup>15</sup> The proposed port stood to be the largest coal export facility in North America. Known as Gateway Pacific Terminal, it was

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<sup>15</sup> Dave Gallagher, “Developers Withdraw Coal Terminal Applications, Ending Project.” *Bellingham Herald*. Accessed July 23, 2018. <http://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article131783149.html>.

to be built at Cherry Point, a sacred archaeological site known as Xwe'chieXen (Home of the Ancient Ones)<sup>16</sup> to the Lummi Nation of northwestern Washington State.<sup>17</sup>

The process would begin with strip mining in Wyoming and Montana, mostly from the Powder River Basin. They would ship the coal 800 miles, down the Columbia River, to be loaded onto cargo level ships bound for Asia, primarily China and India. This project was proposed and funded by Goldman Sachs, Peabody Coal, Arch Coal, and Berkshire Hathaway, who would have profited immensely from the construction. Together, they planned to transport over a hundred million tons of coal each year.

At the inception of the proposal in 2011, the SSA (Stevedoring Services of America) cleared trees, filled wetlands, and disturbed cultural areas without any permits.<sup>18</sup> “Rather than getting the permit . . . they proceeded to move in their equipment, bore their holes, and get the data.”<sup>19</sup> Jewell Praying Wolf James of The Lummi Nation, wrote an article titled “The Search for Integrity in the Conflict over Cherry Point as a Coal Export Terminal.” He aptly articulated the scenario as follows:

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<sup>16</sup> “Xwe'chi'eXen is a sacred landscape in northwestern Washington that has deep spiritual and cultural significance to the people of the Lummi Nation. This sacred site is now known as Cherry Point. Xwe'chi'eXen is an ancient reef-net site and a 3,500-year-old village site. Lummi Nation's hereditary Chief, Tsilixw, also known as Bill James, describes it as the “home of the Ancient Ones.” It was the first site in Washington State to be listed on the Washington Heritage Register, and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Lummi tribal member and documentary filmmaker Freddie Lane said in an interview, “The spiritual importance of this land makes this place much more than just a space.” “Fossil Fuel Connections: Tribes, First Nations, Lummi and Coal,” by Esmael Lopez and Chelle Bonham. (Accessed June 1, 2018) <http://www.fossilfuelconnections.org/lummi-and-coal/>

<sup>17</sup> The Lummi Nation resides near Bellingham. Bellingham is on northwest corner of Washington state near the Canadian border.

<sup>18</sup> The acronym SSA stands for Stevedoring Services of America which was founded in 1949 and is today one the largest marine operators in the world.

<sup>19</sup> Esmael Lopez and Chelle Bonham. “Lummi & Coal,” Fossil Fuel Connections. Accessed July 30, 2018, <http://www.fossilfuelconnections.org/lummi-and-coal/>. No publication date.

I often hear people ask: What can I do to promote a healthy environment and push back against the juggernaut of corporate power? Goldman Sachs alone has almost \$1 trillion in assets! People feel powerless, overwhelmed, and unsure what to do. The answer is here, before us, in preventing this mega-project from going forward. We can and must stop it and put in its place a vision of responsible long-term stewardship of the land and water. We don't need to be hypnotized by their narrative or to become a corporate colony of global finance and Wall Street investors. We are the people. We must unite to preserve the ecological vitality of the Pacific Northwest. This is our home. We must commit to stop toxic dumping into public lands, air, and waters. We must demand that our lawmakers stop giving away public resources for private gain. But we can only do this through coalition-building. It has always been true, and is true, today. We respectfully call upon the tribes, the non-Indian community, civic organizations, professional organizations, the business community, the faith-based communities, non-governmental organizations, and elected officials to put aside any differences for the sake of the Creation. Most importantly, we are asking that the general public take the time to become informed on the magnitude and madness of this proposal. Let our voices be heard for the benefit of our children and our children's children—and to honor the Creation. Now is the time. This is the place. We are the ones called to this duty in the name of our collective Xa xalh Xechnging ("sacred obligation").<sup>20</sup>

The call of Jewell Praying Wolf James was answered. Lummi Nation led the battle against Gateway Pacific and solidarity was offered from a diverse array of organizations. Jewell James, a renaissance man, skilled carver and artist, hand carved totem poles and began a tour called "Kwel Hoy," which means "we draw the line." He traveled along the routes of the proposed coal terminal sites and train routes. The totem poles created awareness about the environmental degradation caused by coal. As "Kwel Hoy," journeyed on, musicians also 'drew the line' and unified the community.

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<sup>20</sup> Jewell James, "The Search for Integrity in the Conflict Over Cherry Point as a Coal Export Terminal." [www.whatcomwatch.org](http://www.whatcomwatch.org), August, 2013. Accessed June 7, 2018.

The local musicians sprang from many walks of life and their collective efforts were efficacious in the fight against the Gateway Pacific Terminal. Locally, environmental songwriter, Harlan James of Lummi Nation, was one of the first to step forward and give a musical offering in direct resistance of the export. His song, “Mother Nature’s Rights,” could be heard outside the administration building at Lummi Nation and on street corners throughout Bellingham from the germination of the export proposal until its ultimate defeat. BandZandt, as previously mentioned, a Whatcom County<sup>21</sup> band, wrote a catchy anthemic song titled “No Coal Train.” The Lummi Youth Canoe Family were heavily involved and held performances and ceremonies throughout the region. Following the model of Jewell James’s “Kwel Hoy” tour, Bellingham’s singer songwriter Dana Lyons wrote a song called “Sometimes,” and embarked on the “Great Coal Train Tour,” doing concerts in every town along the proposed train route to create awareness and gain solidarity against the large corporations.

Beyond Bellingham, musicians in the greater Pacific Northwest region in Seattle, Oregon, and Montana added musical contributions to the movement. A group called the Raging Grannies, with gaggles<sup>22</sup> all throughout the Salish Sea region, sang songs loud and clear against the coal train which could be heard in Seattle, Eugene and Spokane. Three of the Raging Grannies in Spokane were found rocking in their chairs whilst boldly

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<sup>21</sup> Whatcom County is the county where Bellingham and Cherry Point reside.

<sup>22</sup> The Raging Grannies use the word gaggle to mean an organized group.

singing their songs on the railroad tracks and were unashamedly arrested.<sup>23</sup> Tracy Spring, a rich voiced singer songwriter, wrote a song as well against the corporations' endeavor titled, "Leave it in the Ground." The group, Counterfeit Cash, sang a cover to the tune of Folsom Prison Blues, yet replaced the lyrics with scientific facts regarding the effects of coal energy. While the musicians involved were vast and diverse, the interviews included in this document focus on a small group of local Bellingham musicians who stood in solidarity with the leadership of a First Nation tribe and contributed to defeating the largest coal export in North America from being constructed.

As I sought to understand how a relatively small group of local musicians in Bellingham created a powerful synchronized and victorious ethos that defeated the fiscal giants backing Cherry Point, I looked to scholarly research for answers. Such questions I sought to answer were: How does music propel a movement? What does music that is made about a given place tell us about the culture? How does music bring people together? On my journey to answer these broad questions through scholarly reading, three themes continued to arise: place, the human voice and empathy.

The first theme is the idea of humans making music in relation and reaction to place. When referring to place, what is meant is a shared ecosystem, community and culture. Secondly, is the theme of the human voice and its agency within community. This theme explores the dynamic qualities of the human voice and how it can be used in

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<sup>23</sup> Johnathon Glover. *Three 'Raging Grannies Arrested for Blocking Oil and Coal Trains*. August 31, 2016. Accessed June 2, 2018. <http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2016/aug/31/protesters-block-rail-lines-on-trent-avenue/>

connecting community by bringing people together for a common cause.<sup>24</sup> Thirdly, music and empathy, pertaining to the fact that there is strength in understanding one another and how music encourages this communication. Through these themes, it also became clear that humans have an innate instinct to make music in order to connect. Furthermore, looking back thousands of years, there is evidence of human beings using music to connect and strengthen cultural consciousness of a given place.<sup>25</sup> While the bulk of this document will focus on first hand testimonials from local artists and their contribution to defeating the coal export, let us first look at a brief literary review on *how* music making achieves such noteworthy contributions.

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<sup>24</sup> By saying “If used for connecting community,” I am recognizing that the human voice and music making can be used divisively as well as for unity.

<sup>25</sup> Music making also has the power to drive cultures apart. Part of what makes music such a potent weapon is that the result, whether to unify or divide, is contingent upon how it is used.

## CHAPTER II

### SCHOLARLY SOURCES: PLACE, VOICE, AND EMPATHY AS IT RELATES TO MUSIC

Throughout recorded history, human beings have used music to express a sense of connection to the natural world. Given archaeological evidence of musicality going back at least thirty-five thousand years, people have probably been using music to communicate and express ecological ideas for as long as the species *Homo sapiens* has existed, if not longer (other species in *genus Homo* probably communicated through music as well). Therefore, connections to place have been formed through music for many millennia.<sup>26</sup>

In his book *A Song to Save the Salish Sea: Musical Performance as Environmental Activism*, Mark Pedelty describes music making and its relationship towards preserving place. The above quote resonated with me as I sought to comprehend the seemingly unquantifiable and vast realizations regarding music's relation to the environment. Iain Morely, in his book, *The Prehistory of Music, Human Evolution, Archeology and Origins of Musicality*, argues that evidence, "illustrates that important elements of the physiological and neurological foundations of musical behaviors were in place considerably before the advent of anatomically modern *Homo sapiens*."<sup>27</sup> Simply put, the notion of using music to express the ideas of community and place go back

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<sup>26</sup> Mark Pedelty, *A Song to Save the Salish Sea: Musical Performance as Environmental Activism*. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016), 239.

<sup>27</sup> Iain Morely, *The Prehistory of Music, Human Evolution, Archeology and Origins of Musicality* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 98.

perhaps further than the Neanderthals.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Steven Mithen, in his book, *The Singing Neanderthals*, argues that paying attention to the origins of music making is paramount in our understanding of its unifying power.

While art has been seen as an index of cognitive complexity and language an essential tool of communication, music has suffered from our perception that it is an epiphenomenal ‘leisure activity’, and archaeologically inaccessible to boot. Nothing could be further from the truth . . . music is integral to human social life, and we can investigate its ancestry with the same rich range of analyses—neurological, physiological, ethnographic, linguistic, ethological and even archaeological—which have been deployed to study language . . . Musicality is a fundamental part of being human . . . this capacity is of great antiquity.<sup>29</sup>

Mithen’s argument, that the study of music making should be on the same platform as other studies is profound. Ironically, outside of interviewing local musicians, I also spoke with non-musicians who were involved in the Cherry Point situation. The majority of the non-musicians I met with were quite dismissive of music’s potency in the defeat. Naysayers of my hypothesis (and therefore Pedelty’s and Mithen’s and others hypothesis as well) which negated music’s direct impact on Cherry Point, seemed to write off musician’s efforts in what Mithen refers to as “a leisure activity.” Yet, regardless of those who don’t think music holds an equal footing in the realm of societal movements, humans have perpetually had a connection to the concept of place through music.

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<sup>28</sup> It should be said this depends on what definition of music one is using.

<sup>29</sup> Steven J. Mithen, *The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind and Body* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), 5.

“From ritual expressions of reverence for animals to colonial anthems of conquest, music mirrors, expresses, and influences how humans interact with the rest of the living world.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, as ethnomusicologist Travis Stimeling explains, “human being’s affective ties with the material environment”<sup>31</sup> is expressed and fostered through music. When music is used as a tool to protect the environment of a place, “place is more than a floating signifier.”<sup>32</sup> Place is far more than a physical location but rather becomes a reason to make music. “Environmental expressions of place are deeply embodied, material exigencies that make place intrinsically important to a song’s meaning.”<sup>33</sup> The relationship between music and place can be that it is not “just place for music’s sake but also music for place’s sake.”<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, as Denise Von Glahn describes in her book *The Sound of Place*, place is extraordinarily profound to those who dwell there.

The idea (of place) has gripped the imaginations of thinkers since the beginning of recorded time. Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Newton . . . have all pondered the meaning and significance of place. Place is one way we organize our experiences and order our memories. A sense of place, along with a sense of time, helps form our identity . . . *Sounds of Place* is premised upon the belief that places can inspire art, and that musical responses can, at some level, evoke those places . . . Writers and artists have responded to their environs for centuries and, in the process, communicated essential values of their cultures . . . Powerful artistic responses to one’s place are not confined to what can be seen on the canvas or read on the page. Music captures places . . . Where painters remember a landscape for its light and shade, composers hear the rhythms and timbres of a place and

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<sup>30</sup> Pedelty, 239.

<sup>31</sup> Travis D. Stimeling “Music, Place, and Identity in the Central Appalachian Mountaintop Removal Mining Debate”. *American Music*. 30, no. 1., (2012): 3.

<sup>32</sup> Pedelty, 241.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

recall it in sound. Although sonic images may be more fleeting than painted or sculpted ones, they are no less eloquent or evocative; their commentary is no less poignant. Some might even argue that their lack of material form imbues them with greater profundity.<sup>35</sup>

Just as human beings have made music for “place’s sake,” one of the ways they have made music is with their voices. The human voice has profound agency. Jennifer Peeples and Stephen Depoe discuss this idea in their book *Voice and Environmental Communication*.

At its most basic level, voice is a physiological process, a mechanism for expressing one’s thoughts through sound and action. It is also the instrument, the vehicle, and the medium for constructing meaning for ourselves and others.<sup>36</sup>

When the voice is used as a medium to transfer meaning to others, an environmental movement can take root. When an audience listens to the message the voice is conveying and are aurally stimulated by its sound quality, the impact can move listeners to participate or partake in the movement. Pedelty expresses this idea as follows:

The human voice produces not only words but also powerful sound waves, making voice a physical, visceral, and intersubjective phenomenon . . . Voice communicates nonverbal messages through subtle changes in timbre, tone, volume and pitch. Those qualities matter as much as the rhetorical content of speech . . . musical voice is a collective phenomenon, a question of creating community.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Denise Von Glahn, *The Sound of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape*. (Northeastern University Press, 2003), 2-3.

<sup>36</sup>Jennifer Ann Peeples and Stephen P. Depoe, *Voice and Environmental Communication* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Pedelty, 238.

Considering what Pedelty says, the color and sound quality of the voice is on a level playing field with the content of the lyrics. This brings to mind a statement Jane Bernstein presents in her book, *Women's Voices Across Musical Worlds*.<sup>38</sup>

While Bernstein's scholarship highlights various people, mostly women, who have contributed greatly to the field of protest, peace, folk music and political movements, she writes about how women used sound in a way that was accessible and applicable to their audiences. In chapter seven, *Thank you for my Weapons in Battle: My Voice and the Desire to Use it*, she also discusses tactics regarding sound usage. She addresses how vocally the sound was organic and untrained. She argues that the rawness by which many of these powerful musicians used their voices contributed to the growth of the various movements of which they were a part. The musical tunes and melodies were very simple and allowed for sing-alongs and participation. Also, the way in which they used music evoked a sense of folk-like affability, not creating any sense of superiority. Regarding musical activism and how it becomes effective, Bernstein shares,

Since the words related the message of the song, the singing style of the performer became emblematic of the common people. The voice had to be simple, straightforward, and sound untrained. It meant . . . a pure, clean tone devoid of excessive vibrato. Low tessitura made the voice sound less threatening.<sup>39</sup>

One of the commonalities of the singers I interviewed, was that, while some had had some musical instrument training, none of them had formal institutional training. As

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<sup>38</sup> Jane Bernstein, *Women's Voices Across Musical Worlds*. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

Bernstein argues, it was their “simple, straightforward,” sound that likely made them so effective in this battle. The artists used their voices strategically in the Cherry Point battle in a way their audience would receive. Harlan did so with his deep, raw and robust timbre, while Robin colored her voice with a folk like twangy tone. With their unified sound, the Lummi Youth Canoe Family offered a stunning meditative spiritual quality, while Dana Lyons used a humorous speech-like approach. It was through their voices that the community was unified. In his book *Community Music: In Theory and in Practice*, Lee Higgins corroborates this notion:

Community music is an expression of cultural democracy . . . Environmentalist organizations can sometimes fall into a pattern of speaking mostly to themselves rather than reaching out to, and listening to, the wider community. As a result, environmentalists may fail to inform, move or persuade others. Here is where music and the principles of community music, in particular, help by emphasizing inclusion rather than impenetrable walls of specialized rhetoric.<sup>40</sup>

A voice used with direct motivation can ignite solidarity and advocate cultural democracy. But what does cultural democracy mean and how does it manifest itself within a community? James Bau Graves in his book *Cultural Democracy*, offers the following:

Cultural democracy lends an importance to private ritual that pushes it into the public square to challenge our received notions of what constitutes artistry. The images and assumptions that we receive through the media and revere in our temples to high art are representative of an extremely narrow cultural perspective. They reflect the tastes and values of elites, but they are distributed

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<sup>40</sup> Lee Higgins, *Community Music: In Theory and in Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012). 32-37.

indiscriminately to us all as though they were our own. Indeed, they are designed to profoundly shape what we ourselves claim as our own . . . Cultural democracy offers a different paradigm, a system of support for the cultures of our diverse communities that is respectful and celebratory, that gives voice to the many who have been historically excluded from the public domain, and that makes no claims of superiority or special status. It assumes a fundamental acceptance of difference . . . cultural democracy hangs as an overarching metaphor for a society we might yet become: a society that balances the American creeds of liberty and equality, that places the liberty of individuals within the context of their free communities, nurturing and protecting the aspirations of the many, not just the few. Culture of the people, by the people, for the people.<sup>41</sup>

Graves argues that a “fundamental acceptance of difference . . . that places the liberty of individuals within the context of their free communities”<sup>42</sup> is paramount in creating cultural democracy. It is about communication across borders. The Cherry Point artists did not prescribe to nor depend on an academic approach to their music making, nor did they choose to make esoteric art which is “representative of an extremely narrow cultural perspective.” Rather, they created music of and for their community. Local musicians from eclectic backgrounds utilized and celebrated their diversity, which culminated in one multifaceted unit, bolstering the democratic voice. “Culture of the people, by the people, for the people.” There is power in the amalgamated voice. This is because “music is important for group morale and solidarity. Song coheres communities and inspires creativity, as it did during the early civil rights movement.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Pedelty describes how Pete Seeger used his voice to create a solidarity:

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<sup>41</sup> James Bau Graves, *Cultural Democracy the Arts, Community, and the Public Purpose* (University of Illinois Press, 2005), 17–21.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Pedelty, 239.

“We Shall Overcome,” reinforced group resolve during trying times. When sung loudly by marchers, the song expressed group solidarity and let both passive observers and violent opponents know that the movement was there to stay. “We Shall Not Be Moved” did similar cultural work. For activist communities, making music together helps people create a collective voice.<sup>44</sup>

Another way music making works within a movement is through empathy.

In her writing, *Music and Empathy*, Felicity Laurence discusses how empathy germinated through music enables people to get inside one another’s minds. It allows them to humanize one another and find common understanding, or said in another way, to have empathy for one another. She argues that making music together is a formidable method of unification and tool for reconciliation.<sup>45</sup>

In all these themes, music can enable people to feel each other’s suffering and recognize each other’s humanity . . . Music has potential to enable, catalyze and strengthen empathic response, ability and relationship, and that is this potential capacity which lies at the core of music’s function within peacebuilding.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, Christopher Small coined a term in 1998 which he called ‘musicking.’ Musicking means “to take part in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, ‘musicking’ helps create relationships between people. Small argues that ‘musicking’

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<sup>44</sup> Pedelty, 239.

<sup>45</sup> Felicity Rose Laurence, *Music and Empathy: A Study of the Possible Development, through Certain Ways of Musicking, of Children’s Empathic Abilities, Responses, Motivation and Behaviour within a Primary School Context* (Great Britain: University of Birmingham, 2005), 14-24.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> Chris Small, *Musicking: The Meaning of Performing and Listening*, (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 9.

together encourages not only self-awareness, but awareness of those participating as well as a sense of spirituality, intercultural understanding and the ability to cooperate for the greater good of the entire community.<sup>48</sup>

The act of musicking establishes the place where it is happening, a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies. They are to be found not only between those organized sounds which are conventionally thought of as being the stuff of musical meaning but also between the people who are taking part, in whatever capacity, in the performance, and they model, or stand as a metaphor, for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be: relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world.<sup>49</sup>

Regarding Small's term, Laurence points out that when we music together, we explore, affirm and celebrate relationships. Similarly, as empathy can be created through 'musicking,' empathy can also be created with nature itself.

In *Current Directions in Ecomusicology*, Aaron Allen discusses the idea of organism in relation to environment. This was also a strong catalyst in my research. While this work looks closely at the derivatives and origins of the word "ecomusicology" and the understanding of this specific field of research, it also begs many important questions about each individual's relationship and their ability to empathize with the ecosystem. One such reference was Allen's exploration of how Henry David Thoreau understood sound in relation to environment.

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<sup>48</sup> Small, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Allen discussed how Thoreau did not see himself as an individual or separate being from the environment, but as an organism in relation to and *part of* the environment. There wasn't a separatist idea in Thoreau's ideology such as the perspective of 'man verses nature,' but rather human in harmony with nature. Empathy with nature is found in the oneness and cohesiveness of human beings empathizing with the ecosystem. Thoreau recognized fully the tapestry of environmental sounds from crickets to birds to the rustling of the leaves in the breeze as musical sounds and understood the idea of music in response to environment. Musicking happens between people, people and nature, and exists amidst nature itself. As Allen writes, "Thoreau understood himself in relation to nature not as an individual but rather in a relational ontology and epistemology acknowledging the importance of community and the role of sound as communicating in all living systems . . ." <sup>50</sup> Thoreau epitomized the ethos of the local musicians fighting to protect Cherry Point. Because they saw themselves as one with the ecosystem, and empathized with her, they chose, as will be explicated below, to make music as an act of empathy and stand with her against environmental degradation.

Through the protecting of place, using their voices for communal unification, and empathizing with one another and the ecosystem, the local musicians helped to win the battle against the corporations. <sup>51</sup> The insights shared by the scholars mentioned shed light

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<sup>50</sup> Aaron S. Allen and Kevin Dawe, *Current Directions in Ecomusicology: Music, Culture, Nature* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 21.

<sup>51</sup> Regardless of if the musicians' contributions resulted in victory or not, the interviews would still have been highly informative as their musicking linked members of the community who not have otherwise united. The victory was a byproduct of the connectivity.

on how the local musical activists won this battle. Understanding their research allowed me to confidently move forward in my interviews. While the phenomenon of music making cannot be fully grasped through academic writing, I hope that the interviews and first-hand stories will help the reader see the power of grassroots musicians coming together in solidarity for a like-minded goal.

### CHAPTER III

#### MOTHER NATURE MATTERS: A VOW TO BE A VOICE FOR MOTHER EARTH—AN INTERVIEW WITH HARLAN JAMES

One of the ways I was able to meet contributing members of the coal export defeat was by attending a variety of local events focusing on environmental issues. On June 11, 2018, one such event highlighted indigenous leader of the Ayuy Yu People in the Ecuadorian Amazon, Flavio Santi. As a cultural educator, shaman and healer, Santi shared stories of his ancestors resisting the presence of petroleum, mining, and logging companies over the last seventy years.<sup>52</sup> Due to the construction of oil companies, their community, environment, and ancient cultures had been contaminated and traditional way of life altered. As a result of their resistance to the oil companies, Santi's family suffered assault, incarceration, and interrogation.<sup>53</sup> It was fitting then, that at this event, I would meet environmental musical activist, Harlan James, who also has suffered persecution from those who degrade the environment.

After Santi's presentation, Harlan and I found ourselves next to one another in line waiting to shake Santi's hand and thank him for his environmental work. We began to discuss the importance of hearing about grassroots movements and their cogency within

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<sup>52</sup> Paul Beckel, *Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship, The Midweek Update* (June 6 2018) Accessed June 10, 2018, <http://www.buf.org/files/121/MWU%20Nov%202016%20and%20forward/BUF-Midweek-Update-June-6-2018.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> For a brief overview of the environmental intrusion in Ecuador see <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19506216>

a community. Harlan then proceeded to tell me about his own environmental work as a member of the Lummi Nation and how what Santi said resonated with his own tribe. The Lummi People, like Santi's tribe, have fought battles for centuries in order to protect their culture and environment.<sup>54</sup> Harlan went on to tell me that his "plan is to start the Mother Nature Matters Movement" with the environmental songs he writes.<sup>55</sup> Given I was endeavoring to find artists who contributed to the coal export, Harlan seemed like the perfect candidate. A few days later, Harlan agreed to an interview.

We met at Boulevard Park, which rests on the Salish Sea. Harlan arrived at the interview with his guitar in hand ready to make music in the park following our meeting. Harlan grew up in a musical family, all who have contributed richly to the local music scene. Harlan started writing music in 2011. Harlan can be heard singing his songs on many street corners in Bellingham. His songs aim to create awareness about issues that range from shutting down the local oil refineries to purifying bodies of water.

Harlan told me, "I made a deal with our Creator and to Mother Earth, to trade my time, energy and soul for her to be saved. Greedy corporations are raping Mother Earth, and I have to do my part."<sup>56</sup> Harlan credits his devotion to Mother Earth to his father: "My dad taught me that we play music for God, which to me *is* Mother Earth. The music I play is a voice for Mother Earth."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Thomas Greaves, "*Endangered peoples of North America: struggles to survive and thrive*" (Greenwood Press, Westport, CT) 2001, 97.

<sup>55</sup> Harlan James, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, June 11, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, June 14, 2018.

<sup>57</sup> James, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, June 14, 2018.

As our interview progressed, an overarching idea kept rising to the surface. Harlan's words kept revolving around the theme of cause and effect. He kept questioning how music reflects society and how society reflects art: a question that is not new to humanity. Aristotle, as Smith writes, had similar ponderings. "Aristotle declared that poetry is an imitation of human actions, a concept, later interpreted to mean an imitation of nature both human and external. Literature, then, has commonly been held both to reflect and to influence society."<sup>58</sup> In Harlan's case, his lyrics are a form of literature and his poetic content reflects how he sees society. His music making seeks to penetrate the arts with the changes he wishes to see in society. After Harlan began writing songs, he attended Northwest Indian College to study environmental science. There, he realized that, "everyone treats Mother Earth like a business, and she doesn't have any money to fight back. So, I needed to fight business with music."<sup>59</sup>

Ironically, only months after Harlan began writing songs and majoring in environmental science in college, Gateway Pacific proposed the largest coal export in U.S. history on July 16, 2011. Immediately upon hearing the alarming news, Harlan wrote a song called "Mother Nature's Rights." He shared how he started playing his song outside the administration building at Lummi Nation as soon as the proposed coal export news began to spread. Harlan added,

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<sup>58</sup> James M. Smith, Smith, "Does Art Follow Life or Does Life Follow Art? A Controversy in Nineteenth-Century French Literature." *Studies in Philology* 53, no. 4 (1956): 628 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4173184>.

<sup>59</sup> James, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, June 11, 2018.

My dad was a policy representative for twenty years protecting our treaty rights and would say that with our ‘inherent rights there are inherent responsibilities, and with inherent responsibility there is inherent accountability. Everyone has to be held accountable.’<sup>60</sup>

His song calls out the greedy motivations of the corporations who wished to build on his ancestor’s sacred land and beckons them to be accountable.

Harlan in many ways was a torch bearer of the musical movement surrounding the coal export resistance. There were many at Lummi Nation who were not aware of the export until they heard Harlan’s song daily echoing throughout the community. Harlan shares, “I started to play it (“Mother Nature’s Rights”) downtown by Rite Aid, outside the Co-Op, and Trader Joe’s, because there were people there who were like minded about Mother Earth.”<sup>61</sup><sup>62</sup> When asked how his song contributed to the movement, Harlan said,

The song is catchy. People need to repeat to remember. Once they start hearing it over again and again, and start remembering it, then they realize, ‘hey we don’t want to kill our world! Let’s kill this coal train. The truth is spread and then, because of the work of music, the truth sticks in their head on repeat. It’s easier than having a symposium or public speakers, in that way, you only hear it once. With music, it repeats in the mind. [sic]<sup>63</sup>

Harlan spoke the lyrics to me as we sat by the Bellingham Bay, a watershed that would have been drastically altered had the export been built:

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<sup>60</sup> James, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, June 11, 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> By “like minded,” Harlan was describing how there were people who understood what he was singing about and agreed with his sentiments.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Mother Nature's Rights  
By Harlan James

Verse one:

Indigenous baby  
you're my whole wide world  
And it's driving me crazy  
because I don't want to lose my girl.  
Let's clean our rivers, creeks and streams.  
Protect our Mother Earth from these heathen beings.

Chorus:

Let's unite and fight for Mother Nature's rights.  
Let's unite as a tribe for our children to survive.  
Let's unite, join the fight for Mother Nature's rights.  
She's alive, she has rights.

Verse two:

Say no to the coal train  
If you don't want to kill our world  
It's such a cold game as the corporations kill our world  
It's more of a nightmare than a dream  
Greed is all these demons breed

Chorus:

Let's unite and fight for Mother Nature's rights.  
Let's unite as a tribe for our children to survive.  
Let's unite, join the fight for Mother Nature's rights.  
She's alive, she has rights.

Verse three:

Say no to the pipeline if you don't want to kill our world  
Because who in their right mind would let these corporations kill our world?  
Protect our oceans, protect our streams,  
Protect our Mother Earth from these heathen beings.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> James, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, June 11, 2018.

I asked Harlan who he was referring to when he wrote “heathen beings.” He said it was describing large corporation or anyone who doesn’t understand that Mother Nature is our life force. Only a week later, Harlan invited me to record “Mother Nature’s Rights” with him. Knowing I was an opera singer, he wanted me to sing in an operatic style in the third verse to symbolize the concept that, I, an ancestor of colonizers, can find a new direction against the idea of colonization, territorial ownership and the degradation of Mother Earth. Following the operatic verse was a rap section which Harlan felt symbolized the voices of protest. As Harlan puts it,

Colonization is still occurring every day in this country as the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and large corporations continue to ignore treaty rights and sovereign land, simply to line their pockets. We know the bloody history is there. We can’t deny it. But how can we move forward? We are stronger if we move forward together.<sup>65</sup>

Harlan told me that had Cherry Point been constructed, “It would have created a dead zone and killed more sea life. We already did tests on fish. It would have destroyed our water quality. The coal and pollution would kill our river.”<sup>66</sup> He went on to describe how the freight trains that already travel through Bellingham into Vancouver are “killing our river from the coal dust that comes off the boxcars. Not to mention that they (SSA Marine and Burlington North Trains) also rejected treaty rights and our sovereign nation.”<sup>67</sup> Harlan continued, “One of my questions with my music, is how can I get

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<sup>65</sup> James, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, June 11, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

everyone together and unify? There is strength in numbers.”<sup>68</sup> The goal? To build a musical resistance.

“The songs I play ask, ‘what would Mother Earth say?’”<sup>69</sup> His songs are not inherently didactic nor preachy, but they are thought provoking and move the listener towards such questions as: What about Mother Earth’s rights? Are you listening? In the fast-paced societal race that we live in, people rarely seem to stop and listen to Mother Earth. Harlan proposes that if people won’t listen then we must speak on her behalf. Harlan shares how music is communal and therefore is the best catalyst for such “ponderings and awarenesses [sic].”<sup>70</sup> However, his impassioned environmental musical activism was threatened shortly after the Cherry Point defeat.

Harlan was stopped by the authorities while playing music in Bellingham. “The police jumped me. I thought they jumped me for playing environmental songs, they said I fit the description of a robbery suspect, and when their victim came up and it wasn’t me, it made me not want to play music in public anymore . . .”<sup>71</sup> Harlan said that with enough prayers, the fear couldn’t hold him down, and soon he was on the front lines at Standing Rock<sup>72</sup> with his guitar. While the police instilled fear in him for a brief period, the Cherry Point victory prompted courage. Harlan drove to North Dakota from Bellingham to stand

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<sup>68</sup> James, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, June 11, 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> The Standing Rock Tribe protested construction of the Dakota Access pipeline near their land. The pipeline was blocked by the Obama administration but then approved after President Trump took office. (Accessed June 6, 2018). <https://standwithstandingrock.net/>

in solidarity with The Oceti Sakowin Camp, a historic gathering of tribes, allies, and people from all walks of life working to halt the Dakota Access pipeline.<sup>73</sup>

“I went to Standing Rock on Thanksgiving to face my fears. There was a lot of love and community there.<sup>74</sup> We were coming together for the same purpose.”<sup>75</sup> Harlan describes the strong sense of solidarity he experienced there. He was extremely intentional about his purpose at Standing Rock, “I fasted for days before Standing Rock so that my music could be a voice for Mother Earth.”<sup>76</sup> I asked Harlan where he found such a strong sense of spirituality. As the interview went on, Harlan opened up about how he found his spirituality while in prison.

When Harlan was young, a struggle with alcohol, which he now refers to as the “flesh eating spirit,”<sup>77</sup> caused him to go to prison for a time. One of the many fascinating things about Harlan is that he is a chanupa carrier. He explained that the chanupa is a sacred prayer pipe that carries the prayers of his people. While in prison, he and his inmates had a native circle and the older men, through a pipe ceremony, chose him to be a pipe carrier because of his youthful prayers. The pipe ceremony is a sacred ritual to connect physical and spiritual worlds. The pipe itself is the connector between these two realms.<sup>78</sup> A pipe carrier is commissioned with the prayers of the people and this

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<sup>73</sup> James, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, June 14, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Nancy S. Love “From Settler Colonialism to Standing Rock: Hearing Native Voices for Peace” *College Music Symposium* (Published online: 30 November 2018). doi:10.18177/sym.2018.58.sr.11412

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> “The Native American Pipe Ceremony.” (Accessed July 2, 2018) <https://www.native-americans-online.com/native-american-pipe-ceremony.html>

commission is considered a sacred honor but also a sacred responsibility and humble duty. “Music is like a chanupa to me. The chanupa represents the Inipi.”<sup>79</sup> The sweat lodge is central to the Inipi. “The Lakota term for sweat lodge is Inipi which means ‘*to live again*.’<sup>80</sup> Inipi is a purification rite and is necessary in order to help the vision quest seeker enter into a state of humility and to undergo a kind of spiritual rebirth.<sup>81</sup> Prayers offered there draw on all powers of the universe; Earth, Water, Fire and Air. Harlan said, “Keeping the prayers strong is one thing I learned as a pipe carrier, and therefore there are a lot of prayers in my music.”

It is quite evident when listening to his story that Harlan is fearless about using his music as a tool for protecting the environment. He is forward thinking and beyond music, he also has plans to grow cultural centers to preserve Mother Earth. “I want to start environmental camps with artesian wells. To keep our culture preserved.” Sustainability and environmental and cultural preservation are on the forefront of his endeavors. He uses his musical platforms “for community outreach and professional development within the Indian country.”

Harlan believes people are destroying the earth because “souls are spiritually broken and disconnected from Mother Earth and they don’t nurture life, and don’t understand what their duty is.” Harlan says our job as musicians is to “spread the

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<sup>79</sup> James, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, June 14, 2018.

<sup>80</sup> “The Native American Pipe Ceremony.” (Accessed July 2, 2018) <https://www.native-americans-online.com/native-american-pipe-ceremony.html>

<sup>81</sup> Louise Drysdale, “Inipi-The Rite of Purification.” (Accessed, Jan 1, 2019) <http://aktalakota.stjo.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=8671>

message of truth” because “music is therapeutic and healing.” Music, “like a river, spreads the message of whatever we put into it.”<sup>82</sup> It is difficult to hear some of Harlan’s story without realizing the deep spirituality that exists in everything he does. Harlan created music as a tool to protect place. He used his voice to persistently share the importance of the Cherry Point resistance, all while creating empathy in those who listened to his lyrics, inviting them to join in the movement.

Meanwhile, while Harlan was the instigator of the musical resistance, Robin Wallbridge’s song with her group Band Zandt, “No Coal Train,” became the anthem of the movement and spread awareness throughout the region.

My high school marching band director at Mt. Baker High School, Doug Sutton, told me that if I wanted to understand the passion behind their catchy song, I had to meet with Robin. He said that Robin is “the heart” of BandZandt. He was headed to band practice after I interviewed him, so he asked her that night if she’d be willing to share her thoughts on Cherry Point with me. She gregariously accepted, and Robin Wallbridge and I met the next week.

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<sup>82</sup> Drysdale, “Inipi-The Rite of Purification.”

## CHAPTER IV

### **“NO COAL TRAIN”: THE ANTHEM OF THE CHERRY POINT PROTEST— INTERVIEWS WITH BANDZANDT’S ROBIN WALLBRIDGE AND DOUG SUTTON**

Robin Wallbridge is a passionate singer songwriter, active environmentalist, mother and an educator at Kendall Elementary School in rural Whatcom County. The song “No Coal Train” became what fellow Whatcom County singer songwriter Dana Lyons (Chapter 5) called, “the anthem against the Cherry Point Coal Export.”<sup>83</sup> The songs catchy country melody, singability and BandZant’s consistent incitement for audience participation made it central to the movements progress. First, I asked how she wrote the song? Robin explained the inspiration and organization of the anthem.

My friend called me up while I was cleaning the local public library one morning. His name is Chuck, and he’s the drummer in the band, and he said, “Oh my gosh Robin, you have to write a song right now about the coal train problem.” So, I made the Coal Train song and it just popped out in minutes because it was so important.<sup>84</sup> The bridge is really good for facts. So, you have your verses and you have your chorus, but the bridge is where you can put in the minor edgy feel. You want to make it a bit uncomfortable and tweekey, and that’s where you want to put in the stuff that is irrefutable. The stuff that reaches out and turns the key.<sup>85</sup>

Robin proceeded to share the lyrics of the song with me.

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<sup>83</sup> Dana Lyons, interview by Julianne Olson, phone interview. April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>84</sup> Robin Wallbridge, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, WA. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

## **No Coal Train**

*Robin Wallbridge and BandZandt*

*("for free use for the good of the Earth")<sup>86</sup>*

Say you want a coal train, dollar in your hand  
We don't want no coal train cutting through our land  
Baby don't need no coal dust take away his breath  
Mama don't want no coal dust messin' up her dress

Papa don' want no  
Mama don' want no  
Baby don' need no coal train Whoo – ooo

Everybody work hard, cleanin' up the town  
We don't want no coal here, leave it in the ground  
Hundred tons of coal dust blowin' on the breeze  
Listen to the people Mister Money please

Papa don' want no  
Mama don' want no  
Baby don' need no coal train Whoo – ooo

Bridge:

Well there's 118 uncovered cars per train  
And there are 14 to 20 trains per day  
That's 3 million, 3 hundred fifty thousand pounds of dust  
From Wyoming to Bellingham Bay

Say you want a coal train dollar in your hand  
We don't want that coal train cuttin' through our land  
We've got the might and we will fight  
We'll bring that whole thing down  
We don't want no coal train coming through our town

Papa don' want no  
Mama don' want no  
Baby don' need no coal train Whoo – ooo<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Wallbridge, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, WA. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>87</sup> BandZandt, "No Coal Train," Jan. 28, 2012, music video, 2:55, accessed June 1, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11Rfs5A44PI&t=3s>

For Robin, fighting this coal export was a no-brainer as public health would have been jeopardized. Writing music on behalf of her town meant protecting her children's health and health of her loved ones.<sup>88</sup>

Where your children are growing up and breathing, you can't have coal dust! My friends have babies who live near where the uncovered cargo trains run . . . There's a million things regarding the environment that you can get involved in, and you just keep getting involved doing the best you can because, why else are we here? So, it's the same thing with the Coal train, you must jump in and do as much as you can with whatever medium you are working with. Mine is music.<sup>89</sup>

Robin shared that local doctors, scientists, nurses and nutritionists also organized coalitions, attending rallies and sharing about the harmful domino effect and health hazards of coal. "I wrote the Coal Train song from a very basic standpoint. A woman goes outside and takes her clothes off the line and finds that they are dirty. And she just washed them . . ."<sup>90</sup> Robin said this has happened to her numerous times where she lives in rural Whatcom County. She uses a clothes line regularly and time and again has had to re-wash the clothes or sheets either due to coal train dust or her neighbors burning plastic, among other things.

I live out in the county toward the mountain, and people don't understand. Don't get me wrong, I love my neighbors. We are world apart environmentally and politically, yet they would give me the shirt off their back . . . But they don't think about how everything we do affects the air around us. I have gone to them and said, 'I really wish you wouldn't burn plastic because it smells bad and now, I have to go and re-wash all my clothes.' It's the same thing as the Coal train . . . I

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<sup>88</sup> Robin Wallbridge, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, WA. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

understand it is a livelihood for people and I understand that forward motion is slow, and everyone is moving forward at their own pace. But there are some things that are no brainers such as children being able to breathe.<sup>91</sup>

Robin went on to tell me how she has seen a dramatic increase of asthmatic students at Kendall Elementary School since the coal trains that run into Canada began. She couldn't imagine how the proposed coal trains would do to increase the asthma case. She told me of the stark divide in Whatcom County between environmentalists and non-environmentalists. In the rural areas, health concerns were secondary to the allure of employment opportunities that the coal lobby promised. I asked if she or her band had faced opposition as they presented facts about the export in their song.

There is opposition at times. We sang this song at a public event, and one of my band members' old bosses came up and said, "*if I knew you were going to sing that kind of song, I never would have hired you at the school.*" He was an old school superintendent. Most of the time 90% of the people are on board, but there might be a few in the audience that don't feel that way. You have to balance it, and sometimes you just have to stand up and say, *these are true facts*. The 360,000 pounds of dust, *that* came off the *actual* railroad website, *not* some rhyme out of my head. This song was not a throw away, it was facts from the railroad website, not from a site that is particularly against the railway or something. I do occasionally step on someone's toes, and I hate it when I am misunderstood, so I'll put forth the effort to make it very clear. And if I overstep, I overstep . . . But something like this (the coal train), I know I'm not overstepping. It's important for this planet, and this planet needs to have caretakers . . . When it comes to this aspect (Mother Nature), I'm not backing down . . . There's the aspect that the land is my sacred brother, and the land is my family, and I don't break my family . . . That's really important . . .<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Wallbridge, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, WA. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Robin has a graceful way of navigating the divide that exists between what locals refer to as “loggers versus tree huggers.” One of the ways she does this is by choosing soundscapes or tunes that could be attractive to non-environmentalists or people on both sides of the issue. Robin’s strategy with the sound of the song was to make her listeners recall other train songs in order that its familiarity may make them stop and listen.

I love train songs. For example, “City of New Orleans.” It was my intention, to achieve that twangy sound, because people may start listening and be attracted to it before they even know what it’s about. It wasn’t intentionally anthemic at the start. But the song did become anthemic. I like anthemic music because it brings people to their feet when there’s a good reason. We played the song at the beginning of the movement, at a big rally at the Squalicum Boathouse, and it was so well attended that we could not fit all the people inside. People were just so jazzed to stop this export. I guess that’s why the drummer, Chuck, wanted me to write this, because he knew this event was starting, and the kick off was approaching. Also, it has to be accessible sound wise. I try to make music accessible to those who wouldn’t normally want to listen to it. The “No Coal Train” song was not a hard song. People could sing along and be a part of it and participate. The simpler the song, the better. Three different documentaries picked up our song and used it. And I said, you guys want to use it, *use it*. It’s *free*, it’s for everyone. As Woodie Guthrie said, “folk music belongs to the folks.”<sup>93</sup>

The theme of giving surged out of Robin. However, in addition to her use of facts in the lyrics, being cognizant of health concerns, overcoming opposition, and strategic application of sound, using music as a medium for science to reach children drives her mission the most. With her own children, she has taught them since infancy to be environmentally responsible. During our interview, Robin explained how she and her children would walk the ditches collecting litter as a weekend activity. “The children are

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<sup>93</sup> Wallbridge, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, WA. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

our future! If we don't teach them, there's no hope!"<sup>94</sup> Robin is also trying to create awareness through songs at Kendall Elementary where she works. She said, "sure we beat the coal export, but this wasn't the first nor will it be the last that time big business tries something like this."<sup>95</sup>

She was adamant; if we want the environment to have future protectors, we have to invest in our children's understanding of the world around them.

Music is the leveler. Kids can memorize music way better than they can memorize facts. So, put the facts in the music. Kids are sponges. I have kindergartners and even the shy kids who are not as willing to participate would get up if music was involved. Kids just get it. Does every kid think clean water is good? Yes . . . It's just factual. Without exception. Music helps kids know the facts on how to preserve their future. You ask the kids, "do you think it's ok that this dirt is in the air?" And they all say "no," because they know instinctively that it's wrong. They don't have any politics or financial investiture . . . So you ask, "Do you think it's ok that those mama whales had plastic in their breast milk, so their babies couldn't drink clean milk?" The kids are all horrified. So, we need to help kids understand that these environmental realities *are* horrifying and that they are the future.<sup>96</sup>

Another important theme was community. Robin credits music making with bringing the community together, both with Cherry Point and in general.

Music helps solidify the community. We are one solid group of people and we can do this. And when there are little victories, that's great. And when there is defeat, you have someone to be heartbroken with. You know, when you sing, you can hold hands with a stranger and it's not creepy or weird, there is unification in singing together. It's building the bridges.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Wallbridge, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, WA. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

I asked her how she thinks music making builds bridges, and what she thinks it does to the mind and soul of those participating? Robin answered that she has witnessed the transformation that takes place in someone when they participate in music. They can go into a concert, public forum, or jam session tired, jaded and worn out and leave ready to accomplish anything, and feeling renewed. Specifically, Robin explains how music helps restore youthful fervor:

Participating in music helps people remember the way they felt when they were eighteen and powerful, knowing they could make change. People get older and more bitter and jaded, maybe less likely to battle the issues, thinking change can't happen. But music helps remind us that we don't have to be jaded, we are still going strong. I try to teach the kids about how folk musicians were the ones that got things done. You know Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Woodie Guthrie . . . They all said what needed to be said. So that is where change happens. Truth on the wings of music.<sup>98</sup>

Making music then, restores adult's belief in the ability to change things, and for children, it helps them realize what will be important as they traverse life. When asked how she views herself within the community, Robin says,

I consider myself a musical activist. Enviro-rock/pop or eco-pop. I don't have a giant platform to state my case, but I have music. Music can almost be insidious, music can creep in where other things can't, it has a way of getting through people's cracks.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Wallbridge, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, WA. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

Insidious. Such a word seems apt considering the unlikeliness of this triumph. Though the word often has negative connotation, music's role against the coal export seemed to subtly get inside the communities subconscious. Little by little, music making resulted in the formation of a group of locals who were determined to beat big business. This group was led and formed by people like Robin.

Robin, while primarily a song writer, also plays the guitar, drums, and used to play French horn. Though Robin is a strong and multi-faceted musician, she assumed a humble posture, noting that she is not a trained musician. Someone who used music so efficaciously in her community to better the world around her, doesn't consider herself a trained musician? I asked her what she meant by that, and she said she was referring to having not obtained a music degree. Yet, she plays multiple instruments and has mastered the art of three chord songs, singing the truth in a way that compels her listeners. Robin describes her relationship to music this way: "Music is the beat of my heart. I like lyrics and puzzles so that syllabically, all the words fit together perfectly in all the nooks and crannies. It has to resonate in my heart. For the Coal Train song, it resonated in every way, it was social, and a gift for the community."<sup>100</sup>

The theme of place was also evident in Robin's interview. Ironically, Robin's journey to Bellingham was led by her train hopping husband. He hopped trains because he didn't want to go the Vietnam war and he had a really low number.<sup>101</sup> He majored in

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<sup>100</sup> Wallbridge, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, WA. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>101</sup> The draft lottery for the Vietnam war was based on birthdates. For the drafting process, there were 366 blue plastic capsules containing birthdates placed into a deep glass container. The capsules were drawn by hand, opened individually and "then assigned to a sequence number starting from 001 until 366. The first

sculpture and art, and Whatcom County offered him a teaching job in the art department. He came to New York for a while and met Robin. They moved to Whatcom County in 1983. Robin shared how the Bellingham community she is involved with has a social understanding of what's important.

This place really formed me. My friends here are all very socially conscious. And we encourage each other to ask what motivates people to be socially conscious and how can we make music that appeals to people? How can we motivate those people who are not motivated by the heart? Perhaps it will be the pocket book? Regardless, we must make it appealing, or at least not devastating for the people who make their livelihood that way.<sup>102</sup>

One such Bellingham friend is Doug Sutton. He is the bass player in BandZadt who she refers to as her “multi-talented” friend, and someone who was an integral part to the song's evolution.

Doug Sutton is a high school band teacher at Mt. Baker High School. He plays many instruments and has dedicated his gifts towards giving back to his community from high school teaching to playing local gigs. Doug Sutton's main objective with his music and his unique skill set is to figure out how to put music together in an organized way that helps people understand the topic at hand. Doug explains:

The whole coal train export at Cherry Point was a big deal in the community. People were very passionate about it. There were those that wanted the big

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date draw was September 14 followed by April 24, which was assigned to 001 and 002 respectively. The drawing process continued until each day of the year was assigned to a lotter number. The lower the number was, the higher probability men with the corresponding birthday would be called to serve.” “The Vietnam Draft,” July 25, 2013, accessed January 2, 2019, <https://thevietnamwar.info/vietnam-war-draft/>.

<sup>102</sup> Robin Wallbridge, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, WA. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

business side of things, and they wanted it to happen, and some people were concerned about the environment. It was in everyone's consciousness. There were coal mines in Montana and Wyoming, and they wanted to move their coal on trains through Bellingham to end up at Cherry point. I remember hearing that our air and water can be polluted from the coal that is burning in China, and that is where a lot of this coal would be going, China. They wanted to build a place that could accept supertankers. So, people were concerned about the ethics of it. We talk about this stuff at band practice, and our drummer challenged our singer, Robin, to write about it. Chuck put the train aspect in there. Our guitarist, Kent, came up with the catchy lick. Soon after we recorded it, I took a walk along the waterfront, and a coal train went by. I had my Iphone so I videotaped it, and I took it home and I used it as the music video. I put the coal train song on top of it, and it was the perfect length for the recording.<sup>103</sup>

Doug explained that Robin is the social justice member of the group. Covering a specific controversial issue was new for the band, but the issue was pressing enough that they wrote about it. The recording studio they used said, "Hell, we'll donate the time for *this* song."<sup>104</sup> The issue was so pressing in the community that BandZandt didn't pay for the recording. "We got a lot of requests for the song. We played it at all kinds of events and fundraisers. We had some people not happy with us. But it didn't matter."<sup>105</sup>

Interested in the individual roles each person played in the resistance, like Robin, I also asked Doug what he felt his role was in the community. He described himself more as the interpreter of Robin's lyrics, to create the sound, harmonies and the chords. I then asked how he thought music plays a role in working for the environment:

Number one, it has to be a good song. It has to have the message, but it has to be a song that someone wants to listen to, sort of anthemic. Good music has got to be

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<sup>103</sup> Doug Sutton, interview by Julianne Olson, Fairhaven, WA. May 30, 2018.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

succinct. It's not a free form long poem. It needs to be narrowed down to an idea in a verse, and a chorus, and cut to the chase pretty quick in the bridge. Popular music can bring things to a point succinctly, it's the nature of the genre of three chord songs. Music is organized sound. Patterns. Patterns help people make sense of the world. Music that sticks with you has patterns. You get in to aleatoric music, and it doesn't stick with people. Aleatoric sound as protest music, isn't going to go anywhere . . . Patterns help people make sense of the world. If music is random and not very musical, it doesn't stick. The coal train song, it starts with a familiar sound of the train. The harmonica sets the tone for the train as well, sort of a whistle. Joe Hawley played the harmonica in the song. We just set this country groove. It's hard to beat a three chord song, it's the blues. These songs are pretty well complete in Robin's head when she writes them out. So, when I first heard this song, it was pretty well structured in her head. We just had to fill in the blanks and the voices.<sup>106</sup>

Doug is passionate about the way sound works in society.

There are plenty of songs with great lyrics that don't grab the listener. Was Shostakovich a socially conscious writer? Was his music protest music? What was it about his music, that galvanized some people? That was what people heard in the day, so they went to performances. What is in the sound that makes the public listen? What was popular twenty years ago when my parents turned on the radio? The twang in our song ("No Coal Train") makes the listener think of "Loretta Lynn" but it's a protest song. Gotta have a hook. It must have accessibility.<sup>107</sup>

The way in which Doug discussed "music as organized sound" was revealing. The songs' simple tune and steady beat transported pertinent information to the community. Writing a song with a hook that sticks in the listeners memory is key to gaining unanimity. If a song is inaccessible, how will it manifest a movement? Rather, if music making is going to create empathic response from its patrons, it must use a voice that speaks to the culture

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<sup>106</sup> Sutton, interview by Julianne Olson, Fairhaven, WA. May 30, 2018.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

of that place. Through intentionally protecting the environment and health concerns, creating strategic organizations of musical sounds, pouring into community and investing in children through musical activity, Robin and Doug Sutton, as well as BandZandt, were noteworthy contributors to defeating the coal export.

## CHAPTER V

### **LUMMI YOUTH CANOE FAMILY: A ONENESS WITH THE ECOSYSTEM— INTERVIEWS WITH JAE JEFFERSON AND BECKY KINLEY, AND A COMPARISON OF IDEOLOGY IN TWO CHILDREN’S BOOKS**

In December of 2016, my older sister, Kristi, was at a street fair in Bellingham, Washington. At the street fair, she noticed a booth where members from the Lummi Youth Canoe Family were selling CD’s, full of their original music, in order to raise funds so they may accept an invitation from the Maori’s to visit New Zealand and participate in an intertribal and international canoe journey.<sup>108</sup> Kristi purchased the CD as a gift for me. On the back of the CD, I found the name of Jae Jefferson as the composer and Becky Kinley as the organizer. I was able to contact them through the information provided on the CD. The CD was called “Nilh Tilh Tie Ne Schalangen” which means “This is Our Culture.”

When I contacted them to ask if they’d be willing to share insights with me regarding their contributions to defeating the coal export, both said they were willing to do anything they could to help. Jae Jefferson of the LYCF and Becky Kinley, Leader and Organizer of the LYCF spoke dynamically about their spirituality and culture. LYCF is an artistic and culture-based group that travels around the region via canoe journeys and internationally. Recently, they traveled to New Zealand to work with the Maori Nation

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<sup>108</sup> “Maori Source.” 2018. Accessed Jan 2, 2019, <http://maorisource.com/MaoriHistory.html>.

and establish integral indigenous culture global networks,<sup>109</sup> sharing their songs, stories, and art with other first nation tribes.

Jae is the primary song composer for LYCF. She explained to me that songs have been coming to her since childhood and she believes it is a spiritual gift and one she must use for the holistic well-being of the world around her. Jae spends a lot of time canoeing on the Salish Sea. She says out on the water is where the songs usually come to her and where she hears the melody in her head. Jae admits that when the songs come to her, she doesn't always know what they are for, but she writes them down and trusts that they will be used at the proper time and place. Furthermore, Jae expresses how songs represents the spirit of their tribes and the culture and their songs are inseparable.

Becky sings with the LYCF and her administrative duties range from recruiting youth to be involved in canoe journeys, culture activities and ceremonies to teaching youth how to be captains of the canoe. When they are captains, they learn to be leaders for those on board. Becky has a warm humor about her. They expressed how not all youth are willing to participate in cultural activities, but Jae told me that if anyone can get the youth to join the group, it is Becky. Becky laughs, "I don't know what it is, they just listen to me."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Frank Hopper, "The Last Real Indians. Lummi Youth Canoe Family, an Anchor for At-Risk Youth, Seeks Funds for New Zealand Trip." 2017. Accessed, Jan 2, 2019, <https://lastrealindians.com/lummi-youth-canoe-family-an-anchor-for-at-risk-youth-seeks-funds-for-new-zealand-trip-by-frank-hopper/lastrealindians>

<sup>110</sup> Jae Jefferson and Becky Kinley, interview by Julianne Olson, Lummi Nation Administration, June 6, 2018.

Becky and Jae are very active members of the team. In 2017, Becky spoke at a symposium Climate Change and Pacific Rim Ingenious Nations Project and expressed what the Lummi Youth Canoe Family is all about:

We are Lummi youth who believe that cultural identity teaches us and sustains us for today and tomorrow, with the guidance of our elders who have taught us Lummi values and disciplines. Through integration of the canoe, we have been able to find a sense of belonging. We have defined meaning to not only empower ourselves but help those around us. We started as a small group of five members and have grown, serving nearly 80 members, over the last five years. Those who meet the age limit of the program take with them invaluable skill sets, knowledge, goal setting, and experiences in preparing them for future challenges. Many of these graduates apply for scholarships and plan future careers in vocational and professional fields. We offer young people alternative ways of dealing with various types of mental health issues other than the use of drugs and alcohol. Under the direction of Lummi Behavioral Health Division and Lummi System of Care Expansion, the Canoe Family receives guidance in helping to reduce mental health stigma through the intergenerational teachings from our elders. Starting in 2007, our kids have traveled in seven canoe journeys and we have started to travel the Pacific Rim in cultural exchanges, so we can understand the success and struggles that other indigenous communities face in comparison to our community.<sup>111</sup>

After learning more about the work of LYCF, I asked them what part music played in defeating the Cherry Point Coal export, and how it helped protect and preserve the environment? Jae Jefferson replied,

I think it (music) played a big part, as did our culture. A lot of our culture and spirituality is song based. They are intertwined. As composers, we receive songs, and hear songs from the water, from the voices of our ancestors. The songs come to us when we need them. There are several different types of songs, or I guess you could say, 'genres,' throughout our lives. Various composers and tribes

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<sup>111</sup> "Climate Change and Indigenous Nations Project," The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington, 2017. Accessed, June 8, 2018, <https://sites.evergreen.edu/indigenousclimate/>

collaborated at these protests (against the export). They were songs that needed to come out during this specific time to help us. It's hard to explain the spirituality part of it, because there are no words. It's just who we are as Native people. The music played a huge role. I won't speak on behalf of the elders. But I really believe this was such a big win because it's our ancestral land, it's culture based. The songs, and dances and the revival of our culture in just the last few years played a big role in the defeat at Cherry Point. There is a song and dance for everything in our culture. Our songs are our culture. The music is a voice for the land.<sup>112</sup>

Becky corroborates,

Music brings its presence and dominates. It motivates you. One can sit and talk about things, but making music complements and adds emphasis and power. I think that's what the music does for the culture of Lummi. The song is in our blood. Looking at the environment makes you look at the spiritual context of the individual. The spirit is what keeps everything alive and settled. If you take music away from us, we go back to the framework of colonization and assimilation. Music is our voice. To recap, the spiritual context of the individual impacts the environment. Music is the movement of your soul. How I interpret Jae, and how I've been able to interpret the entire process, is that the environment is present and full of its beauty because of our spirit, our spirit is music, and that's the context of the environment for us. This is our ecosystem of life and that's how the gifts are projected and that's what makes them so strong. It's cyclical. I know that Native people are not the only ones that feel that, but in terms of Native song, it comes from a oneness with the ecosystem.<sup>113</sup>

Regarding Cherry Point, Jae exclaimed,

This area is our ancestral homeland. As previously mentioned, some of the songs that we received came off the water. The time that we spend out there, fishing, paddling on the canoe, it is like a meditation on the water. And so, some of the songs are received out on the water in our ancestral homelands. We receive these songs in order to be able to preserve this area. It is a huge deal for all of us. We've

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<sup>112</sup> Jae Jefferson and Becky Kinley, interview by Julianne Olson, Lummi Nation Administration, June 6, 2018.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

paddled through the Cherry Point waters and fished up there, and there are various reasons why and how this land and area ties into our songs and dance. During that whole time at Cherry Point, our tribal leaders were stepping up and doing the fight, and our focus was youth based . . . I know that during that time, when they were up there and doing reef net fishing and gathering at Cherry Point, our songs were sung at the gatherings. The “Lhaq’temish” (Lummi Welcome) song, and “Kwelengsen” (Eagle Song) were sung at the gatherings. There are several songs that are used, and singers sang the songs we composed.<sup>114</sup>

What is markedly rare about Becky and Jae’s description of music is how song is embedded in the culture. Songs are interlaced with the art of being human. In addition to songs, another way the tribes stay interconnected, is through Canoe Journeys. On the route to a chosen destination, the tribe will stop and camp at all the reservations on the way. When they arrive at the various reservations, they ask for permission to come ashore, they have a potlatch, share a banquet meal, and participate in song and dance.<sup>115</sup> Here, examples of place, voice and empathy are simultaneously cultivated. Traveling through water and requesting sanction to disembark their vessels and sojourn on to sacred land is an act of empathy and veneration of place. Together, they coalesce in voice and song, celebrating both the distinctiveness and rapport of their tribes.

LYCF participated in their first canoe journey in 1989, known as the “Paddle to Seattle,”<sup>116</sup> with only a few canoes. “Paddle to Seattle” was a protest against the state

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<sup>114</sup> Jefferson and Kinley, interview by Julianne Olson, Lummi Nation Administration, June 6, 2018.

<sup>115</sup> A potlatch, particularly in first nation individuals in North America and the Northwest, is an opulent ceremonial feast at which possessions are given away or destroyed to display wealth or enhance prestige Michael E., Harkin, Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, eds., vol. 17 (Oxford: Pergamon Press. 2001) “Potlatch in Anthropology” pp. 11885-11889.

<sup>116</sup> Reference to a very famous Nat. Film Board (of Canada) film, “Paddle to the Sea”.

because they were going to take away the tribe's water rights. Lead by Emmett Oliver, he revitalized the centuries old tradition of canoeing by organizing the "Paddle to Seattle" as part of Washington State centennial ceremony. "His dedication of launching this revival of tradition now continues more than a quarter century later as is now known as Canoe Journey."<sup>117</sup> Just recently, in July of 2018, there was a five-day journey called "Paddle to Puyallup. Honoring Our Medicine." Tribes north and south of the Salish Sea coast come together each year to celebrate this event. Estimated participation is over 100 canoes and over 10,000 people representing coastal tribes from all over the Pacific Northwest.<sup>118</sup> Each tribe will host the canoe journey for one to two days. The use of land and water territory is all about community connection.

Many of the tribes had up to four canoe families on the water at once. Now, canoe journeys have over one hundred canoes in the water, preserving and connecting cultures.

Jae solidifies:

We are reviving our culture with the paddling, song and dance, and getting our kids back in touch with who they are. A lot of that had been lost. Many of our kids live in the fast-modern world and we are slowly pulling them back into our culture. Lummi has thrived in song and dance these past few years, and many of our kids have become interested.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> "What Is Canoe Journey," Paddle to Puyallup News. July 15, 2018, Accessed August 01, 2018, <http://paddletopuyallup.org/about.php>.

<sup>118</sup> Karshner Museum and Center for Culture and Arts. "Puyallup Tribe of Indians hosting 2018 Canoe Journey, Power Paddle to Puyallup," July 16, 2018, *Indian Country Today*, accessed July 2, 2018, <https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/the-press-pool/puyallup-tribe-of-indians-hosting-2018-canoe-journey-power-paddle-to-puyallup-fm7b9VtLdkiCUG2yPfCICg/>

<sup>119</sup> Jefferson and Kinley, interview by Julianne Olson, Lummi Nation Administration, June 6, 2018.

Jae explained, the culture is reviving in part due to how Canoe Journeys have grown in familial participation. “My youngest sister was never really involved in the culture as much as we were, until she met Becky, and the canoe skipper, Justin, and somehow, they roped her into the culture.”<sup>120</sup> Becky laughs and says, “I don’t know what it is . . . They just listen I guess.”<sup>121</sup> Jae goes on, “we felt like we needed to support her as a family because she never took interest in it (the culture), but we didn’t want her to get lost in the things kids are doing these days.”<sup>122</sup> Jae emphasizes how important culture is, “it connects the community on various levels. There are a variety of ceremonies, fundraising, regalia making, canoe journeys, and we try hard to keep the kids busy and heavily involved in the rich culture.”<sup>123</sup> The kids, she explains, will be responsible for the future preservation of the culture.

As I processed the interview, a few concepts kept resonating. First, “a oneness with the ecosystem.” This was such a simple but world changing mindset. When one views oneself as a small piece of the greater ecosystem puzzle, accountability, then, ought to become the default. Day to day decisions would not be separate but rather connected because of this accountability. Secondly, they offered the idea that nothing is owned. At one point, while Jae was talking about composing, out of curiosity I asked, “did they sing *your* song at the Cherry Point protests.” As soon as the question left my

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<sup>120</sup> Jefferson and Kinley, interview by Julianne Olson, Lummi Nation Administration, June 6, 2018.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

mouth, Jae stopped me. “Well, I never think of the songs that come to me as *my* songs. They are not owned by me or anyone.”<sup>124</sup>

I welcomed the clarification because it was liberating. In capitalism, one writes songs and they get a copywrite in order to protect the brand or song. But in this interview with Jae, such an approach could not be further from the truth. What would the future look like if we all adopted this generous and winsome perspective? Rather, Jae uses the songs and her voice intrinsically for safekeeping and homage to the sacredness of place. Empathically, music making is an act of binding together the spiritual, environmental and cultural realities harmoniously.

Thirdly, they presented the notion of upholding the statutes of their ancestry by protecting the environment, speaking on her behalf, keeping the culture alive, staying connected with family and inviting them into the revival, as Jae did with her sister. Additionally, they shared an ideology of teaching the next generation to conserve Mother Earth by using music, preservation of culture, identity and traditions to help address current environmental threats. The children are our future, teaching them what ought to be preserved and why the succeeding generation depends on it is crucial. What Jae and Becky were sharing, this theme of preparing the children for the future so that they may defend Mother Earth, became even more evident to me through a First Nation children’s book, *Goodnight World*.

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<sup>124</sup> Jefferson and Kinley, interview by Julianne Olson, Lummi Nation Administration, June 6, 2018.

Becky invited me to the Lummi Stommish Water Festival that was taking place in the upcoming week at Lummi Nation on the Salish Sea. I was thrilled to attend, and when I arrived, the first thing that caught my eye was a stand selling children’s books. A book titled *Goodnight World* I found to be particularly noteworthy (Figure 2).

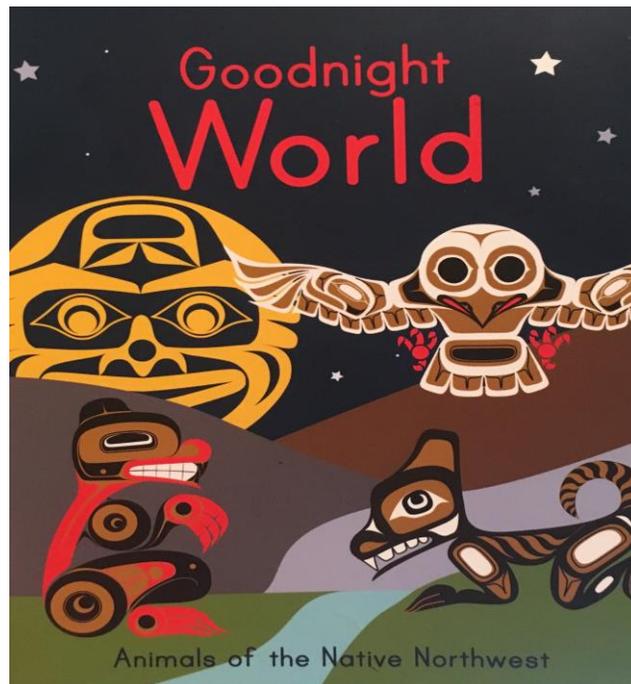


Figure 2. *Goodnight World: Animals of the Native Northwest*.<sup>125</sup>

It is a subversion of the famous of the 1947 children’s book by Margaret Wise Brown with illustrations by Clement Hurd, *Goodnight Moon*. As I read *Goodnight World*, I was startled. I could not help but notice the striking contrast and the different use of

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<sup>125</sup> Figure 2. Photo taken by author, Julianne Olson, of the book *First Nation and Native Artists. Goodnight World: Animals of the Native Northwest* (Vancouver: Native Northwest, 2014).

agency between *Goodnight World* and *Goodnight Moon*. Everything in *Goodnight World*, was alive and connected. Every being had a face. The moon, the sun, and the animals, were all interacting. Becky's concept pertaining to a "oneness with the ecosystem," is extremely intelligible in this children's book. Nothing is referred to as an object, or *owned*, just as Jae emphasized as an important belief in their culture. Nor is any creature without a face, a song, a dream or an emotion.

From the onset, children exposed to *Goodnight World*, would be able to draw conclusions that the ecosystem is fully alive and worthy of respect. I must reiterate, everything is *alive* in *Goodnight World*. None of the illustrations infer consumerism nor ownership of objects. Rather, the illustrations by First Nation Artists ignite the notion of a cyclical universe, where the sky relates to the sea, the sea to the animals and the animals to the sky. Everything is linked. "Goodnight wolves howling in harmony to the moon." (Figure 3).

The wolves and moon are singing in harmony, they are not separate entities, but in solidarity. "Goodnight owls keeping watch through the night." The owls are protecting the night. "Goodnight whales humming softly in the sea" (Figure 4). An important reference to music being made not *only* by humans, but by all living beings. "Goodnight birds singing each other to sleep" (Figure 5).

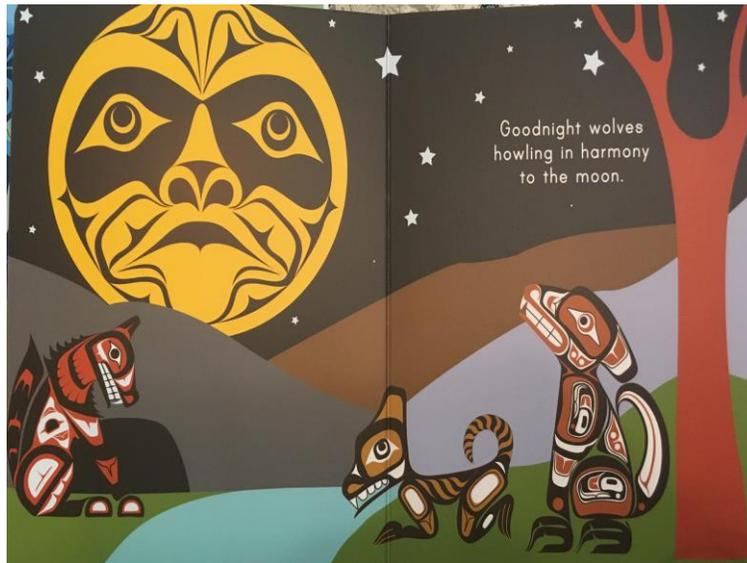


Figure 3. Goodnight Wolves Howling in Harmony to the Moon.<sup>126</sup>



Figure 4. Goodnight Whales Humming Softly in the Sea.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Figure 3. Photo taken by author, Julianne Olson, of the book First Nation and Native Artists. *Goodnight World: Animals of the Native Northwest Goodnight World: Animals of the Native Northwest* (Vancouver: Native Northwest, 2014).

<sup>127</sup> Figure 4. Photo taken by author, Julianne Olson, of the book First Nation and Native Artists. *Goodnight World: Animals of the Native Northwest Goodnight World: Animals of the Native Northwest* (Vancouver: Native Northwest, 2014).



Figure 5. Goodnight Birds Singing Each Other to Sleep.<sup>128</sup>

Children learn from infancy that, just as humans sing to one another, the birds participate in this melodic ritual as well. Musicking is woven into the narrative as a necessary action and a natural practice of life, not an activity. This creates a visceral understanding of how all creatures are connected and worthy of preservation and care. There are infinite cycles of connectivity in this book. If children were historically reared to accept the basic knowledge and understanding that we co-exist with the environment around us, and perceive how our choices affect our surroundings, be it positively or negatively, then perhaps we might be living in a much different reality? A reality where

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<sup>128</sup> Figure 5. Photo taken by author, Julianne Olson, of the book *First Nation and Native Artists. Goodnight World: Animals of the Native Northwest Goodnight World: Animals of the Native Northwest* (Vancouver: Native Northwest, 2014).

the largest coal export may never have been proposed, the North Dakota Pipeline wouldn't exist, seas would not be ridden with toxicity, nor would resident orcas be rapidly declining. Some may consider such rhetoric as utopian, but is it? Or is it simply conscientiousness?

In *Goodnight Moon*, a contrasting educative narrative is present in this iconic children's book. Only certain illustrations are presented as alive, there are few faces, and most of the expressions are muted. There are multiple references to objects. The book begins, "In the great green room, there was a telephone, and a red balloon." There is no face on the telephone or the red balloon. There is no movement or connection. There is simply a telephone, referred to as an object, which can safely be inferred to as an owned item, and a faceless red balloon. Items are not introduced in relation to one another. A few pages later Brown writes, "and a comb, and a brush, and a bowl full of mush, and a quiet old lady who was whispering, *hush*."<sup>129</sup> The only reference to sound is the elderly bunny asking for silence. Why, I wonder, did the illustrator choose to portray the old lady bunny as colorless? The following page reveals the young bunny with an expression of fear knowing they must be quiet.

My goal is not to factually prove if such a comparison is statistically viable, but to elicit ponderings about what children intellectually digest and how it might be shaping our present and future realities? Ponderings which, the First Nation artists who wrote

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<sup>129</sup> Margaret Wise Brown with illustrations by Clement Hurd, *Goodnight Moon* (Harper and Row, 1947).

*Goodnight World* understood, and Jae and Becky embody as they lead over forty youth into the future with Lummi Youth Canoe Family.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GREAT COAL TRAIN TOUR: INTERVIEW WITH DANA LYONS

Every movement has its minstrel. The unions had Woody Guthrie. The peace movement had Phil Ochs. The environmental movement has Dana Lyons.

—Captain Paul Watson, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society<sup>130</sup>

As discussed in the introduction, it was Mark Pedelty's book, *A Song to Save the Salish Sea: Musical Performance as Environmental Activism*, that led me to this research topic. Pedelty dedicated chapter one of his book to Dana Lyons titled, *Bellingham's Dana Lyons: The Artful Activist*. Once I read Pedelty's account of Dana's story of being an environmental musical activist, I knew I needed to interview him about Cherry Point. I went to his website, [www.cowswithguns.com](http://www.cowswithguns.com) to find his contact. I had the pleasure of researching his zany songs and learned that Dana's claim to fame was through his humorous song, "Cows with Guns," a song which reached top 40 in the U.S. in 1996 and was wildly popular in Australia.<sup>131</sup> On Dana's website, he states this song came to exist because of a strange dream he had one night in 1994 where he was "visited by the great cosmic cow."<sup>132</sup> In the dream, there were "bovine revolutionaries who had just taken over

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<sup>130</sup> Dana Lyons, "Dana Lyons Background: Press." 2012, accessed January 7, 2019. <https://www.cowswithguns.com/old-cowswithguns-web/danabackground.html>

<sup>131</sup> Dana Lyons, "The Story behind Cows with Guns." 2012, accessed May 31, 2018. <https://www.cowswithguns.com/old-cowswithguns-web/Cowstory.html>

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

Omaha in the most significant defeat of the US military since Red Cloud dusted Custer.”<sup>133</sup> He said the tune was “country-esque” and he used an “overabundance of weak rhymes and low blow puns.”<sup>134</sup> Little did Dana know, this song would become his most popular and provide the fiscal resources for many of his environmental music tours.<sup>135</sup>

While Dana habitually uses humor in his songs, “Cows with Guns” is only a glimpse into the incredible artistic activist he is. In fact, Dana’s “Great Coal Train Tour,” was a key factor in the fight against big business. Furthermore, Dana has taken dozens of tours around North America and abroad creating awareness about a variety of environmental issues.

When Dana replied to my email, he was more than happy to meet with me. Our first interview was by phone as he was in Australia singing his song “Cane Toad Muster,” on tour about Australian’s ruthless invasive species, cane toads.<sup>136</sup> Our second interview took place while hiking Chuckanut Mountain in Whatcom County.

During our first conversation I asked Dana to tell me about his history with musical environmental activism and how he got started. Dana moved to Washington

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<sup>133</sup> Lyons, “The Story behind Cows with Guns.”

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Lyons, interview by Julianne Olson, phone call, April 10, 2018.

<sup>136</sup> Dana Lyons, “Cane Toad Muster,” May 26, 2013, music video, 3:30, accessed January 7, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6n0PUbV0Q\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6n0PUbV0Q_U)

Details about cane toads: “Cane toads have been linked to the decline and extinction of several native predator species in the Northern Territory and Queensland, including the northern quoll. Their toxin is strong enough to kill most native animals that normally eat frogs or frog eggs, including birds, other frogs, reptiles and mammals.”

“Cane Toads,” Office of Environment and heritage, July 28, 2019, accessed January 7, 2019, <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/pest-animals-and-weeds/pest-animals/cane-toads>

State from upstate New York in the late 1980's. His brother was working with Greenpeace in the Pacific Northwest. So, Dana decided to move out as well. His brother had told him how the Hanford Facility in Washington was going to be used as a nuclear dumpsite. As a result of this news, Dana wrote a song called "Our State is a Dumpsite."<sup>137</sup> He sent the song to Green Peace and other environmental groups and Dana said that it was this song that really got him started in his environmental music activism pursuits. Primarily, however, Dana used "Our State is a Dumpsite," on a tour he and his brother took, known as the I-90 tour. Dana explains how it all began:

The Interstate 90 Tour was my first major tour. I think it was in January of 1986. This was the longest tour of my issue tours. That was the tour that set the mold for the other tours that I've done. Basically, with the help of friends, we took a 55-gallon drum and put a big radioactive symbol on it and then put a big X through (meaning "not-radioactive") and built a little rack for my brother's Buick station wagon that we could put this barrel on. We drove from Boston to Seattle and then on down to Olympia, on Interstate 90. We stopped in every major city, or basically every major television market all the way from Boston to Seattle and Olympia. An hour outside the given city, we'd call every TV, Radio and Newspaper and say, "In one hour we are holding a press conference in your city. We're the car with the fake barrel of radioactive waste on it. Also, did you know that there's going to be a truck full of nuclear waste coming through your town every ninety minutes for the next twenty years?" The response was amazing. We were co-sponsored by the International Firefighters' Union, which was concerned about the hauling of nuclear waste to Hanford. The Department of Energy said that one truckload of nuclear waste would go through every town every 90 minutes for 25 years. We would hold press conferences in front of schools and hospitals, and at toll booths. People didn't know this was going to be happening. Part of the purpose of the tour was to create awareness on the route, not just in Washington State. We got so much media, we were on twenty-five tv stations and countless little newspapers and big newspapers and the media would call the

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<sup>137</sup> Dana Lyons, "Our State is a Dumpsite" April 23, 2009, music video, 3:18, accessed April 9, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8pOjZamifk>

police and fire stations and ask them about it, and we were supported by the local police and fire, hospitals and schools, because nobody knew. We were these two young brothers dressed up in our cowboy hats and we probably looked pretty silly, but people wanted to know, and we were going to tell them. An early stop, I think it was up in Buffalo, New York, at the New York State Freeway stop. We pulled off right next to the toll booth stop because we thought “Oh this will be a great camera angle for the TV.” You know, with our fake nuclear barrel and the New York State Freeway in the back. We were only there for a couple minutes when these three state trooper cars pull over, and I thought, ‘oh no, this may be the end of our tour.’ They said, “What you are doing?” and we explained. We told them what we had told everyone else, “Did you know about the truck load of nuclear waste every 90 minutes?” Then, they walked away from us and chatted amongst themselves. When they came back, they said “Listen, we really want to thank you for what you’re doing.” They told us that they had lost two friends, state troopers, who were killed in a terrible accident by a truck filled with chemical waste which was not marked properly. Normally, you can see whether a truck is loaded with petroleum, chemicals, radioactivity, or whatever; there’s a little sign on the trucks and this truck wasn’t labeled, and the troopers didn’t know, they got up close, and they were killed because of that. So, they really appreciated what we were doing. They said, “before you do your press conference, we are going to shut down the whole toll area, so you can get the best camera angle on the New York State Freeway.” They closed six lanes. I couldn’t believe it. What I realized is that with hard work, facts and a human-interest story, you could draw attention to a serious issue that wasn’t necessarily known by the public.<sup>138</sup>

I asked Dana if he faced opposition on this tour. In true comical Dana fashion, he said,

Well, as we drove along, the people who were in favor of the dump would give us the finger. The people who liked what we were doing would give us a thumbs up. So, we kept track, and called it the finger poll. The news media loved it. We would tell the news media where the finger poll was. At the end of the tour, the poll was 20% the finger and 80% thumbs up. In the final election it was 84% yes, so our finger poll was in the margin of error.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Lyons, interview by Julianne Olson, phone call, April 10, 2018.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

While some thirty years have passed since the I-90 tour, and Dana has journeyed on many similar awareness-creating tours for various environmental issues, one his most successful was The Great Coal Train Tour. While on this tour, he promoted awareness about the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers plan to construct the largest coal export in North American History. He wrote a song for the tour called, “Sometimes,” stating in the chorus that “Sometimes the people stand up for a reason.” Dana told me how people standing up in solidarity with an optimistic outlook is key in winning an issue. Dana shared,

For the Great Coal Train Tour, I did a seventy-five show tour for the proposed coal train, from the coal mines in Eastern Montana, and Wyoming to Bellingham . . . They were going to try to build six coal ports in Washington and Oregon, and I did shows along that train route. All these little communities that felt isolated and felt like they couldn’t beat big business needed support. There is strength in numbers, and one person at a time can help create a winning attitude. You must believe you are going to win, in order to win an issue. I’ve worked on some issues that I thought were going to be an easy win, but if the community is baffled by their adversaries and they think they are going to lose, then the community will lose. However, a small minority can believe they are going to win, and still win. It can go both ways. But to win an issue, you have to have a winning attitude.<sup>140</sup>

As he disclosed his stories with me, Dana continued to discuss the importance of a winning outlook. Unlike the other artists I had interviewed, he really sees his environmental pursuits as a matter of winning or losing. Dana views it this way because when an environmental movement loses, the world inevitably becomes a worse place for both the local and global community. I asked Dana what part he feels he plays in winning

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<sup>140</sup> Lyons, interview by Julianne Olson, phone call, April 10, 2018.

a movement. He told me that his role is to help create winning attitudes about what can seem like an insurmountable environmental battle. He shared,

I am a glorified cheerleader, the kindling in the fire. I'm a performer, educator and entertainer. So, I felt that the best thing that I contributed was to go from town to town and tell people what everyone else was doing, and at every show I said, "I think we are going to win, and this is how we're going to win." It created a winning attitude. There were so many players. The Native Americans in our region played a huge and pivotal role. The Lummi Nation in particular. We had two thousand people regularly showing up at public hearings, the environmental groups all did an outstanding job. Our elected officials mostly did an excellent job too. The Lummi Indians played a much larger role. I feel like the role I played (as a musician) was helpful. I wear the title of being a glorified cheerleader proudly. Getting the people going is important.<sup>141</sup>

Dana continued to describe how, with the coal train situation, no one he talked with in the community wanted the export to be built, but they also didn't believe they could beat Gateway Pacific. Dana explained,

What was so fun about this tour is that it was the first tour I've ever done in my life where a vast majority of the public was against this coal train. It was also the first tour I've ever done, where people at my shows regularly would come up and self-identify as democratic or republican or conservative or libertarian. It was a fascinating mix of people who were all against the coal export train. One of my favorite quotes on the tour was from a self-identified libertarian who came up after the show and slapped me on the back, and said, "You know Dana, I don't know about this climate change stuff, but we're sure going to stop that coal train." In the end, there were six proposed coal ports and we beat all six.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Lyons, interview by Julianne Olson, phone call, April 10, 2018.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

Throughout the interview, Dana kept coming back to the ideas of gathering community through music, creating winning attitudes and helping people not feel isolated. There was an underlying theme of music and empathy. With this in mind, I asked him how he goes about writing his songs:

First, is just the entertainment value of the song. Does it make people laugh, does it move them, or inspire them? Does it help educate them about a story? Beyond that, I ask if the song is anthemic? Does the song capture the central story or argument of a given issue? A song can serve as an affirmation of a group of people's beliefs. It can strengthen community. As I mentioned earlier, as a songwriter and an entertainer, I am usually not too much more than a glorified cheerleader, but that's a very important role I believe. Because, you know, there's the greater community who wants to save this piece of habitat or save this animal, or stop a mine . . . And people, when they are fighting with large corporations or large governments, naturally feel isolated and can think, *oh how can I possibly beat this big entity?* But a well written song can linger in someone's mind, and they can put it on, and have a moment of inspiration when they're feeling down. And I believe it can help lift a movement as it struggles along. Usually to change some policy or to save a place or a mine or something, it takes many years. It's kind of this ongoing cultural chapter that the song plays a role in.<sup>143</sup>

When he said a song can play a role in "this ongoing cultural chapter," I couldn't help but think of Eunice Rojas's idea in *Sounds of Resistance* that a movement is rarely comprised of a monolithic whole but rather specific moments in history.<sup>144</sup> Dana's song, then, was a thread in the tapestry of the greater movement. His song, "Sometimes," which he wrote specifically against the export, really speaks to his community and the visceral realities that would ensue had the export been constructed. The lyrics are below:

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<sup>143</sup> Lyons, interview by Julianne Olson, phone call, April 10, 2018.

<sup>144</sup> Eunice Rojas and Lindsay Michie, *Sounds of Resistance: The Role of Music in Multicultural Activism*, Volume 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Publishing, 2013), 165.

Sometimes

by Dana Lyons

When you feel the ground a'rumbling  
When you hear the great horn sound  
The big steel wheels a'grindin  
The three lights bearing down  
When a sound that once seemed friendly  
Now is tearing at your heart  
There's no backing down

Sometimes the people stand up for a reason

When you see the long train coming  
And it's coming to your town  
And it's carrying the poison  
In a hundred thousand cars  
And you hear your daughter coughing  
When it wakes her in the night  
There's no backing down

When you know it drops the value  
Of every home in town  
When you know the kids with asthma  
Jumping rope on the playground  
When you know we're all against it  
And our voices do not count  
There's no backing down

Sometimes the people stand up for a reason

When they hit you with the sales pitch  
While they're buying off the state  
While the feds are gonna tell you  
That the towns don't have the right  
To block interstate commerce  
To protect your family's health  
There's no backing down  
When every mom in Billings  
Down through to Bellingham  
When every doc and teacher  
When every mayor stands

When every child who lives  
Within five miles of the track  
There's no backing down

Sometimes the people stand up for a reason<sup>145,146</sup>

Like BandZandt's, "No Coal Train," "Sometimes" uses just a few chords. Yet, its chorus has a hook that asks this listener to "stand up." As Dana refers to himself as a 'glorified cheerleader,' his statement of "there's no backing down," ignites the notion that losing is not an option. This song expresses how neither business conglomerates nor the federal officials can stop an impassioned community standing up for a noteworthy reason. Dana explains another way in which he believes the music he makes works to connect people.

I try to specialize on issues that people with environmental leanings are not necessarily aware of. Like people say to me quite often, 'oh you're preaching to the choir,' and my response to that is, "yes, I am preaching to the choir, but the choir can't sing unless they've learned the music first." My organizing tenet is first, you organize 'the choir' to sing the piece of music. Second, the choir shares the music with their friends and family. Third, you win. The choir is the community. If you get a core group of people talking about it, and then their circle learns about it, then you are able to win an issue.<sup>147</sup>

With Dana's contagious songs and spirit, I was naturally curious about his musical background. Dana told me that he started to play the piano when he was seven

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<sup>145</sup> Dana Lyons, "Sometimes," Sept 12, 2012, music video: 4:43, accessed April 10, 2018  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9w6NvixeYTI>

<sup>146</sup> Dana Lyons, "Sometimes," 2012, accessed April 10, 2018,  
<https://cowswithguns.com/product/music/sometimes-the-coal-train-song/>

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

and guitar lessons by age twelve. He said his guitar teacher encouraged him to write songs and join bands. Dana shared how his mom used to walk around the house and sing funny songs, “that’s probably where I get my humor,” he says. Dana says Woodie Guthrie and Pete Seeger were two of his biggest influences. He believes that Pete Seeger brought community together and created a winning attitude in songs like, “We Shall Overcome,” a song which Dana refers to as the “ultimate movement song.” Beyond musical inspiration, Dana says he tries to practice what he preaches as well.

Dana lives in a small garage in the woods outside Bellingham. There, he has shelves of protest posters made of recycled paper from his various environmental endeavors, CDs, self-made hats, and memorabilia which remind him of his past successes and journeys (picture below with his “No Coal Train” sign). He lives simply, and his life is fully dedicated to fighting for the environment with the music he makes. Dana is constantly pursuing new issues and told me he plans to keep fighting environmental degradation for as long as his body allows. His passion for the power of local and grassroots movements are key in his daily ambitions.

There’s a tendency for local musicians to discount their own music, myself included, because we are largely locked out of radio and the bigger music industry. But local music is very important, and if a person or a group writes a certain song that captures the imagination of even a sub community in a town, it can help unify and motivate and bring people together. That is core in grass roots organizing. Grassroots organizing means bringing people from a neighborhood or a block or a town together to work on something. They’ll sing that song before having their potluck dinner or before they have their meeting to help figure out what they are going to do. It can provide some of the glue in working on issues.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Dana Lyons, interview by Julianne Olson, Fairhaven, WA, July 3, 2018.

Dana stated that he and his fellow local artists often can encourage one another to keep making purpose-driven art. For example, Dana said that he really thinks his friend Robin Wallbridge's song "No Coal Train," kept the movement rolling and people were singing it everywhere. Whereas Robin Wallbridge shared how Dana is the "guy to talk to about music and the environment." There is a mutual comradery and respect between these local musicians. Additionally, Dana often meets with Lummi tribal leader Jewel James and attends meetings at Lummi to see how he can stand in solidarity with issues they are facing. Dana is a strong force in Bellingham. At every interview I held with fellow local artists, each said "make sure you talk to Dana Lyons about this topic."<sup>149</sup>

On our second interview, Dana had just returned from his tour in Australia where he was singing about the dangers of the cane toad infestation. When we met, he wanted to go on a hike and tell me about his plan to fight the refineries with Lummi Nation leaders and share some more thoughts about how the locals beat big business regarding the coal export. However, one of the most fascinating things Dana shared that day was not only how musicians contributed to defeating the coal export, but also how making music impacts movements:

Many activist organizers and academics do not understand how music and the arts affect political struggle. The activists and political leaders who *do* understand, they realize that music helps validate people's feelings. Everyone feels alone, but if there's a song about it, people think, *oh maybe this is actually important*. It helps bring people together and creates joy and fun and some reason for social gathering. So, music and the arts, all the arts, is part of what I call people power. So, that's really the core element of why music matters. This is why I encourage

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<sup>149</sup> Lyons, interview by Julianne Olson, Fairhaven, WA, July 3, 2018.

other musicians and artists to do their thing and write their songs and get them up on YouTube. If a song goes on YouTube and 200 people watch it from your town, and maybe 30 of those people are moved by it, and maybe five people say *you know, I could do more*, then you have a chance to win. All you need to win on many of these issues is one or two people shifting and most people don't realize that. That's how music and the arts fits (sic) into all of this. The best way to teach is through stories and song. All hunter gatherer, spoken word cultures, would gather around the fire in the cold months, and the grandparents would tell stories and sing songs, and that's how humanity learns. It's culture and it's in our DNA. The modern song and stories are the television or the internet, where we are hearing someone else's story. But that's the primary function of music; story telling. The culture is our song, environment is the stage.<sup>150</sup>

Dana is a witty educator, artist, and entertainer. His humor drives him and helps make him accessible to his audiences. As Mark Pedelty suggests, "Dana creates performance contexts that help audiences understand issues and ecological connections intellectually as well as emotionally."<sup>151</sup> Or as Dana puts it, "people can only handle so much doom and gloom, you need to make them laugh."<sup>152</sup> So, how might we understand Dana's musical approach in comparison to environmental musical activists that came before him? In *A Song to Save the Salish Sea*, Pedelty offers a helpful perspective in a brief comparison between Woodie Guthrie and Dana Lyons:

A final word is in order concerning how we might understand Dana's music from a comparative perspective. Musicologists, ethnomusicologist, and cultural studies scholars put a fair amount of effort into characterizing the musicians they study, and for good reason. For example, based on his study of Woody Guthrie's Columbia Cycle, John Gold describes Guthrie as a "social documentarist." Previously, Guthrie had been described mainly as a musical activist involved in the struggles of workers and poor farmers, a fiction he actively perpetuated in his

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<sup>150</sup> Lyons, interview by Julianne Olson, Fairhaven, WA, July 3, 2018.

<sup>151</sup> Pedelty, 53.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

art. However, as Gold accurately points out, in truth Guthrie was more an observer than instigator . . . Like Guthrie, Dana is an extremely adept lyricist, imbuing his comedic lyrics with point and poignancy. However, unlike Guthrie, Dana is a movement musician, an artist who turns musical tours into ecopolitical campaigns. Perhaps more importantly, Dana show us the joy in creating a better world.<sup>153</sup>

One of the ways Dana continues to create “a better world” is through his current tour, fittingly titled, *The Great Salish Sea Tour: A Concert Tour for the Orcas*. He will release his ninth album which shares the tour’s title. He will travel throughout the greater Salish Sea Region, from as far north as Prince Rupert and Haida Gwaii down to the south end of the Columbia River Gorge.<sup>154</sup> He will be raising awareness about the “increase of oil, coal and natural gas through the Salish Sea, and the threat posed to the Salish Sea’s marine environment, our regional economy, and to us all.”<sup>155</sup> He will be working with individuals from British Columbia, Washington and Oregon to try to “stop highly explosive oil trains, tar sands pipelines and toxic coal trains and dangerous liquid natural gas exports.”<sup>156</sup> Dana’s hope with this tour is that it will help “increase local audiences’ cultural and ecological identification with the Salish Sea.”<sup>157</sup>

In closing, in Dana’s final stanza of the title song of his new album, *The Great Salish Sea*, much of what Dana’s musical activism is about can be summed up in these

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<sup>153</sup> Pedelty, 67-68.

<sup>154</sup> Dana Lyons, “Great Salish Sea Tour,” 2012, accessed Jan 1, 2019, <https://cowswithguns.com/the-great-salish-sea-tour/>

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Pedelty, 53.

few lines. Ultimately, Dana cares about gathering communities, standing up bravely, and rising up to protect the environment.

*The Great Salish Sea* by Dana Lyons

Final verse:

Oh hush hear the voice from both sides of the border  
The rallies, the blockades, the brave sons and daughters  
The people speak out for protecting the water  
The people are rising to come save the orca<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Dana Lyons, "The Great Salish Sea," Sept 25, 2015, music video, 6:20, accessed January 2, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=towlRuXK8FU>

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Most people appreciate the beauty and meaning in music, but we sometimes forget how important music is to our collective lives. As these talented artists have demonstrated time and again, when it comes to preserving the planet community, or sea, nothing is more essential than music . . .<sup>159</sup>

The roles musicians play in environmental movements are vital to activism. My objective has been to use real-world examples to provide musicians, students, and other citizens “with new ideas regarding how we might advocate for more effective environmental policies, institutions and actions.”<sup>160</sup> Much can be gleaned from local artists and grassroots movements by academic communities. These artists are daily connecting the dots between society, their musicking celebrates diversity and communicates across social borders. They showed me that music making creates a platform where diverse voices merge as one for a greater goal, “a call to action. Because inaction and neutrality is siding with the oppressor. There is no movement without songs to sing.”<sup>161</sup>

Harlan James, BandZandt, Lummi Youth Canoe Family, and Dana Lyons, created a ripple effect within the community that aided a triumphant and unlikely victory. As Lee

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<sup>159</sup> Pedelty, 258.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>161</sup> Ale Blakely, interview by Julianne Olson, email correspondence, July 25, 2018.

Higgins stated, “community music is an expression of cultural democracy.”<sup>162</sup> “Culture of the people, by the people, for the people.”<sup>163</sup> Each of the artists discussed used their voices to create democracy within their shared culture and place. In Bellingham, on July 16, 2011, the community’s confidence in democracy was shaken to its core. This was the day when the Whatcom County Planning and Development Services (PDS) received a report from Gateway Pacific, informing them of unpermitted clearing at the site of the largest proposed coal export in North America.<sup>164</sup> The people’s voices were not considered. For many in the community, their sense of place seemed to be altered overnight without any vote or consent from the public. However, local musicians joined forces with the Lummi Nation to create their own cultural democracy by connecting the community through song and reclaiming the Salish Sea region from environmental mayhem.

As Denis Von Glahn says in *Sound of Place*, “Places can inspire art, and that musical responses can . . . evoke those places . . . artists have responded to their environs for centuries and, in the process, communicated essential values of their cultures . . .”<sup>165</sup> The artists discussed each “responded to their environs,” and through their songs, communicated the values of their culture. Harlan’s lyrics proclaimed, “say no to the coal

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<sup>162</sup> Lee Higgins, *Community Music: In Theory and in Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012). 32.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>164</sup> Dave Gallagher, “Developers Withdraw Coal Terminal Applications, Ending Project,” Feb 9, 2017, *Bellingham Herald*, accessed July 23, 2018, <http://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article131783149.html>

<sup>165</sup> Denise Von Glahn, *The Sound of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (Northeastern University Press, 2003), 2-3.

train!”<sup>166</sup> outside Trader Joe’s as Robin sang, “Mama don’t want your coal dust!”<sup>167</sup> at public forums. Meanwhile Lummi Youth Canoe Family offered meditative songs at the construction site itself, praying to their ancestors for protection. All the while, Dana went from town to town along the proposed train route singing his lyrics, “sometimes the people stand up for a reason.”<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, while the artists used their voices and music to protect the environment and create cultural democracy, they also used music making as a vehicle for empathy.

When Harlan sang, “let’s unite for Mother Nature’s Rights, for our children to survive,” he invited the listener to have empathy with the environment and the future reality of children. When Dana asks his audience to think of what it would be like to “hear your daughter coughing, when it wakes her in the night,” he is requesting empathy and understanding for the health of everyone surrounding the proposed export. Robin provokes empathy when she sings, “don’t want no coal dust to take the baby’s breath,” because she is beckoning her listeners to think what life would be like if the export existed. Lummi Youth Canoe Family’s entire mission embodies empathy as they try to understand their youth and ancestors with every musical or cultural endeavor. Felicity Laurence reminds us, “music can enable people to feel each other’s suffering and recognize each other’s humanity . . . Music has potential to enable, catalyze and

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<sup>166</sup> Harlan James, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, June 11, 2018. From the song “Mother Nature’s Rights,” by Harlan James. See Chapter 2.

<sup>167</sup> Robin Wallbridge, interview by Julianne Olson, Bellingham, WA, June 5, 2018. From the song “No Coal Train,” By BandZandt. See Chapter 3.

<sup>168</sup> Dana Lyons, “Sometimes,” 2012, accessed April 10, 2018, <https://cowswithguns.com/product/music/sometimes-the-coal-train-song/> From the song “Sometimes,” by Dana Lyons. See Chapter 5.

strengthen empathic response, ability and relationship, and that is this potential capacity which lies at the core of music's function."<sup>169</sup>

So, what is the reader to do with these stories? My hope is that this document may create a renewed sense of action in my fellow musicians. Mark Pedelty offers that the "arts and music play roles every bit as important as science and policy."<sup>170</sup> A concept that Dr. Karl Paulnack, a world-renowned classical pianist, also understood when he challenged a class of incoming music majors with the following:

As a music major . . . You're here to become a sort of therapist for the human soul, a spiritual version of a chiropractor, physical therapist, someone who works with our insides to see if they can get things to line up . . . I expect you not only to master music; I expect you to save the planet. If there is a future wave of wellness on this planet, of harmony, of peace, of an end to war, of mutual understanding, of equality, of fairness, I don't expect it will come from a government, a military force or a corporation . . . I expect it will come from the artists, because that's what we do.<sup>171</sup>

This research rejuvenated my own musicking with a new sense of purpose. The artists I interviewed reminded me just how effective, alive, contagious and compelling music is. How might we bridge the gap between academia and those singing songs on behalf of the environment at a public forum or outside a Trader Joe's? The research I had the privilege of participating in this past summer offers one method in building such a

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<sup>169</sup> Laurence, 14.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>171</sup> Dr. Karl Paulnack. "Welcome Address to the Freshman at Boston Conservatory." August 21, 2004. Boston Conservatory, Boston Massachusetts, accessed Jan 9, 2019, [https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/boisi/pdf/s091/Welcome\\_address\\_to\\_freshman\\_at\\_Boston\\_Conservatory.pdf](https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/boisi/pdf/s091/Welcome_address_to_freshman_at_Boston_Conservatory.pdf)

bridge. In closing, as the local musicians that have been portrayed in this document have exemplified, may we also consistently seek to use our artform as a catalyst for the betterment of the world around us. The call of Jewell James to protect the environment is as relevant now as it was at the onset of the proposed coal export.

We can only do this through coalition-building. It has always been true, and is true, today. Let our voices be heard for the benefit of our children and our children's children—and to honor the Creation. Now is the time. This is the place.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> James, "The Search for Integrity."

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# APPENDIX A

## IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENTS

### IRB Information Sheet Template

Project Title: Dissertation Field Research for the Doctoral of Musical Arts Degree

Principal Investigator: Julianne Olson

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Gavin Douglas

**What is this all about?**

I am asking you to participate in this research study because I am seeking to gather evidence pertaining to the efficacy of environmental music activism. This research project will only take about one and a half hours of your time and will involve an in-person interview conducted by myself, Julianne Olson

**How will this negatively affect me?**

No, other than the time you spend on this project there are no known or foreseeable risks involved with this study.

**What do I get out of this research project?**

You will get the benefit of contributing to your community in a positive way.

**Will I get paid for participating?**

This is volunteer, so compensation is not provided unless requested by the interviewee prior to the interview.

**What about my confidentiality?**

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. I will not include any identifying information about you without your permission. If you would prefer your real name not be used, I will assign you a pseudonym. Interviews will be audio-recorded. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the recording.

**What if I do not want to be in this research study?**

You do not have to be part of this project. This project is voluntary and it is up to you to decide to participate in this research project. If you agree to participate at any time in this project you may stop participating without penalty.

**What if I have questions?**

You can ask Julianne Olson any questions you may have about the study. She is the Principle Investigator and can be reached at: [jgolson@uncg.edu](mailto:jgolson@uncg.edu) and 360-319-1662. Also, her faculty advisor is Dr. Gavin Douglas [gddougla@uncg.edu](mailto:gddougla@uncg.edu). If you have concerns about how you have been treated in this study call the Office of Research Integrity Director at 1-855-251-2351.

Approved IRB

3/27/18

Recruitment email:

Greetings!

My name is Jules, and I am a native of Bellingham, WA. I am a Doctoral Candidate in Musical Arts at University of North Carolina Greensboro. As I look toward writing my dissertation, my research focuses on the efficacy of environmental music activism. More specifically, my hope is to focus on the musical efforts within the community, and how the collective influence of musical artists contributed to altering the plans of building the coal train export in Bellingham. Because of your noteworthy contributions to the environment with your powerful music, I would be delighted if you would allow me to interview you as part of my research.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind Regards,

Julianne Olson

Approved IRB

**3/27/18**

## **Interview Questions**

Who are some of your artistic inspirations and influences that made you want to write music about the environment?

Would you consider yourself an environmental music activist?

Why did you choose music as a catalyst to bring environmental awareness to your community?

How do you measure success of the songs that you have written in opposition to certain potential hazardous environmental constructions? How have your songs helped save aspects of the environment at the local level or at large?

Who is your audience?

What type of venue do you perform your songs in?

How do you market your songs about particular environmental issues? How did you market your songs particularly for the Coal Export at Cherry Point? What challenges did you face?

Why do you think environmental music activism is important both locally at large?

What would you like readers to know about the music you write and your process as a songwriter?

What opposition (if any) have you faced in an effort to prevent environmental travesty? How have you overcome that?

What is something you would like to see change in the local music scene to better serve artists who use their music as a tool for awareness and the betterment of the environment? How could you better be supported?

What are some of the musical settings or tactics which you use to communicate your message to your audience?

How do you decide which environmental issues you want to write about?

What inspires your lyrics? Do you subscribe to a certain poetic form?

Who are some of your favorite lyricists?

What are some examples that you know of that where music has directly impacted the environment for the better be it from your predecessors or current environmental music activists?

How does music contribute to environmental movements?

What does environmental music mean to those who create it?

How might we, environmentalists, more effectively perform music in the service of biodiversity, sustainability, and environmental justice?

## APPENDIX B

### PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE MAP

# The Seattle Times

DATE: Tuesday, February 05, 2019

One-time Payment

Transaction was successfully submitted and is currently processing. A Request ID [5493922211436469404046](#) has been created.

Return Codes

Request ID [5493922211436469404046](#)

SOK - Request was processed successfully.

Authorization Code H26919

Payment to Seattle Times

Transaction Type Sale

Total Amount \$25.00 USD

Transaction Source

MOTO - Mail/Phone Order

Customer Information

Name Julianne Olson

Credit Card Type Visa

Credit Card Number XXXX XXXX XXXX 2494

Billing Address Julianne Olson

508 Charter Place

Greensboro NC, 27405

US

CONTENT: File name: lummi-tribe-c\_4\_0\_2737455046.2pdf.pdf

FROM: "Tribes prevail, kill proposed coal terminal at Cherry Point," by Linda V. Mapes, Seattle Times environment report (The Seattle Times, Local News, May 9, 2016)

Terms include: Publishing / Editorial, one Julianne Olson UNC Doctorate of Musical Arts degree ("Work"), in perpetuity within original Work only, US, one time within original Work only, mandatory credit, in-context, non-exclusive use. No use in teases, promotional, marketing or advertising materials. Digital manipulation, outside normal cropping and color correction, is prohibited. Use of text dropped in over the Map is prohibited. If you wish to use this Map in derivative works, ancillaries, other formats and media, please contact The Seattle Times with details of your proposed reuse. Licenses are granted on a per use basis. Mandatory credit to Mark Nowlin / The Seattle Times. Rights are not sub-licensable. Rights exclude media and/or formats not now known or hereafter devised. Licensing and/or content files are released up on receipt of payment using a Visa or MasterCard. Once you have placed an order a \$15.00 order revision and/or cancellation fee is in effect.