

Haisla Nuuyum: Cultural conservation and regulation methods within traditional fishing and hunting

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Abstract

Haisla Nuuyum (Way of Life and Laws) offers cultural teachings that continue to grow and develop throughout generations. This paper translates and interprets stories told to me by my parents about how our Nuuyum illustrates how cultural rituals and ceremonies act or serve as methods of conservation and regulation for fishing and hunting. In these rituals and ceremonies, I include roles of family members as the fisher and hunter prepares for their expedition. I will share accounts of cultural knowledge as it relates to seasons, weather conditions, and the ceremonial rituals required to be performed prior to, during and after the fishing or hunting trip. My analysis includes an examination of, and suggestions for how to apply rituals and ceremonies into contemporary fishing or hunting regulations. Throughout this paper I refer to cultural conservation, as a method that includes rituals and ceremonies in how we practice conservation from our Haisla Nuuyum. Moreover, I explore strategies on how to re-teach cultural conservation to young people. It is important for you as a reader to understand that these cultural teachings are only one example of how a community practiced (and to a certain extent still

practices) conservation in a cultural way. There are diverse Indigenous¹ histories, identities and cultural practices and in these diverse places, some practices are still vibrant and lived, whereas for many other communities, cultural practices have been violated by colonial forces. Cultural teachings are lifelong processes and for many other Indigenous communities who continue to confront the devastation of their violated territories, there is an urgency to hear, preserve and re-tell their own sacred teachings as it relates to fishing and hunting.

Due to modern shifts within Indigenous worldviews, it is essential that we are creative in how we relearn cultural knowledge and in how we re-tell these teachings to young people. As an academic, I have chosen to learn these cultural practices and translate them into text. In this text, I also incorporate specific stories that signify a cultural practice that, from my perspective, illustrates a teaching for conservation.

Keywords: *ceremonial conservation; conservation stories; cultural regulation; cultural laws*

Introduction

Hemas – Moosmagilth! Gukulu – Ungwa! hkenuuk kundokq, hkenuuk helkinew, hkenuuk hanaksila, kitselas, haisla. Wuh, Lekwungen and Esquimalt

My traditional name was gifted to my parents on their wedding day from the late Walter Wright. My name means ‘journeying over the mountains with belongings on my back’; my parents are glasttowk askq and bakk jus moojillth – Ray and Mary Green. My grandparents are the late Walter/Murial Nyce and the late James/Agnes Green.

I want to acknowledge the Elders, Chiefs and Ancestors of this beautiful territory of where I work, study and play – Lekwungen (Songhees), Wyomith (Esquimalt), WSANEC’ (Saanich)

Wuh!, Hychka, Thank you!

As a scholar I am privileged to learn and know about western methods, ethics and protocols required for academic scholarly research purposes. The convergence of my identity and place of belonging in the Haisla nation, and who I am as a scholar offer me an opportunity to write in a manner that is respectful to Haisla people while at the same time meeting the expectations of academic rigor. Within my immediate family, my parents are the last generation to speak Haisla language fluently. My interpretations of cultural practices are in constant translation from the central nature of Haisla Nuuyum into English language, writing and analysis. Moreover, my

¹ Throughout this paper I will use the terms, Indigenous, First Nations, Aboriginal and Native interchangeably. Our people use the term First Nations, in academia, we use the term Indigenous, and in reference I make to government encounters, I will use the term Aboriginal.

storytellers and my father are in constant modes of translating and re-interpreting Haisla Nuuyum into English. The stories and cultural teachings I share in this article come from my parents, kgal askq and bakk jus moojilth – Ray and Mary Green. My parents explain to me the different sets of responsibilities given to parents in relation to cultural teachings: it is the duty of my father and his family members to provide his children with cultural teachings, and the duty of my mother and her family members to nurture the teachings. Both kgal askq and bakk jus moojilth have learned this practice from their parents.

Each generation has adapted our Nuuyum as our community started to expand and intersect with economic expansions. My scholarship has been informed and adapted by philosophies embedded within our Nuuyum, including my continued journey and commitment to studying Indigenous philosophies within westernized institutions. My vision is to continue to broaden the scope of diverse Indigenous epistemologies, theories and philosophies within academia, within my community and with younger generations. In this sense, I begin this paper by sharing an account of Haisla stories and teachings to illustrate how Haisla Nuuyum is indeed a theoretical and philosophical foundation to analyze how regulation and conservation has and is operationalized in the northwest coast of BC. I draw upon stories, cultural teachings and family/community experiences as a method to illustrate to readers how, prior to fishing/hunting regulations, Haisla people lived cultural conservation. I argue that living cultural conservation strengthens our Haisla Nuuyum; however, due to forces of colonization within our territories, it is essential to re-visit these practices as a decolonizing method to reassert and affirm how Haisla peoples define conservation.

There has been an ongoing effort by academics and governments to learn and understand the relationship between Indigenous peoples, traditional practices and knowledges about fishing and hunting. As such, many contemporary regulations attempt to include aspects of Indigenous knowledges, but do not capture the essence of cultural law. Cultural laws are specific but diverse for different groups of Indigenous peoples and their landscapes. Cultural laws are traditional practices passed down from ancestors who had intimate knowledge and understanding of how these practices would preserve natural resources, provide sustenance for people and ensure that mother earth and all her offspring would be replenished throughout the seasons.

Translating these diverse and specific cultural methods into westernized regulations often results in the loss of the original intent of the cultural teachings (Absolon, 2011; Archibald, 2008; Bauerle, 2003). For the listener or student of these cultural teachings, it is critical that there be a respectful relationship between the storyteller and the listener/learner. “Respectful relationship,” refers to the important practice whereby you, as a reader, connect this text with a place and person you are familiar with in an effort to learn and understand the traditional practices relevant to that place and people. Now, for a student/learner of this type of cultural practice, it is important that the listener attempt to capture the cultural teachings through experiential learning and be inclusive of the cultural teacher. If the intent is to develop a regulation, then it is essential that the learner maintain lifelong relationships with the cultural teacher and that the teacher be inclusive of a final written regulation. In an effort to transform

cultural conservation, it is critical that we return to re-learning traditional practices while at the same time *ridding* our minds and hearts from westernized practices.

To respectfully situate Haisla Nuuyum, it is necessary that my writing stems from and operates within an Indigenous paradigm that will appropriately reflect philosophies of our Nuuyum. I will intersect a decolonizing framework as I explore methods for translating Haisla Nuuyum into contemporary regulation systems. Hence, my writing stems from and within critical theories, of which I have chosen to situate *Haisla storying* at the onset, and second, my analysis of re-generating cultural knowledge is how I illustrate decolonizing methods for cultural conservation. As such, returning to “living” cultural conservation is a lifelong commitment to decolonizing regulations that have affected and harmed Indigenous knowledge.

The teachings I share in this article emanates from one family: my family². My parents have shared that there are many methods, practices and approaches within cultural teachings. Each family, clan or community has their own distinct method for fishing or hunting and although distinct to each family, the core practices that guide them are the philosophies of Haisla Nuuyum. No one family method is more valuable than the other. In this sense, my analysis will be to write in a manner that does not subject readers to the notion that this written piece is “the answer”, but rather, that readers search for their own accountability and responsibility of what they will do with the knowledge they acquire from this article. Wahpetunwan Dakota scholar, Waziyatawin wrote about Dakota creation stories in her book, *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (2008). She cautions her readers that the Dakota story is a story that connects her people to ancient traditions, she states, “...the reason I am sharing this story is to demonstrate the ancient and sacred relations we have with this landscape” (p. 20). Throughout this paper, I will draw on my family stories to inform my analysis of cultural conservation. My analysis will include an examination of how these stories may be deployed in order to inform specific operations to re-introduce cultural practices into existing family systems and into contemporary policies and regulations as they relate to fishing or hunting.

Theorizing Haisla conservation, regulation and laws of the land and water

Traditional worldviews of Haisla people encapsulate the distinct yet interconnecting knowledge of the land, the seasons, the weather, and the water; this knowledge informs people of seasonal and appropriate times throughout the year to fish and hunt (Basso, 1996; Cajete, 1994; Deloria 1999). Within these intersections, fishers must know how to work respectfully and sensitively within these eco systems and must be prepared to conduct and adapt their lives in relation and response to weather. There are certain forms of rain, north wind and animal movements which affect how the water flows and in turn, this affects where the fish and other sea animals travel. So, for many fishers they must be of a good mind and heart to know these specific aspects and be

² When I refer to “my family” this includes extended family such as aunts, uncles, grandparents from both sides of my immediate family.

prepared to work in whatever conditions and elements they are presented with. These aspects do not prevent the fishers from carrying out their work, but it allows them to know whether their fishing will be challenging; if it is challenging, it will also alert them to what these challenges may be. *The old people say – “the fish aren’t going to wait for you or the weather to get better, get ready to fish!”* Anthropologist Paul Nadasdy (2003) wrote extensively about relationships between Kluane First Nations people, the land, the animals and the state. He illustrates that for Kluane people, hunting is a way of life and that to hunt, meant knowledge and survival to and with interconnection of landscapes. He states,

...Kluane people continue to conceive hunting essential to their physical survival. Many people explicitly spoke to me about hunting as being necessary for survival and stressed how important it is to “know how to survive.” By this they did not mean the plane-crash-in-the-woods type of emergency survival but, rather, the ability to live and function comfortably in the bush for extended periods. (p. 64)

In the ambiguity of weather and other ecological factors, fishers and hunters require knowledge about certain methods of communicating effectively with each other while simultaneously paying close attention to the ecosystems and mountainous places throughout the Northwest.³

As stated, each family holds their own specific cultural teachings as it relates to their experiences and knowledge of fishing, trapping and hunting. These diverse stories include, but are not limited to, accounts of place names, events that have occurred at these places and historical knowledge of which families belong to these places. Deloria (1999) states:

The most common experience of Indian tribes today is that of reflective places...Tribal histories, for the most part, are land-centered. That is to say, every feature of a landscape has stories attached to it. If a tribal group is very large or has lived on a particular piece of land for many generations, some natural features will have many stories attached to them...These stories relate both secular events such as tales of hunting and warfare and sacred events such as personal or tribal religious experiences. (p. 252)

In this sense, knowledge of ancestral teachings, practices and places including knowledge of how colonialism has affected this way of life are indeed what I refer to as the theoretical space to examine cultural conservation before and after encounters with settlers. Embedded within these cultural knowledges are practices and methods that refuse to consider cultural infractions as illegal acts that require punitive actions as a corrective to the preservation of resources, as is the case in contemporary conservation regulations for fishing and hunting. Rather, our cultural forms of regulations center teachings as a form of remedy in order to ensure accountability and communal responsibility.

³ Northwest Coast of British Columbia (BC)

Knowledge of landscape

Our ancestors have always maintained the importance of knowledge of and relationships to weather, land, animals and seasons. Their teaching is steadfast and clear: *if we have knowledge of these relationships then our families will never be poor, our families will always have food throughout the seasons and the fish will always return to our places*. This form of relational knowledge, however, has oftentimes been subjugated throughout the evolution of the fishing industry (Harris, 2001; Newell, 1993). In the last decade, policy makers have taken great strides to listen to the cultural teachings; however, this has not necessarily resulted in successful translation of cultural knowledges into contemporary laws. Paul Nadasdy (2003), states:

Yukon First Nations peoples have historically seen themselves as part of the land rather than as separate from it (McClellan et al. 1987) although they have drawn and continue to draw their sustenance from the land, they did not – until recently – think of their relation to the land in terms of ownership; instead they were in a complex web of reciprocal relations and obligations with the land and the animals upon it. (p. 223)

Generally, Indigenous peoples inherit knowledge that focuses us to our various obligations to ecology, cosmos and all living things. This knowledge includes an understanding of the respect and care not only for the resources and seasons we prosper from, but we were also taught to respect ourselves as fishers. Respecting ourselves as fishers entails the particular forms of familial accountability whereby families had to fulfill specific roles as their family member prepared to fish. The knowledge that informed these vibrant, respected and lived cultural and ritualized practices were and are considered to form Indigenous law and governance. Anishinabek scholar, Dr. John Borrows (2010) states:

Anishinabek legal traditions have ancient roots, but they are not stunted by time. They continue to grow and develop through observation, experience, and interaction with other people's more recent presence within their territories. Like other Indigenous legal systems, Anishinabek law is a living social order, developed through comparing, contrasting, accepting, and rejecting legal standards from many sources. (p. 244)

Diverse Indigenous laws contrast with western regulations and laws whereby aspects of spiritual and holistic relationships to and for fishing are not recognized as part of the regulatory frameworks and functions.

What the landscapes tell us

Pueblo scholar, Dr. Gregory Cajete writes about science, cosmos, and Indigenous knowledges and illustrates how cultural teachings and spiritual connectivity shape and is shaped by

sacredness of ecology. In his book *Look to the Mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education* (1994), Dr. Cajete connects and interconnects spiritual metaphysics to learning, understanding and respect of all living things. He writes eloquently about ancestral knowledges and teachings to show us how to live harmoniously with all that is around us. For Cajete, these forms of knowledges are what he refers to as Indigenous or Tribal education and that the ultimate goal of Indigenous education is to be fully knowledgeable about one's innate spirituality (p. 42). In this sense, Indigenous education is not categorized and separated, but rather, education and knowledge is brought to us succinctly as living within and being connected to our eco systems. Cajete states, "What is called education today was, for American Indians, a journey for learning to be fully human. Learning about the nature of the spirit in relationship to community and the environment was considered central to learning the full meaning of life" (p. 43).

In the northwest of British Columbia, Haisla rituals and ceremonies, as they relate to cultural conservation, resonate and are revealed in different places throughout what is now known as the Douglas Channel. Throughout the territory, there are many places, stories and teachings about where Haisla people fished. The fishing techniques in *the old days* are much different from those used today; what remains present, however, are the core values of when and how to fish. Throughout the Douglas Channel there are specific places, which tell the people where and when to fish. We come to know these places and gather this knowledge through weather movements and seasons; the weather and seasons are highly intertwined with, and influence our relationship to, the landscape, fish and animals. Embedded within these ecological spirals are cultural rituals, ceremonies and practice that show us the respectful and appropriate times to fish and hunt. This story is shared by my parents:

In our Village across the water there are mountains. Of these mountains, there are mountains that are not pointed at the top; instead they are shaped like canoes at the top. These unique mountains tell the people a story and that story is about different species of fish migrating throughout specific places and in specific seasons. Throughout the seasons, fishers and their families' watch for which mountain the sun will set. For example, if the sun sets in the southern canoe top, it will be time to prepare and fish for herring. The fishers prepare themselves to work quickly because during this time the days are shorter and colder so they need to work fast. The fishers use a handmade tool called kedaiyou (this tool looks like a comb, but with nails that are burnt black – black so the herring cannot see the tool). Fishers used this tool to scoop herring rather than using nets for fishing.

When the sun sets in a mountain beside the canoe shaped mountain, our people know it is almost time for oolichan fishing. At this time, the people prepare their oolichan camps, food, equipment and supplies. Finally, when the sun sets in the middle of the canoe, the people know that the oolichans have arrived. By then, they are prepared to oolichan fish and embark on their journey. Oolichans are a mystery fish. Year to year, people do not know when and where they will spawn.

People do not know where they go or where they come from prior to oolichan fishing. The people know that soon after the oolichans arrive, the next run of fish are steelhead, salmon, and trout and they are reaffirmed about this depending on which 'canoe mountain' top the sun sets at.

The people were taught that if nets were used, they would be over fishing the herring and that the herring would not return the next season. Use of handmade tools was a method to control the amount of herring fished; the people fished enough herring for their families winter supply and for ceremonial purposes such as feasting. My dad has shared that to this day, they do not know how much oolichans other fish, birds and seals have eaten before our people finally gain sight of oolichans. Fishers learn about oolichans by watching the activity of other animals, the weather and seasons and by watching closely where the sun will set. These fishing practices and knowledge of fishing places clearly illustrate conservation in a cultural sense for Haisla people.

Regulating self: Cultural conservation

Historically, our people constructed and prepared their fishing/hunting equipment and supplies from materials found on the land. There were only certain times and seasons to use natural resources (trees, bark, roots, branches) for supplies and equipment. In the old days, oolichan fishing supplies and equipment were collected and built each year, by each oolichan camp member⁴. In addition to extensive preparation, families of the fishers also had important roles and responsibilities. Family members helped to gather supplies, prepare food and prepare boats, all of which were imperative to ensuring that the fishers would be safe and have the tools and means to successfully fish and provide for the families. Importantly, both fishers and their family members went through significant spiritual preparation, with the expectation of our cultural practices being that both the fishers and their families would engage in honoring and paying respect through prayers before beginning their fishing journey.

Prior to fishing and hunting there were sacred teachings and rituals required to be carried out so that the fisher could be acquainted with the water, river, land, fish and animals. In this sacred ceremonial space, the fisher prayed to Creator for a safe and prosperous journey. It was emphasized that if the fisher respected the cultural teaching, this respect would be returned through an abundance of fish and/or wild game and the fisher would not fall into harm's way.

Prior to the departure, the fisher cleanses his spirit and prays as he bathes in the outdoor waters. He bathes and uses aweekas (devils club) as a cleansing medicine. The fisher bathes in the stream, prays and then plunges his/her entire being into the water three times. While bathing the fisher speaks to the fish or animal they will be harvesting. This sacred ceremony is done in isolation. No one

⁴For detailed information please see Green, J. (2008) Reclaiming Haisla Ways: Remembering oolichan fishing.

is to know when the fisher bathes and prays. The fishers partner, usually a brother, uncle or friend also follows a similar process of bathing and plunging into the stream with aweekas. His prayers and ceremony will also be done in isolation and no one will know about his sacred preparation as well.

In her book, Nuu-chah-nulth scholar, Dr. Charlotte Côté discusses maintaining cultural links to her people's whaling ancestors. She states, "Our whaling ancestors never left us – they breathe life into our rich whaling narratives, preserved and reinforced through oral traditions" (p. 69). For Haisla people, the teaching is that one must be of sound mind and spiritually connected to knowledge of the cosmos. Cajete goes on to say:

The community embodies the essence of that "place," which is really the place of the spirit...each Indigenous community identifies itself as a sacred place, a place of living, learning, teaching, and renewal; a place where the "People" share the breath of their life and thought. The community is a living, spiritual entity that is supported by every responsible adult. (p. 47)

The requirement that the fisher connect spiritually and pay respect to the land, water and animals in advance of their fishing journey, speaks to the *regulatory functions* of this cultural practice. I was told that as soon as people received a sign about when to fish (where the sun sets), they began to prepare physically and spiritually. During this preparation, the *old people* have said some of the fish moved beyond the fishing place (went up the river) so that they could spawn for following years. The movement of fish demonstrates that the spiritual relationship to fishing helped to regulate how much fish would be left for the people. Determined by their place, various Indigenous peoples have similar fishing practices that establish this form of "ceremonial regulation" of fishing. Speaking to his specific place and context, Gregory Cajete states:

Hunters learned that preparing for the hunt was also preparing for life, a preparation most essential to body, mind and spirit. It involved a spiritual ethic of conservation and ecologically sound approaches for maintaining the life of the animals hunted. (p. 98)

A sacred ceremonial regulation as described here connects fishers to all other living things:

Through prayer, the teaching is that you will harvest only what is needed for your family and you will be guided where to fish. The fishing crew who will be travelling take time to map out their trip based on what they want to fish for, and where they will fish. By mapping out their trip, they are able to multitask by fishing for crab, halibut, and salmon and maybe even pick mussels. For example, they will travel by boat and begin their harvest at Beez inlet where they will drop their crab traps, and then travel to Collins bay to drop their nets for spring salmon. Once their nets are dropped at Collins bay, they may stop for lunch, pick mussels then return to Beez to check and pick up their crab pots. Last they will return too Collins bay to check and pick up their fishing nets. If time permits,

they may gut and clean their catch while on the boat. By the time they return home, their catch is ready to be preserved.

The sacred bathing ceremony confirms that Haisla people do not want to harm the animals, fish or land intentionally. In this cultural method, they do not fish for species that are not in its natural reproductive cycle, nor do they fish for species that are not naturally travelling its life cycle course. “The rituals performed for hunting functioned to attract animals and to cultivate a proper attitude and respect, but also allowed human beings to reconnect with those mythic times” (Cajete, p. 99). Culturally-based fishing practices were and are regulatory principles of conservation that ensure fishing supplies for future generations and for other forms of life that relied on fish for sustenance.

Family responsibilities to and for regulating

By now, fishers have prepared themselves, their supplies and equipment for their journey. One might assume that any fishing or hunting journey only includes the fisher. For Haisla peoples however, it is essential that families and their children also understand the underlying philosophies of our cultural practices as it relates to the fishing trip. Historically, the fisher’s spouse and children also prepared themselves spiritually; their distinct preparations, however, did not involve them partaking in the sacred bathing ceremony. The *old people* shared that it is important for families to be united spiritually and to be prepared to face any situation the fishers may encounter – whether it be stormy weather or an overabundance of fish to be worked on:

Although the couple is in the same home, the fisher does not go near the spouse for three days before they travel. The spouse is to stay at home during the preparation including while the fisher is out on the harvest. The spouse demonstrates respect and prays for their spouse so they will be successful in their harvest.

While the fisher is harvesting the spouse stays at home and does not participate in other activities or talk to other people outside of their home. The spouse is to respect and honor the fishing journey and any encounters with and to the land, water, animals or fish. If the spouse does not respect the stillness and quietness in their home, the fisher may not be successful in their harvest. When the fisher is out and catches nothing, people become suspicious and problems arise in the home and family. Our people refer to this instance as “Quolqual” which means when a person is skunked (no catch) due to the disrespect of the cultural practice from a family member.

The call for the spouse to remain isolated and still during their partner’s fishing journey has never been viewed as sexist or patronizing; but rather, viewed as respecting the fisher who is fulfilling family needs for the year whilst also providing a source of support through focus,

mindfulness and attentiveness to the important journey. Hence, families partook in the practice of ceremonial conservation and also understood the importance for spiritual connection for fishing – this family knowledge contributed to how Haisla people “conserved” fish for future generations. Teachings for why family members are to be isolated are:

The spouse may feel bad if there is an accident and the fisher gets hurt, or the accident is fatal. The family member may feel responsible if there was no catch. The beliefs in those days were if you don't respect cultural teachings during fishing or hunting – the fish, animals, land and water will not respect the fisher and family.

This aspect was similar for children of the fisher and spouse. During fishing times, the children were to stay at home and not run around the Village, not participate in other activities such as sports, westernized dancing or they were not to scream around the Village – they were expected to stay at home, in stillness waiting for their fisher to return home.

The teaching here is that family members are active participants and spiritually connected to the fishing journey. As such, cultural practices demand that family members must also believe and respect the sacred ceremonies that take place for the fishing journey.

From the children's perspective during those times, the cultural requirements were not understood as extreme in the way it would be perceived today. Typically, uncles, aunts, friends or other relatives would visit and provide support to the entire family. In the home, they would be preparing their own supplies to preserve their catch. This would involve preparing their jars for canning, preparing wood for their smoke house and preparing barrels to salt their fish.

When the fishers' return to the community, they are greeted with people who help them unload their boats, bring their gear to their home and prepare their workspace to preserve their catch. For many fishers, they do not waste any part of the fish! The heads and tails of the fish are preserved by salting or they eat them right away by steaming or baking it. The bellies of the fish are salted and usually eaten during north wind season. P'ulaxw is the backbone of the fish and is barbequed and smoked before preserving. Typically, this is eaten during winter months sometimes together with seal meat. If there are salmon eggs, these are steamed and preserved: when it is time to eat the eggs, it is steamed in water and seaweed is added. Typically this dish is used as an appetizer during mealtime. Another use of salmon eggs is to ferment the eggs and usually this is eaten raw or is fried and one can add seaweed (sometimes soya sauce) usually this dish is eaten together with deep fried potatoes and usually with a special invitation to the Old People or family or friends. The actual fish parts are smoked, salted, frozen or jarred – and usually eaten any time throughout the seasons. Usually the day the fishers return home, their family would cook Lejuk, which is steamed salmon cooked with onions and potatoes. Sometimes you can add seaweed, but what makes Lejuk delicious is adding oolichan grease. There are a number of

different ways to smoke fish – half dried, fully dried and in strips which we call Toloss. When we eat the tolloss with grease – we refer to this as ‘tspa’ which means, dipping your fish in grease. The unused parts of fish – usually guts – is either used as fertilizer for their fruit trees, or returned back to the water.

Sacred ceremonies teach us to be respectful of ourselves, our families and all other living things. “If proper rituals were conducted during the First Salmon Ceremony, the salmon would see that as respect and would continue to return year after year” (Coté, p. 116). In the context of the fishing journey, cultural and spiritual practices emphasize the importance of respect for self. In this place of practicing silence and stillness, the fishers and their family are honoring the “spiritual” aspect of the fishing journey. In the old days, it was seen as a high honor when a family and crew were hunting or fishing. Often, when fishers returned home they would share their catch with other family or community members. In this way, fishers often contributed to the sustenance of the entire community.

This entire process for fishing illustrates how traditional knowledge, in its very specific forms, teaches fishers and their family members appropriate times for harvesting their food. Moreover, traditional knowledge shows the intelligence of not only the fisher, but also their entire family as they prepare and preserve their catch. I point out intelligence because *in those days*, typically a catch would involve up to 200 fish and this required fishers and their families to work precisely, astutely and with great speed so that there was no waste; and so that all of the catch was preserved and shared with families and other community members. Because the family respected their cultural teachings – our Nuuyum – *respect* was returned to the family by the abundance of food they received that would last them until the next fishing season. My dad shared how his grandfather would celebrate the abundance of oolichans. His grandfather would stand in his canoe and holler “Chaieeee! Chaieeee!” This means there is plenty of oolichans in the river! Cajete (1994) also shares a celebration story:

The celebration, often seven days in length, included feasting, gift-giving, torch-bearing processions, dancing and singing. During all the ceremonies of welcome, countless salmon were allowed to pass upstream to the spawning ground, and thus the ritual actually helped to assure the continuation of the salmon run. (p. 102)

During those times, fishing was life. Life was fishing. There were cultural laws that were taught and learned. In those times, the people were prosperous because of the abundance of resources and because they followed the regulatory principles of respectful cultural conservation. They shared and they respected what was gifted to them as a form of fish.

Hunting must include knowledge of Wa'wais

For Haisla people, different types of harvest call for distinct and specific forms of preparation and ceremonial processes. For example, they must learn and understand teachings from and about the landscape; they must understand what harvests are available in what seasons; and they must be able to work adeptly and effectively with their crew. There were only certain seasons and months to hunt for ducks, seals or to dig for clams or cockles. There were strict seasonal times about when they could trap for smaller animals. These cultural practices were in place so that our natural resources could replenish.

If they are trapping, the trapper must clean their traps by soaking them in aweekqas before their departure. Once the traps are cleansed, they are put away where no one could touch it. Before leaving for their boats or trap line, the trapper must also cleanse their boots and clothing with aweekqas. By doing this, they say the animals will only smell the aweekqas and not the human smell and therefore will not know that the hunter is in the woods.

This sacred preparation was not only protection for self, but also so that the trapper would not harm other animals in the process. A person was always required to understand notions within wa'wais when they embarked on a journey to access resources for family, clan or community. Knowledge of place, as well as sacred hunting practices, are important attributes within cultural conservation.

Wa'wais are hunting trap lines on pieces of land that belong to families, but owned by their Clan. Within wa'wais territories, people have traditionally fished, hunted, trapped, picked roots and/or traditional medicines. Wa'wais tell stories of who belonged there, what they fished or hunted for, and who the wa'wais was then passed on to. "For Indian men and women, the past lies embedded in features of the earth...which together endow their lands with multiple forms of significance that reach into their lives and shape the ways they think. Knowledge of places is therefore closely linked to knowledge of the self..." (Basso, p 34). Haisla wa'wais tells stories of our histories, cultural economies and landscapes. Similar to our feasting protocol, wa'wais – together with the owner's traditional name – is passed on to the person who traditionally inherits this rite. Within our territories, there are five clans and fifty-four wa'wais. From this account, you can see that most families once owned their own wa'wais and from this, we can also imagine that their livelihoods depended on knowledge of wa'wais and what it provided to the people. This type of ownership does not mean that families could only fish or hunt within their own wa'wais. If they want to fish or hunt for something other than what is in their area, they simply asked permission to fish or hunt in another member's wa'wais. Sometimes as they were hunting within their wa'wais, they would meet up with another hunter from another wa'wais.

My dad shared many stories about his father and his uncle who were trappers and hunters. Mostly they would hunt for goat. One time when his dad was hunting in Q'epuwax, his wa'wais, he was climbing the mountain hunting for

goat. It must have been a long journey to the top and when he finally made it to open areas on the mountain – he saw his cousin who was also hunting. My sense is that they were both hunting by themselves. From the story, it appeared that they were surprised to see each other - they took a break, had their tea and lunch. Dad said after their tea, they headed back down the mountain, continued hunting before they returned home.

In these territories there are many forms of wildlife. Particularly, there are fierce animals such as grizzly, black and brown bears. Similar to the spiritually-driven fishing regulations, it is essential that the hunters prepare themselves to be protected from fierce wildlife. I have often heard stories of how hunters, trappers or berry pickers would talk to the woods before entering. They would say in our Haisla language, “*it’s me, I’m only coming in to hunt or to pick berries – I won’t hurt you*”. At the same time, if there was an accidental death of an animal, or if they saw something in the woods that they have never seen before, they would say “*nolaxw, nolaxw, nolaxw*”. By saying this term three times, you are acknowledging the spirit of the animal that died or you are expressing the “awe” of something beautiful you have seen for the first time.

My grandmother from my mother’s side was an avid fisher. What I remember about her is that her entire life depended on her ability to fish and preserve her catch. She dug for clams and cockles, she crab fished, salmon fished and she picked berries. She knew the traditional names of all the wa’wais and who owned them. She lived with my grandfather at a logging camp down the Douglas Channel. While he worked at the logging camp, she fished for our entire family. While she never specifically ‘said’ anything to me, I watched her prepare herself for fishing, she preserved all the resources by herself and then she would ‘boat’ into Haisla and distribute to her sisters, brothers then her children. She included us as her grandchildren, she would give us chocolate bars and orange crush pop.

My grandmother is an example to me about respecting these wonderful resources. She was very careful in how she preserved her catch. She spent hours in her smoke house to ensure there was the right amount of smoke for the fish. She jarred cases of fish, wild crab apple, salmon and blueberries. Once, we as grandchildren went fishing with her. She was not impressed at our ability to help her – I think we got in her way. Nevertheless, she showed us how to start her boat, how to slow it down when we came close to fishing grounds. She showed us how to look for signs of clams and cockles. Although we tried to pull up the crab trap for her, she wanted to show us how to be gentle and how to empty the crab trap gently so that the meat does not bruise. When we returned home, the task was to clean and preserve all the catch. We groaned as we saw the big bowl of crab to clean – it would take us hours. Once the crab was cleaned, she jarred it and awed at the beauty of how the crab looked in the jar. I suppose back then we could have said ‘nolaxw, nolaxw, nolaxw’. My grandmother was a wonderful and beautiful teacher for fishing.

Similar to knowing where the sun sets (on the mountain shaped like a canoe) and varying forms of weather patterns, wa'wais is equally important to know. Traditionally, these wa'wais places played a significant role in the livelihoods of our people. Within Wa'wais territories, people respected these places, they shared them and they knew when to share their place with the entire community or with surrounding communities. There were natural laws, which we refer to as our Nuuyum. Cleansing for our people is referred to as *Nakwelagila* which teaches the importance for cleansing inside and outside, mentally and physically. The old people have said the “strength of the medicine involves the power of the mind and that the mind is the backbone of our medicine” (Kitamaat Village Council, 2005, p 66). In this sense, the spiritual connection *regulated* our relationship to and with fishing and hunting and, consequently, our people prospered for many years with fish and wildlife.

Strengthening and decolonizing our Nuuyum

The cultural practices identified in these stories are Haisla law; this law attempts to safeguard and ensure that there is an abundance of resources throughout each season and for the entire community and for future generations of Haisla people. These cultural teachings have been passed on through generations through storytelling and experiential learning (Green, R. 2007; Kitamaat Village Council, 2005). Hence, historical knowledge and ancestral practices are “methods” that inform how I interpret cultural conservation. It has been emphasized in these teachings that you learn through experience and that teaching is shown and told over and over. In the old days, fishers were taught skills at a very young age. They worked within their fishing crews for many years to learn and understand fishing processes. Throughout the years, fishing crews changed as their families grew and each of these cultural teachings shifted and adapted depending on which family and/or community you were fishing with.

Throughout the generations, these cultural teachings faced and were confronted with modernized methods and techniques for fishing. With the emergence of new technologies, the influx of industry and intermarriages of young fishers, fishing processes were expedited (Coté, 2010; Harris, 2001; Newell, 1993). Throughout these shifts of modernization, our people knew which fishing skills could be adapted, yet also knew which fishing processes remained untouched by modernization. However, during these times of changes and adaptations to new techniques, Haisla Nuuyum continued to be the philosophical foundation for fishers. Meaning, it was and is always important to centralize cultural teachings throughout modernization.

Disruptions to our Nuuyum occurred and are occurring through the imposition and clash of another kind of regulation; that of westernized laws that attempt to interfere with and sever our way of life. *Indian Act* laws restricted our fishing and hunting, thereby causing a myriad of disturbances to our economic and social forms of life. The removal of countless children from our community and placement in residential schools led to ruptures in our kinship and familial relations, as well as severing the inheritance of intergenerational regulatory education acquired through participating in cultural practices and ceremony. Furthermore, a form of governance

stemming from the *Indian Act* soon dictated laws that our people were forced to abide by. During the early years of these disruptions, there were laws in place that criminalized our people for failing to conform to these laws. It was not long before these newly formed laws took hold and were exercised within our community. Historian John Lutz (2008) states,

Aboriginal people all over the province experienced the effects of laws explicitly aimed at limiting their economies as well as other laws, which, in the process of their administration, had the same effect. These severely limited the kinds of work that Aboriginal People could do, but even more fundamental were the laws and regulations that defined “Indians” and established a set of race-based privileges and limitations. (p. 236)

While the imposition of colonial laws has been devastating for so many First Nations communities in the Northwest, our people resisted and protected our Nuuyum in their memories and souls, thus stemming much of the fragmentation that comes with imposed colonial policies.

Due to the imposed laws, our cultural practices have not been utilized to the same extent they once were. Our people have not partaken in the sacred bathing ceremony like they once did. Not all family members are as involved with fishers as they once were. While most of our community fishes with their families – those old sacred teachings are no longer practiced. In her book, *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors* (2010), Dr. Charlotte Coté writes about stories her mother shared with her as she was growing up and how her stories have shaped her life. Charlotte references Ballenger to say, “Memory is a place where cultural materials get put, usually in the form of stories that tell people who they are and who they have always been” (p. 84). Decolonizing fishing practices must include methods for hearing and remembering *old teachings* simultaneously with critically analyzing what contemporary conservation practices can be weaved together.

Westernized laws cannot criminalize our people like they once did, nor can the churches and governments so freely take away our children. In many of our First Nations communities, many of our people have attained post secondary education and hold graduate degrees. Our communities are taking up leadership roles in an effort to respectfully and appropriately provide governance and leadership for clans and community members. Leaders are governing the people in a manner reflective of their distinct territories, histories and cultural practices. Decolonizing conservation practices can be strengthened by continuing to provide the “true” account of Indigenous peoples within school systems, whether that is local Indigenous community schools or public school systems. Moreover, it is critical that school systems incorporate a strong focus of cultural knowledge so that children will grow up knowing the intersection of knowledges from an Indigenous worldview.

Throughout developments over the last century we have seen many small villages and wa’wais throughout the Douglas Channel. We have witnessed the development of industry, the arrival of Christianity and the construction of the town of Kitimat. There are many more towns and industries in the northwest, with people from around the world living there. Many of our

people have moved from the territory due to intermarriage, or for the purpose of work or school. In the midst of this survival and resistance, I wonder how we teach our children about sacred bathing. How do we teach young families to be still while their spouse is fishing? How do we make these sacred aspects a main part of our lives like it once was? Throughout my own educational journey, I have often wondered and sought to analyze how we might bring these teachings back and how we might incorporate cultural practices into policies and laws.

My first thoughts are that each family must take on the task of teaching their own children. Although there are no oolichans, it would be important for fishers to prepare themselves spiritually like they once did. It would be good learning experiences if the children and families learned how to prepare their equipment and camps like they once did. By doing this, children and families experience and learn those very old sacred processes for fishing. In an effort to allow children to participate, it would be good if schools could provide credit to students for participating in this process so that they are not discredited for missing school. In addition, it would be great to develop a social studies book for our community school and the town of Kitimat that provides the account of Haisla peoples and the evolvment of industry – and is seen as a credited book by the school district.

Deloria (1999) affirms the importance of our teachings in the following way: “The essence of the Indian attitude toward peoples, lands, and other life forms is one of kinship relations in which no element of life can go unattached from human society” (p. 131). If we doubt our teachings then we do not learn how to conserve our resources. Cultural conservation was our livelihood. Our people harvested only what we needed for our families. Throughout these stories and in my studies, it is clear that our cultural conservation and regulatory processes evolved over time including the implementation of specific and varying legislative laws. At first, these laws were an attempt to keep our people confined to a reserve system. Soon, these laws began to regulate when and how our people could fish or hunt in order to thwart our people’s efforts to disrupt the developments of a westernized fishing industry. At the onset of these laws, our people were not consulted. Paul Nadasdy analyzed the interruptions to Kluane First Nations people and stated:

Kluane people have suffered all of the hardships and indignities experienced by colonized people the world over. If anything, the social change they experienced was all the more disruptive because of its rapidity. In just over fifty years they have made the transition from subsistence-oriented hunters and trappers to full – if still marginalized – citizens and workers in a postindustrial capitalist state. Kluane people and their culture, however, have not simply given way before the irresistible onslaught of capitalism and the Canadian state. (p. 27)

More recently, governments have attempted to work with our people to amend existing laws. Although these laws are not as constrictive or exercised as violently as they once were, they remain violent in the sense that they continue to have a demeaning and dehumanizing effect

on the dignity of our people as they fish, trap and hunt. Our people now have to register for a license and they must show a government agent their license, which also includes their *Indian Act* status number (Green, R. 2007; Lutz, 2008). And, as they are fishing or hunting, they are often required to show their fishing bins to government agents to “prove” that they are not over fishing. Thus, a systemic program of surveillance, regulation and curtailment of resources continue to permeate the relationship between Indigenous peoples and colonial state laws and governance. If our people showed government agents their traditional wa’wais, the government agents would not know what it means. In *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, knowledge, and Aboriginal-state relations in the southwest Yukon*, Paul Nadasdy (2003) states:

First Nations people continue to use the very cultural meanings and practices they are trying to “preserve” as a basis for interpreting and action upon the world – including in their interactions with Euro-Canadian people and institutions. We cannot hope to understand Aboriginal-state relations without taking this into account. (p. 3)

I respect the works of Paul Nadasdy as he navigates stories from Kluane First Nations Elders and constitutional laws in an attempt to analyze whether First Nations knowledge is correctly interpreted within political fishing regulations. Like Nadasdy, I believe that the government is aware of the injustice contained within existing laws in relation to First Nations peoples. While governmental departments are attempting to “consult” with First Nations people to correct this “unjust” policy, the consultation process and the action of amendments continue to be developed within westernized economic and political frameworks. Nadasdy (2003) states:

So if we really want to understand the role knowledge plays in processes like co-management and land claims, then we have to examine not only the unequal power relations between participants but also the assumptions underlying the concept of knowledge integration itself and how they both derive from and reinforce those relations. (p. 113)

Contemporary regulations and laws of the Canadian state include aspects of inherent rights for Aboriginal people – defined and written from a westernized perspective. While some may consider this recognition as significant, constitutional rights do not resemble nor do they respect the diverse cultural practices for First Nations peoples. Law Professor, Douglas Harris (2010), states,

...Native laws were much in evidence in Native/settler relations in northern British Columbia until late in the nineteenth century. The missionaries, whose influence in Native society far exceeded that of local magistrates, used their knowledge of ‘Indian Law’ to resolve or diffuse disputes between Native and settlers. It was not until the 1880s...that Indian law was transformed by the state into ‘privileges’ granted under Canadian law...later, ‘Indian law’ became ‘oral tradition’ to be considered by courts as evidence but not as law. (p. 202)

Throughout Canada, First Nations people are asserting their inherent rights which flow from their relationship and ancestral knowledge to all living things. While there are some First Nations leaders who argue the importance to having recognition from the Crown, others would argue “recognition” is not relevant to ways in which Indigenous peoples assert sovereign Indigenous knowledge. Having said this, recognition must move beyond pieces of legislation that simply names First Nations, Inuit and Métis people without any consequential shifts or incorporating Indigenous forms of governance within legislations. If the government now recognizes these three groups of people, in what ways are these recognitions noteworthy? And what does it mean for our people to be substantively recognized by the Canadian state? What about Indigenous groups who affirm sovereignty over their landscapes and cultural practices – how can the state work with these groups of people? (I recognize that from this “sovereign” perspective there is no desire to work with the state – I am curious about how the state would attempt a discussion within a sovereign space) These crucial questions may come under consideration in another paper. Nonetheless, in an attempt to decolonize conservation and regulation, our people have always maintained the necessity to be at the decision making table when these laws were and are developed. At the same time, it is critically important to regenerate old teachings as Haisla families, clans and community. It is essential to discuss collectively how we re-learn ceremonial conservation while at the same time deconstruct existing policies and laws that affect Haisla Nuuyum – this is a form of decolonizing practice. Perhaps government agents could participate in sacred preparedness to understand and learn how these traditional teachings influence and effect conservation and regulatory laws. A Kluane First Nations person told Paul Nadasdy that a wildlife biologist asked her ‘what exactly is traditional knowledge?’ She responded, “...well, it’s not really knowledge at all: it’s more a way of life” (p 63).

So, I ask myself, what are ways in which government regulations could be inclusive and respectful of diverse Indigenous peoples? I think there are specific tasks that can be done to ensure cultural practices are understood. I think there are specific learning pieces that government official could undergo to better understand why or how ceremony can be regulatory. And, I think there could be a way to pause the machinery of government to remember the historical relationship with First Nations people, with the hope they remember its original commitments and relationships to the people. I believe that if government officials modeled a respectful and just relationship to First Nations peoples, then other provincial and municipal governments, including corporations and industries, will follow suit. This would combat the racism our people face whenever there are governmental or corporate developments within our “traditional” territories. Canada is not very old. There are Elders in our communities who have lived up to 90 years old and they remember all the shifts within and throughout our territories. They have told these stories to their children. There are government agents who are 90 years old and I am sure they remember these experiences as well. The town of Kitimat is just over fifty years old. If our people are around to remind us about “what used to be”, I am sure there are non-Indigenous peoples who need to remember their place in this history.

As a method to assert Haisla Nuuyum to inform cultural conservation, I would suggest as a starting point that our people invite government officials to a feast to discuss conservation and regulation. By participating in “feast hall” discussions about conservation, we illustrate how Haisla Nuuyum is a strong force to preserve resources for future generations of people. All discussions, laws and projected policies must be analyzed within feasting philosophies in an effort to build and nurture contemporary conservation that is reflective of our histories; cultural practices and encounters with the state.

I am sure my suggestions will face contentions from some of our people and from many non-Indigenous peoples. I do not believe that government will consider our request in any meaningful way and change policy. Regardless of whether our people work in government, I remain skeptical as to the possibility that policies will change – they have not changed thus far, despite the many consultation processes between Indigenous peoples and government bureaucracies. What I am suggesting is merely a recommendation for both sides of negotiators to relate to each other on an equal playing ground. From the outset, western practices and processes have dominated relations between Indigenous peoples and colonial settlers. While there have been a few government agents who have truly advocated for cultural practices, there remains to be no significant change. A hunter who collaborated with Paul Nadasdy stated his reasons for not attending co-management meetings in his territory.

...government people treat him and his knowledge like it was “old-fashioned” and useless. He said that they should hold one of these meeting out on his trapline during the winter (where it might easily be -40° or -50° Celsius.). He would tell them they could discuss management after they got a fire going, built a brush camp, and got dinner ready. Then they might realize that he and other elders know a little something. (2003, p. 132)

If various levels of government were invested in shifting relations between them and Indigenous communities, and if they truly intend to “amend” policies as they relate to First Nations people, they would know and understand that they would begin their collaborative journey in a feast or ceremony.

Weaving stories and experience

Documenting traditional stories is not enough. Such stories must be regularly shared with our young people to strengthen our knowledge in order to continue preserving our land and water. Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) is one of the first Indigenous scholars to publish a book about what it means to conduct research from an Indigenous scholarly perspective. “For many indigenous writers, stories are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further” (p. 145). While it is important to learn and re-learn cultural practices, it is also important to understand how colonialism has affected Haisla Nuuyum. Tuhiwai Smith’s work affirms the importance of

documenting both of these histories and to show our people ways in which we have not only preserved cultural practices, but have adapted our livelihoods within an encroaching and changing society. There are multiple forms to documenting our stories, our Nuuyum, our sacred teachings and our relationships to settlers. There certainly are stories shared in public schools about the development of Canada. However, there has not been a balance within our school systems and governments about how these two histories have intersected for over a century. Smith recommends “recording stories as a way of “writing back” whilst at the same time writing to ourselves” (p. 37).

Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank attempts both a recording and writing back method in her work with three Tlingit Elders – Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith and Annie Ned – to produce a beautiful account of their experiences in the southern Yukon. In her book, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and knowledge in the Yukon Territory*, Cruikshank (1998) shares how one of the elders describes that land ownership rarely includes formal boundaries and ownership is expressed through knowledge acquired during a lifetime (p. 16). Similar to the Elders from the Yukon, and how Tuhiwai Smith describes “speaking back”, our people were taught to respect our *wa’wais*, our ecology, and to care for the land and people who are working close by you. These notions of respect included what our people refer to as Gywathlaab, which means “helping one another” (Green, M., 2006, p. 5). These old teachings are what frame Haisla laws and the practice of cultural conservation. Cruikshank’s writing engages readers with her interchangeable use of scientific dialogue and storytelling. Cruikshank is a non-Indigenous woman who has shown in her writing her commitment and respect for cultural teachings. She is a valuable ally and in her method of writing, she incorporates two voices throughout her writing – those who are Elders and those who are scientists. Her method of writing shows how western regulations become formalized; and she draws on storytelling to illustrate how cultural practices formulate cultural laws that will “conserve” our natural ecological environment.

Contemporary fishing and hunting has transformed rapidly and now includes modern technology and methods. While there remains to be a philosophical foundation for Haisla Nuuyum, there continues to be no recognition in western regulations to understand the meanings behind the cultural teachings. So one question that emerges is: how do we as Indigenous Peoples and scientists have a dialogue about mother earth and all living things based in respect and mutuality? How do we respectfully share each of our teachings and/or education about our world views that will not impose or take away from all groups of people? Moreover, how do we develop these in a way that does not perpetuate colonial thought and practices?

Four directions of cultural regulations and laws as a decolonizing framework

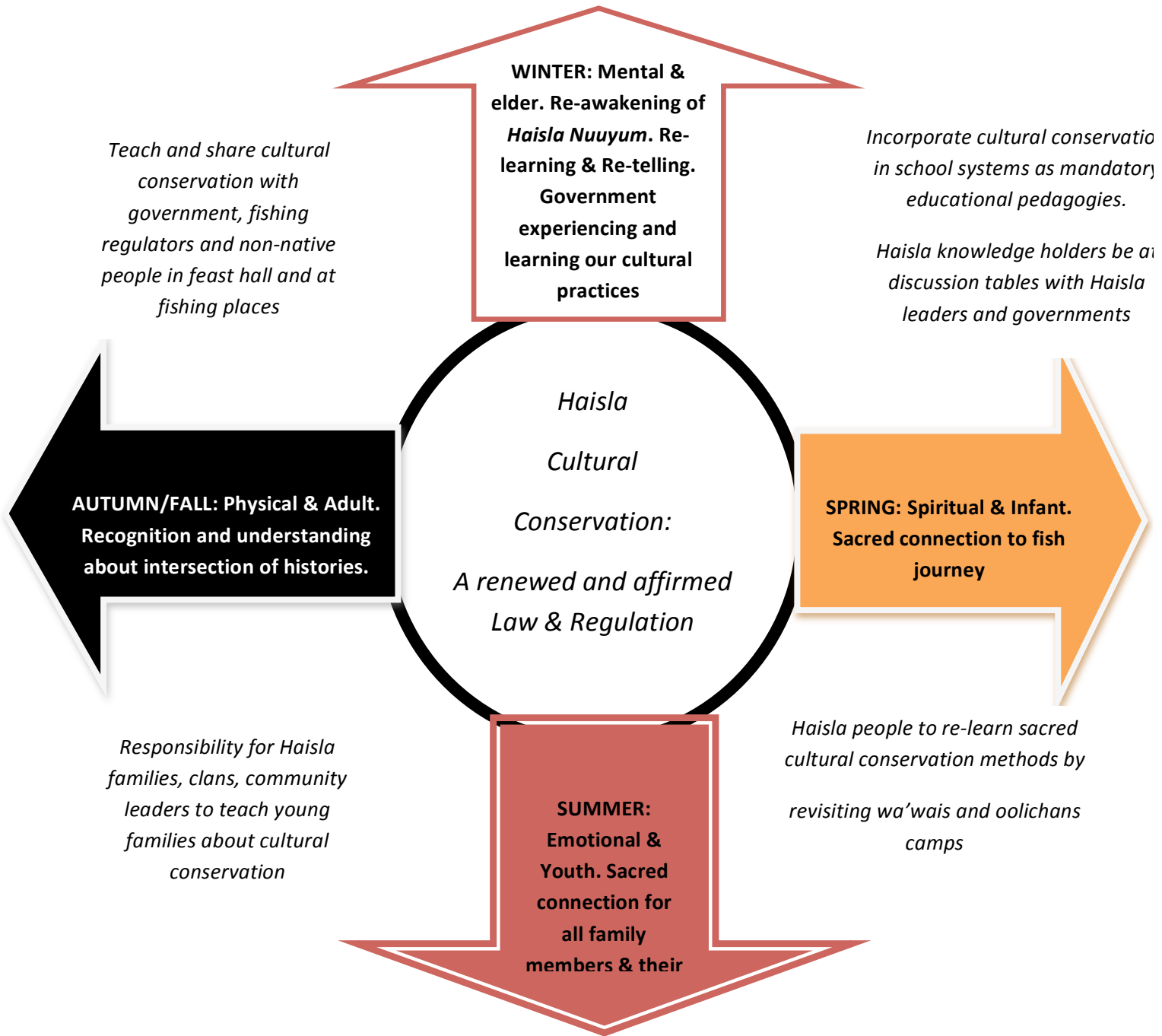
Four direction teachings illustrate a holistic connection to all aspects of life. There are many different teachings and practices about four direction teachings. Some Indigenous Peoples refer to this teaching as Medicine Wheel teachings, while others refer to it as circular teachings.

Medicine Wheel teachings are a borrowed philosophy from my colleagues who are Anishnabe and Ojibway. I have used this philosophical framework throughout my professional and personal life. This philosophy guides me in how I think through my writing, research and daily living. Typically I draw upon four directions that include the life cycle, such as infant, youth, adult and elder. I also utilize aspects of our being, such as spiritual, emotional, physical and mental. Other aspects can be placed within the four directions such as colors, animals, and elements of the earth, traditional medicines and seasons. For the purposes of this paper about cultural conservation and regulation from a Haisla Nuuyum perspective, I will employ the four seasons to encapsulate my final thoughts for this paper.

The *Eastern* direction is the direction of infant and spiritual being – this is the direction of spring. In this direction, our people prepared themselves spiritually by partaking in their spiritual bathing. They also spiritually prepared their supplies and equipment for their journey. During this season, they also watch out for signs of what and where they would fish or hunt. The *Southern* direction is the direction of youth and Emotional being – this is the direction of summer. In this direction, families of the fishers prepared themselves and their household for the fishing journey. There were strict rules about how they must conduct themselves. The families also prepared their homes, supplies and smoke house to preserve their catch. In this cultural practice, all family and crew members engage prayer, silence and stillness. The *Western* direction is the direction of adult and the Physical being – this is the direction of fall/autumn. In this direction, we note two different worldviews between First Nations' peoples and non First Nations. This is direction when colonial foreign laws and physical forces attempted to prevent our Nuuyum to prevail. The *Northern* direction is the direction of elder and the mental being – this is the direction of winter. The *Mental* direction is where leadership is demonstrated, including the importance for fishers and their families to hold extensive knowledge about the entire fishing journey, pre and post preparation. In this direction, we “remember”. This is the direction to re-awaken those old sacred teachings. This is where non-Indigenous peoples learn and understand the philosophical teachings within traditional knowledges. This is also the direction where we re-think what conservation is and that this will better reflect and Indigenous worldview.

Figure 1

Cultural conservation, regulation laws throughout seasons...



Aixgwellas...

My dad has shared that conservation is not a priority for organizations such as sport fishermen. Generally sports fishermen are not regulated in a same manner that Department of Fisheries (DFO) regulates Indigenous peoples when they fish. Sport fishers can fish up to seven days a week regardless of any limitation on their catch. Sport fishery organizations build lodges and camps to attract tourists and sport fishers to our territory and they can fish daily with no one to monitor their catch. The northwest coast waters are immaculate, beautiful scenery, and with an abundance of places to fish. The beauty of our territory and its fishing attracts visitors from all over the world for sport fishing. The difficulty and possibility for Haisla pain is created by the fact that many fishers are visitors who will eventually leave our territory; they are often uncaring and abrupt in their actions and pollute our water with garbage. Fishing organizations that accommodate “sport fishing” do not enforce “common sense” laws to respect because this may be “bad for business.” Douglas Harris (2002) refers to Dianne Newell who questions, “For whom are fish conserved? The answer she concludes is that Native people, despite their long history of effective resource management, bore the brunt of conservation for the sport and industrial fisheries” (p. 17).

Despite decades of rationalizing who has the right to fish or hunt, there has never been a satisfactory conclusion to meet the needs and concerns of our people. This is due, in large part, to there being little or no motivation on the part of non-Indigenous peoples to learn and know cultural living prior to settler developments. For Haisla people, fishing is life and fishing processing is our connection to all that is around us. Nadasdy (2003) shares an account of Kluane people and their life as hunters. He states,

...when I talk about ‘hunting’ I am referring not simply to the shooting of animals but also to the entire constellation of values, beliefs, practices, and social relations that surround and give meaning to Kluane people’s subsistence strategies and their relationship to animals. (p. 66)

There will continue to be amendments to laws, creation of new laws and legislation in an attempt to appease Canadian citizens. However, no one will be satisfied. From a Haisla perspective, all we ask is that you learn and understand the unique methods that our people lived and continue to live by, of which we refer to as our Nuuyum, and that you refer to as cultural conservation law.

Wa! Hy’chka! Thank you .

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