

PLACING GITXSAN STORIES IN TEXT:
RETURNING THE FEATHERS. GUUXS MAK'AM MIK'AAX

by

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ABSTRACT

As a *Gitxsan* child growing up in the *Gitxsan* territory, I was never sent away to residential school. I was able to experience a traditional *Gitxsan* education that involved working with Elders on the land and listening to stories. This experience had a profound effect on my way of being, both as an educator and as a storyteller, so much so that I have used this pedagogical approach in my public school teaching. This study documents my journey as I concurrently use stories as research and research as stories and drawing from narrative, autobiographical, reflective practice, and action research literature and the conception of Indigenous research offered by Linda Smith (1999).

I narrate the stories and legends that reveal the depth of the *Gitxsan* culture. *Gitxsan* culture involves traditions arising from a long oral history. I explore these traditions and stories and transform them into text so that they can be used as an educational resource in order to help students think critically and understand factual content in a personalized manner.

Gitxsan educational materials can and should be integrated into the common school curriculum. *Gitxsan* perspectives on storytelling offer useful insights that would enhance education programs within our public school systems. This thesis/dissertation captures the diversity and complexity of the *Gitxsan* culture and explores some of the struggles and tensions associated with an inquiry into educational change.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE ODYSSEY BEGINS

INTRODUCTION

This study is about *Gitxsan* history, laws and traditions. The study contains *Gitxsan* interpretations. The *Gitxsan* are very independent. They own the land and the territories, it has never been purchased from them and they have never signed a treaty. The chapter begins with an *ant'imahlasxw* that introduces the connection the *Gitxsan* have with the land. In addition, I explain who the *Gitxsan* are, where they have come from and where they are going. This begins their story.

1.1 Gunnxhl

(Excerpt from The Odyssey of *Nuhlx*, His Three Brothers and Sister). It was in a northern village in the *Gitxsan* Territories where this story took place. People stayed close to the village because of the monsters that surrounded the territories. There was a sandbar at the lower part of the village. The sandbar extended out a great distance. It was flat and large. This was where the young people played *gunnxhl*. They played and played. Sometimes they would stop playing when one got hungry and they would eat fish and start again. The Elders would ask the young people to come and help with food preparations, but their cries fell on deaf ears.

Then one year while they were playing someone spotted a beautiful feather, brilliant with the colours of the rainbow. One rather foolish young man was lured by the beauty of the feather so he grabbed it to place in his headband. He caught the feather and soon his legs were dangling in the air. The feather was lifting him and he could not let go. Another boy ran to his rescue to pull him down only to find that he too was attached to his friend's legs. Others ran to help and soon all were stuck to each other. The feather

seemed to realize there was no one left and it lifted all the people from the village upward and disappeared into the sky.

1.2 Setting

The territorial home of the *Gitxsan* Nation where *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and sister once faced the monsters is a vast area in the upper Skeena Valley in Northwestern Central British Columbia. The people consider themselves to have originated at T'emlax̓amit, an ancient *Gitxsan* community.

When the Europeans arrived, the *Gitxsan*, in addition to occupying their specific family territories to obtain resources, lived in the following co-operative seasonal settlements: *Galdoo'o*, *Gisgaga'as*, *Gisbahyakws*, *Gitanmaaxs*, *Gitjeigyukwhal*, *Gitwangax*, and *Gitanyaaw*.

The First Nations groups who are territorial neighbours to the *Gitxsan* include the *Nisga'a*, the *Tsimshian*, the *Haisla*, the *Tahltan*, the *Carrier-Sekani* and the *Wet'suwet'en*.

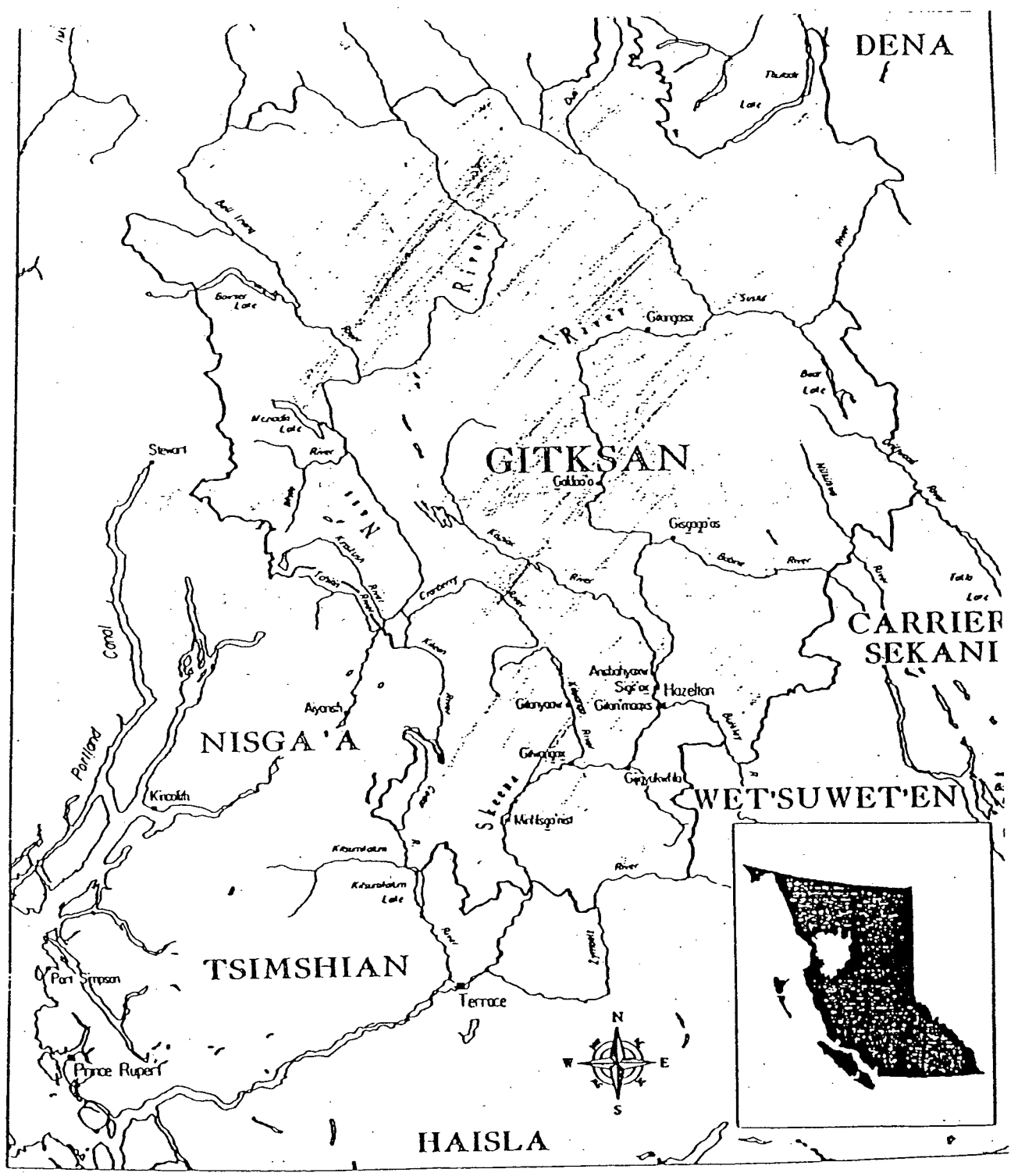


Figure 1. Map of the Gitksan Territories
Courtesy of the Sim'algax Working Group

The setting of this study is in *Gitanmaaxs*; the name, when translated, means “People Who Fish By Torchlight.” *Gitanmaaxs* is a reserve at the confluence of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers (see Figure 2). The village of Hazelton is adjacent to the reserve.

The *Gitanmaaxs* are members of one of the *Lax Gibuu* (Wolf), *Lax Seel* (Frog) or *Giskaast* (Fireweed) Clans. Each clan is comprised of many House groups, and each of these House groups has one head chief and may also have two associate chiefs. A person is a member in the mother’s clan by virtue of laws of matrilineal descent.

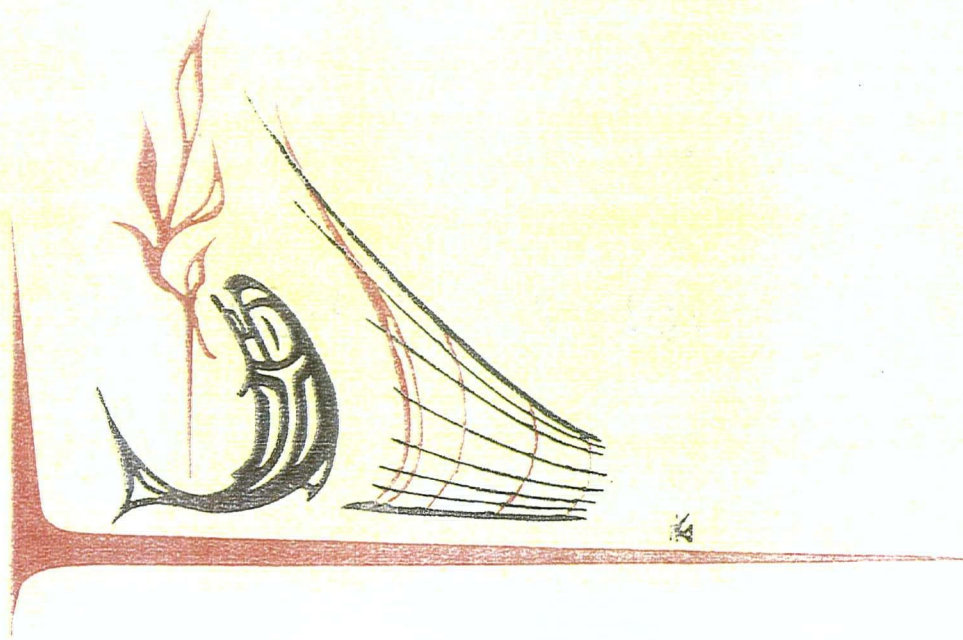


Figure 2. Logo of the Gitanmaaxs Band Council.
Coutresy of the Gitanmaaxs Band.

1.3 Definition Of Terms

Aatxyasxw: Tools given by the Creator for our earthly journey.

These are intuition, inner knowing and visions.

Adaawk: Used to describe the personal bloodline histories of the *Gitxsan*.

Adaawk involve *Gitxsan* stories and crests.

Anlo: Isolated reserve lands situated on the banks of the 'Xsan, four miles north of Hazelton. *Anlo* means where the salmon swims or where the canoes are launched.

Ansbahyaxw: The traditional name for the *Gitxsan* Village of Kispiox. The word *Ansbahyaxw* means people of the hiding place. The village is located on the north bank of the Skeena at the mouth of the Kispiox River.

Aspiiyuwa: *Gitxsan* name given to a *Gitxsan* Elder.

Ant'imahlasxw: The stories and properties of all the *Gitxsan*. The *ant'imahlasxw* are used to instruct, inform, guide and entertain the listeners.

Ayook: *Gitxsan* laws.

Baaskyaalaxha: The name of a Chief of the Wolf Clan.

Breath of our Grandfathers: Stories and songs of all our ancestors; grandfathers and grandmothers since time immemorial.

Coast Mountains School District #82: A public school district with its main office located in Terrace, which is 145 km. west of Hazelton. There are 5400 students in the District attending 20 different schools. Approximately 550 First Nations/*Gitxsan* students attend elementary public school in the *Gitxsan* territory.

Delgamuuk: The name of a House Group and Chief of the Frog Clan. In addition, *The Delgamuukx Court Case* resulted in the landmark Supreme Court decision confirming that *Gitxsan* oral history is credible evidence.

First Nations: The current term used by aboriginal peoples in Canada to describe themselves. It replaces the words Indian and Native that are commonly used in literature about the First Nations people.

Giskaast: Members of the Fireweed Clan.

Gitanmaaxs: A *Gitxsan* Village located near the confluence of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers. The name *Gitanmaaxs* means people who fish by torchlight.

Gitanyaaw or Kitwancool: A *Gitxsan* Village located on the *Kitwancool* River about fourteen miles above its mouth on the Skeena. *Kitwancool* means people of the narrow place.

Gitxsan: Name of the First Nations people who live mainly in a number of communities that are situated in the valley of the *'Xsan* in central western British Columbia. *Gitxsan* is their name for themselves and means people of the river of mist.

Gitxsanimx: The language spoken by the *Gitxsan*. The term *Sim'algax* is also used by some *Gitxsan* to describe their language.

Gitxsan Wet'suwit'en Education Society (GWES): A local society that places great importance on the local control of education. GWES regards community involvement as an essential component of any education program.

Gitwangax: People of the place of rabbits. Location on the north bank of the *'Xsan* near the mouth of the *Kitwancool* River.

Gus makt am mik'aax (Returning the feathers): A ceremony used by the *Gitxsan* to acknowledge a kindness bestowed on them. In the past it was used as a ceremony to display peace after a disagreement or war.

Gunnxhl: Ancient game of field hockey. The sticks were made from hazelnut bushes and were shaped like the hockey sticks of today. The ball was made from deerskin wrapped around a small rock.

Guxs witxw: Reincarnation.

Ha gwilii yin: Walk gently, on a soft path that is covered with eagle down.

Haldowgit: The evil side of the culture. The art of practicing witchcraft.

Hanamuxw: The name of a Chief, Elder and advisor for this study, presently held by Joan Ryan.

Hawal: Cash donations made in the feathall by the hosting clan.

Heyuxw: Soul of the dead.

Hi madam: The mountains are streaked with sheets of clouds.

Hix: Mountain Goat fat used for scared ceremonies.

Huwilp: *Sim'alga \bar{x}* word for House Groups of the extended family. It is the plural for *wilp*.

Indian Day School: A federally funded school on reserve attended by *Gitxsan* students who did not attend residential schools and who were not allowed to attend provincial public school.

Integrated Resource Packages (IRP): BC curriculum guides that define the mandated parameters for the implementation of curricula in all programs from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

K'aas': Marrying within your clan; also the *Sim'algaḡ* word for incest.

K'alidakhl: *Sim'algaḡ* word for blue jay. *K'alidakhl* means hair tied back.

Kitsegukla: A *Gitxsan* Village (*Gitjeigyukwhal*) located on the south bank of the *'Xsan* at the mouth of *Kitsegukla* Creek.

K'olim lo'op: Gutting knife made from stone.

K'ubawilksihlkw: young people who are in line to become chiefs -*simgigyat* (men) or *sigidimhaanak* (women).

Lax Gibuu: Members of the Wolf Clan.

Lax Seel: Members of the Frog Clan.

Li'ligit: A gathering where repayments are made.

Limx'ooy': Mourning song or lament sung when a new chief takes on the chieftainship.

Luu hix hogix: Spiritual balance.

Mahumim lo'op: Stone file.

Malwasxw: A root of the Indian Hellebore burned and used to purify one's aura or home. The smoke cleansed the area of unwelcomed spirits.

Mas: Red ochre.

Masxwagwa lo'op: Red rock.

Mii K'aax: Fine eagle down used for sacred ceremonies.

Miin Wilp: Head chief of a House Group.

Na'a: Mother or grandmother.

Naadahalhakwhlinhl: Interconnectedness with all living things.

Naxnok: Used to describe a supernatural person or a being that is higher than humans.

Nuits: Musus secreted from the nose.

Nuhl̄x: Name given to the child born from *nuits*.

Pdeek: The Clan to which one is a member.

Sabax: The end.

Sbil naxnok: A supernatural place where power ceremonies take place.

Sdikyoodenax: The highest peak in the Hazelton mountain range (Rocher de Boule).

Sigit'ox: *Gitxsan* Village located on the north bank of the 'Xsan a few miles below the mouth of the Kispiox River. *Sigit'ox* is the name of a nearby hill.

Sim'alga_x: Term used by some *Gitxsan* to describe their language.

Sim'oogit: Chief.

Simgiyat: Chiefs.

Sigidim haanak': Women chiefs or high ranking women.

Skants'ook': Chokecherry branch.

So'o: Excess food at the feast given to the guests to take home. Guests are not allowed to refuse food or gifts given to them in the feast hall.

T'axim Gisgaga'as: A lake located in the village of *Gisgaga'as*.

T'axim Sdikyoodenax: A lake at the base of *Sdikyoodenax* now known as Seely Lake.

T'ets: Messengers sent out to invite guests for a feast.

Ubin: Pregnant.

Uun ts'iist': *Sim'algax* word for a positive affirmation. In ancient times, *uun ts'iist'* was a small woman who lived in the ground and came to the rescue of those who were in trouble. The *uun ts'iist'* always gave positive advice and for payment she wanted the soft string that was used for earrings in earlier times).

Weget: *Gitxsan* trickster who transformed into raven; also the word for big man.

Watsx: Otter

Wiit'axgats'agat: *Sim'algax* word used to describe mosquitoes. *Wiit'axgats'agat* means long noses.

Wii K'aax: The name of a House Group and Chief of the Wolf Clan.

Wilxsilaks or *Wilk silaks*: Members of the father clan.

Wil'naa'tahl: Relatives within the House Group.

Wilp: The House Group of the extended family.

'Xsan: River of mists (Skeena River).

Xsim lax ha: A place in the sky. The people were taken by the feather to *Xsim lax ha*.

Xsimoos: Like a thumb also, number nine.

Xsiwis: (The writer) I am *Xsiwis*. I am a House Member of *Wii K'aax* the name was given to me by the House Chief.

Yukw: A large feast. A feast used for a totem pole or gravestone raising when all the villages are invited to witness the event.

Yahlxw wila yeet': Harmony (the way is smooth).

Yuuhlimxw: Giving advice.

1.4 Path To The Spirit World

It is customary in the *Gitksan* culture to give thanks for all the gifts of life. The chiefs, in their speeches, give thanks to the Creator, the land, their ancestors, animals, plants, their relatives and everything else. So it is in the same spirit that I give thanks to my Creator and teachers as I begin my story of the past, present and future. This, according to the Elders will promote the principles of harmony (*yahlxw wila yeet'*), balance (*luu hix hogix*) and interconnectedness (*naadahahlhakwhlinhl*) as shown on the *Gitksan* philosophy wheel (see Figure 5). These guiding principals surface in the *Gitksan* stories of the land (see Chapter 4).

Through the ages, my ancestors have kept the culture, the language and the stories alive. For these gifts I am truly thankful. I now take these gifts and in turn share them in the form of this study.

To begin this study I needed to strengthen my spirit. I began by smudging my head and my heart with *malwasxw*, a sacred root used by the *Gitksan* for this type of ceremony. I then journeyed to the wilderness to burn tobacco and food to feed the ancestors of the land. I also sang the *limx'oooy'* from the House of *Wii K'aax*. This is the way in which *Gitksan* show respect to those in the Spirit World. As I gave my gifts, a squirrel came over to investigate and an eagle flew above me. I took this as a sign that I would not be alone on my journey.

1.5 What Brings Us To This Place

Despite the affirmation of oral histories as legally significant (Persky 1998) and the Elders' teachings of the importance of legends, stories and songs for cultural survival, the number of *Gitxsan* who are fluent in *Sim'algaḡ* (*Gitxsan* language) has declined dramatically in the past half century. It is my belief that if the *Gitxsan* stories are not translated and converted to text they will be lost.

Fulford (1999) cites Alasdair MacIntyre, the moral philosopher, when he states "humans create their sense of what matters and how they should act by referring consciously or unconsciously to the stories they have learned" (p. 33). According to Fulford, MacIntyre suggests,

I can only answer the question, 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question, 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part'? Children grow into adults by learning stories, and so do nations and communities.... Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in words. There is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources (p. 33).

The lives of those who attended residential schools and the future generations, who are not living their stories, are illustrations of what is to become of the *Gitxsan* students without their stories. They drift into the master story of mainstream society.

1.6 The Breath Of Our Grandfathers

I am conflicted by my desire to leave the stories behind in written form for future generations. In my life, I was fortunate enough to hear the stories travel from the breath of my storytellers. The stories had traveled in time on the 'Breath of our Grandfathers.' Writing the stories stems from my need to identify the *Gitxsan* culture and define and protect it because it has the potential to empower. As technology now presents a tool that will ensure that the stories are not lost, something vital is lost. The spirit, the breath, and the tonations are lost when stories become textual rather than oral and the multiple voices are lost as just the written version is available to readers.

I would not have been convinced to take the stories to text if it had not been for a dream. I woke up one morning to the sound of my alarm. I was startled because I am usually awake before the alarm. I was grateful to my alarm clock for waking me up; unlike the little porcupine who was so annoyed with the creek in a story I often tell (see Chapter 4). In the dream I was given deer meat and I had wrapped it for the freezer. I was surprised in the dream because I do not eat deer meat. This is because the deer are so beautiful and look so harmless. In my dream as I placed the deer meat in the freezer it had all turned into books. The dream inspired me to write the stories that had been given to me as a gift.

The ways of our people should be written by those who know and the written records should be treasured like the chief's regalia. This way those who do not know the language will read and know the disciplines and the uniqueness of the *Gitxsan*. This does not take away from the oral tradition, it is an addition. The oral tradition will always be there for those who understand (*Baaskyaalaxha*, *Gitxsan* Elder and chief, personal communication, 2000).

1.7 Gitxsan World View

The *Gitxsan* concept of non-linear time emerges from our worldview of the co-existence of the realms of the physical and supernatural worlds and our belief in reincarnation (see Chapter 4). In addition, *Gitxsan* stories, laws, songs and language that shape our worldview come from the Breath of the Grandfathers. Since time immemorial the stories have been passed down. When the storyteller speaks, he or she is the vehicle for the voices of the *Gitxsan* ancestors. The listeners become a part of many storytellers past, present and future.

The *Gitxsan* had a way of thinking and looking at the world through stories. *Gitxsan* spirituality was and is intimately connected with all things in nature. Animals, water, rocks, trees and earth all have spirits and are all gifts from the Creator. My Grandparents told me stories to help me with decisions to be made in the future when they were no longer around to help me. My Grandparents taught me about respect at an early age. Ever since I can remember, I was taught to “Be kind to birds, animals and all of God’s creation, be kind to old people and the handicapped.” I always thought this was a strange teaching because I would not be otherwise. My Grandparents were emphasizing that everything and everyone was *naadahahlhakwhlinhl*: animals, trees, rocks and humans all have spirits. Everything was created in perfect *yahlxw wila yeet*’ and to disturb a part of creation was to disturb the *Luu hix hogix*.

My Grandparents taught me that death was a natural part of life. Death was required so others could live; thus, the bodies of the *Gitxsan* who have died have fed the soil. Everything growing from the land was a part of the *Gitxsan*. This was why the *Gitxsan* respected the land and felt that it was sacred. The land was not a commodity to

be sold to the highest bidder. My Grandparents taught me to respect the newcomers to the land. "We all come from the same Creator and the same earth," they would say, "How can they be different, we are all the same." Everyone and everything that took nourishment from the land, including the newcomers to the land, were connected to the *Gitxsan*. We are all relatives.

1.8 Upsetting The Balance

The idea that we are all the same echoed in my mind all of my life, but the newcomers did not always treat us with respect. Children in Gitanmaaxs could not attend public schools. *Gitxsan* students had to attend Residential Schools and Indian Day Schools. Until 1950, First Nations peoples had to use the back door of the local hospital. The front entrance was for whites only. In the early 1900s the Reverend John Field strung a rope down the aisle of the Anglican church in Hazelton. He instructed the *Gitxsan* to sit on one side and the non-*Gitxsan* on the other side. According to the values of my Grandparents, this was not respectful so they left the church. I am including these three incidents to show how, in the past, lack of respect for a people upsets the balance. Young people need to know that events such as this occurred on *Gitxsan* lands. All people must remember to show respect to all creation. The *Gitxsan* have lost many things in their culture, but I am glad that the spirituality passed down to each and every one of us still remains intact.

1.9 Connection To Creation

As I placed the story of *The Oddessy of Nuhl̄x, his Three Brothers and Sister* and *The Origin Story of the Gitxsan* into the context of the *Gitxsan* spirituality and worldview, I was struck by the connection that *Gitxsan* have with all of creation (see Chapter 4). The young girl came from the Puberty House and as she searched for her people and wandered from house to house, she picked up a little red rock, a rock for sharpening stone tools, a rock knife and a root from a chokecherry bush. Once she combined her tears and her mucus with the items from nature they became her children. In the story, *The Origin of the Gitxsan*, the first *Gitxsan* was thrust out of the earth and became the first child of the earth. The *Gitxsan* are children of nature (see Chapter 4).

1.10 Walk Gently Xsiwis

I am *Xsiwis*, a *Gitxsan* living in *Gitanmaaxs* Village. I am a member of the Wolf Clan and my Father Clan is the Fireweed Clan. *Xsiwis* translates to *Spirit of the Rain* (see Figure 3). This name was given to me by our house chief, *Wii K'aax*, at a stone raising feast; the name *Xsiwis* once belonged to his mother. *Gitxsan* names have been passed down since time immemorial. In the feast hall *Wii K'aax* announced my *Gitxsan* name and called on many of the high-ranking chiefs to call out *Xsiwis*. He started with the Fireweed Clan, which is my Father Clan and then called on the chiefs from the Frog Clan. Some chiefs called out my name and added a phrase saying something humorous, using the crests of their own House. Others said "*ha gwilii yin*" which translates to walk gently, on a soft path that is covered with eagle down.

My House Members gave their *hawal* (presently comprised of cash donations) to assist me in paying the chiefs who abided by the laws of our grandfathers and gave power to my name by calling out my name. This is the way in which I received the name *Xsiwis*. I was born *Lax Gibuu* and will belong to them forever, but the name can change depending on the wishes of the chief. In the past, names were given to children; the boys were given names and their ears were pierced. Girls were given names when their lower lip was pierced. These are the markings of those who would eventually become chiefs. Each ceremony was defined with laws, rituals and feasting.



Figure 3. Emblem for the *Gitksan* name 'Xsiwis' which translates to 'Spirit of the Rain.'

The Wolf head symbolizes the Wolf Clan. The feather symbolizes the House Group, *Wii K'aax*.

The rain represents *Xsiwis*. Property of Jane Smith

1.11 Reflections Of Xsiwis: Gitxsan Education

It is important to note that I did not attend Residential School. The *Gitanmaaxs* Band Council, of which my grandfather John Smith was a member, decided that a school should be built in Hazelton. Discussions started in 1946 to obtain land for an amalgamated school to service both *Gitxsan* and non-*Gitxsan* students in the area. It was not opened until 1954. The Council surrendered land and the Skeena Amalgamated School was built in joint agreement with Hazelton School District # 53 (now known as Coast Mountains School District #82 see Appendix 2). *Gitxsan* children no longer had to attend Indian Day School or leave to go to residential school. The teachers of the public school system seemed very unhappy. By the time I went to school in the 1950s the attitude of the teachers was still the same. It appeared as if they considered it a great burden to have to teach *Gitxsan* students. My elementary schooling was very difficult, because of the differential treatment of First Nations students, non-First Nations curriculum and racism. I had older sisters who taught me to read. My father taught me to do Math. So in spite of the seemingly negative environment at the school, I made progress.

1.12 Where Did The Stories Come From

Unlike the residential school students, who were sent away to such places as Edmonton, Port Alberni, and Lejac residential schools, I went home each day to a loving family, who supported and helped me with everything. I knew who I was and where I belonged all of my life. Spending entire summers at the fish camp at *Anlo* (where the

salmon swims) was a family tradition. As a little girl, my father made me a fishing pole from a hazelnut bush and sat me by the river where I spent many delightful hours catching bullheads and minnows.

As the summers rolled into one another I was old enough to help my sisters gather ferns for the women to use while they were gutting salmon on the banks of the 'Xsan. The children would then haul the cleaned salmon in tubs on the red wagon to the smokehouse and canning area, at the fish camp.

At the smokehouse, in the early evening I would sit quietly and listen to my two grandmothers tell each other stories. Some were funny like *The Mosquitoes and the Woodpeckers* (see Chapter 4). Some were frightening. I remained fascinated and very much afraid. I knew that my father would come in and check on the women to see if they needed help with wood or lifting salmon and I would walk home with him with my hand in his to the cabin that was seven metres away. Listening to the story about *The Wild Woman of the Woods* made me afraid to be alone (see Chapter 4).

At the Fish camp everyone slept in a one-room cabin. After the lantern was turned off, my Na'a (Grandmother) would tell a story. If one went to sleep, it would be retold again another night. The stories seemed to go in circles. I remember tracing images of the characters and setting in the air with my finger. Na'a's stories were my television. Na'a had many talents, but telling a story was her greatest talent. Before she would begin she would credit all her sources. Soon the listeners would realize that they were listening to the stories from the beginning of time. Na'a would weave a story that would bring forth all the images and action in your imagination. She did not miss the smallest detail; she used humour and could hold your attention for hours. Sometimes she

would stop and scold the characters in the story, and then get back on track. The added bonuses in listening to her tell a story was the wealth of the language one was privileged to hear (see Chapter 4).

1.13 Unending Story Of The Extended Family

In the afternoon at the fish camp I had to help with the haying. It was fun to make haystacks with the pitchfork. I had six sisters who all helped and several of our cousins came from Gitanmaaxs to help and also to play in the hay. It was great fun to jump off the crossbeam in the hay shed onto the soft hay. Grandfather never scolded us. All the children including me would hunt for mice and baby mice under the haystacks and kill them with the pitchfork. The story for the evening meal would be one about respect for all living things. See *The Lack of Respect: The Mountain Goat Story* (see Chapter 4). I have never killed a mouse since; I suppose I was always afraid of revenge. The stories became a part of whom I was.

Another job for the children in the late afternoon was to go and hill potatoes. There was a large potato garden at *Anlo* every year. Everyone had helped to plant and everyone would help with the harvest. There was a lot of work to be done at the fish camp, but it was family working together and having a wonderful time.

All the children were taught to be very quiet at night. The *Gitxsan* believed that creatures of the night could come and take a child. The story of *The Night The Owl Came* was told so the children would understand the importance of not crying in the night (see Chapter 4). Once I cried in the night to see if the owl would come. Nothing came

for me. However, for many of the children in our village the owl came in the form of the people who took them to Residential Schools.

1.14 Spiritual Training

In the afternoon when the haying was complete I would set off with the family to cut wood for the smokehouse. My father and grandfather would cut and split the wood and the children would pack the wood to the wagon pulled by a team of horses and then we would pack wood from the wagon to the smokehouse. I watched my grandfather, as he placed tobacco on the ground and expressed gratitude to the earth for her many gifts.

In addition, if anyone died my grandfather would burn tobacco and food to send to the spirit world. This was so the spirit guides from the spirit world would come and help the newly departed spirit on his/her spirit journey. Today, I am the keeper of the fire for my family and I burn tobacco and food at *Anlo* for the spirits.

1.15 Respecting The Ancient Teachings

In the autumn when the fish camp was closed for the season, it was time to go berry picking. The family hiked up the mountain to pick huckleberries. The children were trained to stay close to the family.

I remember the story my mother told about *Otter Woman* (see Chapter 4). My mother had first-hand experience with hearing the otter and she said it was frightening. She went out for the day picking berries with other women from *Gitanmaaxs*.

It was dusk as they came down the mountain road. In the distance they could hear the chains rattling from the horses' harnesses and they were so pleased thinking that the

men were coming to meet them. As they hurried along my mother had a strange feeling that it was not possible that anyone should be meeting them. She uttered the word, “*Watsx*,” (Otter) and the women moved quietly into the bushes on the side of the road. Instantly, the rattling of the chains was silenced and all was quiet. The frightened women hurried back to the village. Their story would be told over and over again. Years later, at a very low point in my life, I was hiking up a mountain path with a non-*Gitxsan* friend. We heard a vehicle coming very close to us. We stepped off the winding mountain road to let the vehicle pass when I said, “*Watsx*,” to myself. The sound of an approaching vehicle disappeared. My non-*Gitxsan* friend was puzzled with the strange event. I chose not to tell her what was happening. I was happy that I knew the ancient teachings and I knew how to apply them to the situation.

We are given *aatxyasxw* by the Creator which are tools for our earthly journey. These are intuition, inner knowing and visions (*Hanamuxw*, *Gitxsan* Advisor, Elder and chief, personal communication 2004).

1.16 Language Arts With Na’a (Grandmother)

It was a time before big business, large sawmills, and logging trucks. Many *Gitxsan* families would work at a pole camp on their territories, harvesting trees. I was fortunate enough to be taken along as company for my *Na’a* while the men were out working. During the day I helped *Na’a* with simple chores. I would pack wood and fetch water for *Na’a*. Sometimes we made bannock or cookies. Throughout the day *Na’a* would tell me *Weget* stories such as *The Origin Of Weget* and *Weget And The Ball Of Light* (see Chapter 4). Then at the evening meal I told the *Weget* stories to my father, grandfather and uncles with the help of my *Na’a*. So powerful was the confidence

instilled in me, I was able to write a modern day legend about *The Young Egret* (see Chapter 4). When I became an educator I had the ability to use the stories and the culture to write plays. Years ago, *Na'a* had an excellent curriculum that I have been using since I became an elementary educator in 1986 and I hope to encourage others to use also.

1.17 Cultural Training

As I listened to the stories as a child, I did not realize that I was collecting knowledge about the culture and language. I became a storyteller just like my *Na'a*, and today I find when I am telling a story to a group of non-speakers I have to struggle to keep using English, as the power of my language, the original voice in which I heard the stories, rises to the surface. *The Legend of K'alidakhl* is written in English and *Sim'algyax* (see Appendix D). In addition, I felt that my Elders valued me. This was their greatest gift to me. I did not have to face any monsters by myself. As a child there was someone always by my side. Now in my adult life, my early teachings and stories are my constant companions.

1.18 Summary

As a child, I compared my life with those who attended residential school. I was often envious. They would come back sophisticated and knowledgeable about the world. I never left my humble village. After I read the documents (e.g., Sutherland, 1997) relating to the negative residential school experience where they were denied their language and culture and being constantly hungry, I was glad that I never attended. It seems that I worked just as hard as the Residential School students with all the chores

that needed to be done. However, my work was contributing to the family unit and I was encouraged and praised for my accomplishments. The stories of residential school indicate quite a different experience, where mental, physical, and emotional abuse was endured.

The Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council (1996) revealed the losses experienced by many of those who attended Residential School. On the contrary, I did not lose my family ties, my identity, my language, my role models, my values, my support systems, my individuality, my self-image, my childhood, my innocence and my freedom to be a child. I do not consider my early public school experience helpful in my academic education but fortunately I had the cultural teachings of my family and *Wilp*. With these teachings, I had the self-esteem required to obtain a formal education, as my life in later years demonstrates. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council revealed that being absent from the culture-as was the case of those who attended residential schools in their formative years-was devastating and made a lasting impact on the life of the young child.

1.19 The Call Of The Stories

(Excerpt from The Odyssey of *Nuhl̓x* his Three Brothers and Sister). The children knew that they had to leave the village. They knew they had a purpose to fulfill. *Nuhl̓x* and his siblings decided to set off into the territories that were guarded by different monsters. They would go and destroy the monsters that did not allow the *Gitxsan* to venture out any great distance on the territories. The five youngsters hardly seemed adequate to face the challenges that plagued the *Gitxsan* Territories. *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and sister did not pack a lot of food for the journey. They left all the food they had prepared for their mother. They had explicit instructions from the spirit guide. The

Naxnok who was watching over them had informed them of what they would need so they took just enough food for one meal. The spirit watching over them would provide their food. They had the feather for their power.

Nuhl and his brothers and sister set off on their journey. They knew they had a purpose; it was a journey of choice. Their mother wanted to go with them, but the youngsters knew that their journey was a dangerous one. Their mother walked with them as they began their mission but then she returned home. They convinced their mother that she must stay home with her people. The children knew they had their supernatural powers to help them. If they had to go and rescue their mother - who was human - they might not be successful. The mother wept as she watched her children disappear around the bend in the trail. She knew she would never see them again. She collected the items that had transformed into her children and found comfort in them as she placed them in her apron.

Each place where *Nuhl* and his brothers and sister defeated the monsters that plagued the territories became a power place. The *Gitxsan* call this place a *xsbin nax nox* (a supernatural place). The *Gitxsan* have several supernatural or power places throughout their territories. The place where the owl took the child is a *xsbin naxnox*. The banks of the *'Xsan* at the point where it meets the Bulkley River is a sacred place. The *Gitxsan* endured great suffering at these places and a supernatural being appeared to them. The *xsbin naxnox* is a place of immeasurable strength. It can bind an individual to that spot of ground in the face of adversity. Before I leave on a journey I go to the *xsbin nax nox* and wash my face and hands. A true ceremony would be to immerse myself in the icy waters. This was so I would not forget my early teachings and who I was. Upon

my return home I go there once again, to wash my journey off my spirit. Here I have often felt the sensation of my ancestors who are doing it once again in my actions as I obey the laws of the land. These are special rituals that have been handed down through time.

Like the children in *The Odyssey of Nuhlx*, I have always felt that I have a purpose to fulfill. Supported by the confidence of family and friends I decided to leave my comfort zone. I obtained my Bachelor of Education from the University of Victoria, and then I went to the University of Northern British Columbia to secure a Masters of Education degree. This included a session of summer school in Prince George and throughout the year working and attending classes on weekends in Terrace. Finally, I am now on my last journey that took me to the University of British Columbia. It was not an easy decision; I had a job that I loved but I felt the Elders had invested so much of their time in me that I needed to take their stories beyond my classroom. Equipped with the knowledge that it was my destiny to take the stories to text, I left my family, home and job to go to university in order to learn how to take the stories to a place where they would be considered of great value in an educational setting. I felt the academic world had to accept them. I had to convince them that my Elders' stories were worth telling. The purpose was to gain the sanction of the "authority" of academia, to aid my goal of using the stories and storytelling as curriculum for elementary students in the *Gitxsan* territories. So my journey of choice took me to the University of British Columbia. It was a difficult year, but the call of the stories was so strong I could not fail. I had my stories for my power.

CHAPTER TWO: RETURNING THE FEATHERS

I will explore the stories and legends that reveal the depth of the *Gitxsan* culture. *Gitxsan* culture involves traditions arising from a long oral history. I will explore these stories and put them down in text so they can be used as an educational resource in order to help students think critically and understand content in a personalized manner. The stories dominate the cultural lives of the *Gitxsan* people. The stories are the subject of many art pieces, the medium by which storytellers keep alive the memories of their *Gitxsan* heroes and lawmakers. Stories, throughout the ages, have provided inspiration to music and are the core of the rich and extensive ceremonial practices of the *Gitxsan*. These stories become part of the stock of teaching stories. I am a *Gitxsan* educator documenting these stories using Narrative as Research.

2.1 The Feather Returns

(Excerpt from The Odyssey of *Nuhl̓x* his Three Brothers and Sister). Then the dreaded day arrived and the feather returned to the community from the sky. It shimmered as it floated above the players. *Nuhl̓x* had established himself as the best player but he was losing and blamed the feather for distracting him. *Nuhl̓x* grabbed at the feather and stuck it in his headband. Soon his legs were dangling in midair. *Nuhl̓x* turned into a mess of green slime, but the feather did not get disgusted with the slime. His brother, *Masgwa lo'op* ran to *Nuhl̓x*'s rescue. The boy changed into a rock and grew and grew and turned into a huge boulder to try and help *Nuhl̓x*. The boulder was like a pebble to the beautiful feather. *Mahnim lo'op* went to the rescue next, thinking that the extra weight would cause the feather to fall to the ground. Like the first group taken by the feather, the children did not see the string to which the feather was attached. Then came *Skants'ook'*. He grabbed at his brother's legs and changed into a tree and his roots grew into the ground, but the feather uprooted him.

Their sister *K'ohlim lo'op* screamed while she sharpened her hands on *Mahnim lo'op*. She knew she was a broken knife and she was filing her blade. The little girl ran

climbing up on her brothers and stood on *Nuhl̓x*'s shoulders as she reached around for the invisible string. She did not know what she was doing but she grabbed and cut the string. Those who were hanging fell to the earth.

2.2 The Power Of The Feather

The story of *Nuhl̓x* and his three brothers and sister with the feather as their power will lead the journey through the *Gitxsan* Territories. With the strength of the Elders behind me, I will return the feathers and I will lead young *Gitxsan* and others who want to learn about the *Gitxsan* on a journey through *Gitxsan* culture. In the past, *Nuhl̓x*, his three brothers and sister captured the feather; today I am returning the symbolic feather to say thank you to my storytellers.

Guuxs mak' am mi k'aax is a ceremony used by the *Gitxsan* to acknowledge a kindness bestowed on them. The headdress is a power symbol worn by a chief. A chief dances and the eagle down falls gently from his/her headdress. Today, this is the way in which *Gitxsan* say thank you. In the past it was used as a ceremony to display peace after a disagreement or war. This study is my way of saying thank you to my *Gitxsan* teachers, the Elders who used stories to teach me and encouraged me both to be a keeper of the stories and to pass them on to the children of the present and to preserve them for the children of the future.

2.3 The Strength Of The Feather

The strength of the delicate feather is incredible to me. The feather lifted all the people of an entire village into the sky. The fine eagle down that floats from the chief's headdress represents the powerful concepts of peace and honour. The oral stories, which are in a precarious state of being forgotten, will, with the power of text, last forever.

As a *Gitxsan* Educator who is fluent in both English and *Sim'algax*, I am compelled to preserve the stories of the *Gitxsan* for future generations. It has been a part of my calling. I have always been disappointed that there is so little educational material based on *Gitxsan* content. Most educational resources tend to put the *Gitxsan* into the larger linguistic group of the *Tsimshian* and in so doing have obscured the rich culture and stories of the *Gitxsan*. I have used *Gitxsan* stories and legends in my teaching and in my community work. In this study, I intend to use my collection and convert to text some of the stories that I have used while exploring their pedagogical, epistemological and ontological significance.

Listening to stories was the beginning of my earliest education. Early in my life I was given the sense of belonging through the stories told to me by my storytellers. In later years, from the storytellers' examples, I was able to take on the role of storyteller.

2.4 Preserving The Stories

As an educator, I have used storytelling as my mode of instruction. In my professional background as a classroom teacher with *Gitxsan* students, I have often stressed the importance and the effectiveness of using the *Gitxsan* culture as an avenue for instruction (Smith Mowatt, 1988). I believe it is important for children to receive

instruction through their own cultural stories in order to enhance their self-images and to provide them with an accurate understanding of themselves. The powerful pedagogy of the Elders calls to me.

2.5 Learning More From Elders

This study translates into English some of the *ant'imalthlasxw* of the *Gitxsan* passed down to me by the storytellers and documents them in written textual form. These are stories that reinforce *Gitxsan* values, customs, language, culture and identity. Repeating these stories acknowledges and validates the knowledge of the Elders. According to the Elders, the children need to learn from the past in order to be prepared for the future. They state that the youth must take the talking stick from the hands of the oral culture and incorporate it into the hands of their book learning (see Figure 6). My purpose is to make the stories of the Elders accessible to others so they come to know, value and respect the stories of the *Gitxsan*. I want to present the Elders as master storytellers and teachers as their pedagogical approach can be used in the education system of today. The younger generation and the future generations of the *Gitxsan* need to know who they are and from where they have come. They need to gain the confidence and pride that comes from the knowledge and sense of belonging as a result of knowing one's story. They need to know the legacy of the residential school system that denied them the legacy of the wisdom of the Elders.



Figure 4. The logo for the *Gitanmaaxs* Education Society. The logo portrays the oral culture (circle representing the Elders placing the talking stick into the hands of the *Gitxsan* youth represented by book learning).

Courtesy of the *Gitanmaaxs* Education Society.

2.6 Collaborating: Between People, Between Languages

The Elders have taught me language, stories, beliefs, traditions, songs and dances. From these teachings came the higher dimensions of learning. One cannot sit by the feet of an Elder and not learn about trust, honour, respect, honesty, humour, humility and sharing (see Figure 5). In this study, I will share this experience and use my fluency in both languages - *Sim'algax* and English - to transmit the *Gitxsan* worldview to a broader audience.

All my life I have been called by the language and stories. For years before I became an educator I visited elders and collected their stories in the oral traditions. I was excited to learn “new” words that had been largely dropped from *Gitxsanimx* vocabulary from the lack of use. I used the languages and stories in informal, community educational settings. Then in 1986, when I completed my Bachelor of Education, I began to use them in elementary schools. Over the years I have documented the language and stories in field notes and at times I audio-taped Elders telling stories, talking about the past, singing songs and discussing our many beliefs. This data collection was for my personal learning and teaching. I believed that this was the reason the Elders taught me. Not in my wildest dreams did I think that one day these notes and tapes would be used for a major thesis. Did the Elders in their wisdom know this?

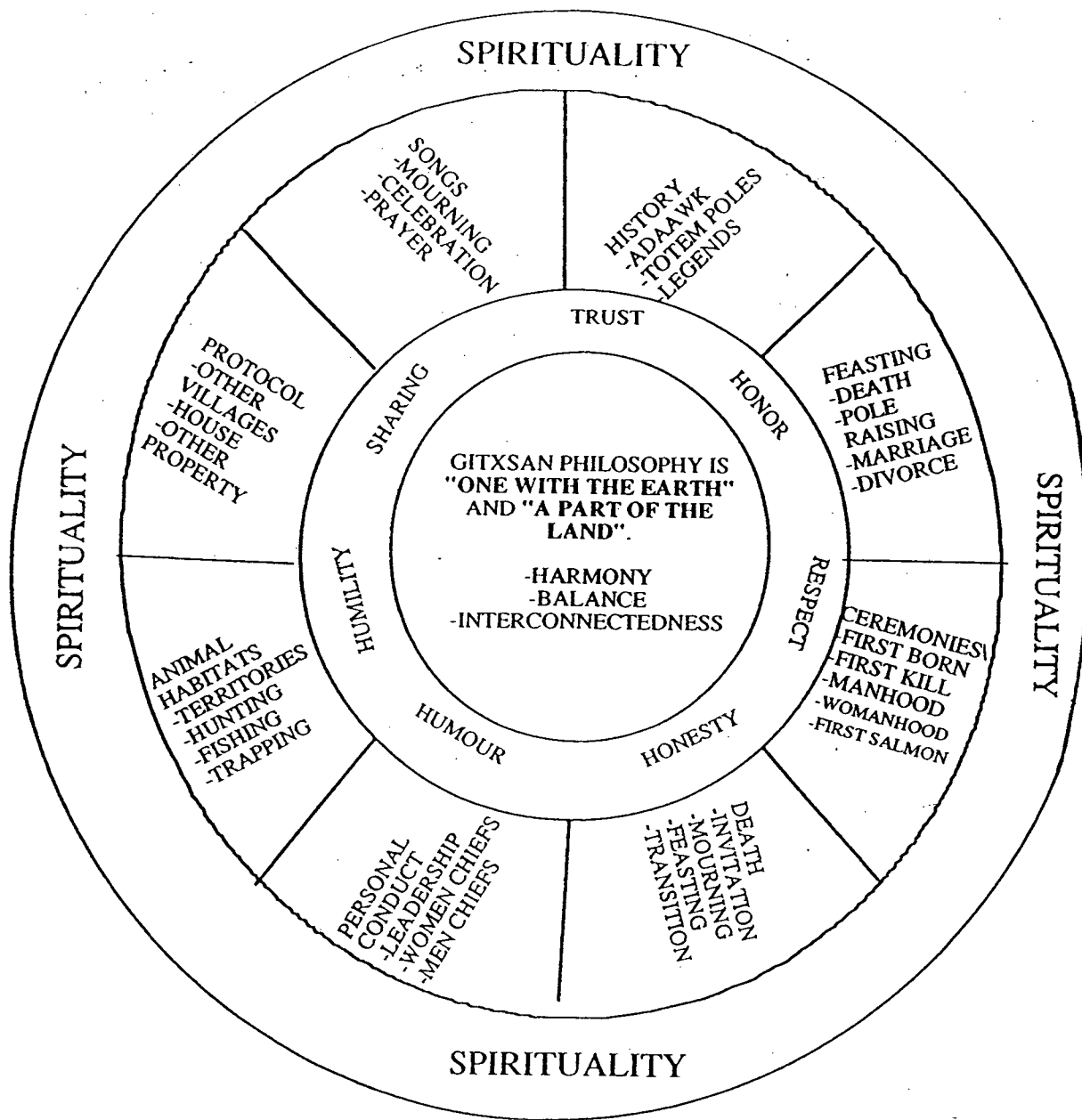


Figure 5. The Philosophy Wheel of the *Gitxsan*.

The wheel represents the values of the *Gitxsan*.

Courtesy of *Wii Muugwikuxxw*.

Gitxsan Elders took on the task of preparing for the future through their visions and prayers. Part of this responsibility meant observing babies as soon as they are born, assessing their potential. What gifts did they bring with them from the spirit level? What will their purpose be in life? Once the Elders figured it out, then the paternal side of the child organizes a curriculum to develop the gifts to their highest potential. The *Gitxsan* are expected to leave earth in a better state than when they first arrived for the physical journey (*Hanamuxw*, *Gitxsan* Advisor, Elder and chief, personal communication 2004).

Today, many of the young people question why they should respect Elders. The younger generations have not been taught about the great contributions the Elders have made through their stories. Many of their parents are products of the residential school system and this has limited their understanding of the language and culture. The Elders have trouble communicating the stories in English. As told in the *Gitxsan* language these stories are vivid and the telling is eloquent. I do not want the stories to appear in broken English: this is not how I hear them. The aim of this study is to connect the younger generations to the Elders as the journey of stories enters the school system and the following questions are addressed.

2.7 The Research Purposes

1. To record in written form the oral history, the cultural beliefs, the traditions, the stories, the perceptions, the visions, the struggles and the legacy of the *Gitxsan* before it is blurred in the memories of those who know and to establish that the *Gitxsan* have ownership of their stories.
2. To present teachers in the *Gitxsan* Territories the knowledge about the devastation of residential schools. The teachers need to understand the history of the education of their *Gitxsan*/First Nations students.

3. To provide teachers and *Gitxsan*/First Nations students with authentic materials from which they can take information to meet the needs of the Integrated Resource Packages (IRP) as outlined by the Ministry of Education (1996). The stories included can meet the requirements of reading and writing for the Language Arts Program. There is always a shortage of culturally relevant materials for the classrooms in the *Gitxsan* territories.

As a teacher in the public school system in British Columbia, my intent is to use this study to provide information and materials for teachers working in the classrooms in the *Gitxsan* Territories. The curriculum documents mandated by the British Columbia Ministry of Education (hereafter, the Ministry of Education) (1996) encourage the use of locally developed resources.

The Odyssey of Nuhl̓x, His Three Brothers and Sister on their journey to free the *Gitxsan* territories will be used as a metaphor to lead the reader on a journey to release the pedagogical significance of stories and storytelling. In the past, *Nuhl̓x*, his three brothers and sister captured the feather; today, with this study, I am capturing some of the stories in text and returning the symbolic feathers to say thank you to all my teachers. The study of *Gitxsan* storytelling rooted in actual places on the land is presented in seven chapters. The stories serve to show the *Gitxsan* contributions to history and how I have used them in my teaching.

Chapter One began with an excerpt of the story of *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and his sister, as do all the chapters. The *Gitxsan* culture group was introduced and I placed myself within the cultural group. I reflected on my educational experience and learning

to show from where the stories in the document came. I also highlighted the losses of those who attended Residential School compared to my experience. As the one who remained at home, I speak *Sim'algax* and I know the *Gitxsan* stories.

Chapter Two poses the research purposes and begins to show the transitions through which the *Gitxsan* have passed. The story of *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and sister's voyage is the metaphor for this chapter. I reflect on my odyssey, as I had to leave my village to fulfill my purpose of taking the stories from their oral place to a place of text.

Chapter Three discusses the research methodology utilized and the manner in which the data was collected for this study. The story of *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and sister placing together the bones that fell from the sky will reflect my task of placing the stories into text that came to me from my Elders. This chapter discusses the importance of Indigenous researchers using Indigenous research methods as defined in this study (see Appendix A).

Chapter Four translates the returning of the feathers to bringing the stories back to the people in an educational setting. Linda Smith (1999) states that research has to be of benefit for the community. The stories in this study are my gift to the *Gitxsan* children. The *Gitxsan* oral culture must take advantage of the technology available in order to reach their own and other communities with the important message of who the *Gitxsan* are, where they have come from and where they are going. Like the feather in earlier times, the *Gitxsan* stories have returned.

Chapter Five presents the experiences and losses of those who attended residential school. Any research done on *Gitxsan*/First Nations people must include the history and devastation of Residential Schools.

Chapter Six brings *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and sister to the sleeping “Monster Snake.” This metaphor brings the journey of *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and sister full circle. This chapter stresses the significant factors relating to effective utilization of authentic *Gitksan* cultural materials in the classroom including the importance of identifying the *Gitksan* literature as *Gitksan*. The impact of the conflict of cultures, First Nations versus European, viewed through literature using the following themes: culture and education, historical-contemporary background, cultural framing, story telling across the curriculum, bridging, curriculum theory, cultural dynamics, and learning and teaching.

Chapter Seven brings *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and sister to their final confrontation as they meet *The Woman With the Robe, Cane and Red Eyes*. *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and sister are defeated and turned to stone on the mountain. The pillar that was *Nuhl̓x* has fallen, and four pillars remain. Within the *Gitksan* culture, *Sim'alga̓x* has fallen and is on the verge of extinction. This chapter discusses the decline of *Sim'alga̓x* to show how important it is to place the *Gitksan* stories in text and have them returned to the *Gitksan* territories. This chapter also includes my concluding remarks on the renewal of the pillar of *Gitksan* storytelling.

2.8 Significance Of The Problem

Over three decades ago, the National Indian Brotherhood (1972) strongly advocated that the right to control First Nations education be based on the two principles of “parental responsibility and local control.” Their document, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, insisted that quality education be provided for First Nations learners, but not at the expense of their self-worth and identity. They argued that positive changes in

education of First Nations children can only come about through full participation and partnership with First Nations parents, local communities and educational institutions. Their argument continues to resonate among First Nations people.

Jeffrey (1999) found that the public school system's inability to understand and meet the needs of First Nations children resulted in many of the First Nations children suffering from a lack of belonging, low self-esteem and the inability to conform to the standards of the public school system. She concluded that, for many generations, the First Nations leaders have been consistent and strong in demanding educational change, but many of the public educational institutions have not responded to the call for change. According to Jeffrey, to continue with this inaction will do injustice to a great majority of First Nations students who have historically been denied an opportunity to develop to their full potential.

Many First Nations groups are making some gains in making the education system more conducive to developing the potential of First Nation students. For example, there are band controlled schools, the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) and similar programs providing role models for developing First Nations teachers, the *Nisga'a* have their own school district and First Nations language teachers are in many communities.

However, curricular and pedagogical approaches have largely been tailored to fit into the traditional Western conceptions of education. This study demonstrates the importance of exploring the call of stories and storytelling as curriculum and pedagogy appropriate for *Gitksan* students living in the *Gitksan* territories.

CHAPTER THREE: THE TASK OF PLACING THE BONES TOGETHER

Do the *Gitxsan* consider their oral culture useful? Will there be a loss of cultural identity and oral traditions with the use of technology to relate the culture to the young people? I realize the contradiction in which I have placed the *Gitxsan* oral tradition. However, I am convinced that I must place the stories in text. The purpose of this study is grounded in my belief that classroom teachers should recognize storytelling in addition to reading and writing, as a valid means of communication and that storytelling is made more valuable when the school incorporates the traditional stories of their *Gitxsan* students to enhance the students' imagination and creativity. The underlying assumption is that values learned through the use of these particular stories serve to strengthen the identity and self-respect of the students.

3.1 Methodology: The Return Of The Bones

(Excerpt from The Odyssey of *Nuhl̓x* his Three Brothers and Sister). One night the mother heard a loud roaring noise coming from the sandbar. "Do not get up," she instructed her children, "We will just ignore it; after it is quiet we will go and see what has happened." It sounded like things were dropping on the *gunn̓xhl* field at the sandbar. Then after a while it was quiet. The family got off their sleeping mats and went outside and there were the bones of corpses on the *gunn̓xhl* field. All the bones of the villagers who had disappeared had dropped from the sky.

The children placed the bones together because they wanted to see what would happen. The children guessed at who owned what bones and spent several days arranging them. Then the job of putting the bones back together was done. The five children were ready. The little girl took the feather from *Nuhl̓x*'s

headband and walked around the bones. On the third time around they stopped; the bones stirred. Then the little group went around the fourth time. The bones were humans again. They sat up just like they had just woken up and stretched, scratched and

yawned, and then they got up and went home, leaving behind *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and sister. But many of the people limped to their houses because the children had not put all the right bones together. The villagers just resumed their lives where they had left off and they had no recollection of what had happened to them. They just thought they had been sleeping and had been awakened from a deep sleep (Smith Mowatt [1988], from a story told by *Aspiiyuwa*).

3.2 Research Is Instructional

In the story of *The Odyssey of Nuhl̓x, His Three Brothers and Sister*, five *Gitxsan* have the task of placing together the bones that fell from the sky. It was my duty in this study to place the bones of the stories together in text and leave them available for the children of the future.

Using the idea that narrative is both phenomenon and method, and that the stories of the land reveal the cultural beliefs and perceptions of the *Gitxsan*, I situated this study within this framework. I used a method of storytelling based on learning and sharing. Storytelling in Indigenous research is both phenomenon and method. In other words, I will research storytelling (the phenomenon) and use storytelling as research (method).

Researching storytelling involved listening to, analyzing and interpreting the stories I gathered from the *Gitxsan* Elders. Linda Smith (1999) argued that very few have attempted to find out how Indigenous people would interpret, analyze, or question the phenomena they encountered on their life's journey. Therefore, I consulted *Hanamuxw*, *Gitxsan* Chief, Elder and advisor for this study, about the interpretations and the perspectives of history that I formed as the basis for this research. She stated that

research is instructional. It teaches you new information and adds to your store of knowledge. It has epistemological significance. It also improves the core content of your curriculum material. Teaching is research. It is both a way of being and an ontological orientation. Research is an inquiry that promotes openness and acceptance of new ideas that in turn enhances the teaching experience. Research is an inquiry into the experience of teaching. The *Gitxsan* have been researching and teaching since time immemorial and now it has found a place in Indigenous research.

My intent is to tease out the epistemological function of stories. Archibald (1997) and Sterling (1997) show us that the lessons from the stories serve an epistemological function. Accordingly, the shared knowledge of well-known stories establishes the foundation of cultural identity. The Elders of a cultural group select what stories are important, which values to encourage, which heroes to celebrate and what goals are important to pursue. The stories *Gitxsan* tell about themselves are tools of identity.

Using storytelling as research methodology draws from the work of Bruner (1987) who argues that stories and narrative as instruments of research are a telling of events, a recounting of history, and an explanation of self discovery as it moves through time. Bruner states that narrative has organized our world from the beginning of time. He explains that human beings construct two avenues of thought: one is the action; the other is the awareness of those actions. The use of storytelling is how these actions and events are interpreted.

When we teach, we tell stories. We tell stories about our disciplines, about the place of these disciplines in the structure of human knowledge. We tell stories about knowledge, about what it is to be a human knower, about how knowledge is made,

claimed, and legitimized continuously from and through the experiences of the *Gitksan* over time. The stories that we tell are stories built on others' stories; they forge the community between our stories and those of others, to confirm community among others and ourselves, and to initiate others into our communities. It is important to realize that stories are performances as well as narratives. They express and represent. In educational theory we tell stories of teaching, stories that at once reveal, constitute, and confirm the values giving significance to pedagogical acts in our classrooms (Pagano, 1990).

In addition, I drew from the works of Sterling (1997) and utilized her autobiographical research style as she placed herself along with her family and culture group into her study. I wove my story, my thoughts, reflections, emotions, spirituality and actions within the stories and storytelling of the Elders. Informed by Schon's (1983) work on reflective practice, I explored my way of being as a storyteller/teacher. There is a connection here to the current use of action research in educational settings, where the prevailing descriptions in that action research are research into our practices (See, for example, Peterat and Smith 2001).

3.3 Pedagogy

Sterling (1997) makes a compelling case for First Nations' concepts to be successfully implemented with the existing curriculum. According to her, within the last few decades there has been a paradigm shift that allows First Nations' epistemology to return. She found that the pedagogical principles that appear in many First Nations societies stem from their connection with nature. First Nations' pedagogy acknowledges

and promotes interconnections between knowledge and relationships with the land. As each concept is acquired and reflected upon it returns to the self and becomes circular as everything connects to other spirits. In the story, *The First Salmon Celebration*, the man who is taken by the salmon returns and tells the *Gitxsan* the laws of the salmon. These laws are still in effect today.

Gitxsan pedagogy allows for the implementation of ritual within the society. It is important to realize that there is not just one way to do things, although certain protocols must be observed. For example, upon entering the feast hall in *Gitxsan* territory certain protocols are observed. A chief is called to his/her place with great ceremony. If these protocols were not acknowledged, then the feast hall would be just another dwelling. Protocol defines the rituals of the culture. Protocol respects the importance of *yahlxw wila yeet'*, *luu hix hogix* and *naadahahlhakwhlinhl*.

Since time immemorial the *Gitxsan* have based their activities on the changing seasons, the cycle of birth and growth on the territories. Erickson (1996) states that the land, and the *Gitxsan* connection and relationship to the land, serve as the primary source for learning observational skills, analytical skills and comparative skills.

3.4 Looking At Mainstream Research

What is research? There is no clear, unambiguous answer available. Some would characterize it as disciplined inquiry, others would say it is a process of discovery, a scientific investigation, a deliberate learning, a searching and searching again.

In the past, researchers have come to the *Gitxsan* Territories with their research questions and their assumptions and their points of view well established. The research is not connected to the community's needs. The research belongs to the guest researcher.

Many of the outside researchers report on the *Gitksan* in ways much as what Singh (1994) described as *Orientalism* whereby outsiders became the authority on the culture without the deep understanding that come from knowing the language. Singh (1994) explores the relationship between cultural identity and questions of literary and textual representation. Her study discusses how we talk and write, teach and learn about differences that remain unresolved issues in many classrooms. Singh argues that colonization is not satisfied with holding people in its grip; it has to empty their brains of all form and content. It turns to the past of oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys. This is evident in the lives of the people who have not resisted: the despair that is turned inwards becomes self-hatred and hatred of others. These differences remain unresolved issues in schools. Others are measured against the myth of a rational white European male self. Singh's criticism is not of the "white male," but of the symbolic white male in cultural and literary production. The colonized person always remained the "Other" of the Western subject.

Singh speaks from the voice of a colonized person. When Singh first began her academic writing, readers of her writing claimed that she was not using her authentic voice. Singh was told she wrote like a white, middle-class male; her gender and ethnic voice had been suppressed. This was all a contradiction of that which she was told as a child, when she was told not to speak her first language (Punjabi). She was expected to be like everyone else. When she was successful in the dominant way of writing research, the rules changed; now what was wanted was her ethnic accent. The dilemma was that Singh did not know how to incorporate ethnic difference within a text except from the voice of a powerless victim.

The celebration of Singh's "difference" was organized from the dominant group's view in order to keep her and other members of oppressed groups excluded from the language and cultural practices of the dominant society. Through these language maneuvers the "difference" was appropriated, staged and then negated. The ethnic difference became just another individual difference.

Smith (1999) demonstrates that mainstream researchers frame their study in such a way that the emphasis is on a "deficit" model based on the individual rather than on examining systemic problems that exist in the environment. Many mainstream researchers often fail to realize the broader picture in which the culture exists. The researchers describe, analyze, and interpret phenomena based on their own beliefs and assumptions. The intellectual property of the Indigenous group is not protected.

In comparing the work of non-First Nations and First Nations researchers, Deloria Jr. (1995) explains that the major difference between the views lies in the evidence that what First Nations people accept as histories is interpreted by the Western system as mythology, legend and superstition. There is no question in my mind of the truths that I have been taught. The stories and the culture define who I am.

3.5 A New Direction

In both Smith (1997) and Singh (1994), the pace and direction of cultural development were determined by the colonized, rather than the colonizers. This is not to say that the colonized wished to assimilate the colonizers, but to come to an understanding of the past and acceptance of the new method. There is a process of

decolonization for the colonized and the colonizer. It liberates the colonized from the shackles of control by an oppressive, dominating, and paternalistic society.

Decolonization also liberates the colonizers from the colonial mentality and preoccupation with control. In addition, decolonization education fosters understanding, tolerance, and respect and gives a direction on how to resolve the issues about teaching and learning differences in the classroom. The result would be a balanced education.

3.6 Indigenous Research: What Is It?

Smith defines Indigenous research as a method to decolonize and as a tool to transform history into justice. History is about power. The powerful need their story in order to continue to dominate others. While this continues, Indigenous people continue to be colonized. Smith explains that with Indigenous research, the researcher has to justify and clarify his/her intentions.

Smith (1999), using Harding's definition of methodology, states that methodology provides a theoretical framework, frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed, and shapes the analysis. Because I have described this study as Indigenous knowledge, I studied the works of Linda Smith (1999), Singh (1994) and Archibald (1997) to attempt to understand what comprised the method. The experiences of these three authors have helped me to move away from Western mainstream research methods to place my study in the context of Indigenous methodology. Smith helped me to recognize the validity of Indigenous research. I set out to write my Elders' stories to meet the requirements of the university and in the

process I became accountable to the Gitxsan of the past, present and future. Singh contributed to my understanding of Indigenous methodology as she articulated her experience that the voice of the researcher had to be authentic. The voice of the researched needed to be their own. Archibald helped me discover the power of the stories as a way of being. Her “storybasket” guided this study as she demonstrated the use of stories and storytelling as a form of pedagogy.

Storytelling has become an essential part of Indigenous methodology. Equipped with this knowledge I have taken the Gitxsan stories and developed a Gitxsan/Indigenous story based curriculum. In addition, I have used the method of the Gitxsan storytellers, in that the storytellers sometimes interrupt the story to give guidance, make a statement or connect with an ancient teaching. In the story of *Reincarnation*, the storyteller stops and counsels the listeners that if they are going through a bad time, not to do anything hasty. The listeners are cautioned to wait until the mountains or the insurmountable problems that have closed in on them pass and fade (see Chapter 4). I interrupt the telling of my stories and connect them to the outside forces such as residential schools and the irrelevant curriculum that have moved in on the Gitxsan and threaten to silence the stories. Indigenous research has given me a way to remove the mountains that have closed in on the Gitxsan for too long.

CHAPTER FOUR: STORIES IN TEXT

Too often the stories of the *Gitxsan* are marginalized and not a part of the main thesis. I wanted the stories to be in the main part of the thesis and not listed as an appendix. The stories of the *Gitxsan*, in text have to be placed in the predominant libraries of the country, in order for all to see the great contribution of the *Gitxsan* storytellers.

The need for knowledge, self-awareness, support, and growth to restore balance for *Gitxsan* is examined through the stories and cultural beliefs.

4.1 Adaawk

If one is to show respect to the *Gitxsan* culture, it is important to know about the adaawk and the *ant'imahlasxw*. This is essential in order to respect the property of others. The adaawk of the *Gitxsan* are very important to the culture and society. The adaawk are personal bloodline histories of the *Gitxsan*. They tell about the house group, whose members are descended through a line of women; adaawk involve their stories, their crests and their territories. They tell of the past and of identity.

The adaawk are the personal properties of each house group. Therefore, one cannot write or discuss the adaawk of another house group. Being ignorant of the adaawk puts one at risk of unintentionally breaking the *Gitxsan* laws. Artists cannot use the *ayuxws* (crests) that are integral to an adaawk unless the chief who owns the story commissions them.

4.2 Ant'imahlasxw

The *ant'imahlasxw*, on the other hand, are the stories and properties of all the *Gitxsan*. The *ant'imahlasxw* are used to instruct, inform, guide and entertain the listeners. The *ant'imahlasxw* often have implicit lessons which the listener has to infer.

Storytellers, teachers and writers can use the *ant'imahlasxw*. Artists can use the *ant'imahlasxw* in their carvings, their jewelry, paintings, illustrations and artwork.

4.3 Giving Direction

In teaching my students I often guide them by examining the lessons from the stories for them. I teach my students to think about the lessons and apply it to their own experiences.

Archibald (1997) suggests that to prepare students to listen to a story, a song is sung. This sets the atmosphere for the children. They are involved and attentive to the storyteller. To begin my story in the classroom, I turn off the lights. I finish the telling and switch on the lights. I then help the children write the story. Then I move away from the re-writing of the story and have the children look at the story from the different perspectives of the characters. Then they write poetry, letters, messages or I have them illustrate the story.

The stories in text tell the *Gitxsan* where they have come from. In order to examine the question *Where are we going?* the educators need to explore the meanings and significance of their stories in the context of the *Gitxsan* worldview, which includes, *luu hix hogix, yahlxw wila yeet'* and *naadahahlhakwhlinhl*. The educators need to examine how beliefs and value systems are formed and reinforced through traditional learning and spiritual practices passed from generation to generation through stories, ceremonies, and celebrations.

The impact of European contact placed layers of influence on traditional beliefs and practices. The need for knowledge, self-awareness, support, and growth to restore

balance for the *Gitxsan* is examined through the stories and suggestions are made for the focus that educators can use.

Archibald (1997) stresses the importance of stories and making meaning from them. She notes that the principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, wholism, synergy and interconnectedness are connected to the stories and to the teller and listeners.

The seven categories of the stories were taken from the philosophy wheel of the *Gitxsan* (see Figure 5). A short discussion about the teachings follows each story. This is so the readers can search out other lessons that apply to their lives.

4.4 Adventure Stories

The Oddesy Of Nuhl~~x~~, His Three Brothers And Sister

It was in a northern village in the *Gitxsan* Territories where this story took place. People stayed close to the village because of the monsters that surrounded the territories. There was a sandbar at the lower part of the village. The sandbar extended out a great distance. It was flat and large. This was where the young people played *gunn~~x~~hl*. The sticks were made from hazelnut bushes and were shaped like the hockey sticks of today. The ball was made from deerskin wrapped around a small rock. The young people played *gunn~~x~~hl* all day. They cheered and hollered encouragement to each other as other activities and tasks were neglected. They played *gunn~~x~~hl* until the daylight was gone. The young people played and played.

Sometimes they would stop playing when one got hungry and they would eat fish and start again. The Elders would ask the young people to come and help with food preparations, but their cries fell on deaf ears. The *gunn~~x~~hl* players said that they were taking advantage of the long summer days. They played and played. They did this every summer. Then one year while they were playing someone spotted a beautiful feather, brilliant with the colours of the rainbow. It floated above them while they played. The feather swayed over them as it floated downward and then upward again. The players wore woven cedar headbands to keep their long hair in place while they played. One rather foolish young man was lured by the beauty of the feather, so he grabbed at it to place in his headband. He caught the feather and soon his legs were dangling in the air. The feather was lifting him and he could not let go.

Another boy ran to his rescue to pull him down only to find that he too was attached to his friend's legs. Others ran to help and soon all the *gunn~~x~~hl* players were stuck to each other. The beautiful feather floated upward and the group became larger. Then the women in the village saw what was happening. Even though they had their babies tied to their backs, they ran to help. They tugged, thinking that if there was more weight the feather would break away, but when they grabbed at the legs, they too were attached. Then the old people came to help, old women and old men were also stuck. The feather seemed to realize that there was no one left and it lifted all the people from the village upward and disappeared into the sky.

Meanwhile, in a little house a young girl sat completing her puberty rites. She was alone and out of water. Strips of leather were attached from her little house to the main house. The leather strips had deer hooves attached to the ends in her parent's house. One strip had a wood chip tied to it, another had a little water basket, another dried fish and meat and the last string had berries. The young girl pulled at the string for water. One of the women from the main house would come and see her with the provisions. Only women were allowed to tend to the girls in the puberty house. She waited. After all, her mother always came to check on her. The young girl was very thirsty so she pulled at the leather strips again to make the deer hooves clatter in the main house. She thought maybe something was wrong with the water leather strip so she tested the string for dried fish and meat and then the leather strip for berries. She was afraid so she just kept pulling on the strings. The young girl became alarmed, knowing that things were not right. So she dressed and tied her little blanket to her waist. She put on her cape with a large hood. She left the puberty shelter to go and investigate. She pulled the hood over

her head and lowered her eyes to the ground so she would not look on the mountain. It was taboo for girls in puberty to gaze at the mountain for a year. If she were to gaze at the mountaintop she would be cursed with blindness at an early age. Looking down at her feet, the young girl left the puberty shelter looking for someone or a sign of what had happened.

The young girl went to her parents' house. When she saw that no one was there, she began crying. She knew something had happened because everything had been left. No one had prepared for a journey. She went down to the sandbar at the lower end of the village. She saw all the *gunn~~x~~hl* sticks strewn about but knew that the young men would not have left their game. She cried and she wiped her tears and the *nuits* (mucus) from her nose on her little blanket that she wore like an apron. She could not find anyone so she cried as she walked. Again she wiped her tears and *nuits* on her little blanket that she wore like an apron. She walked around the house and village looking to see if anyone was alive and she cried as she walked. There was no one around, not even an old person. The village had been wiped out. She cried for all the people.

She found a *masxwagwa lo'op* (red rock). She picked it up and walked around the house. Absentmindedly, she placed *masxwagwa lo'op* in her little blanket that she wore like an apron, guided by the spirits who were helping her during her time of puberty. She left the house and her crying never ceased. She kept wiping her tears and *nuits* on her apron that now carried the *masxwagwa lo'op*. She entered another house and found a *mahumim lo'op* (stone file). She placed it in the apron alongside the *masxwagwa lo'op*. She wandered back outside, and entered another silent house, where she found *skants'ook'* (chokecherry branch) which was used to make handles for the stone knives.

She cried, always wiping her tears and *nuits* on her little apron. She wandered from house to house feeling very lonely and very sad. It was so strange that everyone was gone; she could not understand it.

She entered the last house and found a *K'olim lo'op* (gutting knife made from stone). She took it and placed it next to her belly in the little blanket apron. She cried the whole time and continued to wipe her *nuits* on her belly. She went back to her parent's house and she took out her little findings from her apron. She played with the items for a short time and placed them back into her little blanket apron. The little fire was still burning but she had to fan the embers.

She had lived in her parent's house before going to the puberty house. She started re-arranging her parent's house. She took the boards and made a partition by the fireplace where she would sleep. There was plenty of food in her parent's house. There were no taboos about berries but it was taboo for young women to eat fresh meat or fish. It had to be dried. Her breaking the law would bring bad luck to the hunters but there were no hunters around. Trout was not allowed for these young girls. This was for one full year. After the year was up she was allowed to eat whatever she desired. This was the law she thought as she ate fresh trout and rabbit meat. She set the taboos aside as she looked at the mountaintops and snared rabbits. What else could she do? It was against the laws; but she was alone. It was late fall and winter was approaching. She made all her preparations for the long winter ahead of her. She set in firewood, piling the wood in her house.

She had forgotten the *nuits* and the other items she had placed in her apron by her belly. It was completely gone from her memory. Then one day she noticed that her belly

was swelling. She was astonished. After all, there was no one around. There was no man to visit her in the night. She knew she was going to have a baby. She went to where the moss grew, picked it and put it on the rocks to dry. This was what she would use for diapers. Then she moved the dried moss up to her mother's house. She made blankets for the baby from rabbit skins. Why was she to going to have a child? Suddenly, she remembered how she had wiped her *nuits* on her blanket that she wore like an apron and how she had placed the items in the apron next to her belly. The items had disappeared. She made preparations for the birth of a child. She brought in water when she felt her time was near. This was after a long time. She placed everything near her. She placed rocks near the fire so she could heat them and placed them in the earth.

The young girl did all this to prepare for the birth. She had her baby. It was a boy. She took the baby and wrapped him with moss and rabbit fur. In a little while another child was born. It was a boy. There were four boys and one girl. She named her babies after the items that she had placed in her apron. The first was *Nuhl̄x* named for the *nuits* she had wiped on her apron. The second was *Maswgwa lo'op* which means red rock, the third was *Mahumim lo'op* named after the stone file, *Skants'ook'* was the chokecherry branch and *Kolim lo'op*, the little girl, was named for the gutting knife.

The *Gitxsan* had a birthing place. The ground was dug and hot rocks were arranged in there and boards placed on top. After a woman had a baby she would lay on this bed of warmth to warm her back and cleanse her womb. The new mother lay on the birthing bed of hot rocks. Her five babies lay beside her. She would sit up and put wood into the fireplace. She had food close by. It did not take long and she recovered. She was strong again. She ate so her five babies could eat. These children grew very quickly.

Then she started feeding them broth from fish and meat. She fed them fish and meat with her spoon that was a stick with a circular tip.

Soon the children were walking. It was springtime. The snow was melting quickly this springtime. She explained to the children that she would go and get them some food. "You will all stay in bed until I get home," she said, not explaining that she had a great fear but did not know what it was. The children obeyed their mother and stayed in bed. The mother set off in the early morning and she was gone for a long time. When she returned home, the children were still in bed. They were allowed to get out of bed. The mother cooked and they ate. They were forever eating. She did not let them go outdoors. When she did let them out, she made them walk directly to the forest path with her. The children grew quickly, because they were supernatural beings. She did not allow them to venture down to the large sandbar on the beach. The children grew and helped their mother as she prepared salmon. The children saw the *gunn^xhl* sticks on the beach many times. Their mother always with great fear sent them away from the sandbar. One morning, while their mother slept, the children were drawn to the sandbar and they could not resist. Even the little girl joined in the game. The mother woke when she heard the noise and the cheering of the game. She got up and saw that they were playing *gunn^xhl* on the sandbar. If only she had burned the sticks. She called them to come and eat. They ate quickly and ran back to the sandbar to continue the game. The mother did not know what to do. She knew that something happened to the people in the village when they played the game. She knew something would happen to them also. She warned the children that something would happen but they did not heed. The

children no longer helped their mother. They just played *gunn_xhl*. They started playing as children and they became adolescents. That is how long they played.

Then the dreaded day arrived and the feather returned. It shimmered as it floated above the players. *Nuhl_x* had established himself as the best player but he was losing and blamed the feather for distracting him. *Nuhl_x* grabbed at the feather and stuck it in his headband. Soon his legs were dangling in midair. *Nuhl_x* turned into a mess of green slime, but the feather did not get disgusted. His brother, *Masw_gwa lo'op* ran to *Nuhl_x*'s rescue. The boy changed into a rock and grew and grew and turned into a huge boulder to try and help *Nuhl_x*. The boulder was like a pebble to the beautiful feather. *Mahnim lo'op* went to the rescue next, thinking that the extra weight would cause the feather to fall to the ground. Like the first group taken by the feather, the children did not see the string from which the feather was attached. Then came *Skants'ook'*. He grabbed at his brother's legs and changed into a tree and his roots grew into the ground, but the feather uprooted him. Their sister *K'olim' lo'op* screamed while she sharpened her hands on *Mahnim lo'op*. She knew she was a broken knife and she was filing her blade. The little girl ran climbing up on her brothers she stood on *Nuhl_x*'s shoulders and reached around for the invisible string. She did not know what she was doing. She grabbed and cut. Those who were hanging fell to the earth.

They were in their supernatural forms, the items their mother had placed in her apron. *Nuhl_x*'s original form was smeared on the feather. *K'olim' lo'op* took her four brothers and placed them side by side; she took the feather and went around her brothers while holding the feather high over her head. She wanted to see what would happen. The third time she circled around them, they started to move. They were human form

again, but not awake. The little girl went around again a fourth time and her brothers sat up. They stretched and yawned like they had just awakened from a deep sleep. They got up and *K'olim' lo'op* took her feather and stuck it in her hair. They went home. They finally quit playing *gunn_xhl*. The children never did return to the sandbar after that day. They helped their mother once again.

One night the mother heard a loud roaring noise coming from the sandbar. "Do not get up," she instructed her children, "We will just ignore it, after it is quiet we will go and see what has happened." The children did as they were told and lay quietly on their sleeping mats. It sounded like things were dropping on the *gunn_xhl* field at the sandbar. Then after awhile it was quiet. The family got off their sleeping mats and went outside and there were the bones of corpses on the *gunn_xhl* field. All the bones of the villagers who had disappeared dropped from the sky. The *Naxnok* (supernatural spirit) who had taken them let them go after his fishing line was cut. It annoyed the *Naxnok* to hear them playing *gunn_xhl* all day below Him. That is why He let down the fishing line. The children placed the bones together. They wanted to see what would happen. The bones had been gone for a long time to *xsim lax ha* (place in the sky). The children guessed at who owned what bones and spent several days arranging them. It was at this time that *Nuhl_x* decided that he was the oldest and the boss of the feather. He took it away from the little girl and placed it in his woven cedar headband. Then the job of putting the bones back together was done. The five children were ready. The little girl took the feather from *Nuhl_x*'s headband and walked around the bones. On the third time around they stopped, the bones stirred. Then the little group went around the fourth time. The bones were humans again. They sat up just like they just woke up and stretched,

scratched and yawned. Then they got up and went home, leaving behind *Nuhl̄x* and his brothers and sister. But many of the people limped to their houses because the children had not put all the right bones together. This was the beginning of the *Gitxsan* being born with handicaps. The villagers just resumed their lives where they had left off and they had no recollection of what had happened. They just thought they were sleeping and awakened from a deep sleep. *Nuhl̄x* and his siblings returned to their mother's house. She was overjoyed with the return of her people. It was not long before there were whispers in the village about the strange children. All of them were the same age. Who was their father? Was it a monster? The mother was sad about this and she tried to shield her children but it was of no use.

The children knew that they had to leave the village. They knew they had a purpose to fulfill. *Nuhl̄x* and his siblings decided to set off into the territories that were guarded by different monsters. They would go and destroy the monsters that did not allow the *Gitxsan* to venture out any great distance on the territories. The five youngsters hardly seemed adequate to face the challenges that plagued the *Gitxsan* Territories. *Nuhl̄x* and his brothers and sister did not pack a lot of food for the journey. They left all the food they had prepared for their mother. They had explicit instructions from the spirit guide. The *Naxnok* who was watching over them had informed them of what they would need. They took just enough food for one meal. Their food would be provided by the spirit watching over them. They had the feather for their power.

The Fisherman

The five children walked a great distance until they came upon an old man who was fishing with a net. There was no river. It bothered *Nuhl̄x* that the old man was fishing where there was no river. "Oh, then," *Nuhl̄x* said, "And what will you catch old man." *Nuhl̄x*'s sister quickly grabbed for the feather before *Nuhl̄x* could get into trouble. "Oh brother, brother," replied the fisherman, "I think *Nuhl̄x* is the swimmer." The old man was making fun of *Nuhl̄x*'s supernatural form. *Nuhl̄x* charged at the old man by the fish trap. *Nuhl̄x* kicked the old man down into an abandoned cellar. Then the old man would walk back and be sitting in the same place. The frustrated *Nuhl̄x* kept kicking at the fisherman and he would be right back where he was sitting. *Nuhl̄x* was defeated. *Nuhl̄x* and his brothers and sister could not see the old man was really a spider in human form.

Grandmother

A light rain was falling but they continued on their journey. It was springtime in the *Gitksan* Territories. *Nuhl̄x* and his brothers and sister walked a great distance and they came upon two little raccoons. *Nuhl̄x* quickly killed the raccoons. They built a fire using two willow branches to start a flame. They fed the flame with pitch and chopped cedar bark that was as soft as cotton fluff. They placed the raccoons on a stick and barbecued them by the fire. The young people should not have done this. They ate and put out their fire and left the camp but the fire did not go out. They walked on and they came to a house. *Nuhl̄x* stood at the door and coughed, as this was the custom. A woman

came to the door and asked, "Oh, did you see your little relations, my children? They went to fetch wood and have not returned," said the woman, who was really a raccoon. The family had entered the home of a raccoon. It looked like a real house. It was like a *Gitxsan* house. The woman in the house looked like a *Gitxsan*. "No," replied *Nuhl̓x*, "All we saw were two little raccoons which I clubbed and we ate them," *Nuhl̓x* said. The woman started to slide on the floor, "m,m, m,m, m," she chanted. The woman sliding and chanting was sealing the house to trap them. *Nuhl̓x* quickly grabbed the magic feather and jumped out the smokehole but *Maswgwa lo'op*, *Mahumim lo'op*, *Skants'ook'* and *Kolim lo'op* were trapped in the house.

Nuhl̓x knew that they should not have killed the raccoons. Their meals would always be provided. *Nuhl̓x* ran to where they had picnicked. The fire was still burning. *Nuhl̓x* threw the bones of the raccoons into the fire and drank water to spit out at the raccoon bones. *Nuhl̓x* went around the raccoons with the feather and they were alive again. He gathered up some wood and made packs for the raccoons and sent them home. *Nuhl̓x* returned home with the raccoon children. "Granny, Granny, open the door," the raccoon children cried, "Why is your door sealed?" The woman slid in the opposite direction and the door opened. *Nuhl̓x*'s family could finally leave the house and went on their way. This was a sample for *Nuhl̓x* and his family of the greater challenges ahead. They continued their journey.

The *Naxnok* Spirit Guide

It was almost dark. *Nuhl̓x* and his four brothers and sister were below a slide area on the mountain. It was still covered with snow. Below it was a little cabin. They could

see smoke coming from the smoke hole. They stood outside the cabin. A voice called out, "Enter if you are the ones who will defeat the obstacles of the territories." She was their *Naxnok* spirit guide. She was the one who knew. *Nuhl̄x* went ahead of the others. After all, he was the oldest. The little girl entered last. The woman was a *heyuxw* (soul of the dead) who would foretell of the challenges that waited for them. The *Naxnok* spirit guide explained to the youngsters that many had gone before them to try and defeat the terrible monsters surrounding the territories, but they had not returned. She explained that they would come through all the obstacles and open up the territories for the *Gitxsan*. She explained that she did not know what would happen when they met the tall woman wearing the robe and carrying a cane. The *Naxnok* spirit guide knew, but she did not wish to tell. "Tomorrow," she said, "you will meet a man, he is the first challenge."

Finger Wrestler

The children set out the next day happy to be on their way. The *Naxnok* spirit gave them enough food for one meal. They walked for a long time before they came upon a man sitting at the eastern canyon. This was the first challenge. The *Gitxsan* had not been able to go to this place to hunt, trap or fish in this place because of the finger wrestler who lived here. Here was the man who challenged and killed all who tried to pass. All who had tried had fallen to their deaths. The finger wrestler reached out his large finger to challenge the youngsters who stood on the opposite side of the canyon. The wrestler laughed as he shouted out his challenge to a young boy. *Nuhl̄x* went over and they locked their middle fingers and *Nuhl̄x* was pulled off the cliff. The finger wrestler looked down on the green mucus on his finger. He flung it off onto the rocks below. *Maswɣwa lo'op* ran to the challenge. He called on his power. *Maswɣwa lo'op*

locked fingers and the wrestler fell to his death in the river crushed by a huge boulder that was *Maswgwa lo'op's* power. This was *Maswgwa lo'op's* victory.

K'olim'lo'op had pulled the feather from *Nuhl_x*'s headband before *Nuhl_x* could get into trouble. She picked up the little red rock that was *Maswgwa lo'op* and placed it beside the green mass that was *Nuhl_x* and danced circling around the two brothers four times. *Nuhl_x* and *Maswgwa lo'op* sat up and yawned. They took food enough for one meal from the wrestler's house. The spirit helper had instructed them to take the food enough for only one camp and burn the house to sacrifice each challenge they defeated. The youngsters cremated the finger wrestler. The little band of young people followed the instructions of the wise one.

Man With Lice

The little family of four boys and a girl walked on to their next adventure early the next morning. It was evening when they came to a clearing in the vast wilderness, a huge meadow. At the north end of the meadow they could see a shelter and smoke was coming from the smoke hole. According to the one who foretold all things, this would be the man with the lice. *Nuhl_x* and his family stood outside the shelter, *Nuhl_x* coughed loudly to attract attention, as was the custom. "Enter, enter, enter, my dear ones," a voice spoke from inside. *Nuhl_x*, of course, was the first one to enter. *K'olim'lo'op* was last.

The host instructed the young people to sit and they did as they were told. The little girl quickly took the feather and placed it in her woven cedar headband before *Nuhl_x* could start a disturbance. The man fed the children as his lice moved on his head.

The host and his guests started to eat. The host with his hair moving with lice served fine meat, and berries for dessert. All the food that was available to the people at that time was served. It was a fine evening meal. The young people sat with the host after their dinner. It was at this time that *Nuhl̄x* decided to whisper to *Maswgwa lo'op*, "Look at his lice," "Look at his lice," "Look at his lice." *Maswgwa lo'op* told *Nuhl̄x* to be quiet, the host might hear him. Gradually *Nuhl̄x* got louder. "Look at his lice." "Look at his lice," he shouted.

The host who had lots of lice grabbed at *Nuhl̄x*. He rubbed *Nuhl̄x* on his lice, as this was the way he killed people. *Nuhl̄x* changed to his original form and the disgusted host flung the massive slime to the corner of the shelter. The man with lice snatched *Maswgwa lo'op*, he pressed *Maswgwa lo'op* to his head and *Maswgwa lo'op* transformed to his original form. The man's lice and head were crushed and once again *Maswgwa lo'op* defeated the adversary that had blocked off the *Gitxsan* Territories for so long. The man whose head was crawling with lice died. Once his lice were dead, he was defeated.

Maswgwa lo'op and *Nuhl̄x* lay on the ground in their original form. Again *K'olim'lo'op* took the feather and circled her brothers four times. They sat up as if they just woke up and yawned and stretched. The brothers and sister went to bed and slept and in the morning they ate their morning meal and took food enough for one camp. Again, they collapsed the shelter and burned all the contents including the dead man. This was the custom. The *Gitxsan* always burn dead humans and animals to transfer their spirits to the spirit world. The family left the meadow after they completed their mission. They journeyed on throughout the day until they came to a creek. They sat to eat the

food they had taken from the man with lice. They continued their journey because they knew they were close to reaching their next destination.

The Man With Two Heads

It was early evening when they came to a shelter; they stood outside waiting to be acknowledged. A man's voice bid them enter. Once again *Nuhl̥x* was the first to enter. A man with two heads seated them and started to prepare their evening meal. The host served fine dishes of meat, fish and berries. There was plenty of food and the young people ate until they were full. The youngsters watched with fascination as the man fed his two mouths. It was then that *Nuhl̥x* decided to whisper quietly to *Maswgwa lo'op*, "Look at that man's two heads, Look at that man's two heads, Look at that man's two heads." The fourth time *Nuhl̥x* shouted loudly, "**Look at that man's two heads.**" *Maswgwa lo'op* warned *Nuhl̥x* to be quiet. It was too late the man with two heads slammed *Nuhl̥x* between his two heads.

This is how he killed his opponents in the past. Again *Nuhl̥x* was in his original form and was smeared down the sides of the two heads. The man aimed the mass of green mucus towards the open doorway of the shelter. Before *Maswgwa lo'op* could run to *Nuhl̥x*'s rescue the man with two heads took him and pressed him between his two heads. *Maswgwa lo'op* turned into a boulder and ripped the two heads apart. The man with two heads died. Once again, the little girl took the feather that was their power and circled around her two brothers four times and they were alive again. In the morning

they burned the shelter with the dead man inside. This was the instruction from the spirit guide. They had taken enough food for one meal and they walked on to their next task.

The Man With The Bandaged Leg

It was evening when they approached the shelter of the man with the bandaged leg. The young people could see that there was a fire burning inside the shelter. They approached the shelter of spruce boughs and once again stood outside waiting to hear a voice bid them enter. The man inside invited them to enter. The young people went in and found a man with a bandaged leg. The man with the bandaged leg was cooking. He was cooking enough for six people as if he had been expecting them. He served the young guests with fine cuts of meat and fish and berries for dessert.

Once again it was *Nuhl̄x* who started to misbehave. *Nuhl̄x* started out quietly telling *Maswgwa lo'op* to look at the bandaged leg of the host. *Maswgwa lo'op* tried to make *Nuhl̄x* stop whispering and aggravating the host. *Nuhl̄x* got louder and the host became annoyed. The host was angry but he didn't move. He was going to wait for the guests to sleep. The host gave the visitors sleeping mats and blankets and the family slept by the fire. *Nuhl̄x* was the closest to the fire because he was the oldest, then *Maswgwa lo'op*, beside him was *Mahumim lo'op*, then *Skants'ook'*, and finally *K'olim'lo'op* was the furthest from the warmth of the fire. The family did not trust the host so they pretended to be asleep. The host believed that they were sleeping. The young people had walked a great distance and had eaten a large meal.

The host started to unwrap the bandage on his leg. *Nuhl̄x's* snores became louder as he secretly watched the host. The family had their backs to the fireplace and they

could watch the host while he unwrapped his leg at the far wall of the shelter. The man walked over to the fire behind them and started to heat his leg. The leg shone in the firelight. The man then planted the leg behind *Nuhl \underline{x}* , and cut him with the leg that was like a sword. A huge green mass that was *Nuhl \underline{x}* 's original form was smeared on the metal leg. The host discarded the mess towards the door. When the host charged at *Maswgwa lo'op*, the knife hit against a rock. The blade splintered against *Maswgwa lo'op*'s back. The man returned to his sleeping mat and once again sharpened the blade, using his hands. *Maswgwa lo'op* pretended he was asleep as he snored just as loudly as *Nuhl \underline{x}* had. The man went over and kicked *Maswgwa lo'op* in the back. From *Maswgwa lo'op*'s back grew a bigger boulder. The man's blade broke and splintered into little pieces. The man died. *K'olim'lo'op* took the feather and once again put her brothers side by side and circled around them four times and they were humans once again.

In the morning the family burned the shelter with the man in it, and took enough food for the day. They left the burned remains and set off to meet with the man with witchcraft powers.

The Man With *Haldowgit* Powers

The little group walked a great distance and they came to a spring and decided it would be a good place to stop. They built a fire; they had to blacken the stick like the *Naxnok* spirit had informed them. It was time to make the *haldowgit* staff. The woman had given them the cedar bark and *mas* (red ochre). The five youngsters took the blackened staff and wrapped the cedar bark around the end of it and painted the tips of the cedar red with the *mas*. Once they completed this they set off once again ready to

meet the *Haldowgit*. The young people waited until it was dark before they approached the shelter. They did not want the *Haldowgit* to see the *haldowgit* staff that they had made.

The young people entered when the occupant of the shelter bade them enter. The *Haldowgit* was very happy to see visitors. The host fed his guests, as this was the custom. *Nuhl̄x* looked around and remained very quiet because there was nothing for him to discuss and ridicule. The host seemed like a fine gentleman with refined manners. The host gathered mats and furs and gave them to his guests for their bedding. The host went outside to relieve himself before going to his bed mat. *Nuhl̄x* quickly exchanged the host's *haldowgit* staff with the one they had made. *Nuhl̄x* and his family members once again pretended to be sleeping with their loud snores and slow even breathing. The host was also pretending that he was asleep. The five on their mats by the fire were watching.

The host finally sure that the family was sleeping went to the corner and picked up the staff. The host waved the fringes of cedar bark over the fire. *Nuhl̄x* was snoring loudly with his mouth wide open. The man waved the fringes of cedar bark over *Nuhl̄x*'s mouth. *Nuhl̄x* continued to snore loudly. The *Haldowgit* tried again and moved over to where *Masgwa-hlgu-lo'op* was sleeping. The man swayed the fringes tinted with *mas* over *Masgwa-hlgu-lo'op*'s mouth and *Masgwa-hlgu-lo'op* stirred and moved onto his side.

The *Haldowgit* tried all the family and he could not steal their breath. Finally, he placed his staff in the corner and went to his bed mat on the floor on the far side of the shelter. The *Naxnok* spirit who had counseled the young people had told them that when

the man was sleeping sparks came out of his nose. Then when he moved into a deeper sleep the sparks stopped. Once again it was *Nuhl̄x* who took the real *Haldowgit* staff and all the family members stood by as *Nuhl̄x* gently moved the fringes of cedar bark tinged with *mas* by the man's mouth and robbed him of his breath. The man was dead, killed by his own evil staff. The group returned to their bed mats and slept soundly until early morning. The group took the food they would need for their evening meal and burned the house, the contents and the *Haldowgit*. Most of the territories were now open to the *Gitxsan*. The mission that the little family had set out to accomplish was near completion. They would now make their way to the snake.

The Monster Snake

Their journey had almost completed a circle around the territories and they were now at the base of *Sdikyoodenax̄*. Here they ate and rested. *K'ohlim'lo'op* would cry out and rub her hands on her brother, *Mahumin-lo'op* and place them over the fire to warm them. This was her way of sharpening her knife blade. It was *K'ohlim'lo'op* who would challenge the monster snake. The *Naxnok* spirit who had predicted all their events had told them that the snake was small like a garter snake when it was sleeping but if it were awake, it would be the monster snake. It was fortunate that the group found the snake sleeping on a warm rock.

With a loud scream *K'ohlim'lo'op* charged at the sleeping snake with her hands as knife blades and cut off the small snake's head and tail. The snake transformed into its massive size, but it was dead. The huge head flew off into a northerly direction and landed at *Gisgegas* Lake. The snake's tail flew off towards the south and landed in

T'axim Sdikyoodenax. *K'ohlim'lo'op* defeated the snake and she was on the ground as her original form. Holding the feather over his head and with great ceremony, *Nuhl_x* circled *K'ohlim'lo'op* four times and she returned to her human form.

Woman With The Robe, Cane And Red Eyes

The family set off again but a low fog had drifted down from *Sdikyoodenax*. The little family made their ascent up the mountain path. They had almost reached the summit when they heard what sounded like the clanging of a huge bell. It was the footsteps of their next and final challenge. The group stood and waited but they could not explain the nature of the sound they heard. They walked away from the direction of the sound. They wanted to escape from this unfamiliar sound. Their spirit guide had not foretold what they should do in this situation. The youngsters would stop and move again in another direction, but there was no escape possible. They saw a gigantic woman coming towards them, her red fiery eyes piercing into their souls. The woman was covered in a huge cape with a hood and she carried a cane. When the woman opened her eyes fire would pour out of them. She would close her eyes and the fire stopped.

Nuhl_x and his brothers and sister tried to run, but there was nowhere to go, so they stood and faced the giant. The woman used her eyes and melted the rock over *Nuhl_x* and his family and covered them with the melted rock and in so doing she destroyed herself. Here is where *Nuhl_x*, *Masgwa-hlgu-lo'op*, *Maawnim-lo'op*, *Skants'ook'* and *K'ohlim'lo'op* died. This story is also written in *Sim'alga_x* (see Appendix D).

Guidance And Challenges

The frames of *Nuhl̄x*, *Masgwa-hlgu-lo'op*, *Maawnim-lo'op*, *Skants'ook̄* and *K'ohlim' lo'op* formed five mountain peaks that sit near the top of *Sdikyoodenax̄*. The mountain peak that was *Nuhl̄x* has fallen and when the other four fall, the *Gitxsan* believe it will be the end of the world.

There are many lessons to be learned from this story. In addition, there are cultural practices, beliefs and customs woven throughout the story. This story can be used to encourage students to take on leadership roles, own up to their responsibilities, and face the challenges life offers them.

Gitxsan Elders always teach the children to act like they are unaware of unusual occurrences. The children are instructed to look away from strange looking people and strange events and not speak of them. Eyes are to be cast downward so as not to bring attention to a person who was different. Although I was never instructed, I always knew as a child that I did not want to be like *Nuhl̄x*.

The children meeting the supernatural spirit guide reminds us that we will know what we need to know when it is needed. The *Gitxsan* are constantly reminded through stories that they were born with this knowing, it is a gift from the Creator.

The many antics that *Nuhl̄x* performed throughout the journey are very humorous. While it is very amusing, the story shows the persistence and courage of *Nuhl̄x*. All the events were surrounded with spirituality and oneness with the land. This story connects with all the values shown in the philosophy wheel of the *Gitxsan* (see Figure 5).

4.5 Spiritual Stories

Reincarnation (*Guuxs witxw*)

A long time ago when only *Gitxsan* walked this land a legend is told about how we learned of reincarnation (the rebirth of a soul).

An uncle had his two nephews in training to be trappers. It was time to show the boys the boundaries of their territories. They practiced good luck by fasting and praying for four days. This was the custom. They packed the necessary gear and food required for their trapping and left the village early in the morning along with their dog. They journeyed throughout the day and in the evening the uncle selected a spot where they could camp. It was sheltered from the winds and there was a stream nearby. They built a fire and ate.

Soon a little squirrel came by to investigate the intruders. The dog started to chase the squirrel around the camp. Eventually the boys joined in the chase. The uncle told the boys to stop because it was bad luck to bother the creature. The boys sat down and watched the dog chase the squirrel. Then the nephews again joined the chase and caught the squirrel and threw it in the fire. The uncle was very unhappy with them and the nephews felt guilty that they had disobeyed and they just went off to sleep under a tree.

In the morning when they woke up the mountains had moved in and trapped them. They looked up and there was the squirrel running on top of the mountain. The boys were heart sick, they knew that this was the result of their disobedience. Their uncle had tried to warn them.

Then the one nephew came up with the idea that if the squirrel could run on the mountaintop after being burned then perhaps this was the way to freedom. So they tested the idea by throwing their dog into the flames. The uncle just sat by and watched. He was full of regret for allowing the boys to play with the squirrel.

They looked up and there was the dog chasing the squirrel once again on the mountaintop. One of the boys volunteered to go in the fire with the packs and the rope. When he was at the top he would lower the rope and pull out the other two. They piled more wood on the fire and the nephew stepped into it. Soon he was hollering at the top, he started to lower the rope as planned. It came half way down the mountain. The other boy stepped into the flames. The uncle looked up and saw them walking away with their packs.

The uncle was heart broken; he sat down and wept. Then he decided that he too, must go into the fire. Thinking that he was still alive, he returned to his village. He thought it was strange that the dogs did not bark at him. He walked over and embraced his wife. He talked to her. She said, "I just felt my blood run cold. A spirit has touched me." (*Today, the Gitksan believe that if your blood runs cold, a spirit has connected with you. Do not be afraid*).

He walked over to the rest of his family and friends and touched them and tried to speak to them. All they said was, "A spirit has touched me." The uncle realized that he had not come through the fire alive. He left the village and wandered for two years. One day he came to a shelter just below the slide area on the mountain that was covered with snow. He waited. A voice called out. "Enter if you are the one for whom they wait." He did not know, but he went into the shelter. "They are expecting you," the woman said as

she fed him. "Who is waiting for me?" the man asked. "Your family," she said. "But I was there and they did not see or hear me."

He did not know that she was a devil's club *Naxnok* sent to help the *Gitxsan* who were suffering from the loss of the uncle, the nephews and the traps. The *Naxnok* woman explained that she was the spirit of the devil's club. She told the uncle the secrets of the devil's club. She explained that to be successful in a hunt, the hunters needed to bathe in devil's club and drink the mixture for four days. The spirit instructed the uncle on how to harvest the plant. She said you must step down on the base very gently and cut it. "Go and jump across the stream," she said, "It is time." He did as he was instructed and at that moment his soul returned to earth as his niece gave birth to a baby boy.

The baby cried constantly, but there was nothing the family could do to comfort him. So the grandfather decided that they should take the baby to the woman who could interpret babies' communication. She lived at the outskirts of the village because she possessed a special power. The *Gitxsan* feared her knowledge. They did not want to be in her presence because she could interpret their thoughts.

"Oh" she said as the baby was brought into her house, "he is trying to tell you who he is. He is the uncle who has been missing all this time." The baby spoke through the wise woman interpreter how the boys had tortured the squirrel, how the mountain closed in around them, how they jumped into the fire thinking it was the way to freedom but it was to their death. He told how he had returned to the village and no one could see him. He told of the *Naxnok* woman at the mountain basin who had instructed him on how to use devil's club for good luck practices and when to jump over the stream in order to come home. He told where he had hidden the traps on a tree on the boundaries of their

territories. The wise woman said that he cried because his skin needed to be soothed from the burns. The grandfather paid the woman with food and gifts. Young men set out to the place where the traps were hidden and found them in the exact spot the wise woman had said. The baby's skin was cleansed with cool mixture of water and devil's club and he ceased his endless crying. He forgot his experience.

The *Gitxsan* had a settlement feast for the uncle and the two nephews. The storytellers used the events to teach the children never to be cruel to animals. It was from this event that the *Gitxsan* learned of reincarnation and that the *Gitxsan* always come back to their clan.

Perception And The Dream World

One night I dreamed that a man was talking about my grandmother. He said, "You know, your Grandmother has experienced death twice and she just still enjoys the great feeling." I wondered what this dream wanted from me and then realized that I must write the story of reincarnation.

The mountains closed in around the uncle and the boys. The storytellers intervene and suggest that the uncle should have waited another day, and suggest to the listeners that, if faced with a mountain, to wait it out. Everything passes and the way is clear once again.

The First Salmon Celebration

Down through the ages, since the beginning of time, the *Gitxsan* Elders gave a warning to their people. Do not be cruel to animals. The heart must be kind to fish,

birds, goats and all the creatures the Creator has given. Through the ages, if meat was required then the animal was killed and eaten. The ancient people did not waste any part of an animal they killed. All parts of the slain animal were used; this to the early *Gitxsan* was the sacred law.

The salmon was the main food source for the *Gitxsan*, and was greatly respected. The early *Gitxsan* learned the laws about respecting the salmon from a man who had been captured by the Salmon people. The man, who was known as *One Who Returned*, told his people about the villages in which the Salmon people lived. The Salmon people lived in houses and traveled in canoes as did the *Gitxsan*. The only difference was that the Salmon people lived under water. The Salmon People, said *One Who Returned*, journeyed from the ocean in canoes when they returned to the rivers of their birth. The Elders told the Young Salmon People that they needed to know something before they returned. *One Who Returned* was amused as he told of the responses of the Young Salmon People. Oh, it is not hard the Young Salmon People insisted. We know the way. We will run our canoes by where the scouring rush grows. We will tip our canoes at each point when the Salmon People have reached their destination. The Young Salmon People did not know the laws. *One Who Returned* told of the counsel that the Elder Salmon then gave to the Young Salmon People. "If the laws are not obeyed by the *Gitxsan*," said the Elder Salmon, "we will not return to the rivers of our birth."

One Who Returned then told the *Gitxsan* the laws that they must obey. *One Who Returned* told the *Gitxsan* that the first salmon must be honoured with a celebration that showed respect to the first salmon and also must be shared with the people of the village. The first salmon caught was to be placed on a woven cedar mat, which had never before

been used. Powerful *Gitxsan* magic elements used by the *Gitxsan* to show great honour: fat, red ocher (mas), and eagle down were to be sprinkled on the salmon. The salmon was to be covered with another unused cedar mat and placed at the front of the long house for one night.

The next day, the chief's wife was to dress and fillet the first salmon. She was to return the salmon bones to the river while she whispered reminders to the salmon bones to always come home. The fat, red ocher (mas), and eagle down were to be burned in the fire.

The chief's wife was to heat rocks in the open fireplace and place them in the boiling water. When the water boiled the filleted salmon was to be skewered on sticks and placed in the boiling water. When the water stopped boiling, the salmon was to be removed from the cooking container, placed on a wooden tray, and distributed to everyone in the community. All of the people in the village were to join the celebration of the first salmon.

The *One Who Returned* also instructed the fishermen of the village to go down to the river and scoop up the water to drink after eating salmon. This was to give the salmon water in which to swim. The fisherman who followed this advice would be showing respect and the salmon would be plentiful and the fisherman would be very lucky.

One Who Returned said this would ensure that the salmon would be plentiful and find their way back to those who honoured the old laws. This was the way of honouring the first salmon. And for a long time, the *Gitxsan* honoured the wisdom of *One Who Returned*.

Each year, the laws of the first salmon were celebrated by the *Gitxsan*. Then one day a Chief in *T'emlaxamit* forgot. The Chief had built a very large fish trap. The fish trap was accessible by the strong bridge that the Chief had also built. Early in the spring he caught the first Spring Salmon returning to the *'Xsan*. It was important to the Chief that he caught the first salmon. He had an impressive fish trap and a prosperous village. The Chief took great care with his fish trap but he became careless and forgot the laws of the Salmon People.

The Chief did not follow the proper protocol of the first salmon to return. Upon his return home, he had the salmon dressed and cooked, then the chief made another serious mistake. He sent his young daughter out to distribute the salmon pieces throughout the village. In her eagerness to distribute the salmon, the young girl had not dressed properly for the chilly day. In addition, she had not been taught to respect the important laws of the Salmon People.

The impressive fish trap of the Chief had caught a Spring Salmon early in the season. The weather was unpredictable in early spring. The sun was shining but the wind was bitter cold. The distant mountains were streaked with clouds that threatened snow. (The *Gitxsan* call this condition *hi madim*.) The young girl took a piece of salmon from her tray and shook it at the clouds. She cursed the clouds saying, "Oh and what will happen to this (the salmon piece) while you produce more snow?"

That night the snow came because the young girl had shaken the sacred salmon at the clouds. It was spring everywhere else but at *T'emlaxamit*. The Chief and his people left the village and the fish trap. They came and settled in *Gitanmaaxs*.

Honour And Celebration

Today the *Gitksan* Elders still celebrate the return of the first salmon. The bones of the first salmon are given back to the river. The *Gitksan* Elders still tell the stories of *The One Who Had Returned* to remind the young people, so mistakes are not made. The lessons learned by the *Gitksan* ancestors must be valued and remembered. If these laws are honoured, the salmon will always make their return journey back to the rivers in the *Gitksan* territories.

Weget's Death

Weget journeyed to the land of the *Tsimshian*. He was told that he had a brother living there. After *Weget* was reunited with his brother, he felt that he had a sense of family and identity. His search was over. *Weget* climbed the mountain and found a cave. He took two young mountain lions into the cave and sat one on either side. *Weget* was a supernatural being; he willed that they be turned into stone. And there they sit to this very day.

Family And Identity

Weget spent his life searching for his family and his identity. When he found his brother he found family and a sense of belonging. He was content and ready to move to the spirit world. *Weget* was a trickster. Why then does he fit into the spiritual stories? *Weget* was a supernatural being and the nature of his death, although done with great elegance, was spiritual.

4.6 Origin Stories

The Origin Of The *Gitxsan*

In the beginning there was only one man on earth. He was thrust out of the womb of the earth. Naked and hungry, he survived the first winter by burying himself in dry pine needles. When he felt the heat of the sun in spring, he emerged from his blanket of pine needles to survey the land in which he must learn to survive.

He was hungry. He gazed in the river he saw a fish. So he broke a branch off from the pine tree and speared the fish from the water. He tried to devour the fish, but it was slippery and it kept slipping out of his hands. He took a piece of sharp shale and sliced the fish into long strips. He laid these strips on the rocks while he ate. When he wanted another fish strip, he found that the sun had dried them and they were crisp and dripping with oil. He was pleased with the taste so he caught and dried more fish in this way. He ate until he was satisfied.

The wind blew up from the river and he shivered. He looked for a place to shield himself from the wind, but found nothing. He tried to break a piece of wood from a tree with his bare hands. He tried with a rock, but only a small piece of the tree broke loose. He realized he must use more force. He looked at the rock and branch. He fitted them together. After much searching he found he could bend high bush cranberry stems around the two pieces. He made the first stone axe.

He used his stone axe to cut posts to build a shelter. Naked and alone, he struggled on until he had enough posts dug in the ground. He knew that he must have a

covering of logs over the posts. But he did not know how he could lift the great weight of the wood to the top of the posts. The first-born of the earth sat down to rest.

Just then a *Naxnok* (supernatural) bird flew over and landed on a branch beside him. The man fled in terror, but the bird remained and talked to him. "*Laxs*," called the bird, "*Gala, helt dim he'y luun*" ("Laxs will tell you many things"). The man had never heard a voice before. He did not know his name was *Laxs*. He did not have language so he remained hidden. The *Naxnok* bird was persistent and called again, "*Laxs, nit dim wa'nt Laxs*. This will be your name."

Laxs crept out of his hiding place. The bird began to instruct *Laxs* on all the things he needed to know. First the bird told *Laxs* on how to make fire for comfort and preparing food. "*Laxs*," he said, "find a piece of alder that has been in the water and let it dry." The bird instructed *Laxs* to find a thin rock, and make a handle and spin one against the other until it started to smoke. The bird said, "Blow on it and flames will start and never allow your fire to die."

The *Naxnok* bird continued, "I will send you my sister to be your helper," "Never again will you struggle and suffer alone. My sister will teach many things. She will teach you how to cook meat and fish with hot rocks and how to dry the berries for winter. She will pick roots and make baskets. She will make blankets and clothing. You will learn to make weapons to kill your food. You will make spears by tying a sharp edged bone to a stick with long ties of animal hides. You will learn to make a bow and arrows, tipped with sharp bear bones. Your first task is to snare many bears and prepare the bones for use."

“I will send you my sister,” said the *Naxnok* bird. “You will comfort and help each other for as long as you live. Build your home here and when you have seven children trained with all your wisdom to survive alone, you and your wife must leave. Carefully choose a new place, build your home, train seven children, once again then leave. Repeat this many times until the land is alive with people, all coming from you and your wife and carrying your knowledge to be passed on forever.”

“Now, before I bring you my sister, I will complete your shelter.” And the *Naxnok* bird raised the heavy logs and placing them securely on the posts to make a roof. That night, as *Laxs* lay in a deep sleep, a sleep made deeper by the *Naxnok* bird, the bird’s sister in the form of a woman crept quietly to his side. When he awoke he found her there, full of comfort and knowledge.

They lived together a long time and prospered. They created children and formed many villages along the *'Xsan*, just as the *Naxnok* bird had prophesied.

Survival Skills

This story conveys bravery and determination. The first born of the *Gitxsan* did what he had to in order to stay alive. The story shows that there is help from the supernatural world. *Laxs* obeyed the laws of the land and from his humble beginnings came a great nation.

Origin Of Thunder

In earlier times when a girl reached puberty she was removed from the main house. In most cases, an aunt or grandmother would sit in the house with them. There

was a death in the village and for several nights the young girls were alone. It was then that several girls ventured outside in the dark night where the young men waited. They would pair off and before the light of day the young men would disappear.

The girls never knew with whom they had spent the night. One night a young girl decided to hold on to her lover so she would know who it was. To her shock and horror she found that it was her brother. The two were very ashamed and they left the village. They traveled to the mountains and eventually turned into thunderbirds.

The people in the village knew this and when the sound of thunder approached the village the villagers would say "*Wii li'am nism' k aats't.*" (We know you committed incest). The thunderbirds would remember their shame and move away from the village and fade back into the mountains.

The Price Of Shame

The young people in this story did not obey the puberty laws. In their shame they left their beloved village. No one asked them to leave. It is often seen in *Gitxsan* laws where the offenders punish themselves. One who has committed a crime does not feel worthy to enter the sweat lodge or the feast hall. I use this story with my nieces and nephews when they are afraid of the thunder. They are not afraid of the flapping of the wings of a thunderbird.

Origin Of *Gitanmaaxs*

Gitxsan means people of the River of Mist. Salmon has always been the source of wealth for the *Gitxsan*; *Gitanmaaxs* means People who harvest salmon by torchlight.

The first village of *Gitanmaaxs* was located by the banks of the 'Xsan. This is the story of the beginning of *Gitanmaaxs*.

A young girl, the daughter of a chief, became *ubin* (pregnant). No one knew who the father was. The young girl did not know who the father was either. Each night she climbed a ladder that the servants put up for her and after she climbed up the ladder was taken away, so no one could get to her and she could not get out. Yet each night a handsome young stranger would come to her.

Her father, the chief, was very angry and the *Gitxsan* were afraid. The chief ordered the *Gitxsan* to pack their belongings and load up the canoes. They were going to abandon the young girl. The handsome young man had disappeared.

The young girl wept as she watched the canoes disappear around the bend in the river. Her mother had left her food and given her hurried instructions on how to deliver her babies when the time came. They did not know that she was going to have triplets.

Her food supply ran out. She sat on the banks of the 'Xsan thinking she could easily slip into the water. Who would know and who would care. It was at this time the babies decided to be born. She knew she had to eat to keep up her strength and feed her babies. She held her three tiny babies and wept.

In the *Gitxsan* culture, in times of great distress, *Uun ts'iits'* (supernatural being) comes from the earth, to help. *Uun ts'iits'* appeared before the weeping mother and instructed her to take strips of bark from the birch trees and make torches. She explained that the girl must then place the torches along the riverbank. The light would attract the fish and she could spear them. The grateful young mother gave the *uun' ts'iits'* her earrings in payment and the *uun' ts'iits'* disappeared.

Each night the mother would bundle her babies together and leave them in the longhouse and she would go to the river to fish. She became strong and confident and soon she had many salmon hanging in the smokehouse. Her children grew very quickly and soon were a help to her. They hunted and trapped small animals, they fished and they picked berries.

The mother explained to her children that their people had moved away because she did not know who their father was. She instructed her children and taught them about the land. Many years passed and her father, the chief, forgot his anger. He sent out his warriors to fetch the bones of his daughter so that he could mourn her. The warriors returned with astonishing news. The chief's daughter and his three grandchildren were alive and well.

The chief and his people returned to the first *Gitanmaaxs* to find a woman with much wealth in the smokehouses. A great feast was held to celebrate the reunion and *Gitxsan* names were given to the children.

Trust And Protection

This story shows the importance of looking after young children. The chief who was anxious to see that no harm came to his daughter treated her like a prisoner. He should have kept her close to their sleeping mats. Then when she brought shame to his title, he was quick to leave her behind.

After some time passed the chief forgot his anger. This is a good lesson on how to forgive and accept forgiveness.

Origin Of *K'alidakhl* (Blue Jay)

K'alidakhl means hair tied back and it is the *Gitksan* word for blue jay. The *Gitksan* say that the old woman gave the world the blue jay.

Smoke curled lazily out of the smoke hole of the newly built shelter. The young couple inside prided themselves on having worked so hard to complete their first home. Food had been scarce, the winter had been long and cold, but they had survived. So with the coming of spring they were refreshed with positive energy and new hopes. They would work ever so hard this summer, and the following winter would not be so much of a struggle.

They held each other closely and made wonderful plans. As they talked, they heard movement and coughing outside. When you visited someone you just made a noise and if the people inside wanted to invite you in then someone would come outside. If no one came out you went on your way.

The man went out and there, ready to move in, was his mother-in-law. She had her bag of clothes with her. He said, "Come in," although he did not wish it. Gone was their privacy. Gone were their hopes of storing as much food as they could.

Chattering incessantly, the old lady did not seem to sense that her son-in-law was annoyed. Winter had been good to her and it did not seem as if she suffered from lack of food. None of her energy had been wasted on work. "Oh," she said, hoping that they would not take her seriously, "all I need is a corner for my mat and you can just feed me leftovers."

Now, this man was a great hunter and he cared for his young beautiful wife. He selected the tenderest parts of his kill and cooked it with great care for her. The old lady

watched with bitterness. The meat given to her was tough, and it was dark and cold in her corner. All her joints ached in the morning from the dampness in the corner, away from the fire. Close to the fire sat her daughter with all the warmth from the fireplace and fine cuts of meat from the hunt. The pampered wife wore a blue cloak that was warm and lovely.

“But,” old lady, said to herself, “if the young and beautiful wife is not around maybe the great hunter will look after me.” She sat shivering in the corner chewing on her tough meat and devising an evil plan. One day when the hunter was out hunting the old lady killed her daughter. The old lady started to prepare a youthful self. She found a piece of charred wood from the fireplace and darkened and deepened her eyes. She took some berry juice and spread some on her cheeks and on her lips. To smooth out her wrinkles, she pulled her hair back very tightly on the top of her head and tied it with a strip of leather. Delighted with the results, the old lady placed the lovely warm blue cloak around her shoulders and waited.

The great hunter returned to the shelter. He came in and looked over to the corner and he thought, “Oh good, the old lady’s gone.” He started to prepare the evening meal. Then he walked over to where he thought his wife was sitting and gazed on the face of a painted old woman. Grinning, the old lady explained that the young wife was gone and now she would wear the blue cloak. The grief-stricken hunter went into a rage; he could not believe his ears. His beautiful wife was gone.

He grabbed his club, and chased the old lady around the fireplace, hitting her whenever he got close enough. With each blow she became smaller and smaller and her

screaming and squawking became louder and louder. Then all of a sudden she lifted herself up with wings and a blue jay flew out of the smoke hole.

For her punishment the old lady was sent out into the forest to scavenge for food and make a lot of idle chatter. Today, if people talk too much and say nothing, the *Gitxsan* laugh and call you *K'alkdakh*. (This story is also written in *Sim'algax* see Appendix D.)

Honesty And Kindness

Gitxsan stories were told in many cases, so that we would learn from the mistakes of others. In the story of *K'alidakhl* there are many lessons. We see the lack of harmony, balance and interconnectedness as greed, desire, resentment, jealousy, envy and violence replace the values. Old lady was not thoughtful. She moved into a home she had not helped to build.

The young couple could have been kinder to the old lady. After all, they had allowed her to move in. If they had given her fine cuts of meat occasionally, it might not have meant so much to her. They could have moved her sleeping mat a little closer to the fireplace.

This story teaches the values of honesty and kindness. In the story of *K'alidakhl* both the young couple and the old lady forgot these important values. My Grandfather instilled in me that if you cannot get the fine cuts of meat, you do without, until such a time as you can earn them. In addition, I was not to publicize my hardships. I was to work harder.

This story shows the consequences of unkind deeds. The old lady was sent out to scavenge for food. The story, although very violent, inspires the use of creativity and imagination, as the old lady starts to prepare a youthful self. The story *K'alidakhl* can be used with adults to discuss the issues of aging. The old lady was envious of youth.

Origin Of The Mosquito

A long time ago when only *Gitxsan* walked the land of *Gitanmaaxs*, there was a monster that hunted them down and killed and ate them. Many of the *Gitxsan* Warriors had set off to kill the *Long Nosed Monster* who walked. They never returned. The *Gitxsan* lived in fear. They did not set off for their hunting and fishing territories, afraid that the monster would kill them. One day a youngest son, whose four brothers had set off to kill the *Long Nosed Monster* who walked, and had been killed, decided he would avenge his brothers' deaths. His mother, father, uncles, aunts, and cousins pleaded with him not to go, but the youngest son could not be persuaded to remain safe at home.

Youngest son prepared himself for the hunt. He drank and bathed in devil's club. He slept in the four directions around the fire. He fasted and prayed. Youngest son took a smoking ember from the fire and placed it in his pack. Even as he set off into the forest, a small stream of smoke lingered behind him.

Youngest son journeyed to the lake where the monster lived. The *Long Nosed Monster* who walked was not home. Youngest son climbed a pine tree that cast its reflection into the water. He waited. Soon the *Long Nosed Monster* who walked returned. He was in a bad mood. He had not found any *Gitxsan* to eat. Youngest son cleared his throat and started to sway back and forth on the tree. The *Long Nosed*

Monster saw the young man's reflection in the water and started jumping back and forth, trying to catch his evening meal.

Soon the *Long Nosed Monster* who walked was exhausted and wet. Youngest son climbed down from the tree, took the smoking ember from his pack, and built a fire. "Come warm yourself," youngest son urged the *The Long Nosed Monster* who walked. The *Long Nosed Monster* who walked was very pleased with the attention he was receiving. Youngest son put more wood on the fire and enticed *Long Nosed Monster* who walked to step a little closer. "Come step a littler closer," he coaxed, "after all, you are so cold and wet." The *Long Nosed Monster* who walked stepped right up to the fire and youngest son pushed him into the raging flames.

From the roar of the fire youngest son could hear the *Long Nosed Monster*, bellow. "You think you have killed me, but I will be back to haunt the *Gitxsan* every summer until the end of time." From the ashes flew hundreds of little *Long Nosed Monsters* who fly. (This story is also written in *Sim'alga*x see Appendix D).

Determination And Problem Solving

In the story of *The Origin of the Mosquito* there are many positive lessons. The story gives hope that one could be victorious in dealing with the monsters and demons in one's life. Youngest Brother faces his fear and conquers it. Youngest Brother shows that there is a solution for any problem that presents itself.

An issue that could be discussed is that of justice. Youngest Brother went to avenge the deaths of his brothers and uncle. There was justice. The issue of land claims can be discussed with *The Origin of the Mosquito*. In Youngest

Brother's day the monster was keeping the *Gitxsan* from their territories. Today, government and big business are the "monsters" that the *Gitxsan* have to face.

This story can be used to illustrate the issue of residential schools. Although residential schools no longer exist, from the ashes came the problems that still haunt those who attended and subsequent generations.

Another important lesson is that of 'winning'. Is winning everything? As swarms of mosquitoes came out of the ashes, did the *Gitxsan* really win?

The Origin Of *Weget* A *Gitxsan* Trickster

The legend tells that the Trickster known to the *Gitxsan* as *Weget* was found by a fisherman, near a pile of driftwood on the banks of the 'Xsan. The fisherman took *Weget* back to the village and was adopted by the chief and his wife. It was soon discovered that *Weget* could not or would not eat, but he continued to grow. The chief and his wife were very concerned because the *Gitxsan* were always whispering about the strange child of the chief. The chief offered a reward to anyone who could entice the child to eat. All attempts were unsuccessful. The chief and his wife continued to try and fix the problem that did not need fixing.

Then one day a stranger with skinny, scabby legs arrived on the shores of *Weget's* adopted village. The stranger would pull scabs off his skinny legs and place them in *Weget's* mouth when he thought no one was looking. The children ran to their parents to tell of the stranger's unusual actions and that he was really a kingfisher, but no one would believe them. Adults very often ignore the reports of children, saying it is just an overactive imagination.

It was then that *Weget* started to eat. The mysterious stranger refused any gifts for his kindness. The chief and his wife were very pleased that their problem was solved and their child was now eating. *Weget's* ravenous appetite could not be satisfied. He ate all the food in his parents' home. He went and stole food from the other smokehouses. *Weget's* eating was out of control. The chief gave away all his belongings as compensation for *Weget's* stealing.

In the early morning the chief assembled all his people very quietly. It was time to leave the village and *Weget*. *Weget* awoke as the canoes were leaving. *Weget* shouted for his parents to come back for him. The canoes disappeared into the morning mist. *Weget* was alone. *Weget* thought that they did not hear him. *Weget* set off on a journey to find his people.

Isolation And Rejection

Every member of the community needs to be responsible for the welfare of others. Children need to know where they belong in order to feel a sense of value.

Weget knew the despair of being abandoned. He was left at an early age to fend for himself. He did not have the hunting and fishing skills required to take care of himself. He had to employ dishonest methods in order to survive. *Weget's* community failed him.

The Origin Of Wind

Weget, on his search for his family, came to the village of Wind. Here he found food to eat. *Weget* had not eaten for several days. Food appeared before him. *Weget* kept eating and when the bowl was empty another would appear. When he was very full, he looked around to see if he could start some trouble. In the corner, three little whirlwinds were playing. *Weget* called over to them, taunting them with a piece of meat, saying, "Would you like some meat, you little whirlwinds with no mouths." "Do you know that the *Gitxsan* call you the devil's children?" *Weget* would laugh and laugh, then burp loudly. The whirlwinds were so hurt; they started crying. Suddenly invisible boards started to beat *Weget*. He ran for his life. *Weget* tended to his wounds and continued his journey to find his family.

Poverty And Homelessness

Weget had become ensnared in poverty and homelessness. He was drifting aimlessly with no clear goals. Alienated from family and community and rebelling against rules and expectation, *Weget* reverted to bullying. He was being fed by Wind, but he could not accept this gift graciously and had to bother the innocent whirlwinds.

Origin Of The Bullhead

Weget sat on the rocks on the banks of the *'Xsan*. His stomach was growling with hunger. A little silver fish came swimming by. *Weget* put on a very sad face and said, "Little silver fish, you remind me of my Uncle; he just passed away." The little silver

fish swam closer to get a better look at the sad man on the river's edge. "Your mouth is just like his," *Weget* whispered sadly.

In a flash, *Weget's* hand flew out and snatched the little silver fish from the shallow water. The slippery little fish struggled and *Weget* squeezed even harder. The little fish was black and blue and his body moved up to deform his head just before he slipped into the water. "Everyone knows you, *Weget*," the bullhead mumbled as it swam away.

Disobedience And Dishonesty

The Creator provides animals and fish for the *Gitxsan* to take for food, shelter and clothing. The law is that the sacrifice of the animals is not wasted. *Weget* disobeyed the laws of the river. *Weget* used trickery to attract the fish. The fish was there for the taking. As a result of *Weget's* disobedience, he left hungry and the fish forever changed.

4.7 Informative Stories

Revenge Of The Mountain Goats

Life was good in the first *Gitxsan* Village of *T'emlaxamit*. The people did not want for anything. The hunters and the fishermen of the village provided very well for everyone. It was the hunters who made the mistake. They forgot the sacred law. The mountain goats were plentiful on *Sdikyoodenax* (mountain). The hunters started hunting for sport. No one needed the meat and the smokehouses were full. After killing the mountain goat, the hunters would take certain parts for a delicacy or leave the entire carcass on the mountain. They could only carry so much.

One day a hunter brought back a live mountain goat as a toy for the children. The *Gitxsan*, in their time of plenty, forgot the sacred law. There would be dire consequences. The children loved to taunt the helpless live toy. They started to torture the kid. No one stopped them. Many of the hunters laughed while the children threw the little animal into the *'Xsan*, and threw rocks at it while the kid frantically tried to swim to safety. Then the children would rescue the wet kid and put him close to the fire. When the kid yelped in pain from the burns the children would throw him into the river again. Their laughter brought another young boy to the banks of the *'Xsan*. The young man had been counseled by his grandfather about the sacred law. The young man remembered his teachings. The young man took the kid from them and put red ochre (*mas*) on the kid's wounds. The kid was marked with red from the *mas* and black from the scorching of his hair. The kind young man carried the kid to the base of *Sdikyoodenax* and gave him back to the mountain.

Meanwhile, the mountain goats on *Sdikyoodenax* were having a meeting. The mountain goats did not mind that the *Gitxsan* took from their tribe to feed and clothe themselves. They understood the law. They voiced their concerns about the harsh treatment of the their brothers and sisters at the hands of the *Gitxsan*. The terrible treatment of one of their children was the final insult. The mountain goats decided that the *Gitxsan* needed to be reminded of the sacred law. The mountain goats decided to have a great feast in which they would invite the *Gitxsan* of *T'emlaxamit*.

Three *T'ets* (messengers) were sent to invite the *Gitxsan*. The three mountain goats looked like humans to the *Gitxsan*. The *Gitxsan* quickly assembled themselves; the chiefs and the young adults would go. The Elders and the children would remain at the village. The *Gitxsan* brought out food for the *T'ets*, but they refused to eat. The *T'ets* explained that they would go and rest in the field while they waited. Children were playing nearby and the three messengers lay down and nibbled on the green grass. The children went to report this to their parents and were dismissed as having active imaginations. (*The Gitxsan made serious mistakes that day. Firstly of all, a large feast is never on the same day that the T'ets arrive. Secondly, visitors never refuse food that a chief offers to them. Thirdly, someone should have investigated the reports of the children.*)

The *Gitxsan* loved to attend feasts and they set off with the visitors. They completely trusted the messengers. They did not know where they were going. They were climbing up *Sdikyoodenax*, but the power of the mountain goats made them believe they were on level ground. Soon they arrived at a magnificent feast hall. The *Gitxsan* were amazed that the hosts knew the names and ranks of the high chiefs. They were

seated accordingly. The kind young boy who had saved the injured kid was among the visitors at the great feast hall. The kind young man was tapped on the shoulder by a young man wearing a black and red robe. The kind young man was seated by a house post.

The *Gitxsan* were served mountain goat meat that had been barbecued by the open fire in the great feast hall. Mountain berries were served in huge wooden bowls. This was a magnificent feast. Then the entertainment began. The dancing was spectacular. The fascinated *Gitxsan* watched as the dancers leapt high into the air as the beat of the drum quickened their heartbeats. Next the dancers all moved to one side of the feast hall. The host chief shouted and the house began to fall. The dancers moved to the other side and the host chief shouted and the remainder of the house fell. The *Gitxsan* fell to their deaths. Their bodies were strewn all over the mountain like the *Gitxsan* hunters had done to the mountain goats.

The kind young man who had shown kindness to the kid who was tortured by the children, clung to the house post and watched the others fall to their deaths. The kind young man understood what was happening. The mountain goats revealed their true form. It was the revenge of the mountain goats. The young man who had seated him came over. He was really a mountain goat. He reminded the kind young man of how he had helped a little goat and now he was being rewarded. The mountain goat gave the kind young man his robe and shoes and instructed him to say, "*Xsimoos*," (like a thumb) and a piece of rock would jut out of the rock face. The kind young man was told to leave the robe and shoes at the base of the mountain. The kind young man turned to thank his friend, but there was no one there. The kind young man returned to the village to tell the

others of the mountain goat feast. The *Gitksan* mourned their dead and remembered the sacred law and honoured it.

Lack Of Respect

Down through the ages, since the beginning of time, the *Gitksan* Elders gave a warning to their people: do not be cruel to animals. The heart must be kind to fish, birds, goats and all the creatures the Creator has given. Through the ages, if meat was required then the animal was killed and eaten. The ancient people did not waste any part of an animal they killed. All parts of the slain animal were used. This to the early *Gitksan* was the sacred law.

Otter Woman

When a man went out alone on his trap line, he was told to concentrate on the task at hand. If his mind wandered to a loved one, Otter Woman would transform to the image of his thoughts. The *Gitksan* storytellers tell of a time that this happened to a young man. He had recently married and had to leave his bride behind so he could set the traps. The agreed plan was that she would arrive in seven days and help him at the trap line.

The young man put out seven markers, one for each day. Each day he would eliminate a marker so he would know which day she was arriving. With each waking moment he thought of her and wished she was there. On the morning of the fourth day the young man eliminated the fourth marker and counted the remaining ones that would bring him closer to his beloved. The young man was totally delighted to see his beloved coming down the narrow path. The young man in his excitement forgot the teachings of

the Elders. He rushed over to embrace his wife. He failed to notice that her actions were different. She held her hand over her mouth and turned her head slightly in a coy manner. *(This was really the otter hiding her sharp teeth. The storytellers always warn the listeners to watch for this action in the wilderness. The otter in her transformation cannot hide her teeth, so she keeps them covered).*

The young man took her hand and tried to lead her to the shelter, but she pulled him down towards the lake. The young man who was so very much in love did not once heed the warning signs. The wife who was really an otter led him to the lake for a swim. The otter possessed the young man and soon his transformation began. He did not realize that he was living in the lake with an otter. All he could see was his beloved wife.

The markers were forgotten as he frolicked in the lake. On the arranged day his wife came up the same path that the otter had come. She checked all around the camp and could not find her husband. She noticed the markers had been neglected and she saw the footprints of an otter along side her husband's footprints. She realized what had happened. She ran back to the village and informed the people. The warriors came to the lake by the camp and found the young man changed into an otter except for his face.

The warriors shot the otter and the young man. The *Gitxsan* were afraid that the man or his children might come back to the village and father children. The *Gitxsan* would be part otter. This was not what they wanted.

Concentration And Awareness

The *Gitxsan* warn their people to keep their minds clear when they are alone in the wilderness. It is important to have a clear mind and a strong heart. Lack of

concentration could result in an accident. Being unaware, one could stumble into the path of a wild animal. Those who travel in the wilderness are reminded to trust the stories they have heard and to watch for the one whom covers his/her mouth.

Wild Woman Of The Woods

If you are in the wilderness and you hear a baby cry, your blood runs cold and the hair on your arms stands up. *"Be glad," said the Elder, "it is your lucky day."*

Be very brave, you are hearing the baby of the wild woman of the woods. She is fierce looking. Her hair is long and her nails are long. (In death, her hair and her nails keep growing). The wild woman of the woods carries her crying baby on her back on a pack board. A brave man met the wild woman of the woods when he was out hunting and he made motions of taking the baby. The action made the wild woman of the woods think that he had taken the baby. She motioned for it back with a gesture. The hunter said, "No, you must grant me my request before I return the baby." Finally she nodded in agreement. The hunter walked backwards, still pretending he had the baby. He knew that it would be dangerous to turn his back on the wild woman of the woods. (*This is also the Gitksan law with all wild animals*). She would attack him with her long sharp nails and rip out his heart. The wise hunter did not trust her. He waited until she promised him his heart's desires, which was to be a very successful hunter. The hunter placed his arms down to his side to show that he no longer had the baby. It was said after that time that he was a very good hunter, who provided well for his people.

Realistic Desires

If you are out in the wilderness and if you hear a baby cry, say oh *Naxnok*, give me the desires of my heart. Say this four times as you face the four directions. If you meet the wild woman of the woods, be very brave and repeat the actions of the wise hunter. The *Gitxsan* Storytellers warn their listeners to be very careful what they ask for from the Wild Woman of the Woods. The Elders stress the importance of hard work in attaining one's wishes.

Night Of The Owl

The cries of the children in the night were a source of fear for the *Gitxsan* since the beginning of time. A crying child was quickly comforted and warned that his/her crying might encourage the return of the owl.

The story takes place at a well-established fish camp at what is now known as Hagwilget Canyon. A toddler woke up in the night wanting a drink of water. This was a great hardship for the early *Gitxsan* as they had small baskets woven from spruce root and storing water was very difficult. In addition, the canyon was very steep and the nights very dark. To go and fetch water in the night would surely cause injury to someone.

A child cried in the night at the fish camp at the canyon, but his parents neglected to comfort him. The small boy crawled from the shelter to see if anyone would give him a drink of water. (It was customary at that time that children did not always sleep in their own shelters. It was the law that children were tended by those around them).

In the morning, the father went from shelter to shelter asking if his son had spent the night at one of the other shelters at the Fish Camp. No one had seen the boy, so the father set off into the nearby wilderness searching for his son. On the fourth day of his search he met a spruce grouse that is also known as fool hen. The spruce grouse promised she would lead the father to his son if he gave her *mas* (red ochre), *hix* (fat) and *mii k'aax* (fine eagle down). (*These are three powerful medicines used by the Gitksan for healing*).

The father did not have faith in such a little creature so he took the cotton fleece from the cottonwood tree, similar to eagle down, a white stone, resembling fat, and pieces of red cedar chips, that he crushed to resemble red ochre. The spruce grouse was not fooled. She informed the man once again of what was required for payment. The man told his wife at the end of the day's search and his wife did not take the information lightly. The wife gathered the materials and told her husband to go and give the items to the spruce grouse. The spruce grouse took the gifts and they set off to find the rotten cottonwood tree where the owl had her nest with the boy in it.

The spruce grouse left the man watching the owl nest and she went off to the river's edge to apply the fat, red ochre and eagle down to her eyelids. She used the fat as an adhesive so that the red ochre and eagle down would stick to her lids. The spruce grouse believed that this would make her more attractive. The spruce grouse still has these markings today. The Elders caution the *Gitksan* hunters, that they must never shoot a spruce grouse. If they are lost in the wilderness the spruce grouse can lead them home.

Meanwhile, the father was watching the owl's nest in the rotten cottonwood tree. He did not attempt to climb up to the nest while the owl was roosting. Finally, in the late

afternoon the owl flew off to hunt. The man climbed the rotten cottonwood tree very carefully, testing each branch, so he would know which branches to step on when he came back down with his son. The father took his very sick son from the nest and climbed down and ran home with the child, who was too sick to cry. The child's stomach was swollen from the mice, frogs and lizards that the owl had been feeding him. The exhausted man returned to the fish camp. The child was dead. Those living at the fish camp at the canyon mourned the loss of the child and regretted their lack of concern to comfort the child.

The fish camp was connected to the other side of the canyon by a hanging bridge made of cedar ropes and small logs. Soon they heard the sound of weeping and mournful singing approaching the fish camp. The *Gitxsan* knew it was the owl coming for the child's spirit.

"Di lo di slay, di nism ant masin hlgu t'iihlxw. Ho heh ho heh" echoed the sorrowful song of the owl. The warriors quickly removed the logs from the deck of the bridge on the side closest to them and replaced the decking with dried cow's parsnip stalks. The owl stepped on the stalks and went crashing through into the river. She was frantically thrashing about in the water. When the owl became weak and it looked like she might drown, the warriors pulled her out and took her to the fire. The owl was pleased and asked the warriors to dry deep under her wings and between her legs. The warriors flung her into the river once again. Again, they saved her from drowning and placed her near the fire. The owl requested once again that they help her dry her private parts. The warriors threw her into the raging fire. The owl died in the fire. The warriors

tortured the owl because she had kidnapped a child and killed him by feeding him owl food.

In the darkness, the grieving father and the people at the fish camp at the canyon kept hearing the baby crying under the ground. The tortured father kept digging where he heard the cries. He would no sooner dig up one place and the crying would start in another. The father was exhausted and the Elders told him he must stop. The people packed up the fish camp and returned to *Gitanmaaxs*.

Spiritual Connections

Even today, there are reports made from people who have heard a child crying at the old fish campsite at the canyon. Others like to explain it and say it is just the wind howling in the narrow part of the canyon. So if you hear the crying of a child at the canyon, be aware that it is not the wind.

It is believed by the *Gitxsan*, since this supernatural event took place at the fish camp at the canyon that the place is known as a *sbil naxnok* (power place). If a person is training to become a shaman, he/she would have to spend four nights alone at this place in a shallow grave. Here they would face and conquer all of their fears and be reborn a new person.

Today, the *Gitxsan* believe that if a person's death is near, they hear the owl cry out their name as she sings her mournful song. The frightened *Gitxsan* are instructed that they must kick the owl three times, as they walk their final journey into the spirit world to show they are accepting their death. The *Gitxsan* in their final walk are warned not to cast a look back at life, but continue their journey to the land of the owls.

The Young Chief

The chief of a large *Gitksan* Village had just died. There was no one to replace him except for a young boy of twelve. The Elders were very concerned there were so many decisions to be made and their chief was lacking in experience and character. The wise Elders took their young chief to the mountain and left him there. Alone the young boy fasted and talked with the Great Spirit. On the fourth day he was presented with a power in the form of an animal which, when he went to the mountain, would give him wise counsel.

The young man returned to the village refreshed and strengthened. Each time a decision was to be made the young chief would journey to the mountain and to his source of power.

The Elders were most pleased with their young chief. Things were going well indeed. Then came the rumours of war. "Go to the mountain and learn of what we must do," the Elders urged their young chief.

"It's a waste of time," the young chief replied. "Look at how well I have looked after the Village, and I don't need to waste my time going to the mountain."

War raged in the Village and the Village was completely destroyed.

Support Systems

The essential lesson in this legend is that we all have support systems. The young chief did not have an immediate family, but his extended family helped him. Today, the wars raged by the young people could be with substance abuse, family violence or

racism. It is also important to note that young people, as in the case of the young chief, sometimes do not heed the warning of the Elders and as a result do not reach their full potential.

The Little Porcupine

The *Gitksan* Storytellers tell this legend to illustrate the importance of respect for all things. One beautiful summer day, as the story goes, a young porcupine was up on *Sdikyoodenax*. He had been eating all day and was feeling like he should take a nap. Porcupine found a shady place by the scrubby fir bushes. He settled down for what he thought would be a long nap and pleasant dreams.

Then Porcupine woke up. Something or someone was making an irritating noise. Porcupine looked around with his beady little eyes and saw what it was that had awoken him. Creek was trickling peacefully over on her way to the lake. Over Porcupine strutted, very annoyed. He drank up Creek and licked all the rocks dry. After all was quiet once again, Porcupine went to the shade under the fir bushes once again to continue his nap and sweet dreams.

Just as Porcupine was dozing off, Creek started her journey down the mountainside again. Porcupine was really angry this time. He went and drank up the creek and licked all the rocks dry. He went back to dream in the shade of the scrubby fir trees. This happened two more times, and each time Porcupine got angier and angrier.

After drinking up Creek for the fourth time, Porcupine was so full of water, he needed to relieve himself. He waddled toward another clump of bushes. But he did not

get there. In the stillness of the afternoon, Porcupine exploded, with fur and quills falling on the nearby bushes.

Creek once again started her journey down the mountain.

Porcupines, the *Gitksan* say are still easily irritated. At the slightest disturbance they will discharge their quills. This story is also written in *Sim'algaḡ* (see Appendix D).

Destiny And Purpose

The major issue in the story of The Young Porcupine is the care needed in dealing with the environment. Porcupine upset the balance by tampering with the environment and destroyed himself.

The lesson of controlling one's anger is evident. The rocks were innocent victims as Porcupine expressed his anger. Porcupine should have investigated other ways to deal with his anger.

An important lesson to learn is that everyone has a destiny and purpose on this earth. Creek's destiny was to journey down the mountain and feed the rivers. Porcupine was destroyed and Creek continued her journey.

Problem solving is another important lesson that Porcupine neglected to learn. Perhaps he should have found another sleeping area, away from Creek. The frightening lesson to be learned from Porcupine is that the consequences are sometimes fatal.

4.8 Creation Stories

Weget And The Ball Of Light

One evening when he still had a home, *Weget* remembered the Elders talking about a chief who owned the ball of light. *Weget* had been outside of the smokehouse waiting for the Elders to leave so he could fill his stomach.

It was a time when the *Gitxsan* Territories were still in semi-darkness. *Weget* journeyed through the vast wilderness to the village of the chief who owned the ball of light. *Weget* watched the village for several days. Each morning the young girls would come to the river to drink. The girls would scoop up the water with their hands and drink. *Weget* decided that he would turn himself into a pine needle and drift towards the chief's daughter. The young girl scooped water into her hand and she noticed the pine needle, instead of disposing of it she just blew it to one side. She drank the water and the pine needle slipped down her throat. Not long after, the young girl was pregnant. The people were amazed with the short duration of the girl's pregnancy. *Weget* was born after a few short weeks and he started to grow at an amazing rate.

The doting mother loved her strange son and gave *Weget* everything he wanted and cried for except for the ball of light. *Weget* threw tantrums and cried and cried for the ball of light, but the chief did not trust anyone with his prized possession. The mother pleaded with her father, the chief, to let the child play with the ball of light. Finally, fed up with the crying, the chief reluctantly gave in to the pleadings. *Weget* brushed away his large tears and started playing very nicely with the ball. *Weget* sweetly thanked his grandfather, the chief, and went to play with the other children. The beaming mother was so proud of her son. Each day *Weget* would ask for the ball of light and he would return

it. One day when *Weget* was bouncing the ball down the path that led to the river no one paid any attention, after all *Weget* would bring it back. *Weget* turned into raven and flew away with the ball of light. *Weget's* grandfather, the chief, yelled, "We knew it was you *Weget*, who doesn't know you?"

Weget felt that once he possessed the coveted ball of light the *Gitxsan* would respect him and bring him food and gifts. *Weget* would just rent out the ball of light in exchange for food. *Weget* flew towards the *Gisgaga'as* River where he knew the *Gitxsan* would be busy with their salmon harvest. *Weget/Raven* saw people below. There was not much light, except for the shiny ball in *Weget/Raven's* mouth. *Weget* did not realize that he was in 'the land in between.' This was where spirits who denied their deaths worked preparing their salmon. These were the living dead, who refused to enter into the spirit world. When *Weget* opened his mouth to ask if they would like to use his ball of light, it fell and broke. The ball shattered into a million pieces. The larger pieces became the sun and moon and the smaller pieces filled the sky with stars. *Weget* just shrugged his shoulders and wandered on devising yet another plan to ease his great hunger.

Rewards And Reputation

Weget would never be hungry again. He would never have to work. All his problems would be solved. To possess the ball of light is like the desire to win the lottery or bingo. While some problems are solved, others are created. *Weget* thought he could buy reputation and prestige.

Creation Of Steelhead

Weget stood on the banks of the 'Xsan wondering if there was a fish camp nearby. *Weget* was unaware of the beauty around him. It was a beautiful summer day. The sky was as blue as the distant mountains. A gentle breeze played on the leaves of the hardy bushes that managed to survive on the cliffs of the canyon. As *Weget* looked across the water he saw a magnificent salmon jumping. *Weget* did not have many skills so he did not know how to catch a salmon. But, as usual, he had an idea, which was much easier than setting a net or making a fishing rod.

Weget hollered at the salmon. "Do you want to have a contest, brother? It is called, *Guxw good'y mi'lit* (Charge at my heart, Steelhead"). *Weget* called the salmon 'steelhead' before it was known as steelhead. The salmon was getting bored with his magnificent jumps and he did not know if anyone was watching.

Weget placed a rock under his raven robe and walked into the river. *Weget* yelled, "Charge at my heart." The salmon did and *Weget* fell backwards. Laughing, *Weget* got up and called out again. The fourth time, *Weget* placed the rock over his heart. The salmon charged at *Weget*'s heart and just before the salmon died he whispered, "I knew it was you *Weget*."

"Charge at my heart," *Weget* chuckled to himself as he went off to cook his steelhead.

Arrogance And Flattery

The salmon was swayed by the flattering words of the *Gitxsan* trickster. The salmon's arrogance caused his death. *Weget* was looking for an easy meal. It was not his

intention to create the steelhead for the *Gitksan*. Fishermen still enjoy the challenge of fighting with a steelhead today. Today, if my mother is hungry for fresh salmon in the early spring, she says, "*Guxw good'y mi'lit*" (charge at my heart, steelhead). Then within a day or two someone brings her fresh salmon.

Creation Of *Weget's* Wooden Slave

Weget looked at his ragged reflection in the water. He thought that if he looked noble the *Gitksan* would treat him well and prepare a great feast for him. He was so hungry.

Weget spied driftwood on the banks of the river and decided that if he had a slave announcing him that the *Gitksan* would be greatly impressed. *Weget* used his supernatural powers to breathe life into his creation. The driftwood came to life. *Weget* took the backbone of a rotten salmon and created a fine headdress for himself.

Weget instructed his slave to say, "Here comes a great teacher, he wishes to speak with the wise people in your village." The slave said in a clear voice, "Here comes a great teacher." *Weget* beamed at his slave. The slave continued, "He wears a headdress of a rotten salmon backbone." *Weget* was furious. He kicked the slave apart and decided it was his choice of rotten wood. *Weget* found a fine piece of cedar and once again he breathed life into his creation. This time the slave repeated each word *Weget* instructed him to say.

Weget and his slave entered the village. The slave hollered that his fine master was seeking higher knowledge and wished to meet with the Elders. The *Gitksan* Elders and chiefs quickly assembled and the women prepared a fine feast. It was customary that

the women offer food to the slave first to see if he approved before his great master ate. The women brought fine cuts of salmon, boiled smoked moose meat, large bowls of huckleberries and steaming Indian tea. Each time the slave helped himself to huge portions and explained that his master was fasting while he searched for higher knowledge. Each time the slave refused on *Weget's* behalf, *Weget* would lean over and scratch the slave's buttocks. After some time had passed, *Weget* asked to be excused. The *Gitxsan* thought this was strange behaviour for a chief.

Weget took his slave to the outskirts of the village and kicked him apart and ate the contents of his stomach. The women noticed all the sawdust on the mat where the slave sat. Later that day the children found the wooden slave on the outskirts of the village and the *Gitxsan* knew that they had entertained *Weget*. The *Gitxsan* pretended that they knew it was *Weget* all along.

Choices And Consequences

Weget was motivated to make the poor choices he did because of hunger. There was no one there to support him. Today, children must cope with many problems that they did not create. Without guidance they can fall into such problems as drugs, unwanted pregnancies, suicide and other dangers that produce horrific consequences.

4.9 Entertaining Stories

Although the stories are meant to be entertaining, they are educational. *Gitxsan* traditional knowledge is encoded in this way and contains messages on many different levels. In this way, listeners learn new and important lessons as their own understanding deepens, the strength of traditional knowledge lies in its ability to convey a deeper truth.

Weget's Tablecloth

Weget was drooling as he walked up from the river, suddenly, the realization hit him. He did not know how to cook. He remembered his uncle's favourite saying, "Go ask your excrement." This was the response the *Gitxsan* gave to impossible questions, but of course, *Weget* did not know this, he took it literally.

So *Weget* squatted a fair distance from his fine salmon and grunted and groaned. He had not eaten for a long time and there was not too much activity. Finally, he managed a small little fragment. *Weget* asked the fragment the instructions for cooking his fine catch. The little teacher told *Weget* in a tiny voice that he must dig a pit and place the salmon in it. Then cover the salmon with bark and build a fire on top of it. *Weget* thought, "That is so easy," so he kicked his bowel movement into the bushes. *Weget* started to make a pit, and then he realized that he had forgotten the instructions. *Weget* searched for his little friend but could not find it.

So once again he squatted and strained for a long time then managed another one, it was even smaller this time and the voice was barely above a whisper. *Weget* placed the new advisor on a thimbleberry leaf and said flattering words about the cleverness of one so small. *Weget* then made a song so he would not forget the instructions for cooking his salmon.

Soon the forest was filled with the aroma of *Weget*'s cooking. The crows alerted one another and soon they were gathered around *Weget* as he cleared the dying fire from the top of his cooking. The crows were impressed with *Weget*'s fine salmon and wonderful cooking skills. Then one of the crows suggested that such fine cooking deserved a fine tablecloth. *Weget* agreed and sent them off to find a tablecloth. The crows soon returned with little bits of bark. *Weget* was furious. His fine cooking deserved a magnificent tablecloth. *Weget* would show the crows what a tablecloth looked like. *Weget* stormed off into the forest.

Weget returned with a fine cedar bark to find that the crows had eaten most of his fine meal and left their droppings on the rest. *Weget* was outraged. He kicked the crows in the rear as they tried to get away. That is why the crows walk the way they do today.

Vanity And Vulnerability

The crows knew the way that *Weget* thought. He was their brother. *Weget* could transform into raven. *Weget* was so proud of his cooking skills that the crows easily convinced him that a fine meal required a tablecloth. The crows knew that if they did not bring back a fine tablecloth, *Weget* would leave his cooking and show them what a fine tablecloth looked like. *Weget* lost his temper and in kicking the crows, he hurt himself.

***Weget* And The Grizzly Bear**

One day *Weget*'s stomach was hurting. He had not eaten for several days. A grizzly bear was eating ants in the meadow not too far from the *Gisgaga*'s River.

Weget watched him for a while and decided that if he tricked him, he would not worry about food for many days.

Meanwhile, a young grizzly bear wandered into the meadow and the Grizzly Bear who was eating ants chased him away. *Weget* could see that the Grizzly Bear was very competitive and not the type to back down from any challenges. *Weget* could see that Grizzly Bear was big and awkward and would not be a fast runner for short distances. *Weget* went over and said, "My Brother, you sure look big and powerful. How would you like to run a short race with me? I am training, and I need to practice."

Weget was thin and tall and very fit from all his walking. *Weget* and Grizzly Bear ran. *Weget* stayed a few steps behind and huffed and puffed pretending he was exhausted. The Grizzly Bear won the race and wanted another race; a much longer race. *Weget* agreed reluctantly as he limped around Grizzly Bear. *Weget* flew over to the finish line while Grizzly was still lumbering along. Grizzly Bear was most disappointed with himself. *Weget* shared with Grizzly Bear that he too used to be a slow runner until he cut off his testicles. *Weget* suggested that Grizzly Bear do the same thing. Grizzly Bear wanted to be fast. He wanted to win the race. So Grizzly Bear cut off his testicles. Grizzly Bear was bleeding very badly while *Weget* sat and waited by the finish line. Just before he died Grizzly Bear uttered, "I knew it was you, *Weget*." He did not, but he did not want to appear foolish. *Weget* did a dance to celebrate his cleverness. *Weget* sang his cooking song and started to prepare his meal. It did not occur to *Weget* just to cook a portion of his kill.

Competition And Deception

Weget was able to persuade Grizzly Bear to race with him by using flattery.

Weget was able to deceive Grizzly Bear because of Grizzly Bear's competitive nature.

Today, many people involved with competitions will do almost anything to win the race.

In addition, many people seek to be flattered.

***Weget* And The Stump**

Weget ate and ate after all he had not eaten for many days. When he was really full, he looked around to see if there was anyone he could bug. He saw a stump by his pit. *Weget* wiped the grease off his mouth with his sleeve and said, "What happened to you short one? I guess you won't be a totem pole." *Weget* laughed and laughed, then he became so sleepy. *Weget* woke up several hours later to find that the stump had shaken all the earth around the pit and had covered *Weget*'s fine cooking with dirt. *Weget* got up and wandered on to find more food.

Abuse And Greed

Weget did not remember the lesson that he should have learned in the land of wind. Once again he is full and looks for someone to torment. *Weget*'s lessons was that he lost his food because of his lack of respect, but *Weget* never did learn.

***Weget*'s New Robe**

Weget walked in the forest throughout the day. The sun was sinking by the western mountains. The sky was ablaze with colour. *Weget* looked at the trees that were

lined along the forest's edge. He could not believe his eyes. *Weget* squinted towards the trees to get a better look. There before him was a magnificent robe. The robe shimmered with shining colours. *Weget* was thrilled with his fortunate find. Without any hesitation *Weget* tore off his raven robe, ripping it apart and saying he would not need the ragged robe anymore. The *Gitxsan* would certainly want to entertain and feed a visitor wearing such a noble robe.

Weget arrived at what he thought was the new robe just as the sun slipped behind the mountain. The brilliant colours of the new robe disappeared with the setting sun. There before him was a large slab of cedar bark swaying in the evening breezes.

The hasty *Weget* went back and picked up the pieces of his torn raven robe and pinned it together with pine needles. *Weget* wandered on.

Pretense And Public Image

Weget's character lacked sincerity and this would always come back to him. He was fooled by the image he saw in the distance. *Weget* quickly rips up his raven robe because the new one would bring him prestige and free food. He thought that if he was well dressed others would be impressed. He had not learned that a good heart was all that he would need.

Mosquitoes And The Woodpeckers

It seems that the mosquitoes became very strong in numbers after the death of their ancestor, *the long nosed monster who walked*. Their system of government became very strong and very sophisticated. The mosquitoes decided that they should hold a feast.

The mosquitoes filled many of their little bent boxes with the delicious red drink they had been collecting from the *Gitxsan*. A messenger was sent out to summon all the woodpeckers to come to the feast. The noble woodpeckers entered the feast hall with great flare and importance.

The mosquitoes that were the hosts served the delicious red drink to the woodpeckers. The woodpeckers were very impressed with the feast system of the mosquitoes. At the end of the feast the high-ranking woodpeckers spoke and with much praise concerning the impressive way in which the mosquitoes were making great progress. It was then that one of the high-ranking woodpeckers asked the chief of the mosquitoes where they could find the delicious red drink.

The chief of the mosquitoes informed all who were there that they had been collecting the drink from the surrounding trees. Ever since then the woodpeckers have been looking for that delicious red drink.

Humour And Self-importance

My *Na'a* thought this story was very funny. "It is just a funny story," she would say. She did not believe this story because no human or supernatural being was present to bring the story back to the *Gitxsan*.

The woodpeckers can be used to illustrate someone who is trying to be self-important. The woodpeckers lack of humility is expressed with the use of humour.

Dear Friends: Porcupine And Beaver

Beaver and Porcupine had spent the day up on *Sdikyoodenax*. The huckleberries were ripe and plentiful that season. The two dear friends had been eating the berries and were full. Their teeth and their lips were purple. They smiled at each other and smelled each other's breath. "Your breath smells so refreshing," Beaver said to Porcupine. "Yours does, too," replied Porcupine. They were two dear friends who enjoyed each other's company.

"I am so full of berries," said Beaver. "Let's go to the glacier and slide," suggested Porcupine. "No, I might get hurt," said Beaver reluctantly. "You can sit on my tail and hold my waist," said Porcupine.

The two friends played tagged all the way over to the slide area. They came to the slide area. Beaver was fearful but sat behind Porcupine and held on tightly. Down they slid, faster and faster, on the huge glacier. Beaver was pierced with quills from Porcupine's back. Then he let go and tumbled down the mountain. The pressure on his stomach made him sick and patches of purple from his berries smeared the white snow. Beaver rolled all the way to the bottom.

Porcupine laughed and laughed. She laughed so hard that she had tears streaming down her face. Beaver had looked so funny rolling down the hill. Beaver was furious. He started to plan his revenge. "I'll get you Porcupine," Beaver vowed as he brushed off the snow from himself. "Porcupine, that was so fun," said Beaver hiding his anger. "Let's go swimming down at the river," Beaver added. "Oh, but I can't swim," said Porcupine sadly. "Come," said Beaver, knowing that Porcupine could not swim, "you can ride on my back."

Porcupine stopped laughing and was looking forward to swimming with Beaver. They journeyed down the mountain and Beaver whistled little tunes his Na'a had taught him, so that he could hide his true feelings. Beaver was very angry with his friend.

They arrived at the river; it was a beautiful day. "It's a lovely day for a swim," said Porcupine. Beaver slipped into the water and Porcupine clutched tightly to his back. Beaver dove under and tried to shake Porcupine off so she would slip off and drown. Beaver dove again and again.

Each time Porcupine squealed with delight, "Let's go again, this is so much fun." Beaver's plan was not working. "Let's rest for awhile," Beaver suggested. Beaver took Porcupine to an island. Porcupine loved the island.

"This is so wonderful," she said to Beaver, as she picked wild flowers. There was no reply so Porcupine looked around. Beaver was gone.

"Porcupine, what are you doing?" yelled Beaver from another island. Beaver laughed and laughed then disappeared into the water. Porcupine soon realized what was happening and she demanded that Beaver come and get her. Porcupine was stranded on the island. She was disappointed in Beaver. She thought she could trust him. After all, they had been friends since they were born.

Porcupine was very sad. She cried and sang a lonely song. "Poor little me, stranded on this island, ho ho hey a yee." A porcupine spirit appeared from among the pine trees. She was carrying a magic quill. The good spirit instructed Porcupine to sing a happy positive song to the North Wind. Porcupine stopped crying and sang a good song.

"Oh, North Wind, I need you to come
and blow away my sadness and fear.

Make me strong and brave and take me home.

He he hoo. He he hoo.”

North Wind came and chilled the air and the river froze. Porcupine walked back to her home in the forest.

Beaver watched Porcupine as she disappeared into the darkness of the forest. Their friendship was over. They were no longer dear friends.

Trust And Friendship

The *Gitxsan* often tell a story from earlier times about two dear friends. The *Gitxsan* tell this story to show the value of having friends and keeping them. The story shows what can happen when a trust is broken. In some cases it cannot be repaired. Honest communication would have helped Porcupine and Beaver, before their friendship was lost to hurt and anger.

Today, if *Gitxsan* friends are quarreling the *Gitxsan* Grannies laugh and say, “Look there goes Porcupine and Beaver.”

4.10 Modern Day Story

The Young Egret

Young Egret sat on a fallen log. He watched with fascination as a fluff from the cattail danced in the wind. Young Egret flew up to ask the fluff as to how it could come to life. Suddenly, Young Egret felt something lifting him. He understood the secret of the magic that made fluff dance.

Higher and higher Young Egret was lifted as he experienced Wind. Everyday Wind and Young Egret played. Young Egret enjoyed and trusted his new found friend. Wind enjoyed having a companion who admired and respected him.

One day a mighty flood swept through Young Egret's home. The water soaked his feathers and no matter how he struggled against the currents, he could not fly. Young Egret heard Wind calling to him. He struggled harder and harder and soon felt Wind lifting him high above the swirling water. Wind promised Young Egret that he would take him to a safe place where he would be welcomed and protected. The journey was long and hard. Young Egret suffered from the cold and lack of food and water. Wind would not let Young Egret give up hope. This was their destiny.

After many days, Young Egret could see through the clouds to the rugged country below. It was beautiful. The huge mountains, and the dark green cedar and hemlock trees gave the exhausted bird a feeling of peace. Wind told Young Egret that they were in *Gitxsan* Territory. They were on the outskirts of a Wolf Clan Fish Camp. Wind left Young Egret in a wooded area while he went over to give the *Gitxsan* a message that an unusual event was about to happen.

Mid-afternoon was a peaceful time at the Fish Camp. Children were playing in the large open field. Women were preparing the salmon for the smokehouse. Men were sitting around the campfire discussing the events of the day.

Suddenly, the tall grass rustled in the corner of the vegetable garden. Three whirlwinds spun out into the garden and through the camp, picking up dirt, twigs and leaves. Wind whispered in the ear of a *Gitxsan* dreamer.

The Dreamer told the others of the message he had received. Quickly, everyone assembled. The Chiefs and Elders dressed in their regalia. The women started to prepare food for a feast. The singers brought out their drums and rattles. A runner was sent to *Gitanmaaxs* to summon the guests for the feast. The children were told to sit quietly.

The *Gitxsan* waited as they watched the sun slip behind the mountain. In the quiet and beauty of the sunset, Wind deposited the weary Young Egret on the roof of the Smokehouse. It was the end of Wind's journey and he quietly slipped away.

The Wolf Chief welcomed the newcomer. The Wolf Chief expressed gratitude to Wind for the beautiful gift. A drumbeat sounded; the Singers and Dancers welcomed Young Egret. The women started to serve the boiled, half-dried salmon, fried bannock and freshly squeezed berries.

Children held out pieces of fish and bannock to the Young Egret. Young Egret devoured everything and hopped around the camp begging for more of the delicious new food. The *Gitxsan* laughed and said, "Young Egret does not know the Feasting Laws."

Young Egret stayed with the *Gitxsan* for many months. Then one day he saw the geese flying over the camp towards the southern mountains. In his heart, Young Egret

knew that he must go home, but he did not know the way. The Northern nights were cold and he did not have the robes and leggings to keep him warm.

One day as Young Egret sat huddled by the smokehouse, he saw a fluff of thistle dancing in the wind. Young Egret remembered his friend. He flew over and asked the wind to take him home, but it was the North wind and he would not venture out of his territory.

The *Gitxsan* could sense the loneliness in their friend. The Dreamer had dreamed of Young Egret's coming and now his dreams were of Young Egret's leaving. Young Egret listened as the Dreamer told the ways of the *Gitxsan*. They too, had journeyed to distant lands and the spirit, as is the way of the spirit, longs to return home. "We will help you Young Egret," promised the Dreamer.

A canoe and drum were designed and carved for Young Egret. A song was composed to call Wind from the Spirit World and carry Young Egret back to his homeland. Young Egret's canoe was launched. The heartbeat of Young Egret matched the steady beat of the Box Drum. The voices of the Singers echoed in his mind as his canoe sailed on the Wind Spirit.

Back in his homeland with his spirit fulfilled, Young Egret knew that the journey with Wind to the *Gitxsan* Territories would live forever in his memories. The Box Drum and Canoe were evidence that it had not been a dream.

Meanwhile, the Fireweed, the Frog and Wolf Clans amongst the *Gitxsan* still tell the legend about Young Egret. The *Gitxsan* still sing Young Egret's song and tell the story of how Wind brought them a beautiful gift.

Foundation Of Confidence

One day, late in Autumn I was out at *Anlo*, I saw an unusual bird flying by the distant trees. It was several days later, after a light snowfall, that I returned to *Anlo* and found the white bird dead beside my smokehouse. I realized then that it was an egret, very far from its homeland. I was able to write this from the confidence instilled in me as a child. I patterned it from other legends I knew and kept asking myself, "How would *Na'a* tell this story." This story was written as a tribute to a visitor at *Anlo*.

CHAPTER FIVE: AN UPHEAVAL IN THE ODYSSEY

5.1 Historical Look At Residential Schools

By many of the newcomers to Canada, the people who were already here were misunderstood. It was a common conception that the First Nations peoples did not possess an educational system. The newcomers did not realize that a sophisticated system of government including education existed. The curriculum consisted of looking, listening, learning and doing. Everyone and everything around the children taught them who they were, where they belonged and how they related to others and to their environment.

The outsiders came with their new ways and new systems and under colonialism set out to change the First Nations People. It is common knowledge that the Residential School concept was a deliberate forced assimilation of First Nations children designed to undermine the cultural foundations of the First Nations' Peoples. Teachers in the *Gitksan* territories need to know the history and the intentions of the concept of Residential Schools because of the legacy of their treatment lives in the students they teach. Children today are still feeling the effects in that their parents/grandparents were products of that system and as a result lost a good part of their culture, language, and particularly the cultural values related to parenting. Much of that parenting in the past was done through storytelling, that is, it was the main form of education of oral societies. It still is today in the feast house.

5.2 The Finger Wrestler

(Excerpt from The Odyssey of *Nuhl̓x* his Three Brothers and Sister). The children set out the next day, happy to be on their way. The *Nax̓ nok̓* spirit gave them enough food for one meal. They walked for a long time before they came upon a man sitting at the eastern canyon. This was the first challenge. The *Gitksan* had not been able to go to this place to hunt, trap or fish because of the finger wrestler who lived here. Here was the man who challenged and killed all who tried to pass. All who had tried had fallen to their deaths. The finger wrestler reached out his large finger to challenge the youngsters who stood on the opposite side of the canyon. The wrestler laughed as he shouted out his challenge to a young boy. *Nuhl̓x* went over and they locked their middle fingers and *Nuhl̓x* was thrown off the cliff. The finger wrestler looked down on the green mucus on

his finger. He flung it off onto the rocks below. *Maswgwa lo'op* ran to the challenge. He called on his power. *Maswgwa lo'op* locked fingers and the wrestler fell to his death in the river crushed by a huge boulder that was *Maswgwa lo'op's* power. This was *Maswgwa lo'op's* victory.

Kolim lo'op had pulled the feather from *Nuhl̄x's* headband before *Nuhl̄x* could get into trouble. She picked up the little red rock that was *Maswgwa lo'op* and placed it beside the green mass that was *Nuhl̄x* and danced, circling around the two brothers four times. *Nuhl̄x* and *Maswgwa lo'op* sat up and yawned. The spirit helper had instructed them to burn the house to sacrifice the challenge they defeated. The youngsters cremated the finger wrestler.

5.3 Church And Government

"Di lo di slay, di nism ant masin hlgu t'iihlxw. Ho heh ho heh" sang the owl as she entered the village to take a child into the night (see Chapter 4). No song was sung for the children who were taken away to Residential Schools. The outsiders came with their new ways and new systems to change the First Nations people. According to Perley (1993) colonialism set out to undermine the foundation of the First Nations people. King (1988), Cummins (1985), and Chrisjohn, Young & Maraun (1997) agreed that the greatest outrage of this process was the Residential School concept. To force assimilation they attacked the most vulnerable component of the First Nations society - they took their children.

Sutherland (1996) states that the responsibility of First Nations education was delegated to the Churches by the Federal Government. As a result of being educated by

the various churches the students would emerge with a new language, a new life style and a new value system. It was a deliberate process of assimilation. The discourse of the federally sponsored education process was foreign to everything First Nations students had learned prior to entering an educational institution. According to Cummins (1985), the intention of the missionary schools was to remove the First Nations' children from their traditional environment so that they could stop being "savages." The churches established schools in an attempt to "civilize" and "assimilate" the First Nations people into the dominant Canadian society. In the 1830s the Minister of Education for Upper Canada was the well-known educationalist, Edgerton Ryerson. He had a great influence on the Church schools and Ryerson's philosophy was that education should be industrial-agricultural where most of the children's time was spent in labor and only two to four hours a day to study (Sutherland, 1996).

According to Yuzdepski (1983) the government left the education of First Nations people to religious groups who were willing to accept that responsibility. The government in part assisted financially. There was no evidence that the Canadian Government understood the needs and wishes of the First Nations people or were they prepared to respond to them.

5.4 Levels Of Awareness

Despite current research that documents the influence of residential school on First Nations history and culture, it is obvious people are not reading or heeding it. Much work (e.g., Haig-Brown, 1988; Hodgson, 1990; Ing, 1990; Jaine, 1992; Nuu-chah-Nulth Tribal Council, 1996) has been done on this topic. The awareness level of graduate

students and teachers in this province remains minimal. I was amazed to learn this when I attended the University of British Columbia in 2001 to do my course work. It is my intent that this thesis will be made available to non-First Nations teachers who work with First Nations children so they can attempt to understand the educational background of the parents and grandparents of First Nations students in their classes. The failures of the residential school system and the tremendous losses suffered by those who attended and how the effects are still felt today should be understood by all those who teach first Nations students (see Appendix F).

Education was inferior for those who attended Residential Schools. In addition, none of the Residential Schools nourished spiritual development. (*Hanamuxw*, *Gitxsan* Advisor, Elder and chief, personal communication 2004).

Any studies done on the *Gitxsan*/First Nations people must include the devastation caused by residential schools. Smith Mowatt (1999) learned from the Elders who attended residential schools in the early years that children were removed as a part of a systematic program on behalf of the federal government to destroy the culture and assimilate First Nations people into mainstream society. In the later years children were removed for sociological reasons. Their parents, who had been through the residential system, were having difficulty coping with the loss of language and culture and lack of traditional modeling of parenting skills. It was fortunate that I remained at home under the guidance of wonderful parents and grandparents. I will present my experience with a traditional (informal) *Gitxsan* education for comparison with those who were taken from their homes (for a formal education) and moved far away from the village to attend a residential school. Many non-*Gitxsan* are involved in the education of *Gitxsan* children and thus need to understand the history in order to best meet the educational needs of

their students who are suffering inter-generational effects of the residential school system, even though they did not attend. This study using my experiences shows how important it is to include the culture of the *Gitksan* students in the existing curriculum.

This chapter will show the Residential school experience of First Nations people and one of those who remained in her home village and received, in this case, a *Gitksan* education. In particular, I will focus on the differences in cultural knowledge, skills and attitudes between those who went away and me, one of those who stayed home. My life was different because I remained at home.

5.5 Significance Of The Literature

The literature on the effects of the residential school system is vast (e.g., Haig-Brown, 1988; Hodgson, 1990; Ing, 1990; Jaine, 1992; Nuu-chah-Nulth Tribal Council, 1996) and articulates the losses of language, culture and identity. Residential schools had devastating effects on Canada's First Nations.

Jaine (1993) discusses the devastating effects the residential schools had on Canada's First Nations people. Numerous losses of culture, traditions, language and identity have been documented, and the effects are still being felt today. The First Nations students attending residential school did not have the opportunity to sit with an Elder and listen to the stories so that there would be no questions in their minds as to who they were and where they belonged. Loss of family ties, childhood, innocence and support systems resulted in an alienation from the extended family. Loss of identity, individuality and positive self-image created a feeling of unworthiness. Loss of role

models gave the students no examples of goal setting. Loss of social skills and morals led to a high rate of self-destructive behaviors.

The literature reveals the harsh treatment and the losses suffered by the First Nations children who attended Residential Schools. According to Cummins (1985), King (1988), Moran (1988), Perley (1993), and Chrisjohn, Young & Maraun (1997), their only referent on how to live and have relationships came in the form of institutional rules and school staff and clergy. King stated, "They were treated like stock animals, they were fed, clothed, sheltered. They were trained to respond to whistles and bells, like any well trained animals." The children were treated as second-class citizens and were taught to farm and sew, and many did not receive a basic education. Clothing, food and living conditions were often sub-standard and screening of school staff was minimal, leaving the children vulnerable to many kinds of abuse and neglect. The experience has impaired their sense of self-respect, self-esteem, and self-confidence. In addition, it shows how these past travesties have continued to have a negative impact on future generations. In the eyes of the dominant society, First Nations people were not meant to be high achievers. The First Nations people were looked on as a pool of cheap labor. Menial tasks were the best they could hope for within the dominant society.

The residential schools produced many losses and failures because of the loss of the language and culture. The residential schools did not serve any useful purpose. King (1988) concluded that the residential school failed to assimilate First Nations people. While they failed to totally destroy the culture and the language of the First Nations people, but they often succeeded in destroying the self-esteem and self-confidence of the students who attended.

The devastation of residential schools goes far beyond the individual experiences of those who attended. Wilson and Napoleon (1994) found that today, while there are no residential schools in existence, so powerful was their mission that the ghosts still haunt those who attended, as well as those who did not and future generations. For many of the First Nations people, education and the experience of school is associated with a sense of loss. The time has come for First Nations People to speak out. I think it is unlikely that residential schools would happen again, but the goals and conditions of residential school remain prevalent in the current school system. For example, racism, curricular omissions and outright errors promote stereotypical views. First Nations People must make events of the Residential Schools and the "ghosts" a part of the historical records in their own voices.

It is important that *Gitxsan*/First Nations students, parents and grandparents engage in a dialogue with historical discourse concerning the effects of residential schools. This will enable them to understand why many of the *Gitxsan* students are having difficulties in the formal education system. It is important that the *Gitxsan* students become strong enough to control their own destinies so the Government polices will never again blatantly attempt to obliterate First Nations cultures. The literature reveals the urgency for developing effective First Nations cultural curricula to be used in the schools across the country and in the *Gitxsan* territories. The literature reveals the serious consequences that result when language and culture are not taught in the classroom.

Educators need to be aware of these losses and their impact on First Nations students because it affects their ability to cope with the current educational system and

take hold of the educational opportunities available. The devastation of residential schools exists in the classrooms of today.

4.6 Educators Need To Investigate

I am concerned that if I am not clear, my thesis might not be successful. It would be tempting to skip directly to the stories, but it is important for the readers of this study, to know where the stories came from. Teachers need to investigate how missionaries, churches, government agencies, and government policies came into conflict with the *Gitksan* who were forced to re-adjust to contrasting notions of existence and property. Teachers need to be convinced to take on this new learning and present them as a part of their consciousness to their students. In the past, we tended to blame ourselves for not making our demands heard. Teachers need to understand why the school is a difficult place for many of the *Gitksan* parents to enter. I want the knowledge about the devastating impact of Residential Schools to become an understanding for teachers and from this, the teachers will make changes to benefit their *Gitksan*/First Nations students.

Too often schools dedicate two weeks to multi-culturalism and feel that they have done justice to the *Gitksan* worldview and the awareness of “other” cultures. According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), the schools need to focus on the social/historical environment and find new ways to correct and incorporate the changes required. I want teachers to question the rationale of the existing curriculum and systematically implement a curriculum that has at its core a *Gitksan*/First Nations perspective across the curriculum.

4.7 Analysis Of The Legend: The Finger Wrestler

I did not realize at the time the great wealth of knowledge that was unfolding before me as I worked with my grandparents. The language, the customs, the traditions, the beliefs, the culture were all there in the stories. My experience has provided a direct source for this part.

My analysis will consist of examining the data from themes that relate to the academic significance of these experiences for the people involved and the greater education community. Throughout their history the *Gitxsan* have always had to battle with monsters, as in the story of *Nuhl̓x, His Three Brothers And Sister* (see Chapter 4). But none has been quite as devastating as the reality of Residential Schools.

In the story, *Nuhl̓x, His Three Brothers And Sister* decide they *must* clear the *Gitxsan* Territories of the monsters. *Nuhl̓x, His Three Brothers And Sister* knew they were loved by their mother. It had been their choice to go. In many cases with the Residential School, children were taken and parents felt powerless to exert any control.

Nuhl̓x, His Three Brothers And Sister were in tune with the rhythms of the land. Their earlier training with their mother and instructions from the spirit guide gave them confidence and security. They were alert and did not live in fear and hunger. Those who attended Residential Schools could not destroy their monsters. Their monsters stayed with them each day and remain with them today.

CHAPTER SIX: CURRICULUM CONFLICT

This chapter examines the role of education in the attempt to include *Gitxsan* Storytelling in the Public School curriculum. This chapter recognizes the importance of including the *Gitxsan* Elders in outlining the path the thesis *must* take. Much attention over the years has focused on the reasons for First Nations children under-achieving in the present school system (See, for example, Archibald, 1997 and Newbery, 1994)). Curriculum initiatives need to be encouraged so that schools offer an educational plan that *Gitxsan*/First Nations students find meaningful and effective in their lives.

This chapter will define the oral culture and the traditional learning of the *Gitxsan*/First Nations students and show how the imposition of European curriculum has changed the culture and curriculum of the *Gitxsan*/First Nations students.

6.1 The Man With *Haldowgit* Powers

(Excerpt from The Odyssey of *Nuhl̓x* his Three Brothers and Sister). The little group walked a great distance and they came to a spring and decided it would be a good place to stop. They built a fire because they had to blacken the stick like the *Naxnok* spirit had informed them. It was time to prepare the staff that they were to use when they killed the *haldowgit*. The Spirit had given them the cedar bark and *mas* (red ochre). The five youngsters took the blackened staff and wrapped the cedar bark around the end of it and painted the tips of the cedar red with the mus. Once they completed this they set off once again, ready to meet the *Haldowgit*. The young people waited until it was dark before they approached the shelter. They did not want the *Haldowgit* to see the *haldowgit* staff that they had made. The young people entered when the occupant of the shelter bid them enter. The *Haldowgit* was very happy to see the visitors. The host fed his guests, as this was the custom.

Nuhl̓x looked around and remained very quiet because there was nothing for him to discuss and ridicule. The host seemed like a fine gentleman with refined manners.

The host gathered mats and furs and gave them to his guests for their bedding. The host

went outside to relieve himself before going to his bed mat. *Nuhl̄x* quickly exchanged the host's *haldowgit* staff with the one they had made. *Nuhl̄x* and his family members pretended to be asleep with their loud snores and slow even breathing. The host was also pretending to be asleep. The five on their mats by the fire were keeping a close watch.

The host, finally sure the family was sleeping, went to the corner and picked up the staff. The host waved the fringes of cedar bark over the fire. *Nuhl̄x* was snoring loudly with his mouth wide open. The man waved the fringes of cedar bark over *Nuhl̄x*'s mouth. *Nuhl̄x* continued to snore loudly. The *Haldowgit* tried again and moved over to where *Masgwa-hlgu-lo'op* was sleeping. The man swayed the fringes tinted with *mas* over *Masgwa-hlgu-lo'op*'s mouth and *Masgwa-hlgu-lo'op* stirred and moved onto his side. The *Haldowgit* tried all the family members but he could not steal their breath.

Finally, he placed his staff in the corner and went to his bed mat on the floor on the far side of the shelter. The *Naxnok* spirit who had counseled the young people had told them that when the man was sleeping sparks came out of his nose. Then when he moved into a deeper sleep the sparks stopped.

Once again it was *Nuhl̄x* who took the real *haldowgit* staff and all the family members stood by as *Nuhl̄x* gently moved the fringes of cedar bark tinged with *mas* by the man's mouth and robbed him of his breath. The *haldowgit* was dead, killed by his evil staff. The group returned to their bed mats and slept soundly until early morning. The group took the food they would need for their evening meal and burned the house, the contents, and the *Haldowgit*. Most of the territories were now open to the *Gitxsan*. The mission that the little family had set out to accomplish was near completion.

6.2 Conflicting World Views

When people settle together in one place they develop ways of behaving that allow them to live as a group. As a part of that process they develop laws, customs, rituals, stories and celebrations. They develop ways of understanding the land and each other. *Gitksan*/First Nations history, told from the vantage points of the people who lived it, serves to expand a student's understanding of how any fact or event never stands in isolation, but is shaped by the times and people living through it. The formal education system of provincial schools in the *Gitksan* territories is dominated by the non-First Nations culture, even though non-First Nations do not form a majority of the population. This dominance includes curriculum, pedagogy, values, beliefs and socialization. There are four schools operated by the Coast Mountains School district located on the *Gitksan* territories. Today, there are 10,000 members of the *Gitksan* Nation; we make up 80% of the local population, yet the school system is designed to follow a curriculum that is intended for the provincial majority i.e. non-First Nations culture.

In today's world, *Gitksan*/First Nations students living in *Gitksan* territories are exposed to both *Gitksan* and mainstream cultural beliefs. The school environment should also reflect this shift. The challenge facing teachers is to begin to understand these two worldviews and the associated issues so they can then plan ways of dealing positively with their First Nations students. It is important that teachers bridge the curriculum from mainstream culture to First Nations culture. The majority of the students in the *Gitksan* territories are *Gitksan*. Eighty-five percent of the student population at the Hazelton Schools are *Gitksan*.

Unless major changes are made within the mandated curriculum at all levels of *Gitxsan* education, the *haldowgit* staff is still robbing the breath from the *Gitxsan* students' education. Our children will continue to be subject to failure syndrome that still exists in the classrooms (Atleo, 1993; Newbery, 1994). The underlying assumptions made by those presently responsible for providing formal education are seen to be not only educationally inappropriate, but probably contribute to the broader social and emotional disturbances characteristic of *Gitxsan* society today (Hoffman, 1999).

6.3 Oral Tradition

In the education of the *Gitxsan*, morals and values were transmitted through storytelling, history, legends and songs. These methods were the backbone of the traditional oral education. According to Sutherland (1996), colonialism arrived with many written educational resources that contained material that was irrelevant to First Nations children. First Nations learners were forbidden to speak their language or live their culture while in formal education programs such as residential schools.

Wilson (1996) also states that the *Gitxsan* have historically been an oral society and the *adaawk* and the *ant'imahlasxw* are an essential aspect of learning all life's lessons. He states that oral history is power. It does not require our recognizing it to give it power. *Gitxsan* art affirmed the visual voice of the culture. The art objects were the recordings of actual events created through the time and space of the *Gitxsan* society. In these art creations the *Gitxsan* narrated the past history, stories and songs.

Sterling (1997) states that knowledge can be passed from one generation to another in a number of ways. An oral tradition is the passing of knowledge orally from

one generation to the next. Until recently, the *Gitxsan* lived by knowledge that was passed to them through their oral tradition. The skills for survival such as hunting, making clothing, tools, medicinal and religious practices were taught by telling and showing one another how to do these things. Singing, telling stories, and plays are also ways of passing knowledge through the oral tradition.

While acknowledging that proficiency in written English could lead people to having more control over their lives, Erickson (1996) continues to support the continuance of the oral tradition. She suggests that the *Gitxsan* community should seek a term such as bi-cultural or *Gitxsan* immersion rather than literacy to describe the nature of their historically oral society.

More and more of the *Gitxsan* children's education come from schoolbooks, and popular culture, such as television, movies and videos rather than from Elders. Over time, and with the continuous adoption of a mainstream lifestyle less of their knowledge comes from the oral tradition of their own culture. Cultural knowledge can provide the children with a sense of identity. Knowing who you are can give you pride in your culture. Elders have information that is needed for survival in the 21st century and in the future. The knowledge is enclosed in the stories.

The paternal side of the family and every adult in the community were expected to help children learn different survival skills. This was so they could take care of this breath of life given to us from the Creator. It was important that children know the conservation and preservation laws. (*Hanamuxw*, *Gitxsan* Advisor, Elder and chief, personal communication 2000).

6.4 The Power Of Stories

The key elements of *Gitxsan* storytelling that emerge from the voices of the Elders, include the past and present definition and purpose of the story, the potential of storytelling, the power of storytelling, and the characteristics of *Gitxsan*/First Nations stories.

Within the *Gitxsan* community, storytelling is personal, interpretative and uniquely cultural. *Gitxsan* storytelling is by design a co-creative process. Since time immemorial the *Gitxsan* have told their stories. When the storyteller speaks, he or she is the vehicle for the voices of the *Gitxsan* ancestors. *Gitxsan* stories come from the Breath of our Grandfathers. The storyteller and listeners become a part of many storytellers past, present and future (Persky, 1998).

The *Gitxsan Wet'suwet'en* Education Society [GWES] Proposal (1990) maintains that the culture determines the *Gitxsan* way of constructing knowledge. It provides them with their history and identity, and forms the basis of their relationships with everyone and everything. Culture defines *Gitxsan* values, spirituality and worldview. It is generally understood that storytelling is a powerful medium for children's learning (Egan, 1986). There is good reason to believe that stories used in First Nations learning should come from their own First Nations heritage. In my personal and professional experience, I have become convinced that relevant stories can be used to enhance First Nations students' understanding of themselves and others. The underlying beliefs of First Nations students are directly related to how they conduct themselves. With the use of *Gitxsan* stories in the classroom, the education of the *Gitxsan* students would better represent the dual nature of their daily lives. *Gitxsan* children can be taught to apply the

lessons to their lives as they engage in both *Gitxsan* and mainstream society. The *Gitxsan* oral stories offer a rich resource for children's learning that can be incorporated into the *Gitxsan* students' school experience.

The potential value of storytelling in children's learning depends on the active role of the listener. Egan (1986) stresses that children are readily and powerfully engaged by stories and that stories stir their imaginations. Furthermore, Egan believes that imaginations are the most powerful and energetic tools for learning. Both telling a story and listening to a story encourages students to use their imagination. Developing the imagination can empower students to consider new innovative ideas. According to Egan, a well-developed imagination can contribute to self-confidence and motivate the students to envision themselves as competent and able to accomplish their hopes and dreams in this lifetime.

Therefore, I contend that using the stories and storytelling of the *Gitxsan* tradition can become a powerful means to overcome the legacy of the residential school system and instill the self-confidence and competence that will assist *Gitxsan* students in developing lives worth living in both *Gitxsan* and mainstream societies.

Storytelling has the potential to guide young *Gitxsan* students toward a constructive personal value system by presenting imaginative situations in which the outcomes of wise and unwise actions and decisions can be recognized. For instance, in the story *The Little Porcupine*, we see that Porcupine made unwise choices. He did not manage his anger and in the midst of trying to destroy the creek, he destroyed himself (see Chapter 4).

6.5 A Great Storyteller

Everyone loves a good story. Unlike linear facts, a good storyteller provides the images and the listener paints a picture in his/her mind and the story is never forgotten. The very best storytellers I know are *Gitxsan* Elders. Before she would begin the telling of a story my *Na'a* would always set the stage. *Nuhl̓x and His Three Brothers and Sister* lived in a village with their mother. They were the only ones there. Something mysterious had happened to the other people. While listening my imagination would quickly set the scene, the setting, and the weather. My emotions would come into play and even today, the story of *Nuhl̓x and His Three Brothers and Sister* always make me sad. Throughout the story *Na'a* would weave in customs, beliefs, traditions and humour. I learned that the *Gitxsan* never knocked on doors. I learned the secret of harvesting devil's club for medicinal use. She would stop telling and laugh through her fingers at *Nuhl̓x* and his antics. Then, with sadness, she would suggest that there would be conflict. The *Gitxsan* were whispering about the strange children without a father. Soon their journey of hardship would begin and my imagination ran ahead of the storyteller as I started to try and imagine how the characters would overcome the opposition and leave me with a happy ending.

The *Gitxsan* Territories were surrounded by monsters. How would *Nuhl̓x and His Three Brothers and Sister* face the challenges? Although, the story ends tragically, the *Gitxsan* have the monuments of the characters on *Sdikyoodenax*, today, to remind them of their young heroes, and their never-ending story. And they also made many triumphs of overcoming the monsters, which can be seen as symbolic challenges we all have to face.

6.6 Training New Storytellers

I have been teaching in the elementary school system for sixteen years. I have been teaching *Sim'algax* and storytelling to adults for twelve years. I have been training as a storyteller most of my life. My favorite place to take "future storytellers" is *Anlo*. We sit around a campfire drinking coffee. I use *Na'a*'s style of storytelling. I tell *Gitxsan* stories of conflict and then I share my own story about sorrows that I have faced and overcome. I ask my students to tell about the time when they had conflict in their lives that they have come through. The residential school experience often surfaces and with it the emotions surrounded by the ordeal. I then suggest that they use this passion and emotion when they tell *Gitxsan* stories.

Gitxsan stories are intended to model core values, to provide positive examples of people who are doing good things and also those who have done bad things with major consequences. In the story, *The Night of the Owl*, the parents neglected to comfort a child (see Chapter 4). I tell stories about animals so that they can be retold to children. I tell stories of how the *Gitxsan* had to learn hard lessons from their unkindness to animals. In the story, *The Revenge of the Mountain Goats*, the hunters mistreat the goats and forgot the *Gitxsan* laws (see Chapter 4).

From the beginning of time, humans of any age have known the magic of listening to a good story. Stories can educate and transport listeners to new realms. Stories are one of the most important ways in which children learn - and learn to care.

6.7 Advice To New Storytellers

According to the Elders, a good storyteller has to believe in the stories. The secret of believing in the stories is to take the story and apply it to your life. For example, with the story of *Reincarnation*, I remember the part, 'when faced with a mountain, stop and wait it out.' I have applied this to my life many times (see Chapter 4). From the stories of animals, the storyteller needs to have learned to treat all living things with respect. I established a connection with nature through meditation and in my dreams I learned that my spirit animal is the eagle. A good storyteller has to examine each story and list the lessons learned from the stories. A good storyteller has to make connections with the stories. For instance, in the story, *The Origin of the Gitksan*, the man crawls out from a bed of pine needles. When I tell this story, I suggest to my listeners to keep the pine needles in their thoughts (see Chapter 4). Then I tell the story, *Weget and the Ball of Light*, Weget changes himself into a pine needle that the princess swallows and Weget is born. The first *Gitksan* comes from the shelter of pine needles, Weget is a pine needle (see Chapter 4).

I also suggest that storytellers find a place to establish a spiritual connection. I go to *Anlo*, a place where I grew up, and there I reflect on the stories of my childhood and the voice of Na'a whispers in the breeze. As I sat out at *Anlo* one day, a piece of fluff from the fireweed floated in the gentle wind; this started the writing of the modern day legend, *The Young Egret* (see Chapter 4).

6.8 Interrupting The Story

The intervention of colonial discourse, practice and ultimately colonial legislation designed to destroy First Nations cultures led to massive disorientation, which created social, political and economic dysfunction (e.g., Hodgson, 1990; Ing, 1990; Jaine, 1992; Miller, 1996). First Nations people today may have recovered somewhat and now understand the contemporary world, but many are still in the process of learning how to meet the ordinary requirements of today's schools (Haig-Brown, 1988). Educators need to understand and create an environment that is as effective as the traditional education system was for the traditional First Nations students.

Atleo (1993) stresses that traditional First Nations people understood their world and were appropriately oriented to it. Motivation, effort, persistence, guidance, and encouragement were not a problem since prestige, acceptance, and survival depended upon a satisfactory level of performance.

Gitxsan hunters, fishermen and healers have a sense of knowing. The hunter has a sense of the forest and knows if there is an animal nearby. The fisherman stands on the banks of the 'Xsan and knows whether or not he/she will catch any fish. The healer enters the room and knows who is in need of healing. This knowledge comes from their close relationship to the land and the Creator. The *Gitxsan*/First Nations people knew how to function effectively within their world.

6.9 Storytelling And Residential Schools

Sutherland (1996) provides historical research from *Ansbahtaxw*, a *Gitksan* village, of how education for First Nations people has gone from Church control to The Department of Indian Affairs control to local control. It was found that there were many similarities during the Church and Department of Indian Affairs periods of control. She discovered that the curriculum during the period of the Church and Department of Indian Affairs control was not at all sensitive to the cultural needs of the students. For example, under both systems, the First Nations children were punished if they spoke their language, told their stories or played their traditional games. Smith Mowatt (1999) maintained that if the oral stories of the *Gitksan* can survive all the betrayal that the culture has endured, then the stories must have power.

For many *Gitksan* who attended residential schools, the lost stories produced generations with a sense of a loss of identity. *Wilp Si'satxw* Community Healing Centre (2001) lists 184 known students attending one of the following residential schools: Edmonton, Port Alberni, Lytton, Coqualeetza and Lejac. This covered a time period from the early 1920s to the 1970s. The effects on those 184 students and their families are far-reaching. The effects on the future generation is devastating; who will teach the language and who will tell the stories? The Elders believe that *Gitksan* storytelling passes on the essence of who the *Gitksan* are as human beings.

Elders are the libraries...their knowledge, their skills, attitudes and their experiences constitute the record of knowledge and the wisdom of the people. Their memories serve as collective knowledge and wisdom. Education is the process of communicating this knowledge and wisdom through oral language, actions and behaviors (Ing, 1990, p. 33).

6.10 The Story Of First Nations Control

In the 1960s the First Nations leaders began to voice their concerns about the unsatisfactory education made available to their people. This resulted in the federal Government's Standing Committee on Indian Affairs' decision to conduct a study and prepare a report that would cover all areas of First Nations policy, including education. According to Young-Ing, 1988, the policy proposed that the "special status" of Indian people within Canada be ended and that Indians have no rights beyond those of other Canadians. The paper became known to the First Nations people as the "White Paper," since assimilation of First Nations people was the underlying goal of this policy.

In its emphasis on achieving contemporary equality for the Indian, the white paper paid scant attention to the liabilities that had been accumulating for Indians from the inequalities of the past (Ponting 1989, p. 33).

The First Nations people heralded a shift from being passive recipients of an imposed educational system to a proactive approach (Ward, 1986). First Nations leaders began to voice their concerns about the unsatisfactory education made available to their people. The National Indian Brotherhood developed the policy *Indian Control of Indian Education*, that was nicknamed the "Red Paper." The Canadian Government's official position on First Nations' education was then to remain unclarified until 1973, when the Department of Indian Affairs "accepted in principle" the National Indian Brotherhood's policy paper (Young-Ing, 1988, p.32).

This position paper set the stage for band controlled schools (Kirkness, 1992). This was the beginning step for a complete reorganization of all the Canadian schools involved in First Nations education. Ward (1986) also determined that it was clear that the federal government was finally accepting responsibility for the appropriate

educational needs of First Nations children in Canada. The federal government began acknowledging the importance of curriculum, parental involvement, cultural relevance, administration and the quality of instruction. The federal government began to make major policy changes regarding First Nations education that agreed with the terms set out by the National Indian Brotherhood's (1972) position paper. It was the dawn of a new discourse of First Nations education in Canada, where the federal government would relinquish its control and allow First Nations people to take control of their own education system.

According to Atleo (1993) in a study done for the Native Brotherhood and Native Sisterhood of British Columbia, more than eighty percent of First Nations students in Grades 4 to 12 have healthy self-images when compared to First Nations students in the 1950s. He suggested that the current state of First Nations education in British Columbia has shown improvement compared to the failures of the past, but the academic performance of First Nations students still lags considerably behind students from the larger society. Atleo (1993) concludes that where colonial discourses produced failures, the inclusions of First Nations discourse has the potential to produce successes. The former discourse created dependents, while the latter discourse promises to create a people who can contribute both to mainstream society and *Gitksan* societies.

6.11 Storytelling And Literacy

The position developed by Hoffman (1999) is that literacy programs should be developed, delivered, implemented and evaluated within the *Gitksan* communities. The programs should communicate *Gitksan* reflections and realities. Literacy programs

should recognize that there are other valid means of communication, in addition to reading and writing.

Erickson (1996) found that the *Gitksan* come from a culture that has a rich tradition of orality. Many of the Chiefs and Elders are great orators. The spoken word, in their own language, is their most valued way to communicate. In the feast hall the *Gitksan* still pass on the history and knowledge of their families through the spoken word. For the *Gitksan* youth to lose this part of their culture would be to lose a way of life.

Literacy is a word that tends to describe shortcomings rather than true abilities and knowledge. Rather than evaluate *Gitksan* literacy based on the current definition of the Western education system, the meaning of literacy must capture the theme of the body of knowledge in the community and acknowledge the wisdom of the *Gitksan*. *Hanamuxw* (2004) states that the Western definition of literacy that takes us away from our cultural knowledge is a translation problem. Many of the *Sim'algaḡ* words do not have a counterpart in English. In some cases there is a loss of the literal meaning or the meaning is distorted. The grammar rules for *Sim'algaḡ* are more complicated than English that also makes accurate translations difficult.

According to Erickson (1996), literacy may be viewed as a means of measuring an individual's ability to communicate. Within the First Nations society, communications have been based on an oral tradition. In addition, she stated that orality provides the foundation for literacy. This means that by listening and talking to one another we learn the rules of the language, which in turn connects us with one another. When people write they need to be able to connect with the audience, or risk not being

able to pass on their ideas. She believes that the human voice and speech are as important to gaining literacy as knowing the alphabet, letter sounds, and sentences. The key to literacy is in speech.

Noll (1998) observed that “conceptual shifts” have to be made to adopt reading and writing with First Nations groups. The adoption of reading and writing as a primary means of communication involves transition. The transition to adopt a new language includes accommodating changes in the ways of learning and thinking patterns. It involves moving from oral delivery to printed versions. He found that the schools tend to disregard the experiences, language and cultural understandings of First Nations people. This is not surprising since early Indian schools were established to suppress First Nations languages. Wilson (1996) confirmed this fact by recounting his own experience of being punished for speaking *Sim'algax*.

Erickson (1996) states that English communications skills, however gradually acquired, move First Nations people further away from a culture rich in tradition and stories. I see this as a high price to pay for literacy; we can, however, choose to define literacy on our own terms. My argument is not with reading and writing; it is with the content. I want the *Gitxsan* students to be competent in the oral culture by listening to stories and telling stories, as in the teaching of the past. The students are learning words that appear on paper that do not reflect their daily lives. *Gitxsan* stories are embedded in the culture. Literacy should bridge this gap for the *Gitxsan* students and incorporate *Gitxsan* stories in text and in this way the students can connect with the written word. By using *Gitxsan* artifacts, paintings and other artworks, a teacher can reach students who may not respond to conventional academic methods. Art can be used as a way of

teaching about cultural identity, historical inaccuracies and current social issues. The artist always produces his artwork in a social context. Literacy would be re-defined and the issues of literacy would not be foreign to the *Gitksan* students. The students would be bi-cultural and bi-lingual.

I maintain that stories that teach values to *Gitksan*/First Nations students in the cultural practices of that nation can be used in the classroom to draw *Gitksan*/First Nations children closer to a way of life that promotes the development of human potential. From this point the students, equipped with the knowledge of whom they are, can reach beyond their cultural development and connect to other cultures and other lands. In *The First Salmon Celebration*, the *One Who Returned* came back with the knowledge of the salmon traditions and shared it with everyone (see Chapter 4).

Jobe (1993) cautions against literature that is not authentic to the culture, whether it is First Nations or any other culture in the world. The literature should record a culture's achievements of the past and provide the tools for achieving its aspirations for the future. He states that on the other hand, for outsiders, First Nations stories provide a new experience in reading because new points of view are expressed based on first hand experiences. First Nations literature offers new myths, new metaphors, and new language to the existing worldview. The First Nations literature can inspire the readers as well as alter their perspectives about First Nations people.

Olson (1994) discusses the low levels of English literacy among the First Nations children across Canada. He says that they are often two to four grades behind in their tested levels of reading. In addition, almost one half of the First Nations children drop

out of school at grade nine. He states that primary factors that contribute to this rate of failure are language, script, culture and pedagogy.

It is assumed that First Nations peoples lack a writing system. The new view according to Olson (1994) is that writing is not adequately thought of as the transcription of speech but rather as a means of preserving and communicating information. Olson says that much of the First Nations art and graphic representations communicate the same as writing. Olson feels that it is possible that we have defined literacy too narrowly. Perhaps the First Nations have been literate all along.

Gitksan knowledge is generally transmitted orally and experientially, but not through writing. It is learned through hands-on experience and not taught in abstractions. Instead of relying on epistemology based on explicit hypotheses, theories and laws, it relies on spiritual attained, and collective knowledge. *Gitksan* knowledge tries to understand systems as a whole and tries not to isolate the interacting parts.

Foreign literature has continued to play a dominant role in the education system of all First Nations students. As a consequence, school courses often seem irrelevant to First Nations learners. Many never complete high school and contribute in high numbers to the failure syndrome so common with First Nations students. Only recently, with acknowledgment of First Nations control of First Nations education, have we begun to motivate First Nations learners with resources which they can relate to because they are based on their cultural heritage (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1999).

6.12 Traditional Education

In the language of the *Gitksan*, morals and values were transmitted through storytelling, history and songs. These methods were and still are the backbone of the oral tradition. Wilson (1996) affirmed that the *Gitksan* lived by seven values, which are honesty, humility, respect, trust, honor, sharing and humor (see Figure 5).

Hanamuxw (2004) makes the distinction between scientific knowledge (dominant), lifeworld ways of knowing (what the *Gitksan* learn by experiencing everyday life) and narrative way of know (learning from stories). The *Gitksan* have their way of creating meaning. Over many generations the *Gitksan* have developed a holistic traditional knowledge of their lands. The *Gitksan* have developed a legitimate and practical way of transmitting information to the learners. This knowledge has been recorded within our oral traditions and not in text. The arrival of the onslaught of new conveniences interfered with the balance of the survival of the culture. For example, there is harmony in hunting and fishing, both which require knowledge and skill. There is a release of energy from which we are rewarded with meat and fish and there is a sense of accomplishment. The oral tradition must be viewed by educators of *Gitksan*/First Nations children as a distinctive intellectual tradition; not simply as myths and legends and addressed in a week of multi-cultural days set aside in the school year. Too often, attempts to contrast traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge creates a sense with *Gitksan* students that their way of knowing is not legitimate.

In the past, formal type of instruction would take place in the evenings among the young people and their house chief. The house chief explained to the house members where the territories for their house group began and ended. A house member, usually

the uncle, would show them where they could fish, hunt, trap and pick berries. The learners were counseled to respect the wisdom of the Elders.

Throughout the traditional First Nations education we see the integrated curriculum that was relevant and very important for the youth to internalize and exhibit. According to Cassidy (1984) traditional education is an integrated view that emphasizes the unity of life, a holistic conception of human beings, their relationship to each other and their natural world. Bopp (1986) affirmed that education was a part of everyday life and incorporated into every action that was taken. This contrasts dramatically with the typical school-based learning which compartmentalizes learning into subjects and the connections are not made.

6.13 Historical Background

Oral literature is a continual aspect of all First Nations peoples' lives. Stories, rituals, drama, chants, songs and anecdotes are all considered as forms of oral literature. In print First Nations oral literature often appears sparse to the reader. For example, in the story, *The Young Chief*, the complex process of becoming a chief is not explained. First Nations literature is brought to life and the gaps filled in by the First Nations audience together with their shared knowledge of the traditions and cultures (Archibald, 1997; Sterling, 1997).

Stories that teach values to First Nations students in culturally appropriate ways can be used in the classroom to draw First Nations children closer to a way of life that promotes the development of human potential. From this point the students, equipped

with the knowledge of whom they are, can reach beyond their cultural development and connect to other cultures and other lands.

The enduring and dynamic character of the First Nations literature is often misunderstood because they did not have a written language. However, First Nations literature is transmitted from generation to generation through storytelling, rituals and ceremonies. Another misinterpretation is the notion that First Nation stories are fictional and not worthy of being assigned educational value. The First Nations literature is actually historical because it reflects the traditional values of the past in order to make sense of the present and future (Archibald, 1997; Sterling, 1997).

First Nations literature tells the First Nations peoples where they come from and establishes their relationship to the physical and spiritual worlds. Champagne (1994) implies that a particular difference from foreign literature is that First Nations literature expresses a feeling for the land. There is a need for dependence on the community and each other. There is a feeling for ritual and ceremony as an integral part of life.

6.14 Historical Contemporary Background

Historically, school textbooks contain very little authentic material and are not at all culturally sensitive, yet students of all cultural backgrounds are required to take History or Social Studies courses that use such texts. Kirkness (1977) states that traditional history has been taught using ideas that do not contain First Nations context, thus they actually have a negative effect on the self-image of First Nations students. She believes that we must counteract everything that is damaging to our educational system.

The textbooks invert the terms, picturing white aggressors as settlers and often showing First Nations people who lived on the land as aggressors. Few texts used in schools actually make reference to life skills that the settlers learned from First Nations people. Kirkness points out the inequalities published about First Nations peoples. She found in a study of six ethnic groups, First Nations people were the least favored by the researchers. They were portrayed as primitive, unskilled, aggressive and hostile compared to the hardworking immigrants. All these stereotypes take a toll on First Nations learners. Kirkness maintains that a textbook has no right to be wrong, or insult or malign a whole race of people.

Textbooks commonly used in classrooms throughout Canada have been criticized for not only being inappropriate, but also as contributing to the broader social and emotional disturbances characterized by many First Nations students. New textbooks need to be created that contain more accurate historical accounts and a connection with current-day issues. Today, as we begin the 21st century the *Gitksan* still do not have a textbook that accurately portrays their history, language and culture.

Francis (1995) examines the image of the "Indian in Canadian Culture." He covers all the areas where the imaginary Indian has been, and continues to be. Examples of what the non-First Nations culture has wanted to believe about First Nations people are used to demonstrate the myths about Indian people. First there were the photographs and paintings of First Nations people, where models always had the same expression on their face. Many artists become quite famous by picking such "stony" subjects. Francis goes on to explore the different images of First Nations people in Canada and says that the Imaginary Indian is ever with us, oscillating throughout our history from friend to foe,

from Noble Savage to blood-thirsty warrior, from debased alcoholic to wise Elder, from monosyllabic “squaw” to eloquent princess, from enemy of progress to protector of the environment.

All these different stereotypes take a toll on First Nations learners, who become confused about their self-image and try to become something imaginary. Francis (1995) quotes a good example of the confusion as illustrated by Randy Fred who writes, “We saw the same movies in that school that white kids did: westerns; and, like them, we cheered on the cowboys or the cavalry. We played Cowboys and Indians--and we all wanted to be cowboys” (p 11).

Francis (1995) also deals with the problem of literature used in schools that contains images of the Indian created by various non-First Nations writers and educators. In addition, there are materials that are passed off as being authentic, such as storybooks and curriculum material that were actually written by non-First Nations individuals and contain inaccurate information. Francis strongly feels that Canadians need to do away with the “imaginary Indian” and need to understand the reality of First Nations people. This reality needs to then be put into writing and incorporated into school curriculum so that both First Nations and non-First Nations learners can better understand First Nations culture instead of being unsure of whom the *Gitxsan* are and what they represent in the world.

6.15 Authentic Curriculum

The education of the public schools in the territories is not authentic. *Gitxsan* have not been involved with the development of the curriculum. The content of the

public school curriculum is lacking in any reference to the *Gitksan*. Therefore, it is fair to say that education in our area is not culturally sensitive. The needs of the *Gitksan* students are not being met. *Gitksan* role models are not included in the curriculum materials nor are *Gitksan* views expressed or contrasted with the views of the larger Canadian society. *Gitksan* Elders and important political figures are not represented in texts nor are they invited to present history from their perspective to challenge the minds of the students. The Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that *Gitksan* oral history is credible evidence (Persky, 1998). There is no reason to delay developing curriculum materials and teaching resources that are appropriate for *Gitksan* students.

Any course offering information on *Gitksan* culture *must* be firmly rooted in an understanding of the philosophy and values that created and maintained their society. The education for *Gitksan* should be designed with input from *Gitksan* teachers, Elders and leaders. The curriculum must take into account the importance of spirituality that encompasses all the beliefs of the *Gitksan*. Today, as well as in the past, the absence of the *Gitksan* perspective in the curriculum explains why the education system continues to be perceived as irrelevant to most *Gitksan* students.

6.16 Culture And Education

Dawson (1988) believes that it is important for First Nations students to receive instruction through First Nations stories in order to enhance their self-images and acquire accurate knowledge about themselves. He summarizes the feelings of many First Nations parents: "If our children are proud, if our children have identity, if our children know who they are they will be able to encounter anything in life" (p. 22).

If we believe this then we need to provide children with real information about of what there is to be proud. They need to be proud of their language and culture. I believe that *Gitxsan* stories are unique and fascinating. They can be empowering to a *Gitxsan* child. Storytelling plays an important part in restoring and preserving the culture. Certainly, this has been my experience as I grew up in a tightly-knit *Gitxsan* family and community where storytelling was a well established tradition. Literature is considered to be an effective vehicle for the transmission and understanding of culture (Bopp, 1986; McCabe, 1995). Unless the school values the culture of the child, the child fails to see the importance of education (Newbery, 1994). I want to include *Gitxsan* stories in the curriculum of schools in the *Gitxsan* territories and the education of the *Gitxsan* students would be balanced and enriched.

I agree with Dawson (1988) that the central goal of schools with First Nations students should be to develop a bicultural identity so that the students may function successfully in both First Nations and non-First Nations societies. For the non-First Nations students, the benefits include a deeper cultural understanding of the First Nations culture. In addition, they learn open-mindedness that they can apply to many other cultures. All children can be taught to apply the lessons to their lives.

6.17 Failure Syndrome

School failure, according to Olson (1994), lies also in the contrasts of the First Nations and Western cultures. Western culture focuses on the analytical, scientific knowledge and in First Nations communities the parents and Elders focus on the integration of knowledge as they teach young children by sharing experiences with them.

Educators who acknowledge these differences can search for ways to help. He states that First Nations students should not be expected to assimilate and the relationship of culture and pedagogy should be reciprocal.

Lack of authentic materials in the classrooms in the *Gitksan* Territories and for all First Nations people contribute to the failure syndrome so often associated with First Nations students. McCabe (1995) explains that it is important for educators to be aware that all students come to school with their culture, their values and especially their own stories. Children comprehend and remember stories that conform to the structure of the stories they have heard at home. However, in most cases - historically and continuing today - non-First Nations stories play the most significant role in the education program of all First Nations students.

Many First Nations students' experiences are considerably mismatched with those portrayed in most stories used in the school curricula. There is conflict between their stories and the ones they encounter in school. As a consequence, school courses often seem irrelevant to many First Nations learners. *The Night of the Owl* is a highly spiritual story that takes place on the *Gitksan* territories. The students can relate to the characters and the lessons to be learned. They have heard the story at home (see Chapter 4).

McCabe (1995) believes that irrelevant curricula have contributed in high numbers to the failure syndrome so common with First Nations. Lack of enriching, accurate information about First Nations people and cultures are in part to blame for our having the highest depression and suicide rates in the country (Hodgson, 1991). Leading up to this fact are the high rates of school dropout, high unemployment, welfare dependency, substance abuse, and high rates of poverty.

Champagne (1994) believes that Native American children who have been deprived of the opportunity to develop a strong cultural base through the transmission of their culture from the previous generation do not possess the same capacity to learn and adapt to school programs, which do not support the transmission of culture. As well he claims that such children cannot develop the cognitive functions required for success in the formal learning situation and this contributes to the failure syndrome so common for First Nations children in school. He advocates developing children's capacity to function effectively in their own cultural situation. To this end he recommends a direct involvement of parents, grandparents, paternal side of the family and community in the delivery of cultural information.

I believe that this can be supplemented by the school if culturally appropriate curriculum materials were available and if teachers were encouraged to develop competence in the storytelling pedagogical process. I also believe that children who have a strong cultural base will be better prepared to function effectively in other cultural situations.

6.18 Changes Required

There are differences between curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived. I think sometimes the curriculum as planned becomes a straight-jacket (Smith, 1996).

Curriculum as planned (i.e., the Ministry mandated curriculum) becomes a straight jacket as relevant *Gitxsan* materials are not identified. Parents are kept in straightjackets as they are shut out of the planning of the school programs. There is a need for parental involvement to voice the need for *Gitxsan* Storytelling as part of the Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Career and Personal Planning programs.

Long range goals that meet the needs and aspirations of the parents and the local community need to be evaluated and implemented at the local level.

Despite the fact that there have been calls for more appropriate curriculum materials by *Gitxsan* and non-*Gitxsan* teachers, there are few examples of any serious attempts to rectify the situation. The *Gitxsan* Territories, however, are rich with history and culture and this should be evident in our schools. According to Beck, Walters and Franciso (1995), the story is an intrinsic and basic form of communication. McCabe (1995) explains that stories are the primary means by which children make sense of their experiences.

More than with any other form of communication, the telling of stories is an essential part of the human experience. Stories are the prime vehicle for assessing and interpreting events and experience. The Elders stress the importance of *Gitxsan* children learning from their own culture. According to *Hanamuxw*, it is the responsibility of the *Wilxsilaks* (Father Clan) to be the "professors." They are hired for life, their contract does not expire. It is said of the *Wilxsilaks* that they provide the cradle upon birth and the casket upon death. *Gitxsan* teachings expect those with a set of skills to share their knowledge with the people around them. This is why the Creator has given these skills. *Gitxsan* knowledge is meant to be shared.

Gitxsan suffer from being misperceived because of the inadequate portrayal of their contributions to history in the school's curriculum. This injures the child as this does not contribute to a strong self-image and contributes to non-*Gitxsan*/First Nations students sometimes having a negative perception of *Gitxsan* culture. Archibald, Friesen and Smith (1993) affirm that Aboriginal heroes are everywhere. Thinking about heroes

invokes special images because everyone has someone who exemplifies courage, strength or other powerful characteristics. Children need heroes for their personal striving for excellence. They need to know that not only do the fine attributes exist in heroes, but also that these qualities lie within everyone. In the story, *The Odyssey of Nuhlx, His Three Brothers and Sister*, students hear about the young people who went to conquer the monsters that surrounded the *Gitxsan* Territories (see Chapter 4). Here storytelling becomes pedagogy and the story teaches about heroism and the children can access the hero within themselves.

Newbery (1994) concluded that a school curriculum that does not include First Nations history contributes to the alienation of students. Schools that do not integrate First Nations culture and history into their curriculum send out the message that first Nations history and culture are not very important and has not made a contribution to the development of the country.

First Nations literature offers an alternate way of thinking and can add new dimensions to existing thought patterns. It often confronts the reader with history that is stark and unredeemable because the treatment of First Nations people was insensitive.

Educators in *Gitxsan*/First Nations territories need to be aware of the conflict their curriculum models bring to the *Gitxsan*/First Nations children. The values of First Nations students do not match the values of the public school model. The educators need to understand that the assimilation model is no longer appropriate. They need to understand the concept of bi-cultural education. All too often the First Nations children are expected to replace their values with those of the mainstream curriculum in order to be successful in school.

In addition, the First Nations learning styles were not taken into account when delivering the curriculum content to students. First Nations students need to have oral, visual, holistic, experimental, hands-on kinds of learning activities.

Garnett (1988) believes in a curriculum that encourages student ownership, discovery learning and creative approaches. First Nations students need to be challenged in the higher - order cognitive abilities (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) in order to provide opportunities for imagination, creativity and social interaction, and to require students to take responsibility for their own learning.

According to Archibald (1997) the creation of a successful curriculum needs to involve a team. The approach has to be based on the collective beliefs of the local community, leaders and educators. She offers suggestions and a model to be used in the development of curriculum for First Nations children that can be adapted for the *Gitxsan* children.

6.19 Creating Opportunities For Community Involvement

For many years First Nations leaders have been actively seeking ways in which to make the education system of Canada relevant to the needs of the First Nations children. Documents produced by First Nations people indicate the importance of community involvement in the development of cultural programs. The National Indian Brotherhood (1972) states that the First Nations people are the best judges of the type of education to be delivered to First Nations children. In order to provide quality education on the *Gitxsan* Territories there must be involvement with the Chiefs and Elders. It is only through this connection that strength will be found.

The *Gitxsan Wet'suwit'en* Education Society (1990) provides supporting evidence that the *Gitxsan* place great importance on the local control of education. *Gitxsan* regard community involvement as an essential component of any education program. According to GWES, the connections among language, culture and identity are required for academic success with First Nations students. An education system that does not positively reflect the culture of its students in effect denies the core of their being. It was declared by a *Gitxsan* Elder that if we allow the language and culture to die, we, as a people die along with it; the language and culture defines who we are. (*Baaskyaalaxha*, *Gitxsan* Elder and chief, personal communication 2000).

6.20 Cultural Framing

According to Archibald, Friesen and Smith (1993), the significance of a culture can best be understood in terms of the cultural practice from which it springs. Non-First Nations writers produce fine literature, but it is not from the First Nations peoples' point of view. The stories told by First Nations people reveal the depth and status of the culture. The First Nations values, beliefs, customs and traditions are recorded in First Nations thought patterns. First Nations peoples since time immemorial have had many experiences out of which may emerge guides for behavior. The stories about these experiences tend to give direction to the lives of children.

The British Columbia Ministry of Education (1999) encourages teachers to find resources that are most relevant to and useful for their students, and to supplement these with locally approved materials and resources to meet specific local needs. They support and encourage learners to understand and respect cultural, racial and linguistic diversity.

As well the Ministry of Education suggests that classroom activities should also help students link classroom learning with the language and cultures in their homes.

The literature as well as the students reveal urgency for developing effective *Gitxsan*/First Nations cultural curricula to be used in the schools across the country and in the *Gitxsan* territories. There is also evidence of a lack of action being taken by any of the funding sources. The literature review indicates the need for parental and community involvement, but again there is no evidence in the literature that this is taking place in the *Gitxsan* Territories. Like *Nuhl̓x* and his brothers and sister, we have the materials, the information and the instructions on how to create the *haldowgit* staff. We now need the opportunity to take the breath of the dominant culture and reconstruct the curriculum for *Gitxsan* children, adding the breath of the *Gitxsan* tradition.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FOCUS ON CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Freire (1981) states, "the basic function of education is to help the learner to name his/her world" (p.13). This defines the problems of most teachers and the *Gitxsan*/First Nations students. The culture of the student is not in the consciousness of most teachers and as a result the *Gitxsan*/First Nations student does not learn to name his/her world in the school.

Culture refers to the language and patterns of perception, thought and knowledge on the minds of living people that provide them with motivation or directions for behavior. This chapter will provide the teacher with information to increase his/her awareness of the culture and summarize it into curriculum for the classroom. The best learning for the teacher would be to attend a *Li'ligit* and watch the *Breath of our Grandfathers* in action.

7.1 Potlatch (*Li'ligit*)

Li'ligit means to call a gathering where repayments are made. Repayments are made for previous loans received from the Father or Grandfather clans. Payments are made to individuals from other clans who have performed tasks for the host clan and for baptisms for members of the *Wilp*. In the past the biggest *Li'ligit* was known as the *Yukw*. Our Grandfathers managed their world and confirmed their worldview through the *Li'ligit*. The *Li'ligit* was connected to marriages, divorces and deaths and all legal matters requiring witnesses. Without a written language, our Grandfathers could not draw up a legal document. They needed a *Li'ligit* in order to make a binding agreement and to validate the completion of each activity that has been carried out by the *Wilp*. All the leading chiefs were invited. The guests were well fed, given gifts and entertained. In addition, they were given surplus food to take home (*so'o*). The guests knew beforehand what business was to be discussed during the *Li'ligit*. At the conclusion of the *Li'ligit* the host and the guest chiefs made speeches and the final decisions were made clear to all. The guests were paid witnesses.

The Social Organization of the *Gitxsan* allowed for the combination of a clan system with a social class system. Within this system are *Gitxsan* House Groups, known as *Huwilp*. The *Li'ligit* is a system based on reciprocity. The *Gitxsan* believe that the *Li'ligit* is the law of their Grandfathers. These laws have been handed down through the ages and can be understood when the oral stories are taken into account. Although the *Miin Wilp* (House Chief) initiated the *Li'ligit*, it was only with the entire *Wilp* working together that it could be a success. The *Li'ligit* permitted the growth of an economy that was linked to social status, based on the concept of economic redistribution among clans. Although the *Li'ligit* is weaker today, it is still in existence. The rich environment of the *Gitxsan* Territories can be seen as being what permitted much of the development of their culture. The *Gitxsan* recognized their dependence on the environment and as such, many aspects of their lives and culture were tied to the environment. Ties to the land, as demonstrated in the stories, are central to the culture of the *Gitxsan*.

In my youth I thought that the laws of our Grandfathers were so difficult and I secretly wondered why they imposed such a hardship on us. Now whenever I attend a *Li'ligit* I am reassured that the laws are strong and solid so that we could become strong and help one another.

7.2 Damaging Historical Policies For First Nations

According to Patsey (1992), a major contributing factor to the breakdown of the First Nations oral society was the implementation of government policies. He declared that the *Gitxsan* world revolved around the feast system. Feasts were the social, economic, legislative and judicial courts of the society. The *Gitxsan* relationships with

the powers beyond were manifested at the feast. The feast hall was the place where each phase of a child's achievement was acknowledged and celebrated by the whole nation. Between 1885 and 1951 the *Gitxsan* potlatches were outlawed by federal statute. The *Gitxsan* feast, including the laws, authority, customs, and values of the *Gitxsan* were rendered illegal in Canada.

Educators in the *Gitxsan* Territories need to recognize that when the *Li'ligit* was outlawed by the Government, the *Gitxsan* lost a tremendous part of a system they had known and lived by since time immemorial. However, it is a great testimony to the *Gitxsan* and the strength of the culture that the *Gitxsan* carried on "illegal" procedures and maintained their "legal" system out of view of the lawmakers. The law courts, the land title offices, the legislative assembly, the registry for births, deaths, and marriages were taken from the *Gitxsan* and replaced with a foreign system. The patrilineal Department of Indian Affairs system clashed head-on to the matrilineal *Gitxsan* system. Educators need to understand how the historical events of non-First Nations commerce and settlement, and political decisions of the Canadian Government and Christian missionaries, joined to create the six, geographically limited "reserve" communities of today. These are *Gitwangax*, *Gitjeigyukwhal*, *Gitanyaaw*, *Ansbahyaxw*, *Sigit'ox* and *Gitanmaaxs* (see Figure1).

With the banning of the *Li'ligit* came the demise of all the creative activities. There was no need to create new songs, dances, drama, and art pieces. The *Li'ligit* provided the incentive and motivation to develop relevant materials for the fine arts component of the *Gitxsan* culture. The *Li'ligit* was the place that recognized and rewarded artistic accomplishments.

Newbery (1994) found that with the invasion of the *Gitxsan* territories came the alteration of their environment. In addition, an alien education system and language were imposed, undermining the *Gitxsan* way of life first by marginalizing them in a church run Indian day or residential schools and then by assimilating them in Amalgamated schools.

According to Patsey (1992) much of the social ills faced by the *Gitxsan* today are the results of systematic oppression by Canadian society and their policies. Many of the adults residing in the territories today are survivors of the Indian residential schools. The conspiracy between the government and church almost worked in eliminating the *Gitxsan* language and culture. The *Gitxsan* were severely affected by those policies as they work through a high rate of alcohol and drug abuse, high incidence of violence in the home, a high dropout rate at school, and an increasing number of children who do not speak the language.

7.3 The Good Reasons They Gave

According to Government standards the distribution of wealth was wasteful and foolish. The reason for outlawing the *Li'ligit* was to help the *Gitxsan*. The missionaries believed that the *Gitxsan* worshipped the totem poles. This was against their teachings and so to outlaw the *Li'ligit* was to outlaw totem pole raisings and show the *Gitxsan* the errors of their ways (Adams & Kasakoff, 1973).

7.4 The Decline Of *Sim'algax*

Within the *Gitxsan* culture, *Sim'algax* is on the verge of extinction. *Sim'algax* is of great importance because our way of knowing is in the language. Within the framework of the *Gitxsan* culture, many topics are taught to the children. In this way, the children are adequately prepared for their journey on earth. The vehicle for transmitting this knowledge is the *Gitxsan* language, the *Sim'algax*. Knowledge emerges from the essence of our stories, rituals, songs and dances that are coded in the language. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) found that residential schools contributed to the destruction of First Nations families. The students were forbidden to speak their First Nations languages and this caused great damage to the culture. It is important that the stories, songs and dances be translated into English and written down for the coming generations before the language is lost.

7.5 Woman With The Robe, Cane And Red Eyes

(Excerpt from The Odyssey of *Nuhl̓x* his Three Brothers and Sister). The family set off again but a low fog had drifted down from *Sdikyoodenax*. The little family made their ascent up the mountain path. They had almost reached the summit when they heard what sounded like the clanging of a huge bell. It was the footsteps of their next and final challenge. The group stood and waited but they could not explain the nature of the sound they heard coming towards them. They walked away from the direction of the sound. They wanted to escape from this unfamiliar sound. Their spirit guide had not foretold what they should do in this situation. The youngsters would stop and move again in another direction, but there was no escape possible. They saw a gigantic woman coming

towards them, her red fiery eyes piercing into their souls. The woman was covered in a huge cape with a hood and she carried a cane. When the woman opened her eyes fire would pour out of them. She would close her eyes and the fire stopped!

Nuhl̥x and his brothers and sister tried to run, but there was nowhere to go, so they stood and faced the giant. The woman used her eyes to melt the rock over *Nuhl̥x* and his family and covered them with the melted rock, killing them and in so doing she destroyed herself. Here is where *Nuhl̥x*, *Masgwa-hlgu-lo'op*, *Maawnim-lo'op*, *Skants'ook'* and *K'ohlim-lo'op* died. Their little frames formed five mountain peaks that sit near the top of *Sdikyoodenax̥*. The mountain peak that was *Nuhl̥x* has fallen and when the other four fall, the *Gitxsan* believe it will be the end of the world.

7.6 Description Of *Gitxsanim̥x*

Gitxsanim̥x is the language of the *Gitxsan* Nation. The linguistic basis for *Gitxsanim̥x* is *Sim'algḁx*, the mother language of the *Gitxsan* as well as the *Tsimshian* and *Nisga'a*. There are two main dialects for the language in the *Gitxsan* Territories: the western dialect and the northern dialect. The *Sim'algḁx* Group has completed a dictionary in their effort to preserve the language. Their goal is for the young people to learn their own language and become bilingual. The *Gitxsan* Nation is still in the position to help the young people learn. If action is not taken, the *Gitxsan* language will be extinct in fifty years (*Sim'algḁx* Working Group, 1998; also see Appendix C).

From my experience I believe that language and culture are inseparable for one cannot understand the culture without the language. The Elders state that there was a time only *Sim'algḁx* was spoken on the *Gitxsan* Territories and now the dominant

language is English. There are many factors that have contributed to the decline of *Sim'algax* but they all relate to the practices of colonialism and particularly the systematic destruction of culture that was the agenda of residential schools.

Without the language, the laws would be lost, I have said this time and time again. Many of our young people do not know *Sim'algax* (*Gitxsan* language). When the language is lost; all is lost. All the *adaawk* (history) is lost, the stories, the songs, the dances, everything. (*Baaskyaalaxha*, *Gitxsan* Elder and chief, personal communication 2000).

7.7 Stories In Text

The schools in the area have undertaken an important role in strengthening the language. The *Sim'algax* Working Group, (1998) and the University of Northern British Columbia are in the process of training language teachers. If the task to teach children the language is not successful, then the pillar of language will fall like the mountain peak that was *Nuhlx*. The stories must be written in *Sim'algax* and English so that the young people will not lose yet another pillar of their culture (see Appendix 3). Their self-esteem depends on knowing their culture.

7.8 The Possibilities For The Classroom

I have criticized the current educational system for failing to incorporate the *Gitxsan* students' worldview. The stories present numerous possibilities for teachers to integrate the *Gitxsan* worldview into the existing curriculum. Fullan (1993) argues that teachers cannot afford to wait for the system to change itself; they must play an active role in educational change.

Some First Nations schools have created textbooks for their Social Studies Programs (see, for example, materials prepared by *Nisga'a School District No. 92*, 1996 Archibald, 1997) offers the guidelines for developing curriculum (kindergarten to grade 7) with the *Journey to Justice Series*.

According to Murdock, Ford, Hudson, Kennedy, Simmons, and Whiting, (1987) any element of culture may have as many as seven facets. Each of these facets can be taken as a foundation of classification. I have included these to show that *Gitksan* stories and *Gitksan* culture are inseparable.

1. Patterned activity

Every aspect of culture involves a journey.

In the story, *The Odyssey of Nuhl_x his Three Brothers and Sister*, a journey is taken by the young people to free the territories.

2. Circumstance

This category is a time or place.

In the story, *The Origin of Thunder*, the girls were in a special place at a certain time to complete their puberty rites.

3. Subject

The subject is defined as a culturally defined class of persons.

In the story, *The Legend of the Young Chief*, there was no one else in line that could become chief, so the young heir had to take on the task.

4. Object

This is described as an activity directed toward food preparation or kin relationships. This could be an inanimate thing, an animal or a person. The action is oriented around the objects of activities.

In the story, *The First Salmon Celebration*, we see the activities oriented around the importance of obeying the laws of the salmon.

5. Means

Cultural activities are accomplished by the use of some external means (e.g., an artifact or human assistance).

In the story, *The Night of the Owl*, we see that a grouse comes to the aid of the father looking for his lost son.

6. Purpose or goal

Cultural activities are normally performed with a purpose or goal (e.g., aid of the supernatural).

In the story, *The Man with Haldowgit Powers*, *Nulhx* and his brothers and sister destroyed the *haldowgit* who plagued the territories with his evil powers.

7. Concrete result

Is a cultural activity that commonly has a concrete result (e.g., buildings, monuments).

In the story, *Weget's Death*, we have evidence of his death. He takes two young mountain lions with him to a cave entrance and willed that they be turned to stone and there they sit to this day.

7.9 The Sleeping Monster Snake

As with the circle of life, the circle of stories have no starting point. I take the story, *The Sleeping Monster Snake*, and use it to illustrate the process of my placing the stories in text.

(Excerpt from The Odyssey of *Nuhl̄x* his Three Brothers and Sister). Their journey had almost completed a circle around the territories. They were now at the base of *Sdikyoodenax*. Here they ate and rested. *K'ohlim'lo'op* would cry out and rub her hands on her brother, *Maawnim-lo'op* and place them over the fire to warm them. This was her way of sharpening her knife blade. It was *K'ohlim'lo'op* who would challenge the monster snake. The *Naxnok* spirit who had predicted all their events had told them that the snake was small like a garter snake when it was sleeping, but if it were awake it would be the monster snake. It was fortunate that the group found the snake sleeping on a warm rock.

With a loud scream *K'ohlim'lo'op* charged at the sleeping snake with her hands as knife blades and cut off the small snake's head and tail. The snake transformed into its massive size, but it was dead. The huge head flew off into a northerly direction and landed at *Gisgaga'as* Lake. The snake's tail flew off towards the south and landed in *T'axim Sdikyoodenax*. *K'ohlim'lo'op* defeated the snake and she was on the ground in her original form. Holding the feather over his head and with great ceremony, *Nuhl̄x* circled *K'ohlim'lo'op* four times and she returned to her human form.

Gee (1996) states that the answer is not just that First Nations students need to adapt to school based discourse, despite what clashes there may have been. The schools need to adapt to First Nations discourse and render them visible, valuable and meaningful

to all students. Instead of trying to assimilate *Gitksan*/First Nations children into other cultures, educators are now allowed to use locally developed courses. Authentic First Nations material instills a strong sense of identity and pride in the students. Developing *Gitksan* and First Nations literature resources has been a slow process because many of the languages were oral and only in the last century have attempts been made to record them. A lot of the true meaning of the material, such as humor, is lost in the translation process.

Lack of both financial support and appreciation of the importance of *Gitksan* stories has greatly slowed down the process of developing comprehensive and professional quality First Nations libraries. In the *Gitksan* territories there are limited resources to assist those who are teaching *Gitksan* students. There are First Nations books from other areas, but there are usually one or two copies, and not enough for a classroom.

Archibald (1997), Sterling (1997) and teachings from the Elders were used to honor and support the importance of oral history. It appears through a review of the literature that story is one of the most important possessions of the First Nations People. From the creation of people and animals and land through to lessons on life, the *Gitksan* have come through time with a wealth of knowledge on many topics related to their culture. The stories were said to be food for the spirit, seeds planted in each listener that one day will come to harvest. In these teachings each person finds the lessons he/she needs for making proper decisions.

In recent time, the *Gitksan*/First Nations people have made the Provincial Government realize how regular Canadian schools have failed to reach the needs of the

First Nations children. It is encouraging that the Provincial Government has acknowledged the need for change and has allowed First Nations people to have more control over their education.

According to Dawson (1988) it is clear that the First Nations and non-First Nations relations have been affected by the conflict of two different discourses. These differing views have contributed toward much of the misunderstanding, intolerance, frustration and despair that has taken place. The sharing of worldviews has not been part of the *Gitksan*/First Nations education. However, Dawson (1988) is confident that with the recent emphasis on biculturalism and building bridges of understanding, the sharing has begun.

According to Bopp (1986) education has value in that it assists and promotes the unfolding of human potential. The Elders saw the essential capacity of First Nations children to develop their self-identity and collectively recreate themselves in a new discourse. Bopp (1986) could see the vision clearly, along with the Elders, that the key to assisting First Nations people was to both allow them responsibility of their own development and allow them to articulate their own vision and discourse of human possibilities.

Atleo (1993) stresses that traditional First Nations people understood their world and were appropriately oriented to it. The First Nations people knew how to function effectively within that world. Motivation, effort, persistence, guidance, and encouragement, were not a problem since prestige, acceptance, and survival depended upon a satisfactory level of performance. The intervention of colonial discourse, practice and ultimately colonial legislation designed to destroy First Nations cultures led

to massive disorientation, which created social, political and economic dysfunction in the *Gitksan*. First Nations people today may have recovered somewhat and better understand the contemporary world, but many are still in the process of learning how to meet the ordinary requirements of today's schools. Educators need to understand and create an effective traditional system for the traditional *Gitksan*/First Nations students. Public institutions need to change their values to meet the needs of the First Nations students rather than expecting the First Nations children to fit into the values of the school system.

It is important that First Nations students are made aware of the historical discourse that has taken place, in order for them to understand why many of them are having difficulties in the formal education system. It is important that the First Nations students become strong enough to control their own destinies so the Government polices will never again blatantly attempt to obliterate First Nations cultures.

Stories were an essential part of the lives of First Nations people long before the written word. Stories were passed down from generation to generation. Stories served to share our *Gitksan* values, to question our assumptions, and to see our individual and collective futures.

In my life, the stories have been my true source of education. Through their stories, the Elders have taught me gratitude, compassion, courage and humor. *Gitksan* oral stories are an important tool for the *Gitksan*. It is not only the first line of defense but it is the final authority; the children need to know this. Throughout my life, the stories of my Elders have reaffirmed my sense of self, my identity and strengthened the bonds. The wisdom of harmony, balance and interconnectedness are there for my choosing. I believe that the existing school system can be used to incorporate the

teachings of the Elders. With the knowledge of who they are the *Gitxsan* students can withstand the injustices of the past, be prepared to challenge the stereotypes written about First Nations people and eliminate racism and live in a world that values equality for all of human life.

I hope that the information and the stories that have been placed in text in this study and the conclusions drawn from the materials will be of use to the teachers of *Gitxsan* students and First Nations Leaders who are able to make the changes in the existing curriculum (see Chapter 4). With their desire to change the existing curriculum to include *Gitxsan* culture and history the teachers in the *Gitxsan* Territories will help to keep the remaining four pillars (spirituality, balance, harmony and interconnectedness) intact on the top of *Steyoodenax*.

It is my desire that the educational systems dealing with First Nations students see the importance of taking action to incorporate the culture of the First Nations children into the classrooms. We have allowed the monster snake to sleep for too long. We need to take our *Gitxsan* culture and stories and find our place in the schools. Like *K'ohlim'loop* I have sharpened my skills by going to university and I am ready to awaken the sleeping monster snake and present the stories of the *Gitxsan* in text. The snake will never sleep again.

7.10 *Gitxsan* Children Of The 21st Century

When the Elders speak of their hopes for the children of the 21st century it is not the academic agenda that they stress. The Elders' priorities are that the children know the *Gitxsan* culture and language. Erickson (2003) documents four traits of the well-

educated *Gitxsan*. The first trait is respect. The children must learn to value and respect self and all other living things. The children should realize the importance of family, extended family and community. They should value learning in both cultures and willingly use their talents and skills to help others. In the story, *The First Salmon Celebration*, the *One Who Returned* shared his knowledge about the lifecycle of the salmon with all the people (see Chapter 4).

Second, the well-educated *Gitxsan* must value knowledge. They must know the connections to others (*wilp*, *wilnaat'ahl*, *pdeek*, *wilksi'laxs* and other Nations). The children must know the place names (territories), the resources and the conservation practices inherent in the culture. The children must know the history of their *wilp* and the *ayook* governing the *Gitxsan*. The children must understand the protocols of the *Li'ligit* and engage in appropriate spiritual rituals. In the story, *The Young Chief*, the Elders helped the young man with all aspects of becoming a chief. He was told to go to the mountain to pray. Young chief understood the lineage of his chieftainship. As chief he would conduct a *Li'ligit*. He knew the ways of the animals and what part of the territories was accessible to his house members.

The third trait is competence. The children must develop the ability to provide leadership by being good listeners and speakers. The children must learn to stay in touch with their own spirit and have the training to acknowledge and release negative experiences. In the story of *Wild Woman of the Woods*, the hunter was in tune with all his surroundings. He was able to conquer with previous knowledge the frightening creature he encountered (see Chapter 4).

The fourth characteristic is actions. The well-educated *Gitxsan* must be able to draw on the training of the culture and act to help self and others. The children must have a sense of purpose to guide their lives. The children must strive for excellence, demonstrate a positive attitude and display a sense of humour. In the story, *Revenge of the Mountain Goats*, the young boy challenged his peers, in order to rescue the mountain goat kid. The young boy did not forget his early teachings (see Chapter 4).

If the children attain these four values and treat themselves, other people, animals and the environment with respect, life will be as it should be, interconnected, balanced and harmonious. The worldview of the *Gitxsan* would be reinforced through all aspects of their lives.

7.11 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to place the *Gitxsan* oral history and culture into text, a responsibility given to me by the Elders. The *Gitxsan* students will have ownership of the stories and the Elders will see the evidence that the culture will continue to thrive. The *Gitxsan* youth of today have to live with two stories, the grand narrative of mainstream society and the local narratives of the *Gitxsan* society. The latter society is very much alive and functioning (Persky, 1998). I have presented twenty-nine stories in which I have woven the *Gitxsan* worldview, traditions, beliefs, perceptions, visions and struggles. These stories have come from the *Breath of our Grandfathers*. Unfortunately, the residential school system and colonization disrupted this structure and the legacy has been that many of today's Elders or parents who are products of that system are unable to take on this traditional role.

I want to present to teachers in the *Gitxsan* Territories the knowledge and understanding about the devastation created by residential schools. The teachers need to understand the history of the education of their students. The teachers need to know the history why school is not relevant to many of their *Gitxsan* students.

Dawson (1988) argues that before the new voices came, the First Nations people had well established education practices in place that provided the youth with the necessary life skills to survive in their societies. Elders were the teachers, and their teachings communicated their knowledge and wisdom through oral language.

Research by Angus (1997) from the *Wet'suweten* Nation, demonstrates that when First Nations traditions break down and the stories are not told the void left by the absence of traditional education is often filled with undesirable substitutes from the dominant society, such as substance abuse. Unfortunately, there are many *Gitxsan* youth who have become lost between two stories and have been overwhelmed by negative influences that lead them to engage in self-destructive behaviors. Many troubled *Gitxsan* youths are symptoms of the loss of a way of life. Despite the negative effects of mainstream schooling, the *Gitxsan* along with other First Nations communities still recognize that their people need to receive a Western education. However, this should not be at the expense of destroying their culture and identity (Wilson & Napoleon, 1994).

Regrettably, the current school system resides in the grand narrative and for years has promoted a Western, scientific, paternalistic knowledge system that has oppressed and devalued other knowledge systems. The colonizers attempt at cultural genocide was extreme (Chrisjohn, Young & Maraun 1997). Perhaps if the same amount of commitment and resources were used to reverse the damage it caused, we would have a

truer start at rebuilding. I have dedicated my teaching career to changing this by using storytelling as pedagogy and the stories as curriculum material to meet the learning outcome in the mandated curriculum. I am demonstrating that in this way of being, a teacher can bridge the two stories. I want to provide teachers with authentic materials from which they could take information to meet the needs of their *Gitxsan* students.

7.12 Recommendations

The schools' curricula should be developed in conjunction with Elders and parents. The curricula should be focused on relevant materials including cultural and environmental issues. Long range goals that meet the needs and aspirations of the parents and the local community need to be evaluated and implemented at the local level.

The inadequacies of financial resources in First Nations education has contributed to the lack of quality education offered to First Nations students and must be resolved immediately.

In my experience, most teachers in the *Gitxsan* Territories allow themselves to remain strapped into the system that is known and familiar to them. Teachers of *Gitxsan* students need to improve their knowledge and understanding of the *Gitxsan* and First Nations cultures. Teachers of First Nations students need to improve their knowledge and understanding of First Nations cultures. The teachers need to be encouraged to take part in community events

Public institutions need to change their values to meet the needs of the First Nations students rather than expecting the First Nations children to fit into the values of

the school system. Universities need to incorporate the teaching of storytelling into their teacher training programs.

It is hoped that this study will provide educators with the information and materials they require, so they can help their students and provide accurate knowledge about the *Gitxsan*. In addition it is hoped that the educators can see the need and make appropriate decisions when implementing *Gitxsan*/First Nations cultural curriculum in their classrooms.

Curriculum units that positively portray First Nations people and their culture need to be communicated to all learners.

The stories from the Elders should be recorded so the stories are not lost. There is significant knowledge and wisdom to be gained from the Elders. Elders should play an active role in education and be compensated as professionals.

7.13 The Journey Completed

As with all storytellers there is a constant search for interconnectedness, balance and harmony. I have found that one can find balance in the stories as the Elders educate the heart. There is harmony with the heart and mind as the teachings connect with all living things. I am a storyteller. I come from storytellers. I want it said of me, "She told a good story." With this study, I conclude that I will have followers and in this way I will know that I have returned the feathers and kept the *Breath of my Grandfathers* alive.

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APPENDIX A

Answering the Validity of Indigious Research

1. *Who defined the research problem?*

The research problem was defined by the needs of the *Gitxsan* community (Hoffman, 1999).

The educators in the *Gitxsan* Territories need to know the cultural background of the children in their classrooms. The educators required materials provided so they could learn and teach.

The *Gitxsan* community needed the research delivered in a form they could understand. What is better than one of their own conducting the research?

2. *What knowledge will the community gain from this study?*

Most importantly the knowledge of who they are will be available to the young *Gitxsan* students. This will contribute to building their self-esteem. The study will provide information for the non-*Gitxsan* educators in the community to help them design relevant curriculum to use in the classroom.

3. *For whom is the study relevant and worthy?*

The study is relevant and worthy for the researcher. The stories and cultural practices of the *Gitxsan* came from the Elders. The study is relevant for anyone who so desires to take the stories and apply them to their lives.

4. *What knowledge will the researcher gain from this study?*

If I think of action research as learning from my experiences then what is gained is a better understanding of my own practice as an educator who uses stories and storytelling as a form of pedagogy.

5. *What are the positive outcomes of this study?*

The positive outcomes are that the students will gain knowledge from the stories and the cultural practices of the *Gitxsan* that might be otherwise not available to them. Non-*Gitxsan* educators will be given a view that will give them an opportunity to look through other cultural lenses. In addition, literature that is available is grouped with the language family. *Gitxsan* stories come under the heading of Tsimshian. This study will give ownership to the *Gitxsan*.

6. *What are the negative outcomes of this study?*

The negative outcomes is that an oral culture has to be contained in the pages of a study. The teaching, since time immemorial have come from the Elders, on the breath of our grandfathers. The problem with stories going into text is that there will no longer be a need to train future storytellers. An argument is made that it is like the totem poles being preserved with wood preservatives and concrete foundations. The totem poles will last forever. There will be no need for carvers in the future?

7. *How can the negative outcomes be eliminated?*

The negative outcomes can be eliminated by the young people learning Sim'alga_x. In this way the stories can be available orally and in text. The Elders can once again take their place as the teachers. This generation has the responsibility to take the stories and culture as far as they can. The culture will provide new stories and new works of art for the future generations. Storytellers will take a story old or new and convey it with their own uniqueness. The artists will always find a new way to communicate the images on totem poles.

8. *To whom is the researcher accountable?*

The researcher is accountable to the *Gitksan* of the past, present and future.

9. *What processes are in place for the research, the researched and the researcher?*

The research will be made available to the teachers in the *Gitksan* Territories to use in the classroom. Professional Development days will be used to present the study to the teachers. The researched will have a voice that is their own. Other *Gitksan* students will use the study as a resource for their studies. The researcher will present the stories in the form of books. In addition, the researcher will base future studies on the results of this study.

APPENDIX B

Band Council Resolution

Hazelton, B.C.
May 30th, 1946.

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, A COMMITTEE appointed by the Hazelton Band of Indians on May 20th, 1946 at a meeting called to consider surrender of certain lands on Hazelton Indian Reserve No. 1, to represent them in the signing of any necessary documents, define the lands for survey and discuss with the Inspector of Indian Agencies and the Indian Agent any matter in connection with same, do hereby state that the said surrender was assented to by said Band at said meeting on the following terms:

- (1) That its easterly boundary be defined as closely as convenient for survey purposes, as the foot of the bench running south westerly from the south east corner of the Town of Hazelton, which we subsequently defined on the ground.
- (2) That no Indian shall be removed from his property until he has been satisfactorily compensated for the value of land and improvements.
- (3) That Indians of the Band shall have the opportunity of purchasing lots on the property and have same declared Provincial lands.
- (4) That the present applicants to purchase shall bear their fair share of the cost of survey of the parcels applied for and that ten per cent of the purchase price shall be paid in to the funds of the Hazelton Band, except in the case of the land applied for by the School Board, where the Band interest shall be met by a payment of ten per cent of the purchase price in addition to and clear of the Estate's interest.
- (5) That the applications now before the Department shall be revised to conform with a suitable subdivision, any additional lands required to be secured by arrangement with the owners.
- (6) That the prices to be paid by the present applicants to be not less than the following:

R. S. Sargent Estate	\$350.00
School Board (B. McKenzie land)	1,500.00 + 10%
" " (Clark Estate land)	600.00 + 10%
Provincial Public Works	500.00
L. Mailen	350.00 per acre

- (7) That the sale of land to the Board of School Trustees or the Provincial Department of Education shall be subject to the proviso that they shall admit to any school operated thereon having high or junior high school classes any qualified Indian high school pupil on payment of the customary tuition fees.

APPENDIX C

The *Sim al'gax* Alphabet

The *Sim'algax* alphabet uses twenty letters from the English (or Latin) alphabet, plus the apostrophe (hard sign), the hyphen (also called the hard sign) and the underline (with g, k, and x). The letters c, f, q, r, v, and z are not used because there are no equivalent sounds in native *Sim'algax* words or else they are not needed to represent *Sim'algax* sounds.

The alphabetical order of the *Gitxsenimx* letters and letter-combinations with the English names of the sound that the *Gitxsenimx* letter(s) make:

a = short a	k' = hard front k	s = ess
aa = long a	<u>k</u> = soft back k	t = soft t
b = soft b	<u>k'</u> = hard back k	t' = hard t
d = soft d	kw = soft kw	tl' = hard tee-ell
e = short e	kw' = hard kw	ts = soft tee-ess
ee = long e	l = soft ell	ts' = hard tee-ess
g = soft front g	'l = hard ell	u = short u
<u>g</u> = soft back g	m = soft em	uu = long u
gw = soft gw	'm = hard em	w = soft w
h = aitch	n = soft enn	'w = hard w
hl = aitch-ell	'n = hard enn	x = front eks
i = short i	o = short o	<u>x</u> = back eks
ii = long i	oo = long o	xw = eks-w
j = soft jay	p = soft p	y = soft y
k = soft front k	p' = hard p	'y = hard y

and the glottal stop is signified by ' (between vowels and after a fricative or a soft resonant) and by - (after a soft voiceless stop).

APPENDIX D

Sim al'gax Stories For *Gitxsan* Teachers**Wila Wilhls Dip Nuhl_x**

(THE ODDESSY OF NUHLX, HIS THREE BROTHERS AND SISTER). Taahl

k'i'yhl ts'ap, gigeenix, ii lax xsiiph_l gahlaxwhl ts'apgi ii uxws 'nakwt ii bahl_xt. ii 'nit wil wilhl k'aylim_xsim'iiwt. ii 'nit wil wilhls dipust, guun_xhlda, (wilhl hawkii).

T'aaba_xbee_kxwhl gandiit, hliwisihl skants'ak'giihl hooxdiiit. Ii hlaa yukwhl kw'oo hootxwdiit up wagayt wil sk'eex_xwhl ga'nakwhl yukwdiit. Kw'oo up ligi kw'ihl xwdayimahl hlik'yulit ii daa'wihl kw'oo a_x hunt ii kw'oo a sgwaa'ytxwt ii kw'oo hats'im hoo gwis luuyaltxwt. Ii hats'im hoo yiyukwdiit. Gaay hahljakwdiithl sint gan huwildiit.

Mahla k'i'yhl sahl huwildiit. Ndayimahl kw'isin gabihl k'uuhl. ii 'nit gat si'aamhl hoo wildiit k'i'yhl k'uuhl ii balgi kw'ihl gipaykw gathl ama'masithl k'aax kw'oo kw'ihl wildiit. Up luubagayt kw'ihl gipaykw wildiit gya'adiit.

ii ba_x ha'whl yugwithl hootxwitgi wilt gya'adiit 'wii k'aax. Lixsgyathl dii wildiit 'nagwitgi. Nee dii kw'ihl gagaytxwdiit. Ii hat'a'l hooxdiiit ii 'nithl k'utk'uu dakxhldiit ahl t'imgesdiit.

iit guutgat hlik'yulihl gyatgiihl k'aax, kw'ihl his'weesxwid dim mahl hlgu gyat. Ii 'nii hit'int lax t'imgest.

ii ba_xt hlaa yukw dim hats'im hoo sit'aa'maadiit ii balgi kw'ihl

lislisxwhl gat sise'et. Sgwatxwiihl k'esahl hlik'yulit dimt suut'ipdamgant. 'Nit wil hoti tk'alhit'hit'hl an'unt ahl sise'ehl hlik'yulitgi.

Sgwatxwiihl habas dipust. ii yukwhl haahla'alsihl haanak'gi iit hoti lixsgyadindiit hliwilhl gya'adiit ii hoti 'widin goldiit ii luuwanhl hlgidiit hak'yo'odiit. li hoti k'esadiit ii hoti t'iplislixdiiit. ii nee dii 'nakwtgi ii gwaats' tk'algootdiit. li 'minsakdiit laxha. ii 'nithl hoo wilhl hanak luujok 'nit go'ohl wilp'ah'yasxw. Am kw'ihl hlaak'yul 'nit ii hiyukwgathl bisxwt. Goodihl akst iit damganhl hagwiluxw wil 'nii t'aahl hlgu aksgi.

'Niilixwhl neek loot ahl hlits'ee'wihl wilps dip noxt.

li nda wilt saxhl hlik'i'yhl hagwiluxwgi iit kw'oo wilaaxs dip noxt gwi dim hasakt. Ligi hun, ligi smax, ligi lakw, ligi aks ganhl maa'y. iit wilaaxdiit kw'ihl wiltgi, gwi dim hasakt.

ii goodihl aks iit damgant gathl hlideeyihl aksgi. li t'aat hlishl wilt. Yukw bisxwt dim aa'ixshl noxt. lit damgan hlideeyihl hun ii hoo neediit naa ji aat'ixsit. Gay hoo k'i'y kw'oo damgant ii kw'oo t'aa kw'oo bisxwt. li neediit naa ji aat'ixsit.

Lixsgyadinsxwhl tk'ihlxwimhanak'gi. Gwaats kw'ihl k'yul 'nit.

ii ayukwst. Bilantxw 'nit ahl gwilat, iit hooxhl 'wii golxsgi. Ii wilk'ii xsaxwtgi. Ha'wahlinidiit dim diit gya'ahl, tk'ihlxwimhanak'giihl sga'nist. Dim t'e'elt gat dim sint jit gya'at. Hapdiit gats'a'adiit up jit gya'adiithl gilelix. ii xsaxwhl hlgu tk'ihlxwgi ii ts'int ahl wilps dip noxt, ii wiiyitxwt, waatxwt. iit gya'a wil kw'ihl haaxxw wil kw'ihl hlitdiitgi. li kw'ihl yeet. lit kw'ihl gimk hlinuts't ahl bant. li kw'ihl yeet ii hats'im hoo yukwt kw'ihl gimkhl hlinuts't ahl bilant, hlgu gwilatgi. ii xsaxwt. ii gay hoo lixsgyathl wilp wil ts'int. Yukwt kw'ihl gi'y dimt kw'ihl 'wa dim didilsit, ligitnaa. Neediit naa ji 'wayit. Neediit 'wahl ligi dago'odit. Saam saksxwhl ts'apdiit.

Luuno'o:

ii 'nit wilt 'wahl hlgu masxwithl lo'op. lit guut. iit kw'ihl k'utk'uu diyeet ts'imwilpgi. iit luumagat hlits'ee'wihl gwilatgi, hlgu bilant, ii 'nit wilt kw'ihl Kw'oo gimkhl hlinuts't yukwhl waatxwt. Up wila wil dim ma hlaa up yugwida dim ant hlimootxwt.

ii gay hoo lixsgyathl wilp wil ts'int, gwaats' kw'ihl waatxwt, ii gani 'nithl wilt gimkhl hlinuts't lax hlgu bilant. li gaay hoo hlgu angee'asim lo'ophl 'wayit ii 'nithl hoo luumakdit ahl ts'im gwilatgi.

li xsaxwt ii hats'im hoo yeet go'ohl k'i'yhl wilp, ii kw'ihl k'utk'uu yeet. li gay hoo 'nit wilt 'wahl hlgu gan, skants'ook'. Hli gandihl ts'ook' dii kw'oo hooxdit kw'oo situuts'xwdiit. lit kw'oo tk'alts'iipdiit ahl lo'op ii 'nithl dii t'uuts'xwdiit ahl 'nagwit. 'Wayit wil kw'ihl sgit iit hoti guut iit luumagat ahl ts'im hlgu gwilat. ii hats'im hoo xsawxwt, kw'ihl waatxwt, hlist luudoxhl 'wayitgi ahl bant. Gimkhl hli nuts't.

ii hats'im hoo yeet ii xsawxwt ii hats'im hoo ts'int k'i'yhl wilp ii hats'im hoo 'nithl wilt hats'im hoo k'utk'uu yee 'nit.

Lixsgyadint wilt wil needit kw'ihl dokhl jogotgi ligi agwi ji ligi kw'ihl saksdiit. ii ts'int sgalanim wilpgi ii 'nit wilt 'wahl hlgu t'uuts'xw. Kw'asthl hlgu t'uuts'xwgi, ihlakt dim ma. Kw'oo hooxdit kw'oo kw'ihl k'ohldiit. li 'nithl hoo guudit iit luumagat go'ohl ts'im bantgi, ts'ee'wihl gwilatgi ii hetxwhl wiiyitxwt, up dim wila wil dim ma.

li ha'wit. Luuyaltxw 'nit go'ohl ts'im wilps dip noxtgi. lit xsidokhl kuba toosit kw'ihl-'week'stgi. iit simihl lakw go'ohl wilps dip noxtgi. Up at'igwil bokxwhl lakwgi. li 'nit wil luujokt.

Mitxwhl toosis dip noxt. Nee dii ligi kw'ihl ak dim kw'ihl gubit.

li hlaa yukw dim maadimngi ii yukwhl hugwasimgaxt. T'agit anwiltgi kw'ihl

luuseewint ts'im gwilat. Gwaats' t'agit anwilt luut'ahldit go'ohl bantgi. Neediit amgoot. ii hugwasimgaxt. Yukw dim ligi kw'ihl ha'wahlxwsda. Up akhl wilt. ii hugwasimgaxt. ii 'nithl gubit. Yukwt ha'wahlins dipt noxt dimt gupt ii up akhl wilt.

Tax'nitxws lip ligi agwihl J'abit hligook dim maadim. Si'oohlxw 'nit iit midinhl lakw ts'imwilps dip noxt. Nee dii sgi dimdiit guphl sii 'yasxwithl smax. Sax gwalgwa hun kw'ihl gupdiit ganhl gwalgwithl smax. iit up anookdiithl maa'y loot, neediit ha'wahlindiithl maa'y. Laaxwhl hoo nee dii anookdiit, hoti ha'wahlxw.

K'i'yhl k'uuhl wilhl haanak' 'nagwit. li hlaa galanhl k'i'yhl k'uuhligi ii xsi'akxwt ii up gwihl hasagat dimt gupt ji hlaa hlis ji hlisxwhl k'i'yhl k'uuhligi. 'Nithl wilhl tk'ihlxwimhanak' tun. lit guphl gaxgi. ii balgi aat'ixs wilt gya'a wil gitxwhl bant.

'Mindaa'wihlgoott. Neediit naahl gyat ji ant ligi kw'ihl 'wat ligi axxw. lit wilaax wil hlaa yukw dim hlguuhlxtwtgi.

ii yeet go'o wil wilhl uumhlxwgi lax'uhl ts'ap,

ii 'nithl gwalgwint. Helthl anwilt. Woo'ii hligookhl maadim iit wilgat go'ohl wilps noxt. Up mitxwhl si'uumhlxwt. li mitxwhl lakwt. Wilaayit wil hlaa yukw dim hlguuhlxtwt iit amgoohl wiltgi. Amgoodid hliwilt luut'ahlhl kuba toositgi go'ohl ts'im bant. ii hoo'o ji wil sakst.

Gwilimgoodinhl lup ligi agwi. Aks anwilt hlaa yukwt aatxt hlaa dim aat'ixs dim hlguuhlxtwt. Hagwin daxdo'ot lup ligi agwi go'o dim wil sgit go'ohl

laxts'eehl lakwgi. li hagwin doxhl lo'op dim uutdit ii 'nit dim wil 'niisgit. iit uutdiit lo'opgi, iit luudoxdiit go'ohl hlgu anyuust iit 'niidoxdiithl gan loot. ii 'nit wil 'nii sgihl hanak' hlishl hlguuhlxtwt. li gyamkhl hak'yo'ot ii hugygam saksxwhl ts'ee'wit.

ganwilt uudasindiit 'nidiit. li hoti 'nithl wilhl hlgu tk'ihlxwimhanak'gi. Hoti 'nithl lip wilt ahl lip 'nit.

li hlaa sit'aa'maad ii hlguuhlxt. ii hlgu gyat gathl gyadit. lit guut iit hli'moo'oldid ahl hlitk'ahl gaxgi. Hlishl yagayt gwilimgoott. li hats'im hoo amhl ga'nagwit ii hats'im hoo gyathl hlik'yeegwit ii hats'im hoo tk'ihlxwimgyatt. Txalpxdulhl ii'wt ii k'yeekwahl hanak'. Akx ii uudaasxwt. Doxhl kuba xgitgi sdo'oixst. Kw'oo a haldim t'aa 'nit iit kw'oo 'niimagahl lakw hlist yagayt hagwin doxtgi.

ii nee dii 'nakwt ii mootxwt ii hats'im hoo daxgyatt ii yukxwt dim wila 'moot'ixshl kuba xgitgi (gwihl wada).

ii t'e'elt limxsihl kuba tk'ihlxwgi. Sgwatxwiid txoogandiit, xyipxdiit, hun kw'oo jamit. Hoobigim gan hooyit hlaat gindiit.

Sgwatxwiidl aat'ixs wil kw'ihl hlo'ohl kuba tk'ihlxwgi.

ii hlaa gwooyim ii hats'im hoo yukwahl saayeehl noxdiitgi dim hugwasimgaxt. li ha'w ji gi'nidimaxsisim wagayt wil 'witxwi'y diya 'nit ahl tk'ihlxwgi. li 'nithl wilhl kuba tk'ihlxwgi, laahlda.

ii hiyukwt txoogandiit, sim ganwila yukwahl txookxwidiit. Nee dii het dim xseekdiit.

Nda wil xseekdiit ii hats'im ligi gandinsxwidiit spagayt gan.

Hlaa amhl gadipdidiit sakst sdildiit noxdiit.

T'e'elthl limxsihl tk'ihlxwgi nda k'uu wil k'uu similo'o't. li nee dii het dim yeediit ts'u'oyuxwgi, lax xsiipgi.

lit hlimoodiit noxdiit wil sinhundiit hlaa up dist'isdiit. li hoti kw'ihl 'wiinak'hl hlgu hanak'gi.

ii k'i'yhl hiihluxw ii woks noxdiiit iit balgi lax'ni wil yiyukwhl hootxwit.

ii 'ni dim maat gya'ahl tk'ihlxwgiihl do'ot gyee'w, guunxhligi. ii kw'ihl baxhl hlgu hanak'gi. Hoti hukwsxw 'nit. Gi'nitxwt noxdiiit iit gya'a wil yiyukwdiiit. iit uu'uudiiit dim txookxwdiiit. ii at'aat'ixsdiit ii am txookxwdiiit ii hats'im hoo 'yaga saksdiit. Akhl hes noxdiiit. Wilaayit dim wil hoti 'nit dim wildiit ahl wilhl galts'apgi. Sgwaa'yt hat'agandiit ii up neediit naa ant lax'nihl kw'ihl het. li aat'ixs wil neediit hoti hlimoodiiit noxdiiit ahl sax guunxhl wila wildiit ii 'nakwhl yukwdiiit.

Gwal mi ligi dist'is 'nidiit ga'nakwhl yukwhl guunxhldiiit.

li hats'im hoo 'nithl wilhl kw'oo kw'ihl gipaygwiitgi ii his'weesxw gats Nuhl_x. K'esxwis Nuhl_xhl k'aaxgi iit guut iit 'niit'aadid lax timgest ii balgi lislisxwhl sise'et.

Hats'im hoo hugyagathl wilhl hlits'apdiitgi. 'Nit wil k'esas Masgwa-hlgu-lo'opgi.

Hats'im ligi 'mashl lo'opgi ii daa'wihlt ts'u'oyuxw iit daxdokhl sise'es Nuhl_x. ii j'ahls Masgwa-hlgu-lo'op ii hoti 'min daa'wihlt hoti lislisxwhl sise'et. li k'esahl hlgu Maawnim-Lo'op. Hoo lo'op 'nit ii hoti 'mast ii hoti t'ipdaa'wihlt ts'u'oyuxw. Hoti j'ahl 'nit.

ii nee dii t'iphla'ansihl k'aaxgi. Neediit gya'adiit hlideeyihl k'aaxgi. Neediit gya'adiit ji wil 'niihukwsxwhl k'aaxgi. li 'nit wil hoti k'esas Skants'ook', ii limxsihl hliwisit ahl ts'im yip ii hoti 'nit wil 'niihukwsxwt. Hoo jahl 'nit. li aayaawaatxwhl gimxdidiit.

T'uuts'xwhl untgi. Lip wilaayit lip 'nit. Hlipdaltxwithl lislisxwitgi. Luu bagayt kw'ihl wilhl hlgu tk'ihlxwgiihl wilt, hlgu tk'ihlxwimhanak'gi. Neediit kw'ihl wilaaxt hoti neediit hoti kw'ihl gya'ahl hagwiluxw deeyasihl k'aaxgi. lit kw'ihl sawihl unt iit ts'ik'ojihl hagwiluxwgi yukwt neediit kw'ihl gya'a anwilt. li 'nit wil laks dip Nuhl_x ii hats'im hoo

lo'opdiit. li nuts' Nuhlx. Skants'ook' hlik'yulit ii up nee sityeekws hlgu hanak'gi loot. Up wila hanak'di'y.

lit saamagahl nuts'giihl 'moosit lax k'aax. lit gwaats' ama doxdiit iit k'utk'uu diyeehl k'aax daax wil doxdiit. Gya'at dim wilt. Nee diit wilaax ganwiltgi. ii hlaa gwila'hlh wilt, hax, ii kw'ihl hloohlaatxwhl do'otgi. Hats'im hoo gagyatda ii up nee dii lugwisxwidiit. lit hats'im hoo k'utk'uu didaa'wihl hlgu hanak'giihl k'aax ii haldim wandiit gat. Wilhl k'ay lugwisxwidi'y gathl wildiit. li kw'ihl xooxdiit. li gi'nidimaxsdiit. iit xbiguus Nuhlxgiihl k'aax ahl tk'ihlxwimhanak'gi iit 'nii hedint lax t'imgest. ii sakshl ha'widiit. li up nee dii hoti wildiit. Nee dii hoti yeediit go'ohl guunxhl.

ii up hats'im hoo 'nithl wildiit. Up txas 'nitxws kw'ihl j'abihl noxdiit iit kw'oo hlimoodiit 'nit.

ii k'i'yhl hiihluxw iit balgi lax'nihl noxdiit sduutxwit ahl gyeewgi. Ahl ha'nii guunxhlgi. Ha'w ji gi'nidimaxsisim diyagat 'nit. Aak' ganeet. Dim a goodahl het dim ii gi'nidimaxsisim dim ii dip gya'ahl diya 'nit. li 'nithl wildiit. Laahlda. Hehl t'iplagidiihl hehl lax'nidiit go'ohl ha'niihlit'diitgi. Gooda gathl het hlaa amhl ga'nagwit, ii gi'nidimaxsdiit.

ii xseekdiit. Gwi dii gahl ji wilhl hlisipl hliluu'lak lax ha'nii guumxdiit. "Tip goodinhl laxhagi hlisipl 'min saksitgi. Umkw 'with! gathl laxha hehl hootxwit hluxwhlaxwt ganwil t'ip magahl ixxt. ii gay hoo yukwt dimt naasda doxdiithl sipgi.

Max'matxwhl hlagats'oot. Nda k'u wilhl k'u 'nakwhl k'uu gwitkw'ootxwidiit diyahl hediit. Nee dii am k'i'yhl sa ji yukwidiit naasda doxdiit sip. Kuba tk'ihlxw hlagats'oot. Gwaats' kw'ihl t'al gixgya'adiit.

Waayt Nuhl_x kw'ihl miinhl k'aaxgi. Ts'aa gwaats' hlisxw_{diit} naadaadox_{diit} sipgi ii hats'im hoo 'nithl hlgu hanak'gi ant daxyugwihl k'aax. ii k'ut'k'uu saksdiit. iit k'utk'uu diyeetxw_{diit} gadaax wil 'wii doxhl sipgi. li gwila'l k'utk'uu hlo'odiit ii k'a litxw_{diit}. li kw'ihl hloohlaatxwhl sipgi. lit hats'im hoo k'utk'uu diyeediit k'aaxgi.

Txalpxhl wildiit. li balgi haldim wans dipust. Ndahl wilhl lugwisxwithl 'nithl wildiit.

Xooxda. Gapgapxw_{diit}. li gi'nidimax_{sdiit}. ii sakshl ha'w_{diit}. li gina kw'ihl litxws dip Nuhl_x. Gwisbakwhl ts'apgi. li ts'ilim gootdiit go'ohl lip gawilp_{diit}. Neediit wilaaxdiit gwihlwa ji wiltdiit.

Way 'nit wil sagagootxws dip Nuhl_x ganhl wakxwtgi dimt hlibaltwiltxw_{diithl} similo'o k'utk'uu wilt ahl ts'apdiitgi. Laxyip_{diit}. Go'ohl gagii'yhl Gitwangax dim wil hlisxw_{diit}. li nee dii kw'ihl tsilims dip Nuhl_x. Dim am gasgoo dim gupdiit ahl ji hlaa txookxwim yuxwsadiit dim yukw_{diit}. iit yukw_{diithl} k'aaxgi. lit Nuhl_x ant diyeet. ii hoti hukwsxwhl hlgu hanak'gi. Yeet. ii 'nit hlaa 'nakw wil liyeetdiit ii naadii gathl hlgu 'wiigyathl dit'aat, kw'ihl yuuhlxwt.

Gwooyim wil wi wildiit. li 'nit gat wil hoo 'yaga hetxws Nuhl_x iit yagayt guuhl gimxditgihl k'aax. "O gwii dim dii 'mugwin hlgu 'wiigyat", di hoo yagat Nuhl_x. "O wagi'y, wag'iy wagi'y ha'niigoodi'y ji gigoos Nuhl_x", diyagathl hlgu 'wiigyatgi.

Tk'esxws Nuhl_x logom 'wiigyatgi iit 'yaga hlo'oxst. Hoo kw'ihl liseewis Nuhl_x hlgu 'wiigyatgi wil yukwhl kw'ihl aatt wil nee dii kw'ihl baxhl ligi aks. li hats'im hoo baxyeehl logom 'wiigyatgi iit hats'im hoo t'ip hlo'oxs Nuhl_x 'nit. li hats'im hoo bax aat'ixshl hlgu 'wiigyatgi. Sgwaa'yt k'esxws Nuhl_x hlgu 'wiigyatgi dimt hlii hlo'oxst up hats'im hoo 'niit'aat. li amhl ga'nagwitgi iit hlaamagas Nuhl_x ii hats'im hoo ii 'niit'aahl

hlgu 'wiigyatgi. Hats'im hoo yiyukwhl aatt. Hlgu gyadaleehl hliwilt ii up neediit gya'as Nuhl_x. Up gyathl dii gya'at. Jahlt Nuhl_x. Nee dii k'a 'nu'wihl gyadalee ii hats'im hoo saksdiit.

'Nakw gat wil liyeetdiit iit daltxwdiit kuba juuluxw. Amyeediit hoo 'naayisyajis Nuhl_x t'ip_xaat' kuba juuluxw iit simihldiit lakwdiit. Alaganhl hooxdiit iit luusgidiithl sganagan ganhl gi'maax_st. 'Mats'diithl hlmaasihl hat'a'lgi iit hugyax_hl hligimk.

Amyeediid yoosdiithl kuba juuluxwgi. Luulidindiithl gan gats'im_k'o'ohl juuluxwgi. ii litxwhl gilbilt juuluxwgi. iit gupdiit. Gwaats'j'ahldiit. iit ts'akdiithl lakwdiit. iit hlaamak_ddiit. 'Nit gathl nee dii ts'akhl lakwgi. Kw'ihl hlayax_hl kuba siph_l kuba juuluxwgi.

Nee dii 'nakw wil liyeetdiit iit balgi 'wadiit gathl hlgu wilp. Am hetxws Nuhl_x ahl aats'ip ii xsawhl hanak_k'gi. "O neemsim gya'ahl sdik_y'eekwsim a doots" diyagat, "sakshl walix lakwdiit ii gwikw'ootxwdiit, diyahl hanak_k'gi. Simjuuluxw 'wim maa 'nit. Neediit gabidins dip Nuhl_x wil ts'imax_sdiit ahl wilp juuluxw. Wilhl up wilbi'y wilt gya'adiit. "Nee", diyagat Nuhl_x "am t'ip_xaathl hl kuba juuluxw dii gya'am ii dip 'naayisyatsdiit iit dip jahldiit'. "Gwaats' saajihljahldim", diyagat, "sax hlisipdiithl manit. li sit'aa'maam geex_whl hlgu 'wii'nak_k'gi. "Huu, huu, huu", di kw'oo yagat. ii hlaa yukwhl sgaadaa'wihl aats'ipgi wil geex_whl hlgu 'wii nak_k'gi.

gay 'nit xsiyuwihl mi'ingi wil xsik'yee_kxws Nuhl_x.

li bax_t go'o wilt gupdiithl kuba juuluxwgi. Naadiihl k'ay mimihl lakwdiit. Lagwis Nuhl_x siph_l kuba juuluxwgi ii bax_t go'ohl aks. li akst. li box_t. Sagaydo'os Nuhl_x kuba lakw iit gi'namt ahl kuba juuluxwgi. lit dibakws Nuhl_x kuba tk'ihlxwim juuluxwgi.

'Ts'iits, ts'iits, k'agahl aats'ip, k'agahl aats'ip loo'm. Nda wilt ganwilhl

tk'algantxwin?" ii hats'im hoo guxws geexxwhl hlgu 'wiinak'gi iit k'agahl aats'ip.
 Ii hats'im hoo tk'andaa'wihl aats'ipgi. lit hats'im hoo saaliyeedis dip Nuhl_x hlishl
 lits'eexdiit. li 'nakw wil liyeetdiit.

li gay hoo 'nit gathl 'wiigyathl dit'aat hlisilkwhl Ts'ilaasxwgi
 (BulkleyCanyonima).

Naasda dulpxwhl lo'op go'ohl Ts'ilaasxwgi. Hlo'otdid gathl 'wii gyat t'aat
 doosdagiit gaak. Hasak't dimt k'ak'xwt (finger wrestle). Hasak't dimt bakhl kuba
 tk'ihlxwgi dimt gya'a naa dim xsdaat. li 'nit wil hoo k'esas Nuhl_x. 'Nit dim sgoogaad. lit
 yagayt guuhl gimxdiitgiit k'aax. li nee ligi 'nakwt ii jahls Nuhl_x ii sax 'wii nuts' 'niit'aat
 lax'unhl gyatgi. lit sawihl unt ii suu'y saafaahls t'aahls nuts' go'o wil kw'ihl wilhl
 hlagats'uut. li 'nit wil k'esas Masxwa-Lo'op dii k'ak'xwhl 'wii gyatgi

iit suu'y t'ip halaldinhl lo'opgi 'nit. 'Nu'whl gyatgi ii kw'ihl sgihl hlgu lo'op. Jahl
 'wii gyatgi. iit Masxwa-Lo'ophl xsdaat. Wa'iit hoo guuhl hlgu hanak'giit k'aax. Ii hats'im
 hoo txalpxhl k'utk'uu daa'wihlt ii hats'im hoo lugwisxws dip Nuhl_x gant Masxwa-Lo'op.

iit 'wadiithl lax'amaaxws, ii hlaa yukwhl sk'eexxw iit gya'adiit wil mihl lakw
 k'aphl lax'amaaxwsgi, spagayt gan. 'Nit go'osun dim wil wokxwdiit. Ii yeediit loot.

ii litxwdiit gyalk'. "Ts'imaxsisim", "ji 'nisim dim ant hlibaltwiltxwhl yajasxw",
 diyahl, "similoo'o". Wilaayihl hanak'gi. ii ts'imaxs dip Nuhl_x. ii hiyukwt
 txoogandiit. ii gwaats' hlixhlee_xwdiit.

Ii mahlasxwhl hanak'gi hlaa 'nit dim ant dee'entxwdiit. "Wo", diyagat, "hlaa helthl
 saksit go'o dim wil yeesim, ii nee dii gwisbakwdiit wil nee dii am'amdiit. Waa'y ii
 yuxwsa t'aahlakw", diyagat, "Dim 'wayisim wil jokhl k'yoolihl gyat. Dim 'weesxw

hli't'at. Hila'yhl wit'ax t'at. Ii 'nit hli't'atgi ant yatshl gyat", diyahl hanak'gi. "Wooy, dim hats'im hoo J'akw di sim 'nit", diyagat. Wilaayid wil xsdaadiit ahl hlik'yulihl

gyatgi. "Jim sim 'wahl guh xt'atgi", diya, "wo dimt ginsim ii up gwi dimt ginsim wo dim miim sim up gupt", diyagathl hanak' "up wineeyis," diyagat, "mii neem diim sim up hlaamagat hlis ji sim jagwit. Dim up mihldisim. Kw'oo didawdas ii up. ii hats'im hoo dildilstdiit". Wilaayihl hanak'gi.

"Way dim dogosim dim sitxwimsansim", diyagat hanakgi. "Wooy ji hats'im hoo yuxwsa wo dim miim sim hats'im hoo 'wahl hlik'i'yhl wilp wil hoo jokhl hlik'ulithl gyat. Ahl 'nidiit ant yatshl gyat", diyahl hanak'gi. Wilaayit. "Wooy ii gilbilhl t'imgest", diya. "Wooy 'nithl guudit gyatgi iit luusbagayt magat ahl t'imgestgi. ii sakshl t'imges ii t'aawak'hl gyatgi", diyagathl hanak'gi. "Ii 'nit dim

hats'im hoo wilhlsim dim up hoo mihl di simhl wilp laxst", diyagat. "Wo dim miimsim t'al simihlis gyadis loot", diyagat. "Dim up J'iibilixst, diyahl hanak'gi.

"Wooy miim sim hoo 'wahl hlik'yulit", diyagat. Hats'im hoo k'yulit hat'akxwit aneet."

"Dixdakhlxw se'et", diya. "Ii se'ethl hooyit ahl gyat", diyahl hanak'gi. "Dim gya'asim dimt wilaagwisim", diya. "Dim sim hugyagam laagaldid 'nisim", diya. "Wooy miim sim lup wilaax dim wila laahlsim", diyahl hanak'gi. "Dim miim sim up hats'im hoo mihlit", diya.

"Wo dim ii hoo hats'im hoo liyeedisim. Dim hats'im hoo 'wayisim hlik'i'yhl wilp", diya. "Woo ii 'nithl gyat tun", diyagathl hanak'gi, "Haldawgit 'nit, ganhl hooyit", diyagat. "Hat'a'hlh 'niilisxwit lax gangi. Tuuts'xwhl hlik'aphl gangi ii ihlee'etxwhl hlik'apt",

diyagat. "iit gyamginhl gyatgi, haldawgitgi hat'a'lgi iit am gimkhl akhl gyat yugwithl wogad. ii 'nit wil 'nu'wt. Wooy dim yagayt j'abisim tun", diya, "hligook mi

sim 'wahl anee'ysa. Dim hoti j'abisimhl gan wo dim ii hoti t'uuts'xwt ii ihlee'etxwhl hlik'apt. Wo dim ii saalisxwhl ha't'a'l loot", iit gi'namhl hanak'giihl mas loodiit dim hooxdit ahl hlik'aphl gangi.

ii 'nithl wila wilhl galdim haldawgitgi ii hoti 'nithl wilhl dim j'apdiit.

"Wo dim ii xsidaa'wihlt ahl gyalk' hligook dim laahlsim", diyahl hanak'gi. "Wooy dim miim sim gay guuhl J'apsim neem sim dii gwingya'adid loot", diya. "Dim miim gay hedint go'ohl aats'ibis", diya. "Go'ohl amuwast ahl aats'ipgi dim miim sim guuhl galdim haldawgittgi dim miim sim yaxwt. Wooy 'nithl goodihl gyat dim 'wayisim", diya'nit.

"Wooy k'i'y dim 'wayisim hligook dim guusbakwsim ahl ts'apsim", diya. "Hoo'o dim wilhlsim", diya 'nit, "dim ligi galxa hat'akxwima 'nisim". "Wii lalt", diya, "dim 'wayisim. Jim sim gii'yt'xw wil wokt ii gesxwt", diya. "Ii ji gyukwsxwt dim ii isxwt ii 'nithl haadidawxwhl gyat", diya hanak'gi, "ii 'wii t'ixxwt ii limxsihl hlilaxt ii silkxwhl ga'nagwit. Wo'ii ji da wokt miim sim da'akxw mi sim jagwit", diyahl hanak'gi. "Way neen dii wilaax dim wilsim ji gadoo'ot", diyagat. "ji galxa ax'akxwsim mii gwisbakwsim", diyagat.

Wooy saks dipust hlaa hiihluxwgi. Tsilim 'nidiit. Ii liyeetdiit. lit 'wadiit wil jokhl aneehl hanak'gi loodiit hlaa yuxwsa. "Tsimaxsisim, ts'imaxsisim, ts'imaxsisim", diyagat. Nuhlxl hoo ts'ilim sgoogaat. lit gwini wanhl gyatgi 'nidiit. ii wandiit. ii hlgu hanak'gi ant kw'ihl hooxhl k'aaxgi. Ii yukw gathl wo'otxwhl kw'ihl 'max t'atgi.

Ii yiyukwhl txookxwidiit. Gwaats' ama smaxt gindiit. Maa'yhl gupdiit. Gwihl gubihl " 'wahlin gigyatgi 'nithl gupdiit. ii wandiit.

ii 'nit wil hoo balgi hes Nuhl_x as Masxwa-Lo'op, "Gya'ahl hlit'as suust, gya'ahl hlit'as suust". ii tk'alyeedi_{ihl} dalhl het. "Gya'ahl hlit'ahl t'aat go'osuust", diyagat.

Gwaats' sidaltidhl het. lit guuhl guht'atgiit Nuhl_x iit hliba'aldid ahl t'imgest ii 'wii nuts' 'niit'aat t'imgeshl gyatgi iit suusildint. lit gay hoot Masxwa-Lo'ophl guudit. iit tk'al geex_{anhl} 'wii lo'opgi ahl t'imgest. Ii didawhl hlit'at. Xsdaat Masxwa-Lo'op. Didawhl hlit'at ii hoti 'nu'whl gyat ii hats'im hoo lo'opt. lit hats'im hoo guuhl hlgu hanak'gi_{ihl} lo'op gant Nuhl_x iit hats'im hoo k'utk'uu didaa'wihl k'aaxgi loodiit. Ii hats'im hoo dildilsis dip Nuhl_x gant Masxwa-Lo'op. ii laahldiit ii hiihluxw ii

txook_{xw}diit. lit dok_{diithl} hlik'aphl wineexhl gyatgi. iit simihldiit.

Habindiithl wilp lax_{sgi} iit mihldiithl gyatgi loot ganhl t'ax'nitxwshl toosit. Up 'nithl hehl gwilim mahlasxwit loodiit dim wildiit. iit hlaamak_{diit} hlishl wildiit.

Haay hats'im hoo liyeetdiit iit hoo 'wadiithl hlgu aks ii 'nit wil wanhl txook_{xw}diit ii hats'im hoo saahlo'odiit. Hlaa dimt 'wadiithl wilphl 'nii gilbilthl t'imgeshl gyatgi. ii hlaa amhl wila yuxwsa ii 'nit wilt 'wadiit. ii hoo litxw_{diit} gyalk'. iit hoo gw_{in} ts'imax_{shl} gyatgi 'nidiit. ii ts'imax_{diit}. ii up 'nithl Nuhl_{xhl} hoo ts'ilim sgoogaat. ii wandiit. ii wo'otxwhl gyatgi loodiit. Tkoogant 'nidiit. Hlishl lits'eexdiit ii wandiit.

Sgwatxwi'yhl hoo het gats Nuhl_x, "Gya'ahl wilhl t'imgeshl t'aat go'osuust", diyagat, "Gya'ahl wilhl t'imgest." Hats'im hoo ya' 'nit. Ansigwit wil yukwt hatagans Masxwa-Lo'op 'nit. Hlaa amhl ga'nagwit ii gehl_{xxws} Nuhl_x, "Gya'ahl wilhl t'imgeshl t'aat go'osuust" diyagat 'nit. lit luu sbagayt magahl gyatgiit Nuhl_x ahl t'imgest. ii hats'im ligi 'wii nuts' t'ahlit loot. iit sildinhl gyatgi ahl aats'ip. ii gay yat Masxws-Lo'ophl guudi_{hl} gyatgi iit magat go'ohl t'imgest. ii hats'im ligi tk'an bisihl t'imgeshl gyatgi. Tk'an bisihl lo'opgi wil 'ni_{wanhl} t'imgest. Mashl lo'opgi ii 'nu'whl gyatgi iit

hats'im hoo diyeehl hlgu hanak'giihl aatxyasxwdiit, k'aaxgi, ii hats'im hoo hugwisxws dip Nuhl_x gant Masxwa-Lo'op.

ii laahldiit. Ii up hats'im hoo 'nithl wildiit hlaa hiihluxw. Mihldiit, wil up 'nithl hehl gwildim mahlasxwitgi loodiit dim wildiit. iit dok_udiit dim gupdiit ahl txook_xwim hiihluxwdiit.

iit hlaamak_udiit. iit hoo 'wadiit hlik'yulihl gyatgi hlaa yuxwsa. Dakxhluwithl sise'ehl gyatgi. Gya'adiit wil mihl lakwt ii kw'idin hlo'odiit loot go'ohl wilp laxst ii 'nithl hoo wildiit hoo agwi lixwda. lit guun ts'imax_xshl gyatgi 'nidiit ii ts'imax_sdiit.

Dakxhlxw 'wii sise'ehl gyatgi ii yukwhl si'angwahl gyatgi, txoogant dip Nuhl_x. Hunhl gupdiit ganhl smax ganhl maa'y. ii up 'nitt Nuhl_x hoo sit'aa'maat ahl hat'ak_xwtgi. ii hoo am si'aamhl het as Masxwa-Lo'op, "Gya'ahl sise'ehl t'aat go'osuust", di hoo yagat. ii hlaa amhl ga'nagwit ii tk_ualyeehl dahl het. Ii a'lax_hl gyatgi. ii t'aahl gyatgi. Nee dii gwi ji wilt yukwt dimt giba dim woowo_xdiit.

iit kw'ihl gi'namhl gyatgi dim gwiiladiit. Ii laahldiit laxts'eehl lakw. ii 'nit wil hoo gwaats' luuxsngiiksis Nuhl_xgi anu go'ohl lakwgi wo'iit Masxwa-Lo'op iit Maawinim-Lo'op iit Skants'ook'. iit K'ohlim-Loop wagayt gits'unit wil sgit. ii amyeet kw'ihl yalims woowo_xwdiit yukwt dimt gya'adiit dim wilhl gyatgi. Ii simhetxwshl gyatgi ji woowo_xdiit ii yukwtgat juxwhl se'etgi, dakxhlasit. Ii sim dalhl ts'aks Nuhl_x.

Xs_ixhak'yo'odithl lakw ii hoti wils Masxwa-Lo'op. Gaay anuu gits'unhl gya'adiit.

Gya'adiithl hliwilhl gyatgi. ii 'widin daa'wihl gyatgi ahl lakw ii yukwt gyamginhl se'et ii hats'im wilhl didili'y gathl'wilt. Tuuts'xwhl se'etgi. ii 'nithl hedint go'ohl hak'yo'os Nuhl_x ii hoo 'wii nuts'hl 'nii t'ahlit loot iit hoo sildint go'ohl aats'ip. lit gaay hoo Masxwa-Lo'op_hl k'esxwihl gyatgi iit gwaats' xsi 'nagwinhl hak'yo'ot iit suu hlip t'ishl se'ehl gyatgi.

Xjaaxw wil t'iphlaalagahl hlits'u'winhl t'uuts'xwhl gyatgi. Ii hoo k'a daa'wihl gyatgi go'o wil giihlt. ii yukwt geexhl se'etgi, an'unt hooyit. Gwaats' sakhl j'apt. ii sa'aamhl dalhl ts'im ts'aks Masxwa-Lo'op. ii hats'im hoo 'widin yeehl gyatgi iit hats'im hoo hlo'oxshl hak'yo'os Masxwa-Lo'op. Tk'alyeet xsi'nagwins Masxwa-Lo'ophl hak'yo'ot. ii hats'im hoo

hliplakhl se'ehl gyatgi. ii hats'im hoo daa'wihlt iit hoo hats'im geexhl se'et ii yugwi'yhl wilt ii hlipgoodihl se'et. ii 'nu'whl gyatgi. lit hats'im hoo j'aphl hlgu hanak'gi dip Nuhl_x iit hats'im hoo lugwisindiit. ii laahldiit. Hlipgoodahl se'ehl a'lagadgi. iit malkwdiit 'nit. ii hats'im hoo saahlo'odiit.

Wo' hlaa yukwt dimt j'apdiithl galdim haldawgitdiit. 'Nakw wil liyeetdiit ii 'wadiithl hlgu aks ii 'nit wilt simihldiithl lakw. 'Nit wilt t'uuts'diithl gan aneehl hanak'gi.

Gwaats' tk'al gi'namdithl hat'a'lgi ganhl mas. iit k'utk'uu dakxhldiit hat'a'lgi iit saamastdiithl hlits'u'winhl hat'algi.

'Nithl daxyukwdiit hlaa hats'im hoo saahlo'odiit hlaa dimt 'wadiithl haldawgitgi. Hlaa sk'eexw wilt 'wadiit 'nit iit gwaats' kw'ihl yaxwdiithl galdim haldawgitdiitgi. Nee dii hediit dimt gya'ahl gyatgi. ii ts'imaxsdiit hlaat gwin ts'imaxshl gyatgi 'nidiit.

Luu'amhl goothl gyatgi wil kw'ihl bakwdix go'ot. Ak'hl hoo ligi kw'ihl hes Nuhl_x gyuu'n. Ak'hl hoo ligi kw'ihl halaagyagad. Up amagyathl t'aatgi. ii txookxwdiit.

Gwaats' ts'eeyinhl gyatgi 'nidiit. iit awisdox dim wil laahldiit. Up 'nit wila laahl gyat ahl 'nagwit. ii xsidaa'wihl gyatgi gyalk. Yukw dim yeet dim ist.

ii haldim baxs Nuhl_x iit sityeewihl galdim haldawgitgi iit gaay magahl japdiitgi go'ohl amuwast. iit yaxwhl galdim haldawgithl gyatgi. li hoo 'nithl hediit kw'ihl yalim woowox 'nidiit. Gya'adiit dim wilhl haldawgitgi.

ii mihl hlgu lakw. 'Nakw hli^{daa} woowo^{xx}ws dip Nuhl^x diyahl goothl gyatgi ganwilhl gi'nitxwt ii daa'wihlt go'o wil hetxwhl galdim haldawgittgi. iit guut, iit 'nii gyamgint lax'uhl lakwgi. lit 'nii k'yant lax aaks Nuhl^x, gwaats' k'akhl aaks Nuhl^x.

Hats'im gaay didal gathl sneeks Nuhl^x. iit hats'im hoo wilaagwit ii gaay hoo hlik'yulitgi anwilt iit hoti gwaats' neediit hoti am ligi aatxt. Saabahant 'nidiit ii nee dii didawdiit. iit magahl galdim haldawgitxwtgi iit hedint. Ii daa'wihl giihlt. ii 'nithl hoo yagayt mahldihl gwildim mahlasxwitgi. ii hlaa yukw sim xts'a'yhl wokt diya ii xsi'at'aat'ixshl hlip'aaluxw ahl ts'akt. Hlaa goodihl wilt ii "nit wil up wokt. iit guutdiithl galdim haldawgitxwhl gyatgi ii 'nithl hooxdiit loot. iit liluxwsdiit hlinaahlxt.

Gooda hlinaahlxhl gyatgi. 'Nu'w 'nit.

Sakshl laahldiit hlishl wildiit ii woowo^xdiit. Ii 'nu'whl gyatgi. Up hooxdiithl anda haldawgitxwt loot. Up hats'im hoo 'nithl wildiit. Hats'im hoo mihldiithl anj'okt iit

mihldiit gyatgi. Gaay hoo lalt dim 'wadiit jigyyu'n. ii liyeetdiit, ii liyeetdiit hlaa yukw dimt 'wadiithl miinhl sga'nist. ii silakwsdiit ii

txookxw^{diit}. ii aayaawaatxwhl hlgu hanak'gi gas wilt gageexhl unt. Sigyamkhl an'unt ahl lakwgi iit hats'im hoo geext. ii 'nithl hlgu hanak'gi dim ant luudaltxwhl lalt.

iit yagayt mahlihl gwildim mahlaasxwitgi wil ts'uuxshl laltgi nda wil wokt.

iit tk'esxws K'ohlim-Lo'opgi wil sisgihl lalt lax lo'op. Si'amhl wokt. iit suu saak'ojis k'ojis K'ohlim -Lo'opgihl t'imgeshl laltgi ganhl hlik'uukw't. ii anuu Gigeenixhl wila daa'wihl t'imgeshl laltgi hlist saak'ojit. li luudaa'wihlt ts'im t'axxwhl Gisgaga'as. ii Gyeets' wila daa'wihl hlik'uukw'hl laltgi. ii hoti luudaa'wihlt ts'im t'ax. 'Nithl siwatdiit ahl Seeley Lake gyuu'n. Xsdaat K'ohlim-Lo'op. Jakwdithl laltgi.

iit gaay hoot Nuhl_x ant k'utk'uu didaa'wihl k'aax. ii hats'im hoo mootxws K'ohlim-
Lo'op ii hats'im hoo hlgu hanak't. li hats'im hoo saahlo'odiit hlo'odiit. Bax saksda
laxsga'nist, Sdik'yoodinaxhl.

li hlaa yukw dim kw'adixswdiit laxsga'nistgi iit lax'nidiit wil yats'ahl sdamk.
Duum, duum, duum, diyagat lax'nidiit. li kw'ihl litxwdiit, nee diit wilaaxdiithl gwihl hehl
lax'nidiitgi. li hats'im hoo liyeetdiit, hasak'diit dimt gil'k'a giisxwdiithl hehl lax'nidiitgi.
Nee diit mahlihl gwildim mahlasxwitgi dim wildiit. li kw'ihl gina litxwdiit ii hats'im hoo
saahlo'odiit.

Gya'adiit wil aat'ixshl, ii aat'ixshl hanak'. 'Wii t'ax luuhlo'otxwithl hooyit. ii
k'aat'xwhl 'wii hanak'gi. ii nda wil gya'lasxwt ii xsi'aat'ixshl mihl ahl ts'a'at ii hoo ts'iipt ii
hoo goodaahl wilt ii hats'im hoo gyahlaasxwt ii hats'im hoo aat'ixshl mihl.

Gaay hoo lixsgyat kw'oo kw'ihl wils dip Nuhl_x kw'oo si'yhl huutxwdiit ii up
ganwila hetxwhl 'wii hanak'gi angook'diit. li ak'hl kw'ihl wildiit ii up 'nit wil litxwdiit. li
'nit wil lo'ops dip Nuhl_x. li up 'nit wil didaxwdiit. K'oo'it siwatdiithl hanak'gi ii up 'nit
ant yats dip Nuhl_x. Up ak'hl wildiit loot. li 'nit wil lo'ops dip Nuhl_x, laxsga'nist,
Sdik'yoodinaxhl.

ii hlis gathl t'ip daa'wihls Nuhl_x, diyahl andamahlasxw ii hats'im hoo huwanhl
txalpxdulit. li ji hlaa t'ipgootdiit ii 'nit gat dim wil saabaxhl ha'niiok.

li 'nit tun wil saabaxs Nuhl_x.

Hlgu Axxwt**(The Little Porcupine)**

Ant mahlihl andamahlasxw tun hasakdiit dimt si'aluut'aadiit dim hlo'otxwhl
dax'nitxws ligi agwi.

K'i'yhl sum sint, diyahl andamahlasxw tun, kwihl wilhl hlgu axxwt
Sdikyoodenax. K'i'yhl sahl yukwhl kwihl yookxwt iit hlaat aatx wilhl hehl ligi
'numwogadiihl het. iit 'wahl hlgu axxwt wil luuxts'agimxs sdo'ixshl
sganlaxsimlaxnok. ii giihls hlgu axxwt ii hehl sigootxwt dim 'nakw dim wokt
dim ii sim ixsga dim xsiwokt.

Ii gyuksxwhl hlgu axxwt wilt nax'nihl ligi agwi'y mahl het ant umgant. Ii
kwihl si'y gya'lahl hlgu axxwtgi iit gya'a wil hlgu akst huwilt hli
laxliksit ii 'nit ant umgant' ii sim hisgyatxwshl hlgu axxwt 'widin yeet.

Wilhl dim ligi kwihl umgasxwidi'y 'nit iit sim staada aksis hlgu axxwt hlgu
aksgi iit sim jixts'eekhl kuba lo'opgi wagayt wil gwilgwalkwdiit.

Ii hlaa needii s'yaxhl ligi agwi, ii hats'im hoo gwis yees hlgu axxwt go'owil
luuxts'agimxs hlawhl sganlaxsimlaxnokgi.

Ii needii 'nakwtgi ii hats'im hoo sit'aa'maahl hlgu aksgi 'yaga baxt
saa'witxwt laxsaa'nist. Ii sim tk'alyeehl yaahls hlgu axxwt. Ii hats'im hoo
gwis yeet iit sdaada aksihl hlgu aksgi iit hats'im hoo jixts'eekhl kuba
lo'opgi wagayt wil gwilgwalkwt.

Ii hats'im hoo gwis yees hlgu axxwt yukw dim hats'im hoo wokt ii up neediit
gwis 'wahl sganlaxsimnaxnokgi. Sim gyaks galanhl silxwsax ii xwhluxws hlgu
axxwt.ii hats'im hoo 'yaga baxhl hlgu aks sdo'ixshl laxsga'nist.

Ganhehl Gitxsan gaxsdiksihl hli da wilhs hlgu axxwt ii needii getxwhl wilhl axxwt ii hoo yaahl. Amts'uuxs ligi gwihl hehl lax'ni'yit iit hoo lidinhl hli 'yimt ganwil ligi yukw hat'agam xsiwokt.

Andamahlasxw Wila Wilhs K'alidakhl

(Origin Of Blue Jay)

K'alidakhl siwadihl Gitxsanhl ts'uuts' tun, gus dak hlit hli gest. Xsim Gitxsan ant sit'aahl k'alidakhl.

Xsibaxhl mi'in ahl sii sa'anjokdiit ii sim luu'am'amhl gagootthl sii naksit hlis sim t'is hahla'alstdiit hlist sim hugyagam hlisindiit sii'anjokdiit. 'Nakwhl sak' ahl maadim, ii ax'akhl wineex. ii up am wil galxsi'ax'akxwdiit. Hlaa aat'ixshl gwooyim ii hats'im daaxaaxhathl gagootdiit ii hats'im hoo siisaxxwdiit dim sii sagootxwdiit ii hats'im hoo siisaxxwdiit dim wila wildiit. T'is dim hahla'alstdiit. Dim gan nee dim hoo haxhaaxxwdiit ji hlaa hoo maadim.

Gwats luu naadimda'amt 'nidiit hlaa yukwhl hoo sagagootxwdiit dim wila wildiit. Ii yukwhl naadildalkdiit, iit nax'nidiit wil kwihl sdamk wil kwihl xhlisihl ligit naa gadaaxdiit. Ii 'nithl dii ayookdiit, an jim ts'ilaayxxwhl ligit naa am ji kwihl sdamgansdin dim kwihl xhlisidn gadaaxhl anjokdiit, dim gwinnax'nitxw 'nit. Ii ji ansigwidiit kwihl het ii hats'im hoo luuyaltxwt wil saa'witxwt.

Ii xsaxwhl gyatgi gwiihl naadiihl hlamsim hanak't gildimgoodit dim tsimil lukwt go'odiit. Kwihl yukwdit 'wii gwe'ehl wil luudoxhl amixugitt.

"Tsinin", diya 'nit, tsaaneeydi'yt sim ha'nookhlgoott laa wilhl hlamst.

Amgoodit wil needii dim hoo belt dim siwineexdiit.

Ii sim needii luuts'o'o hli algyaxt. Neediit gabidint wil yukwt umkxwhl

hlamsim gyatt het. Amhl dii wila wilt gimaadim, helthl dii wineext. Needii

kwihl sk'oksxwhl wila dii kwihl ganjjok't. Needii kwihl hlabixswt wil

needii gwi ji jabit. "O", diya, moo ji ligit kwihl digilxwhl het,

k'oo'moxwhl goott neemdiit kwihl simedindiit kwihl het. Ahl amuwast dim

wilt kwihl giihlindiit 'nit. Ii logom mankdiiit dimt kwihl gindiit 'nit.

Lukwil guxw siilinaasxwim gyat tun iit sim siip'inhl ama'masithl nakst.

Xsidogathl wil sim am'amhl smax ii 'nithl si'angwit ahl nakst. Ii sim

gaakxhlxw smaxhl gi'namdiit loot, ii sim luusk'eexxwt ii luusakhl

amuwaast wil jokt wil sii du'u wil mihl lakw. Ii sim hagwin t'aahl hlguuhlxwim

hanak't sdo'ixs wil mihl lakw yukwt gup yoosim wil am'amhl smax. Ii t'aahl

anhluut'ixsim nakst, sim gyamk, ii sim ama'masihl gwisgoosxwim gwilahl hooyit.

Ji needii kwihl wilhl k'ay'masim hanak' tun, "Yugwima dimt kwihl didi'yhl

guxw siilinaasxwim gyat tun".

Ii kwihl t'aahl hlgu logom'wiinak' amuwast sim kwihl k'yalt. Gaswilt ge'enh

sim sipxwithl smax yukwhl hat'agam sagootxwt dim wila wilt.

Ii k'i'yhl sa ii daa'wihl k'ay'masim gyat guxw guwasit; iit jagwihl hlgu

logom'wiinakgi lup hlguuhlxwim hanak't. Ii sit'aa'mat guxws awil japxwt dim

gan wilhl tk'ihlxwidi'y 'nit. iit 'wahl t'uuts'a lakw go'ohl hlawil mihl

lakw iit k'utk'u dist'uuts'inhl ts'a'at loot. iit guuhl akxa maa'y iit

min'manhl dido'ot ganhl gadaaxhl tsim'aakt. Ii sagayt dimdamganhl hli gest

iit sagayt ts'iipt ahl lax'ohl t'imgest, tk'ahl hooyit. Ii sim luu'amhlgoott ahl japt, iit 'niimagahl ama'masim gwisgwoosxwim gwilagi lax no'ohlt ii t'aahl gibee'esxwt.

iit nax'ni wil hlaa aat'ixshl guxw siilinaasxwitgi gadaaxhl anjokdiit. Ii

ts'int iit 'widin gya'ahl go'ohl amuuwast wil hixs taahl hlgu 'wiinak'gi,

"O, am", diya, "daa'wihlidahl hlgu 'wiinak'gi", diyahlgoot. Ii sit'aa'maat

gildimgoodint dim gupdiit ji hlaa yuxwsa. Ii 'widin yeet

wil dit'aahl nakst iit simt luu gya'ahl ts'a'ahl kwihl si'ihl si'ama'masxwit

logom'wiinak. ii sim luu'amhlgoothl hlgu logom'wiinak' iit mahlihl daa'wihl

naks k'ay'masim gyat ii hlaa 'nit dim ant hooxhl gwisgwoosxwim gwila. Neediit

simedinhhl hehl nax'ni'yit. Daa'wihl ama'masim nakst.

iit guuhl xlaaxw iit k'utk'u hilanhl hlgu 'wiinak'gi gadaax wil mihl lakw'

gaswilt yatst ahl xlaaxw. Mahla k'i'yt yatst ii aat'ixs wil ts'uuxs hlgu

'wiinak'gi, gaswil aayaawaatxwt, gaswil tk'alyeehl dalhl

het. iit balgi haldim bajihl lip 'nit wil gak'aaxt ii 'nit wil xsigiphayxwhl

k'alidakhl alohl xsiyuwihl mi'in.

'Nit hli ihlagansxwt ganwilhl daa'wihlt go'ohl spagaytgan ii 'nit wil kwihl

gapgabilxwt dim gubit ii gaswil luubagayt kwihl algyaxt. Ii wagayt k'ay

gigyuu'wini'y, ii ji t'is ji kwihl algyagan ii needii gwi ji kwihl liseewin,

hishalaagyaxxwhl Gitxsan iit siwatdiit 'niin ahl K'alidakhl.

Wii'axgats'agat

(The Origin Of The Mosquito)

Needii yagayt kwihl wilhl wiidaxgats'agat go'osun diyahl andamahlasxw.

Amkyeekw 'Wii'nagwid Ts'agad kwihl yeet. Gasgootxwihl aluugigyat similo'o tun wil helthl gyathl yajit iit gupdiit. Go'ohl ts'apdiit wil wilt.

li helthl k'aylimxsim ii'wxwim Gitxsan ant wilaaxhl wildigitxw ii 'nidiit saksit dim ant jagwihl 'wii similo'o tun ii needii gwisbakwdiit. 'Nit ganwilhl Ts'uu'windigim Wakdiit sagootxwt dimt jagwihl 'Wii Similo'o

tun. Txalpxdulhl wakxwt ganhl amkyulithl nibipt saksit dim ant jagwihl

'Wii Similo'o tun, ii needii gwisbakwdiit. Ii ee'esxwhl Ts'uu'windigim

Wakdiit dim diltxwt wil didaxwhl wakxwt. Sgwaa'yt asduxwhetxws noxt 'nit

ganhl hlgiiqws noxt nee dim dii yeet ii up hasakhl Ts'uu'windigim Wakdiit,

iit gos jit asduxwhetxwsdiit 'nit dim hlaat'aat ahl anjokt dim wil gyakshl

dim wila wilt.

lit guuhl Ts'uu'windigim Wakdiithl andaxs'aksxwt wil luusgihl k'aymasxwdiihl

hli t'uuts'hl lakw iit sdindokhl haxdakwt ganhl hawilt, ii saayeet dim

yeet go'ohl t'ax wil jokhl 'Wii'nagwithlts'agat. Ii needii dit'aahl

'Wii'nagwithlts'agathl similo'o. Ii hlipdaltxwhl wiixoo'osxwithl k'ay'masim

gyatgi alohl sginist. lit gya'ahl gansk'oosxant ts'im t'ax. Ii t'aahl

gibee'esxwhl k'ay'masimgyatgi.

Ii needii 'nakwt ii gwis'witxwhl similo'oogi; ii sim kwihl yaahl. Ii sim

hat'akxwhl laxha ii needii kwihl wilhl Gitxsan laxyipxwdiit dim siilinit gan

dimt yatsdiit ii sim xwdaxhl similo'o tun ii sim tk'alyeehl yaahl.

iit balgi gya'ahl similo'o giuhl k'ay'masimgyatgi ts'im aks. li lok'on
 goshl similo'o'ogi ts'im aks wilt gya'ahl gansk'ootsxanhl k'ay'masimgyatgi.
 lit laaxsawihl k'ay'masimgyatgiuhl gan wil 'niit'aat. li laaxaoshl
 similo'o'ogi. Lukwil hasak't dimt gidiguuhl gansk'ootsxangi dim
 gubit ji hlaa yookxwim yuxwsat.

Hlaa sim hlabixswhl similo'o'ogi, ii 'widin yeehl k'ay'masimgyatgi hasak't
 dimt hlimoot. Sim hagwil ha'algyxhl k'ay'masimgyatgi loot ii het loot,
 "Wilhl ligi xhatxwidi'y 'm ii aksdin. Dim simihli'y 'wiit'isim lakw dim
 ii gyamgin". Ii sim kwihl his'weeswhl similo'o'ogi wilt kwihl 'num
 hlimoodiit 'nit. lit sagaytdoxhl k'ay'masimgyatgiuhl gwalgwa lakw. Ha'y,
 t'is wil mihl japt. "Gwaats gwinhetxwin iim gyamginhl lip'niin", diyahl
k'ay'masimgyatgi, sit'oogathl similo'o'ogi. Ii 'nithl wilhl similo'o'ogi gwaats
 gwinhetxw go'o wil gyamkhl lakwgi. Ii 'nit wilt lok'on t'ishl k'ay'masimgyatgiuhl
 similo'o ts'im anlakw.

Ii hlaa yukwhl ts'akhl lakwgi, iit lax'nihl k'ay'masimgyatgiuhl hehl
 saa'witxwit ts'im anlakwgi. "Tsaawildiuhl mi jakwidi'y mi up hoo
 gwis'witxwi'y mahla k'i'yhl sint ii 'nit dim wil diltxwi'y. Ii 'nithl wilhl
 hli ee'eswhl similo'o'ogi, wilhl up t'uuts'iihl wilhl wit'axgats'aad
 xsiliphaygwid alohl hli guumhl lakwgi.

K'ay gigyuu'ni'y, ii si'amhl ax'ehhl Gitxsan wila wilhl wiit'axgats'agat ii
 kwihl ligiphaygwiuhl kuba wiit'axgats'agat gamimuxwhl Gitxsan iit
 amgoosindiit 'nitdiit hli ee'eswhl hligookdiit.

APPENDIX E

Time Line: Occupation Of *Gitxsan* Lands

www.Gitxsan.com (2003) have provided a timeline for the occupation of *Gitxsan* lands. Our footprints have traveled across this land and established a circle of footprints that represents an organized society. We have traveled through time like other Nations and our journey will continue together.

10,000 BC:

Archaeologists have dated village and cache pit sites at ages more than six thousand years. Occupation by the *Gitxsan* is estimated to be thousands of years older. The land is maintained according to traditional laws and overseen by House Chiefs who ensure that their House territories and people are treated with respect and balance. BC's Aboriginal populations are estimated to be several hundred thousand strong.

1830

BC's Aboriginal population drops to 70,000 due to epidemic disease brought by contact with Europeans.

1859

Gold seekers pour into the territories, using the *'Xsan* as a transport and access system.

1865:

Collins Overland Telegraph to Russia is built up the Bulkley Valley from Quesnel to Kispiox before the project is cancelled.

1868

Hudson's' Bay Company builds trading post at Gitanmaax.

1870

Gold is found in the Omineca area. For two years, hundreds of prospectors travel up the Skeena and along the Babine Trail to reach mines.

1871

BC enters Canadian Confederation, yet refuses to cede control of Crown land to the Canadian government. Ottawa discovers that only a few treaties with aboriginal groups exist in BC. Most of BC's Crown land is thus not properly acquired. According to the Royal Proclamation of 1763, Ottawa has a responsibility to ensure that Crown land be legally acquired through treaties with aboriginal groups.

1872

European prospectors burn Longhouses and totem poles in Gitsegukla. Miners refuse to discuss compensation as required by Gitxsan law. The chiefs blockade all traffic on the 'Xsan. Two gunboats are dispatched to the mouth of 'Xsan. Gitsegukla Chiefs meet on board with Lieutenant Governor Joseph Trutch. Compensation of \$600 is granted. Blockade is lifted.

1874

Gold Rush in Cassiar Mountains. Again, Skeena route through chiefs' territories is used.

1876

Canada's Governor General, Lord Dufferin, protests BC's refusal to acknowledge aboriginal title problem.

1876

A joint federal and provincial commission is appointed to look into the allocation of reserves. The Gitxsan give a cool reception to the commissioners and refuse to cooperate in the naming of village sites or burial grounds for reserves until the question of aboriginal title is addressed. The reserves are set up anyway. BC allocates 10 acres per head of household for native. Non-natives are allowed to claim up to 320 acres per person. Natives are prohibited from taking white land without permission of the Lieutenant Governor.

1883

Gold found at Lorne Creek. Gitwangak chiefs, fearing that the prospectors are disturbing wildlife, post notices on trees around camps announcing that the miners are on Indian land. They are ignored and Indians are told to leave the area.

1884

Royal Commission into Indian land question fails to settle land issues in part due to BC's refusal to discuss the fact that aboriginal title continues to exist.

1884

A.C. Youmans, a freighter for local miners, fails to notify and compensate, as is required by Gitxsan law, a Gitsegukla family for the drowning of their son, Billy Owen. Three years earlier, Billy's brother had also drowned while in Youmans employ and Youmans refused compensation then also. Billy's father, Haatq, kills Youmans. He is charged and sentenced to ten years imprisonment.

1884

Feasts, the central political and social institution of the Gitxsan culture, are banned and punishable with jail sentences for all participants, including whites that have knowledge of one and fail to report it.

1887

Second Royal Commission into BC Land Question fails to settle issue of aboriginal title. Again Province refuses to sit down to negotiate.

1887

Haatq, arrested in 1884 for the murder of Youmans, dies in New Westminster jail. Gitksan are denied the demanded compensation.

1887

Kamalmuk, suspecting that one of his family members is killed by witchcraft, kills the man suspected of witchcraft against his family. Police, who had come to arrest him, shoots Kamalmuk in the back. Demands for compensation by his Kitwancool family are ignored. Anger at Kamalmuk and Haatq's deaths threatens to lead to a general uprising against white presence. Additional police are called in.

1888

An Indian Agent and a Constable go to Gitwangak to attempt to enforce the ban on feasts. Their attempt is unsuccessful.

1889

Babine Agency of the Federal Department of Indian Affairs is formed. R.E. Loring becomes the first official Indian Agent in Gitksan territory.

1889

Federal Fisheries Act is passed. Aboriginals are no longer allowed to sell fish or own fishing licenses. Natives who work for fish companies are paid 5 cents a fish while white fishermen are paid 10 cents a fish.

1891

Reserve Commissioner P. O'Reilly and his surveyor, A.H. Green, begin reserve allocations. Clear opposition emerges to allocation of reserves at Kispiox and Gitwangak. O'Reilly promises that all Indians can continue to "hunt, fish, or gather berries where you will".

1893

Rocks are blasted out of the 'Xsan to improve steamer boat traffic. At Gitsegukla, the fishing sites and smokehouses of five families are destroyed.

1897

New Reserve Commissioner A.W. Vowell receives letter from Kitwancool Chiefs saying, "they do not want him there". He goes the following year anyway, but instead of receiving land measurements, the Kitwancool chiefs give a demand for compensation and a tombstone for Kamalmuk, killed in 1888.

1906

Squamish Chief Joe Capilano and his delegation of chiefs spread the word of their audience with King Edward VII in London. The King had told them that aboriginal proprietary rights in the land are to be restored, but only through Ottawa's intervention.

Federal Fisheries Department workers forcibly remove Fish weirs on the Babine River, a traditional fishing method. Nine men who owned and used the weirs are arrested and charged with theft, illegal fishing and resisting arrest. This confrontation forces a meeting between Native representatives and the Federal cabinet to discuss fishing grievances. Nothing is resolved.

1907

Provincial Game Act is enacted to stop beaver hunting for a period of six years. Gitxsan lobby and win a temporary exemption.

1908

Gitxsan contribute money to send Joe Capilano and 25 chiefs to visit Prime Minister Laurier in Ottawa with a land rights petition. Whites around Hazelton dig rifle-pits and trenches in expectations of an Indian "uprising". Indian Agent promises another land grievances commission and tension is diffused temporarily.

June 1909

Gitwangak villagers stop a group of surveyors at gunpoint and demand meetings over land grievances. At the meetings they use quotes from the Royal Proclamation of 1763 as one of the basis for their claim. Kispiox chiefs post notices forbidding whites from crossing the Skeena.

July 1909

Laurier government sends out a commission to discuss land grievances. Gitxsan present their claim of aboriginal title, which cannot be settled by the commissioners. Discontent is aggravated as the commissioners leave. Province agrees to white requests for more police to protect their newly settled property.

November 1909

Kispiox chiefs blockade a road construction crew at gunpoint. Crew foreman responds by throwing two Gitxsan into the river. The Gitxsan seize the crew's equipment. Seven Gitxsan men are arrested after rumors of "secret uprising meetings" prompt a dawn raid of over 40 policemen on Kispiox.

1909

Local DIA Inspector notes that in the Skeena area the "land trouble was more acute...than in any other part of BC".

1910

Kitwancool & Gitwangak Chiefs post notices of their aboriginal claim along trails in Hazelton district and invoke the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to challenge white presence.

Prime Minister Laurier comes to Prince Rupert to hear chiefs' complaints.

1910

A Gitksan is chosen to join the delegation of BC Chiefs petitioning King George V on land grievances.

1911

Laurier demands that BC acknowledge the problem of aboriginal title in the land question. BC refuses. Laurier *must* settle for a second joint land commission.

1912–1916

The second joint federal-provincial land commission, headed by BC Premier McBride and Federal representative McKenna, visit local communities to hear land complaints. Aboriginal title is raised frequently. The commissioners refuse to deal with it, as it is not within their jurisdiction. Chiefs express anger at being let down again.

1920

Indian Act is amended to require compulsory attendance of aboriginal children in residential schools, "so there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question" – Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Federal Indian Department.

1924:

Gitksan and Nisga'a chiefs meet PM McKenzie King in Ottawa to discuss land claims.

April 14, 1927

Ottawa, frustrated by constant aboriginal petitioning regarding the BC land question, decides to allocate \$100,000 to BC for Indian technological training, hospitals and promotion of agriculture and stock raising. This is in lieu of usual treaty payments it would have to pay if BC had recognized aboriginal title. It remains on the federal account books to this day as the "BC Special".

1927

The federal government amends the Indian Act, making it illegal to organize around the land question, or to advance any land claims. They also make it illegal for any lawyer to work on such a case.

Kitwancool chiefs are sent to Oakhalla prison after resisting government attempts to create boundaries for a Kitwancool reserve without discussing aboriginal title.

Indian Agent orders RCMP to suppress feasts at Gitwangak and Kitwancool. Attempts fail.

1929

BC's Aboriginal population is estimated at 22,000 people, after epidemics of smallpox, measles and influenza.

1958

Hagwilget Canyon rock is blasted out by the Fisheries Department. Thousands of years of fishing sites are destroyed.

1975

Gitxsan begin research to launch another formal request to negotiate their claim for land with the Federal government.

1977

Federal government officially accepts the Gitxsan declaration of claim to their territories. However, negotiations cannot proceed so long as BC refuses to acknowledge their responsibilities.

October 23, 1984

The Gitxsan & Wet'suwit'en launch the historic legal action, *Delgamuukw v. Queen* to deal with land claims. They challenge BC's jurisdiction over their 22,000 sq. miles of territory.

November 1985

Chief Gwis Gyen, Stanley Williams, stands in front of a train on the CN railway to force CNR to compensate Gitwangak for 100 acres taken from the reserve in 1910. The Grand Trunk Railway was built right through the village cemetery. The village had been given \$100 to bury the 14 bodies the railway had disturbed, but nothing was given for the land itself. Blockade lasts more than two weeks.

1986

Federal Fisheries officers are sent in to reserves to uphold Ottawa's ban on inland fisheries. BC government adopts the position that reserve grounds are under federal jurisdiction, but ground underneath the rivers are provincial land, so they too have the right to control Native fisheries. The Gitxsan go fishing without permits and, in Gitwangak, the fishery officers are pelted with marshmallows when they try to interfere with Native food fishing.

May 11, 1987

Opening arguments are made in the *Delgamuukw v. Queen* case in Smithers. Chief Justice Allan McEachern presides.

1987

BC Supreme Court refuses Gitxsan's plea for an injunction against new logging or Crown land pre-emptions while *Delgamuukw* is in court.

1988

Chief Luulak, Sandra Williams, issues notice to Skeena Cellulose that logging on her territory is not permitted. She asks Eagle Clan Chief Giila'wa, Peter Turley, to move a loader off her territory. He is charged with possession of stolen property. Eventually charges are dropped.

February 29, 1988

Kispiox residents place a huge cedar log across Kispiox Road in the center of their village to halt logging trucks and protest clear-cut logging of their territories.

April 12, 1988

Gitwangak Chief, Glen Williams, is the first aboriginal in BC charged with holding a bingo on reserve without a permit.

September 1988

Westar begins to build a bridge over the Babine River at Sam Green Creek. A blockade is set up to stop the bridge building. Gitxsan go to court and win an injunction against Westar, who is told to halt the bridge building while *Delgamuukw* is in court.

1989

Gitxsan chiefs continuously protest unauthorized logging in their territories.

1990 Gitwangak chiefs blockade the bridge over the Skeena and the highway into the Gitwangak Valley. The CPR train is stopped at Gitwangak to bring attention to continued failure of CPR to discuss the 1911 land expropriation. Road to Kitwancool is blocked to protest continued logging.

BC Premier Bill Vander Zalm visits Kitwancool to speak about land issues, and continues to deny participation in land claims.

Gitwangak mill is taken over for three days to protest logging while court case is unsettled.

Bill Vander Zalm announces the establishment of a Ministry of Native Affairs and an Office for Land Claims. BC, for the first time in history, agrees to begin negotiations over land claims, but again without any recognition of aboriginal title.

March 8, 1991

Delgamuukw v. Queen is decided in favor of the BC government by Chief Justice Allan McEachern. He describes aboriginal life as "nasty, brutish and short" and announces that aboriginal title, if it ever existed, was extinguished in 1858. Academics and media commentary express shock at the Reasons for Judgment.

April 1991

Gitxsan Chiefs appeal McEachern's decision.

1992

Gitxsan go to BC Court of Appeal.

June 25, 1993

BC Court of Appeal rules against McEachern and declare that aboriginal rights were not extinguished in BC. The Gitxsan will appeal the case further in the Supreme Court of Canada.

The BC Treaty Commission was established to mediate treaty talks.

1994

The Gitksan set aside their appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada in favour of Treaty negotiations with BC and Canada. They enter into the BC Treaty Commission process.

1996

BC walks away from the Gitksan treaty table, declaring “irreconcilable differences”. The Gitksan resume their *Delgamuukw* case in the Supreme Court of Canada.

December 11, 1997

The landmark decision was handed down in the Supreme Court of Canada in favor of *Delgamuukw*. Supreme Court of Canada orders a retrial to deal with Gitksan Title.

APPENDIX F**Residential Schools Timeline****Indian Residential Schools in Canada
Historical Chronology**

The chronology reproduced in our info kits for the Mar 20th special event is one published at http://www.irsr-rqpa.gc.ca/english/historical_events.html.

1620-1680

In New France the first boarding school arrangements are made for Indian Youth by the Récollets, a French order, and later the Jesuits. By 1680 the New France experiment of educating Indian children in residential establishments is terminated.

1820s-40s

Early church schools run by Protestants, Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists established.

1847

Egerton Ryerson's study of Native education, undertaken at the request of the Assistant Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, under the Imperial Government, became the model for future Indian Residential Schools (IRS). Ryerson recommended that the schools provide domestic education, religious instruction for the Indian, for "nothing can be done to improve and elevate his character and condition without the aid of religious feeling..." The recommended focus was on agricultural training; and the government would control the schools only through inspections of them, reports from them and grants to them on the basis of the inspections and reports.

1848-51

The Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), under the Imperial Government, plan to allot private property to encourage Indians in industry was rejected by band councils, but bands were very supportive of education and new schools were established.

1856

A shift in Imperial Government policy towards assimilation through education begins. DIA began to refine its approach in the growing belief that adult Indians could not be changed, resulting in an emphasis upon educating children.

1860

Responsibility for Indian Affairs transferred from imperial government to the Province of Canada.

1860s-70s

Disappearance of the buffalo forced changes in prairie west; Plains Indians sought knowledge of agriculture and requested schools as part of the treaties that set up reserves for them.

1867

With the enactment of the British North American Act, Indian Education becomes federal responsibility. Indian Day Schools are set up in accordance with Treaty provisions of the 1850's.

1876

First Indian Act gives authority to Minister of DIA to control Indian Education.

1879

Nicholas Flood Davin, Conservative M.P., was sent to the US in January to study the Indian education system and report on its appropriateness as a model for the Northwest Territories (NWT). Davin recommended that four denominational industrial boarding schools be established in the NWT so that Indian children could learn Christian morality and work habits away from the influences of the home. With its numerous recommendations, Davin's report had an important influence in shaping the early residential school system. Existing Mission schools would become feeder schools for the larger government run Industrial schools that would enrol students at the approximate age of 14. Industrial schools taught Indian students trades.

1884

The *Indian Act* was amended to allow regulations to be made regarding, among other things, compulsory attendance for those status Indians under the age of 16 until they reached 18 years of age in Indian schools.

1895

Deputy Secretary General of Indian Affairs (DSGIA) Reed reported in the 1895 annual report that the DIA's move away from day schools toward industrial schools off reserve was gradually earning the approval of the Indians of Manitoba, BC and the North-West Territories.

1900

By this time, only 22 industrial and 34 mission boarding schools were in existence, compared to 225 day schools. Like the day schools, the boarding schools were located on reserves but had the advantages of ensuring attendance while the parents were away but allowing contact with them when they were on the reserve.

1920

Amendment to *Indian Act* made attendance mandatory for all children 7-15. Chiefs and band councils are given the right to inspect schools in a further provision of the *Indian Act*. Term 'residential' replaces 'boarding' and 'industrial' in DIA terminology.

1936

The Indian Affairs Branch comes under Department of Mines and Resources; provincial curricula were to be used, with an emphasis on vocational training in residential schools.

1944

The Director of Indian Affairs appeared before the Special Committee on Reconstruction and Re-Establishment to argue for a shift from residential to day schools.

1946

The Anglican Church was conducting its own "investigation into the Indian work of the Church, especially with regard to Residential Schools" The Church committee recommended that youngsters be taught to read and write English, simple Arithmetic, the Geography of their own region, and the history of their own people.

1948

Beginning of era of integration of Native and non-Native schools, which lasted 40 years.

1949

The Director of Education laid out his five year plan for Indian education. He asserted that the churches had "taken the initiative" regarding construction of IRS and that "a new policy must be instituted in which the Department decides on the basis of professional surveys and reports, as to the necessity of erecting this type of school."

1950

A policy statement from the IAB Director in a memorandum to the Deputy Minister noted that attendance at residential schools should be restricted to underprivileged children who have no homes or whose home conditions are undesirable and to children who live in areas where it is not possible for them to attend day schools.

1951

The IAB replaced half-day with full-day instruction; as the old system of residential schools began to disappear and more children began to attend day schools.

1952

The Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teacher Association elected to its National Committee an Indian representative who prepared a "Report on Indian Education" which presented a comparison of the statistics for 1945 and 1951, that showed an increase in the numbers of children being educated. It also noted that the federal government was being more diligent regarding the needs of Aboriginals in Canada.

1956

Regulations for the establishment of school committees were set up and Branch field staff was requested to encourage and assist all Band Councils to develop these committees. In ten years about fifty would form.

1957

A memorandum prepared by the Superintendent of Indian Education reviewed the activities of the Education Division for the period 1952-57. The Superintendent noted that during this time residential schools saw an increase of Indian teachers from 42 in 1952 to 81 in 1957.

1957

A memorandum from the Director to the Deputy Minister recommended establishment of a Board of Indian Education made up of representatives of the government, Indians, the churches and the Canadian Education Association. They would meet annually to discuss educational policy and so an opinion could be obtained on new policies before they were launched.

1958

At the Fourth Conference of Regional Inspectors of Indian Schools, held in Ottawa in April, it was recommended that the IRS system be demolished, but it was subsequently realized that residential schools were necessary under certain circumstances, and these schools were increasingly playing the role of boarding places.

1958

A memorandum to the Secretary of the Treasury Board sought funding for establishing kindergartens for Indian children 5 years of age. The primary purpose of this new policy was to assist Indian children with the "most formidable handicap that faces" them, the requirement of learning a second language.

1958

Between 1949 and 1958, attendance in IRS had grown by about 50% in this period to over 37000. Only 7330 Indian students attended non-Indian schools but this represented an increase of almost 500%.

1966

A proposal from The Canadian Welfare Council for a study of the residential school system was submitted to the department on April 4. The study noted that priority in admission to Residential Schools was now given to children where there was family breakdown.

1967

A memorandum from the Director of Education Services to the regional school superintendents made recommendations regarding Indian cultural activities in residential schools. A new programme was to bring half an hour a week of "instruction in some aspect of Indian culture..."

1967

The Department reported that the role of Indian education continues to change as Native people began taking an increasingly active part of in the education of their children via local boards of education.

1968

The Education Branch undertook an extensive survey of textbooks used in both provincial and federal schools across Canada. The provinces cooperated fully with improvement or removal of any texts found "inappropriate."

1969

DIAND assumed management of residential schools. Day schools and other arrangements replaced residential schools, which become special service only. Parental consent was required for placing children in a residential school and parents were now included on school committees. By this time, 60% of Indian students were in provincial schools.

1969-70

Increased consultation with Native people was recommended in a memorandum from the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of Indian Consultation and Negotiation to the ADM of Indian and Eskimo Affairs following statements from Native leaders who were critical of the level of participation "in matters affecting their present and future situation," including education.

1970

Blue Quills Residential School is the first of the residential schools to come under the control of First Nations. The NIB calls for the end of federal control of native schooling.

1970-71

The Department decided to close Indian residences "as soon as it is practical and reasonable to do so."

1971

In the committee's fifth report, known as the Watson Report, The Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development was critical of the Department's efforts regarding education. The report noted that both DIAND and the provinces were aware of the "inadequacies in the education programs" but their "new awareness has produced many improvements and imaginative innovations."

1971

A five-year program was established for Native Cultural/Education Centers by Cabinet decision in July. Furthermore, bands were becoming more involved in establishing education centers; one example is the Old Sun campus founded by the Blackfoot.

1973

Control of the Indian education program is given to Band Councils and Indian education committees. The department would train Native people to administer schools and consent was required by Native people before any shift from the federal to the provincial educational system was made. Furthermore, Native Cultural/Educational Center

Programs would continue, a revision of curricula to meet requirements of Native students would ensue, and a higher emphasis on post-secondary education would be put in place.

1973

The Department had been supporting training programs for Native teachers but the number of Native teachers was still too low to meet the demand. In recognition of this difficulty, the Department required that non-Native teachers "take courses in inter-cultural education so as to increase their understanding of the Indian child..." All teachers were expected to have completed these courses by 1975.

1973-74

Cultural identity would be strengthened as more and more Native people became involved as staff in many different roles in the educational system. By 1974, over 34% of staff had Indian status.

1975

A DIAND publication reported that 174 federal and 34 provincial schools had language programs in 23 Native languages.

1975

In October, a provincial Task Force on the Educational Needs of Native Peoples heard many recommendations from Native representatives that reiterated the goals of training for Native teachers, increased language and cultural programs and improved funding for Native control of education.

1979

Only 15 IRS still operating. The Department undertook a "major Education evaluation." These measures included initiatives in the Regional Offices to increase the involvement of Native people in education and ways to increase the "sensitization of our school principals and teachers on reserves of the particular cultural and other needs of Indian students."

1982

A Statement of Policy provided notes that the mandate is to support Indian people in assuring their cultural continuity and development by providing Indian youth with the knowledge, attitudes and life skills necessary to become self-sufficient and contributing members of society. The Departmental objective for this policy was to "ensure quality education through Indian control."

1989

Allegations of sexual abuse of non-native orphans by Christian Brothers at Mount Cashel Orphanage in Newfoundland are made public and pave the way for litigation for residential school victims.

1991

Public awareness on the issue of abuse grew in the early 1990s. One result was the First Canadian Conference on Residential Schools, held in Vancouver on June 18-21. According to a press line written for the purpose, the key points in the government's response on the issue of abuse in residential schools included "mention [of] the personal impact of the issue and the assimilation, loss of culture and familial disruption which resulted from the residential school system..." However, it was stressed that past government policies cannot be undone - DIAND policies now support Indian self-government as well as Indian control over their own schools..."

1991

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate offer an apology to the First Nations peoples of Canada.

1993

7 IRS operating: 6 under band control and 1 by DIAND at First Nation's request.

1993

In a message from the Primate to the National Native Convocation, the Anglican Church of Canada offers an apology to the First Nations peoples of Canada.

1994

The Presbyterian Church offers a confession to First Nations peoples of Canada.

1996

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) issues its final report in November. The five volume, 4,000 page report covers a vast range of issues and its 440 recommendations call for sweeping changes to the relationship between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people and governments in Canada. There is an entire chapter dealing with residential schools.

1996

The last federally run residential school, the Gordon Residential School, closes in Saskatchewan.

1998, January 7

The Honourable Jane Stewart and the Honourable Ralph Goodale unveil Gathering Strength Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan, which is a long-term, broad based policy approach in response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. It includes the Statement of Reconciliation: Learning from the Past, in which the Government of Canada recognizes and apologizes to those who experienced physical and sexual abuse at Indian Residential Schools and acknowledged its role in the development and administration of residential schools.

1998

St. Michael's Indian Residential Schools becomes the last band run school to close.

1998

The United Church's General Council Executive offers a second apology to the First Nations peoples of Canada for the abuse incurred at Residential Schools. Litigation naming the Government of Canada and major Church denominations grows from several hundred to 7,500.

2004

Canada and the United Church of Canada hosted an Apology Feast in Gitanmaaxs, BC on Saturday, March 20, 2004. Although it was hosted by Canada and the United Church, they opted to use a Gitxsan venue: the Gitxsan Feast. Simultaneously, Gitxsan extended families of the 25 survivors who completed the alternate dispute resolution pilot project were formally welcomed back into Gitxsan Society.