

Yinka Dinii Ha Ba Ten, the Ways of the People of the Earth:
A Social-Ecological Framework for Sustainability

By

Sandra Martin Harris

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Abstract

In my research project I articulate a Wet'suwet'en social-ecological framework based upon ecological integrity and the strength of a people and culture. Following a Wet'suwet'en way of knowing and being, I would like to add to the limited scholarship that incorporates both the territory and wellbeing of an indigenous people together into a holistic approach. The framework is based upon our 'ways', the maintaining of relationships leads to a way of 'doing', an interdependent social-ecological framework for sustainability. I have adapted the prism model from Parkes et al. (2008) Health and Sustainability to a Wet'suwet'en social—ecological framework based upon *Yinka dinii ha ba ten*, the ways of the people of the earth. The framework, the new figures and the Office of the Wet'suwet'en indicators are woven together to illustrate how the health of the people is connected to the health of the land and ecosystems.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I am from *Cinegh lhay yihk*, the House of Many Eyes, of the *Lihksilyu* Clan of the Wet'suwet'en Nation. I was born and raised in our homeland, reside here and choose to raise my family in this area. I completed my formal schooling at the University of Alberta in 1993, with a major in Cultural Anthropology focusing on traditional ecological knowledge. I have worked for and with the Wet'suwet'en for many years in a variety of roles: from youth worker, social services program manager, policy analyst and researcher, to senior manager and Interim Treaty Negotiator over a 14 year period. I have a deep vested interest in seeing the Wet'suwet'en culture thrive and the water, land and all the life forms in a state that can sustain my family, all families and communities for generations to come.

I see the need to keep families together, protect the territory from intensive resource development yet realize jobs in a sustainable manner. How could there be such disparity between the general public and the first peoples (including the Wet'suwet'en) especially where we make up such a large part of the overall population? There are many studies and reports that identify the ongoing pressing concerns, reports such as the "Fragile Lives, Fragmented Systems," Representative of Child and Youth BC 2010 report; "Pathways to Health and Healing," British Columbia Provincial Health Officer's Report 2009 and "How Are We Doing?," the B.C. Aboriginal Education report. In the provincial land use planning process the Morice and neighbouring Lakes Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMP's) have also identified the need to have First

Nations' community indicators in various levels of the socioeconomic profiles of the land use planning process. In all the main governing and service delivery areas there are recommendations for tribal groups and communities to do this work. I believe community members all across Canada are saying the same thing. There are too many agencies, state services are fragmented and operate in a silo or sectoral fashion and there are uncertain outcomes. All of the processes speak to the need to become healthier, improve education outcomes and offer language teachings so we can grow up in healthy families and communities. How can we do this?

Wiggus is the Wet'suwet'en concept of respect; respect for our interconnectedness and the special responsibility to maintain that integrity. As one of our most central laws it is the basis of the key teachings to be passed on to the coming generations. Since ancient times these tenets have been strictly enforced, taught and lived by. **Wiggus** is our sacred balance and core to our wellbeing as a people. For more than a century the Wet'suwet'en challenged and disputed the restrictions of Wet'suwet'en rights to ownership and authority to the reserve land base only (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2009). Legal processes to "place Wet'suwet'en jurisdiction and ownership within the context of Canada" were pursued (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1996b: 16). In the late 1970's when the Wet'suwet'en (and Gitksan) sought to establish measures to negotiate management of the fishery on the upper Skeena there was a short lived historical agreement to have the river fishery open except when conservation needs were to be met (Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw 1992: 15). After

various attempts to have the hereditary system/Chiefs' authority and jurisdiction recognized in regards to the fisheries, "the Government of British Columbia withdrew from any negotiation, for the same reason as the federal government refused to negotiate on the fishery; for both governments the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en had no rights to the resources or to their management" (1992: 16). The historical court battle ensued: "Today the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en enter the Canadian legal system to seek justice. This is an opportunity for the courts to find a just and lawful process to place Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en ownership and jurisdiction within the context of Canada" (1992: 19).

After many years the court recommended that both the Nations return to the negotiation table to negotiate a treaty settlement. The court process was a strong assertion and reclamation of local history and events of the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan and was quite exhausting. I recall Yaga'lahl, Dora Wilson, speaking in many meetings about the lack of respect in the court room, the blatant disregard for the Chiefs' blankets and the complete ignorance in recognizing the Wet'suwet'en as a people. We lived in this land, 'since the beginning', as Chief Lilloos stated (Mills 1994: 76).

The Gisday Wa and Delgamuukw decision led to a much stronger starting point for the negotiations that were to come. See Appendix A for a map of the house groups' territories which make up the Wet'suwet'en Nation's homeland. Wet'suwet'en seek recognition of their ownership and jurisdiction over the entire land base so the Wet'suwet'en *way of life* may continue. A map illustrating the larger Skeena Watershed

that the Wet'suwet'en homeland is part of is shown in Appendix B. The Skeena Watershed is 54,432 km², the second largest watershed in BC (Gottesfeld, Rabnett and Hall 2002: 6).

Goal and Objectives

My primary goal with this research project is to add to the limited discussion and scholarship regarding First peoples' defining a wellbeing or way of being conceptual framework. Why is a conceptual framework needed? Chandler and Lalonde (1998) have identified cultural continuity in First Nation communities and success in managing their own education, child welfare and economic development offers a hedge against suicide. I believe this is because they have good decision making processes (i.e. governance and trust), administrative capacity to deliver effective programs and services (community based or in a collaborative partnership), and have a vision for a better life based on traditions and cultural strengths of a people.

I have four main objectives in this research project. First is to articulate a social-ecological framework. Secondly I center the framework within a Wet'suwet'en context. Thirdly I will align this framework with existing indicators of the Wet'suwet'en. Finally a summary of the indicators are presented in a poster format to illustrate the vision and elements of the social-ecological framework. I will be weaving together threads of information from the immense planning work and visioning sessions of the formal territorial and social services planning work of the Wet'suwet'en Nation Office.

A framework that links health and wellbeing to ecosystems may lead to *wiggus*, being whole and interrelated in our homeland. If we choose not to do this work, then we will continue to rely on inept provincial and federal services and programs. To date that has not gone well. Whether community based or living in urban centers (where the living standards are often worse) we realize that state services and programs for aboriginal people have not improved in the last decade. I feel that a weaving of the social and ecological factors can be done by revisiting our traditional knowledge and ways of being as a tribe or Nation. The Wet'suwet'en Office has offered many social programs and services over the years and have firsthand experience in butting up against these policy frameworks that do not work for the Wet'suwet'en. They have also expressed the need for sustainability and this formal linking, creating and implementing a sustainable framework may help advance this.

Parkes, M., Morrison, K.E, Bunch, M.J., & Venema, H.D. (2008) Ecohealth and Watersheds paper provides a health and sustainability prism framework that can be adapted to connect broad ecosystem and people issues which can support the Wet'suwet'en house groups achieving both ecological integrity and wellbeing or sustainability. This framework is needed to provide a shared vision of the many programs, services and resources (community, Nation, local, regional and so on) that may formally link health and ecosystems. These are broad concepts that I am drawing on here, to look at how these 'big picture' ideas can work together. Chapter 2 provides a more in depth look at the four main broad governance areas which are reframed from a

Wet'suwet'en perspective to illustrate the necessity of a cultural foundation for Wet'suwet'en social-ecological approach. The relationships amongst these 4 main areas are summarized in Chapter 3.

This is my motivation to carry out this research. I understand that the Wet'suwet'en have not adopted a watershed based approach to land use or territory planning and have maintained a Wet'suwet'en territory based approach. However I strongly believe an interdependent framework that connects wellbeing (health) into an ecosystem approach based upon cultural strengths is important and worth exploring. I have created three main Figures which also are a personal reflection and are intended to be a starting point. I hope there is an opportunity for dialogue as to how health and ecosystems can be linked within a territorial based approach.

Project Rationale: Protecting the Territory and All Its' Relations

The rationale for this research project is to provide a framework that has a social-ecological focus, a broader holistic approach that links both people and natural resources of the territory together within our Wet'suwet'en 'place' to realize a healthy place and a healthy people. I believe the many aspects of planning for land use, community development, self-determination and self-governance need to have a Wet'suwet'en way of being as the basis to sustain the culture, the territory and maintain our connections and inter-relatedness.

In Scott Graham's paper, "Tools for Action Series: A Resource Guide for Designing Community Indicator Projects," he defines what progress means for the larger society,

Groups of researchers, citizens and politicians throughout the 1990s made significant gains in popularizing the notion of a whole system approach to thinking about progress; a movement which assumes that we already know that researching individual parts of the 'system' in isolation of one another will produce only part of the picture. It follows that the more of the picture we can see, the better equipped we are to work together for improving our shared worlds, especially the lives of those people who are being mistreated as well as the non-renewable resources that are being depleted (2008: 7).

If we do not define the larger framework following our tribal laws and language by house group and as a tribal people or Nation, then we will continue to try and fit into these external systems. They clearly do not meet the needs of aboriginal peoples in the areas of land and resource use, health, education and child welfare.

For Wet'suwet'en culture to survive and thrive, our families must be healthy and intact. We must speak our language; have strong connections to our medicines, fish, animals and all that is. We must also contribute and participate in the feast hall, and in the house and clan meetings. Elders, hereditary Chiefs and elected leadership and family members have been advocating and promoting the need for change.

In the International Institute of Sustainable Development report, Christa Rust states that:

Sustainability indicator systems help track progress over time and are seen as essential for **good governance** by an increasing number of communities around the world. These indicator systems can help track economic, social, cultural and environmental change; help recognize achievements and challenges; and

develop programs to move towards a positive vision of the future” (Rust 2008: 45 emphases added).

To help better understand what governance is, it is helpful to understand the framework which helps pull together how these pieces of governance work together to make up a good governing structure.

Governance is a process whereby societies or organizations make their important decisions, determine whom they involve in the process and how they render account. Since a process is hard to observe, students of governance tend to focus our attention on the **governance system or framework upon which the process rests** – that is the agreements, procedures, conventions or policies that define who gets power, how decisions are taken and how accountability is rendered (emphasis added; Graham, Bruce and Plumptre 2003: 1).

According to analysts Stephen Cornell, Catherine Curtis, and Miriam Jorgensen, the challenge facing indigenous nations is to:

- solve difficult social problems,
- protect indigenous cultures,
- build productive economies,
- effectively manage lands and resources,
- effectively manage social and other programs,
- construct mutually beneficial relationships with other governments and with surrounding communities,
- And rebuild societies that work (Cornell, Curtis and Jorgensen 2003: slide 28).

These points speak to the need for governance bodies to address these pressing challenges and the need to find ways to meet them in a comprehensive and holistic manner. These seven points also fit well in a social-ecological model. Although some indigenous nations do not need intensive rebuilding many do need a sustainable economic base and to protect the culture at the same time. Unfortunately economic

development has been a driving force to self-reliance and self-sufficiency. However it is often done at the expense of cultural practices, language and cultural strengths and indigenous family development. I have heard indigenous leader Clarence Louie, of the Osoyoos Band, speak more about this in more recent times, saying to not pursue only economic development and thereby lose your 'being'.

The basis of gathering information, observing and consensus making is strongly in line with traditional ecological knowledge practices of an oral tradition. Most of the preparation for the Supreme Court *Delgamuukw and Gisday wa* challenge was built upon the traditional knowledge, laws and practices of the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan; experts were strategically utilized to provide the academic support the 'white man's' court needed; to their complete and utter disregard at times! As a technician for many years I will be drawing on what I have learned in these many dialogue and community sessions with the specific focus of weaving together a framework that recognizes what has been stated for so many years by various elders, Chiefs, members and staff.

The Parkes et al. (2008) Ecohealth and Watersheds paper outlines a family of conceptual models linking health, environment and social processes. I particularly identify with the "Prism Framework of Health and Sustainability" model. The focus on watersheds links strongly to a first peoples' approach to land stewardship. This model has two main components. The first component presented in the prism diagram outlines the four main perspectives of governance to illustrate the linkages between the broad areas of watershed management and social determinants (indicators) of health (2008:

37). The four main focus areas are watershed management, social systems, health and ecosystems. The second component of the prism diagram identifies the *relationships* between the social-ecological approach with the potential of realizing a synergism when considered as a whole. It is a heuristic tool intended for generic application to examine how water resource management could serve both ecosystem sustainability and improve the social determinants of health (Parkes et al. 2008: 36). Parkes et al. explain:

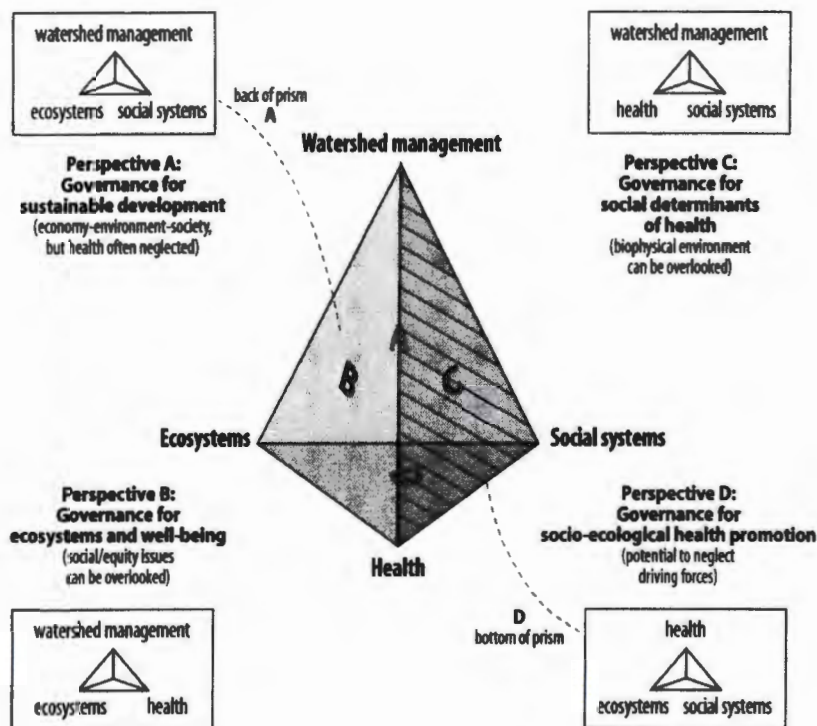
The Prism offers a framework to systematically consider watershed governance for 'sustainable development', 'ecosystems and wellbeing', 'social determinants of health' and 'social-ecological health promotion'. While each of these perspectives can be considered in isolation, their combination offers a multifaceted vision of watershed governance with the potential to build social-ecological resilience and improve the determinants of health (2008: 36).

The combination of perspectives offers a 'multi-faceted vision' of watershed governance with the potential to build social-ecological resilience and improve the determinants of health (ibid); see Figure 1. I could see how when focused on one perspective it can be easy to operate in a manner so isolated from other perspectives that improvements or progress would be a challenge. If operating in isolation at the governance level, this will likely follow suit at the operational level so the 'systems' of health, education and so on, will continue operating in a silo method at the broader provincial and regional levels.

Their health and sustainability framework highlights why governance is important and how considering these 4 perspectives in making decisions can realize sustainability. What Figure 1 outlines to me is that for many indigenous people the

concept that we are all related, all connected, promotes sustainability as the foundation in our decision making process. It is important to go back to how we take care of ourselves and our territories.

What I have learned and repeatedly state is that we are all connected, we have laws to govern our actions/behaviour to ensure that our house system survives, our inherent social process takes care of the land and the people. These laws and social systems help us stay relatively healthy and provide a governance structure to sustain us. All together this works toward balance and ensuring there is not blatant over use or misuse of an ecosystem, plant or animal, especially in regards to water use. To have the laws, governing and social structure working together promotes and ensures resilience. This is achieved through an adaptive learning process, linking the wealth of knowledge of elders and of hunting and gathering families. By working together, learning, sharing and taking care of each other and the land can carry us through daily living over the years and into the future. This broadly speaks to the idea of sustainability. The Wet'suwet'en have a clear social structure process related to our formal land tenure system and economy that connects people to each other and to the land. To sustain ourselves, we must have a functioning social process and a healthy ecosystem, thus the push to protect the land, water and ecosystems. The Parkes et al. prism model uses ecosystems as a setting to promote health and sustainability: The re-integration of



The three dimensional Prism Framework depicts four governance 'perspectives' from which to understand the links between watershed management and the determinants of health. (Text in brackets highlights the limitation of each perspective and the need to see Prism as a whole)

Perspective A: Governance for Sustainable Development – focuses on the 'triple-bottom' line of economy, society and environment within a watershed, catchment or river basin. (Limited by a lack of awareness that criteria for sustainability are also 'upstream' drivers of the determinants of health);

Perspective B: Governance for Ecosystems & Wellbeing – focuses on the physical environment and the freshwater ecosystem good and services provided living systems, including buffering against direct environmental hazards. (Tends to overlook social/equity issues);

Perspective C: Governance for Social Determinants of Health – recognizes that water resources influence social equity, livelihoods and the socioeconomic determinants of health; values equitable, multi-stakeholder processes for water management. (Biophysical issues, and ecosystem processes can be overlooked);

Perspective D: Governance for Social-Ecological Health Promotion – recognizes watersheds as a setting for a health promotion "double-dividend," linking the benefits of sustainable freshwater ecosystems with equitable social processes and enhancing social-ecological resilience. (Needs to ensure upstream drivers of social and ecosystem change are not overlooked, since these are the "causes of the causes" of health inequities).

Figure 1 Governance Perspectives of the Prism Framework. Source: Parkes, M.W., Morrison, K.E, Bunch, M.J., Venema, H.D. (2008): 37.

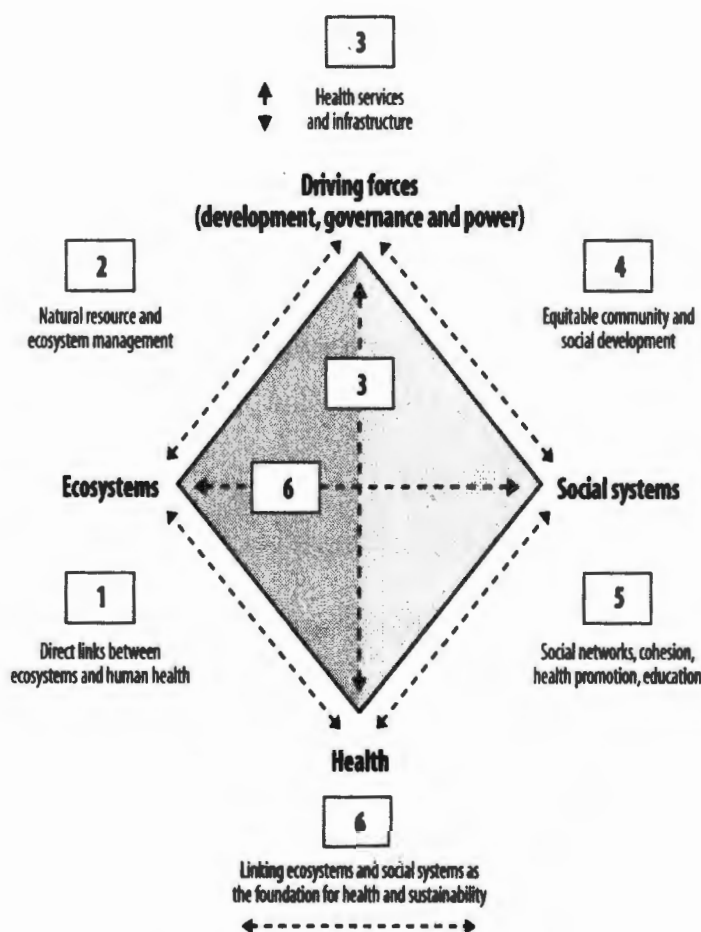
approaches proposed in this report recognizes that indigenous communities, and their traditional relationships and perspectives on nature and health, bear particular relevance to any emerging focus on ecohealth and watersheds. This is consistent with the important contributions of indigenous knowledge to the fields of adaptive management and ecohealth and is integral to multi-stakeholder watershed processes in particular (2008: 42). The four broad areas are presented as the foundational pieces to achieve health and sustainability. By illustrating the connections between these four areas one can better understand 'how' sustainability and good health can be achieved by seeing common objectives. How these contributing factors work together is presented in the relationship section as illustrated in Figure 2, Prism model of Health and Sustainability.

The health and sustainability prism framework was developed from the participatory action research project "Taieri Catchment and Community Health Project" which identified concerns and priorities through integrating concepts of 'lifestyles, livelihoods and living systems'. These three integrating concepts are strongly aligned with three Wet'suwet'en concepts, *inuk nu'at'en*, *Wiggus* and *yintahk*. *Inuk nu'at'en*, or our own law speaks following the cultural practices and laws; *Wiggus* or respect is the interrelatedness, balance with the natural and spiritual worlds, sustainability and livelihood; and *yintahk* or sacred laws of the land in general relates to the ecological resilience or living systems being healthy and intact. The three Wet'suwet'en concepts are often presented as the guiding principles for territorial stewardship planning and

provincial land use planning, sustainable development, including family and community development and finally, in the self-governing treaty negotiations.

Parkes et al. have presented development, governance and power as the driving forces to both ecosystem and social change, and the implications of these changes for the improved environmental and social determinants of health (2008: 36). I have reframed the driving forces to the Wet'suwet'en perspective of self-determination, *balhats* and *inuk nu'at'en* (self-governance) and self-reliance as the basis for ecosystem and social change. The summary of the driving forces is presented in Chapter 3.

This heuristic tool diagram when adapted from a Wet'suwet'en perspective based upon *Yinka dinii ha ba ten*, the ways of the people of the earth, illustrates how the four broad areas of health, social systems, ecosystems and watershed management can work together to create a social-ecological framework. This may be a resource aid to further improve the health of the Wet'suwet'en, the territory and ecosystems.



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Depicts: 1. Direct links between ecosystems and human health (traditional environmental health); 2. natural resource and ecosystem management (including land and water use); 3. health services and infrastructure (including water and sanitation services); 4. equitable community and social development (including socio-economic determinants of health); 5. social networks, cohesion, health promotion and education (including social capital); 6. linked social;-ecological systems (synergies between the environmental and socio-economic determinants of health can arise when social processes generate health benefits through empowerment, justice and social cohesion while also enhancing ecosystems) (Source: Parkes *et al.*, 2003).

Figure 2 Prism Framework. Health and Sustainability. Source: Parkes, M.W., Morrison, K.E., Bunch, M.J. Venema, H.D. (2008): 8.

Aboriginal Ontology as Methodology

My primary focus as an Indigenist researcher as defined by Tuhiwai Smith (1999:146)¹, is to bring forward key aspects of our Wet'suwet'en way of being based upon our ways and beliefs as caretakers or stewards of the territory. I believe the Wet'suwet'en territory based approach of looking at ecological integrity has strong connections to Wet'suwet'en wellbeing.

Booran Mirraboopa/Karen Martin offers up a framework for indigenous research called "Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing: A Theoretical Framework and Methods for Indigenous and Indigenist Re-search" which I will also utilize in my research project. She begins by highlighting the importance of aboriginal ontology:

Indigenist research must centralize the core structures of aboriginal ontology as a framework for research if it is to serve us well. Otherwise it is western research done by indigenous people. It is through ontology that we develop an awareness and sense of self, of belonging and for coming to know our responsibilities and ways to relate to self and others (2003: 206).

Martin states that her country is not only of land and people but also of the "Entities of Waterways, Animals, Plants, Climate, Skies and Spirits. Within this, one Entity should not be raised above another, as these live in close relationship with one another. So People are no more or less important than the other Entities" (2003: 207).

¹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith cites "the concept of indigenist, says Ward Churchill, means 'that I am one who not only takes the rights of indigenous peoples as the highest priority in my political life, but who draws upon the traditions, the bodies of knowledge and corresponding codes of values, evolved over many thousands of years by native peoples the world over'. I would say small 'i' indigenist in reference to me as I do not have much patience for politics and am committed to the strength of traditions.

This ontology of her people in Queensland Australia, at the mouth of the Brisbane River, offers up an outline of three main constructs and their processes:

First, establishing through law what is known about the Entities; second, establishing relations among Entities; and third, enacting ways for maintaining these relations. Elsewhere, I identify these as Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing (2003: 208).

Karen Martin outlines an 8 step Indigenist research process to occur “through centering Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing in alignment with aspects of western qualitative research framework” (2003: 211). I will follow four of the eight steps as the outline for my research project. The eight steps are: research assumptions, to *re-set*; research questions, to *re-claim*; literature review, to *re-view*; research design, to *re-frame*; conduct, to *re-search*; analysis, to *re-visit*; interpretation, to *re-connect*; and reporting and dissemination, to *re-present*”. The following paragraph outlines the four steps that I will utilize.

I presented my research project to the Wet’suwet’en Chiefs’ Table on February 22, 2011. There was support with a request to have more Wet’suwet’en language utilized so I have made as many changes as I could to accommodate that request. This resulted in the *lh’tis* and relationship diagrams and a more reflective social-ecological framework. These documents are only to be considered a work in progress. This suggestion really grounded my approach as the Wet’suwet’en language is a key part to a social-ecological framework.

Organization of the Project Report

I use the *re-view*, *re-frame*, *re-port* and *re-present* steps of Martin's approach to carry out my research project. Chapter two contains my re-view of Wet'suwet'en primary sources of Wet'suwet'en ontology presenting a way of knowing, briefly summarizing the Wet'suwet'en *Yinka dinii ha ba ten*, the ways of the people of the earth. I will then utilize the way of being as the foundational piece to inform the Wet'suwet'en governance perspectives of health, social systems, ecosystems and territory management. Chapter three identifies the ways of being, the main Wet'suwet'en relationships in the five main areas of a health and sustainability model which are *re-framed* and presented back in a Wet'suwet'en social-ecological framework. The specific indicators from various planning and research work of these main relationship areas are summarized in the appendices to illustrate the measurement of achievement or progress in the main relationship areas. The fourth chapter is giving back the final *re-port* to *re-present* a draft of Wet'suwet'en social-ecological framework, recognizing *Yinka dinii ha ba ten*, the ways of the people of the earth.

Chapter 2: Getting Centered: A social-ecological approach

In this chapter there are two sections. The first section provides a general outline of the ways of knowing, *Yinka dinii ha ba ten*, identifying what has been established through 'law', as Martin states. The Wet'suwet'en 'ways of knowing' informs the governing perspectives of a social –ecological approach which are compatible to the Parkes et al. governance perspectives for health and sustainability.

Wet'suwet'en world view is a basic concept. However it identifies major differences in perspectives with mainstream society. Most notably in regards to the protection and preservation of the territory and understanding that all beings are related in our world. Satsan presented the Wet'suwet'en view of self-governance and treaty making at the opening session of treaty negotiations: "The Wet'suwet'en experience, our world view, is different. Our history is vastly different from that of the newcomers to this area. We have always sought respect for our rights and our history and for our way of governing ourselves and our lands" (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1996b: 9).

I have drawn from primary sources in the Wet'suwet'en territorial stewardship plan, the bilateral human services strategy, the child welfare planning committee and the Wet'suwet'en language authority. Much of this information has been gathered by Wet'suwet'en researchers, translators, writers, elders, Chiefs and speakers (and many other specialists) over the last 25 or more years. A wealth of information has been documented and carried over into formal program areas. Ensuring the knowledge of the

people is properly utilized is a key factor in consensus decision making, as involving a diverse traditional knowledge base works towards a broader and more accurate understanding of the cultural customs, practices and traditions of a tribal group (Peeling 2004: 3). Davidson-Hunt and Berkes state in "Learning as you Journey: Anishinaabe perception of social-ecological environments and Adaptive Learning:"

...traditional ecological knowledge is defined as the cumulative body of knowledge and beliefs, evolving by adaptive processes, and handed down through generations by cultural transmission...This knowledge is remembered through 'social memory,' which is the long-term communal understanding of the dynamics of environmental change, and the transmission of the pertinent experience². It captures the experience of change and successful adaptations (2003: 5).

As a result of preparing for the court case there is a library full of resources that captures the voice of the elders and fluent speakers that has been utilized to inform specific initiatives, the Wet'suwet'en Territorial Stewardship Plan and the Unlocking Aboriginal Justice Program for example. It is important that the detailed information be utilized as the basis for teaching, sharing and promoting Wet'suwet'en cultural practices, laws and customs.

Central to the traditional knowledge is the Wet'suwet'en language, elders and fluent speakers, *nukanic* (keepers of the language), is the central force of the culture, teachings and laws of the Wet'suwet'en. The grounding and belief system is drawn from the language and it is essential that any governance work be implemented and based

² Authors Davidson-Hunt and Berkes are citing McIntosh, R.J. (2000) in this quote.

upon the distinctly Wet'suwet'en language. This is a key interest I heard expressed many times over the years by many Chiefs, elders and speakers as they could see how few children and families were learning their language. This has been identified as a high priority and collaboration and commitment to realize language revitalization is essential.

... in 20 years the number of speakers of the language has declined by over 80%. No children have mastered Witsuwit'en as a first language for some time, but language pedagogy programs, aimed both at children and adults are underway in most Witsuwit'en communities (Hargus 2007: 5).

Yinka dinii ha ba ten: the Ways of the People of the Earth

The Wet'suwet'en (or Witsuwit'en) are the people of the lower valley (drainage), in northwest central British Columbia. We are neighbours to many Nations, the Haisla to the southwest, the Carrier to the east, the Babine to the northeast, the Gitksan to the west, and to the Nisga'a peoples to the northwest. Wedzin Kwa (Bulkley River) which includes the Morice River is a major tributary of the Skeena River which runs into the Pacific Ocean. These river systems connect the tribal peoples or Nations, and First Nation communities, 'up and down the line' through the trade of traditional foods and goods, an ancient trade and barter system that is still thriving today. These river drainage systems also connect the people through the heavy reliance on the salmon as a key food for sustaining life. The once well stocked Wedzin Kwa River is now at near extinction levels for the sockeye salmon run, specifically the Bulkley Lake and Maxan Lake sockeye run, one of three runs expected to extirpation on the Skeena Watershed (Gottesfeld, Rabnett and Hall 2002: 21). However, for other species such as

the steelhead the Bulkley Morice run is the best run in the watershed, pinks and spring salmon are doing much better with some concern for the Coho runs as they have dropped dramatically since the 1950's (2002: 30). The Chinook runs have been fluctuating since the 1960's (2002: 42); which is considered the most important single salmon stock of the Skeena Watershed (2002: 110). As a people who have a 'spirit in the land', the healthiness of the territory is essential to all living things, including the fish and the people. Seeking to protect key sacred areas, areas of spiritual significance and other places that are used for prime hunting, fishing, gathering and medicines are high on the Wet'suwet'en priority list. The large territory is divided into specific house group lands totalling approximately 22,000 square kilometres; see Wet'suwet'en House Group Map in Appendix A.

The Wet'suwet'en have a population of about 5000 citizens or house members with about half of the population living away from the territory. The majority of members live in First Nation communities including Tse K'ya (Hagwilget), Kyah Wiget (Moricetown), Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Burns Lake Band, Skin Tyee and Nee Tahi Buhn; the status Indian population statistics are lower than the proposed house member population (B.C. Treaty Commission). These band councils are not all politically affiliated with the Wet'suwet'en Nation. There are many house members living in the territory in the larger centers of Smithers, Houston, and Burns Lake.

Before settlers came into the valley, the Wet'suwet'en spent most of the year living on the house territory and settled into the fishing villages in preparation for the

massive task of harvesting and preparing salmon. As with most indigenous people there was an extensive trail system which connected communities and people across the northwest and interior (and further on in all directions) that was utilized for trade and barter. Caribou were abundant in the territory. I recall many elders, especially Namox, Bill Holland reflecting on the stories of their parents either hunting or traveling alongside massive herds not that long ago. Today there are very few caribou left on the land. I believe that it is the settlement impacts and especially the establishment of the railroad, which pushed the caribou out of the homeland.

Former caribou populations in the Nechako Plateau and Babine Range, which encompass much of the study area, were extirpated by 1920. Population declines of caribou could be responses to climatic warming or to immigrant settlement impacts centered in the Bulkley Valley (British Columbia 2000: 11).

Our indigenous language belongs to the larger Athabaskan family. It was determined to be a separate language in 1974 due to the “‘Babine vowel shift’, a set of historical and synchronic vowel changes which are unique within the Athabaskan family and help establish Witsuwit’ en-Babine as a separate language from Carrier” (Hargus 2007: 5). This research began in Hagwilget in the 1970’s with James Kari of the University of Alaska and it was at this time that this distinction was noted. Through research projects since then by various linguists, the most recent being Sharon Hargus, working with many communities such as Francois Lake, Takla Landing, Tsek’ ene, Hagwilget, Moricetown and Broman Lake, it was determined in 1989, that there are four Witsuwit’ en-Babine dialects (Hargus 2007: 7).

The language provides for a rich and expressive foundation linking land, people and the spiritual connections, *Yinka dinii ha ba ten*; the ways of the people of the earth. We are a matrilineal people following our lineage through our mother's line and we follow a kinship based social structure. We have 5 main clans, Lihksilyu (small frog), Gilsehyu (big frog), Gitdumden (bear), Lihksamisyu (fireweed or killer whale) and Tsayu (beaver) which further break down into 2-3 house groups of each clan, for a total of 13 house groups today (see Figure 3). If you are born from a Wet'suwet'en mother then you belong to the house and clan that she belongs to which outlines certain rights and responsibilities you are entitled to and encouraged to follow.

If your father is Wet'suwet'en, you also have certain cultural responsibilities that are to be followed. This is a key aspect of obtaining balance in the house system; citizenship or house and clan duties between mother and father clan have layers of responsibility, depending on the role which lasts throughout one's life. This is often expressed in the feast hall during a Wet'suwet'en member's funeral feast in which the father clan role is clearly engaged. My father is a first generation born Canadian so my maternal grandfather has picked up this role and often provides me guidance, advice and support, in addition to my already supportive father.

With our strong link to the northwest indigenous peoples we too have a feast system style of governance and reciprocity. The hereditary system is the basis of our natural system of care. Family and house group decisions follow the lead of the house chief and wing Chiefs and advice from the father clan, if sought. However there



Figure 3 Wet'suwet'en Yihk: House Groups. Source: Office of the Wet'suwet'en. Human and Social Services Strategy (1997a) (*original diagram includes spelling errors*). There are variations in how the Wet'suwet'en names of the clans are written depending on which spelling orthography is utilized.

are times of collaboration when all house or clan members may be asked for their opinion or insight regarding a collective decision. Keeping the peace between each other's clans and other Nations is a major role the house Chiefs are responsible for. Resources such as "Eagle Down is our Law" (Mills 1994), "Our Box Was Full" (Daly 2005), "Hang on to These Words" (Mills 2005) and "Trail of Story, Travellers' Path" (Main Johnson 2010) provide a more in-depth understanding of the Wet'suwet'en.

The feast system, *bahlats* is a main source of support and is a decision making process for the house and clan who is carrying out specific business or tasks, whether it is a burial, a headstone raising or transferring a chief's name. The bounty of the territory is brought to the feast hall for sharing and distribution by the host clan. Each feast is led by the House Chief, wing Chiefs and house members of the host clan doing their business at hand. House Chiefs are to lead the overall house group and ensure basic needs are met, promoting Wet'suwet'en teachings in our life roles.

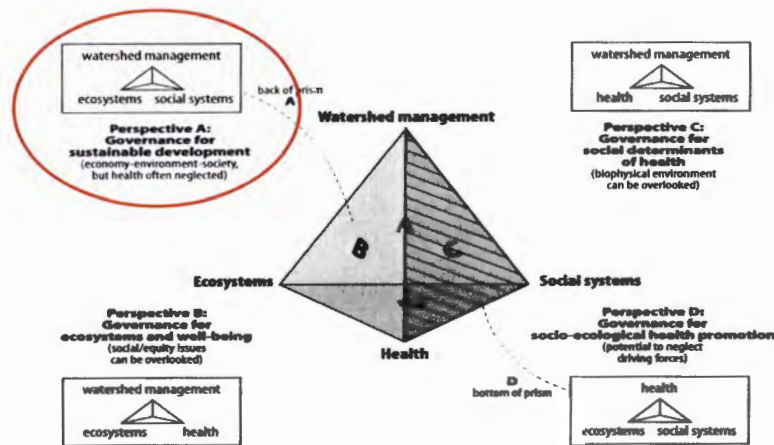
Historically Wet'suwet'en individuals grew up in the feast system, receiving a name, being groomed, guided and taught to be a *mudih*, leader (sometimes in reference to church chief role), or *dinizë* or *tsekožë*, or as a house member, learning responsibility and reciprocity. Upon taking a hereditary name there were strict guidelines to be followed, such as *ts'e 'inholhiy*, being honest, self-sufficient, *Bini wini*, he or she is intelligent, knowing how to promote peace and work towards maintaining balance, responsibility and being strong. There is also a term for women in leadership, or *ts'aqu tseh nenisdzilni* (women who are standing in front) (Hargus 2007: 268). The chiefs of all the Clans must be present to witness the work that is carried out. In prior days everyone knew where they belonged and worked through the decision making process to build consensus, settle disputes and seek restitution if necessary and as needed. There is a clear hierarchy of roles and responsibilities within the house group. At one time every person in the house group had a name today many house group members have not gone through this important step in connecting to their Wet'suwet'en being.

The Wet'suwet'en did not live permanently in communities until the 1890's or so. Our summer fishing villages were inhabited for a few months a year for fishing and feasting, and the balance of the time was spent over the winter, living, hunting and lake fishing on the house territories. The Wet'suwet'en reserves were established in the 1890's (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1996b: 15). Today many of the communities are built on the historical village sites of old settlements, Tse K'ya (Hagwilget), Kyah Wiget (previously Laxilts'ap, abandoned village/Moricetown), Broman Lake (now known as Wet'suwet'en First Nation), Nee Tahi Buhn and Skin Tyee (Mills 1994: 110). These ancient communities or villages all have a unique history to the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan.

Today these communities have been re-established by the federal government as Indian bands and all administer local programs and services such as housing, community infrastructure, Indian registry and work with Health Canada for health programs. Kyah Wiget is the only community with an independent elementary school. Just recently Tse K'ya (to the Wet'suwet'en and Hagwilget to the Gitksan) settled a specific claim suing the federal government for blasting out the Hagwilget Canyon in 1959 and thereby ruining the ancient fishing sites so the local people were in effect cut off from their source of food, the salmon (Alfred Joseph v Queen 2008). The band is reinvesting the settlement into cultural revitalization efforts; last summer many homes received smoke houses, and there is interest to rebuild the old village site below the Hagwilget suspension bridge.

This brief and general outline provides the ways of knowing as a basis for the following section on Wet'suwet'en perspectives of a social-ecological framework. The *Yinka dinii* section speaks to similar interests of taking care of the land and its healthiness and also of the need to be a healthy people while respecting the social system of the Wet'suwet'en. I will be utilizing the four broad main social-ecological areas of the prism model as they are the main components of this approach. A summary of the 'ways of knowing' of each of the four main perspectives is provided in the following section. I have provided a visual aid of the Parkes et al. prism framework at the beginning of each governance perspective section to assist in understanding the social-ecological framework.

Governance perspective: sustainable development



The first perspective is focusing on sustainable development of the social-ecological approach. As stated previously, the Wet'suwet'en are organized in matrilineal house groups and have stewardship responsibilities in their house groups' territories. See Appendix A for a map that outlines the Wet'suwet'en house group territories. The concept of a drainage or watershed is deeply embedded within the Wet'suwet'en language and way of being (Main Johnson 2010: 65). The relationship to the territory follows the basic principles of a social-ecological relationship; systems are complex, integrated systems in which humans are part of nature (Resilience Alliance 1998a: 1). The house system of monitoring and care taking is a function of the land tenure system that has existed for many generations and reaches deep in to the past. Taking care of the territory is expressed mainly through the house system which is not in line with the formal provincial watershed units. There are three main provincial watershed planning units, the Bulkley, Morice and Lakes planning areas, within the larger Skeena Watershed

of which we are located at the most eastern and upstream part. Appendix B is a map of the Skeena Watershed that illustrates where most of the Wet'suwet'en territory is however the southernmost part of Wet'suwet'en territory falls into the Upper Nechako watershed. The Morice watershed is the almost entirely within Wet'suwet'en territory with the other 3 watersheds on the perimeter of the house territories.

The house system, hereditary Chiefs and house members all have responsibilities to monitor, utilize and take care of the territory, animals and habitats through our relationship with the house territory and fishing holes. The Wet'suwet'en have many values, principles and laws that govern the relationship to the territory and laws to govern relationships amongst each other. A particularly strong belief and value is that of ecological resilience which guides how we respect and take care of and ultimately sustain ourselves. As Gisday Wa states, In the Spirit of the Land (1992), "our food sources, hunting grounds, fish rearing and spawning areas and our water sources must be clean and plentiful enough to sustain these natural resources and ultimately us" (Gisday Wa 1992:33). Our most central law in relation to the 'land' is that of '*yintahk*', the respectful relationships between the healthiness of our territory and ourselves. This is one aspect that unites indigenous people across this planet, our respectful and sacred connection to a 'place'. For example, Mills and Overstall identify many home places and their translation; in reference to Owen Lake and *D'lokwa kyo*, "the whole family lived there like a town" (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1996a: Reference Number 50). This beautiful area was an ancestral gathering place; today it is a forest service campground.

In the last 15 years or so the Wet'suwet'en adopted the ecosystems based management approach as a management tool as it is somewhat compatible to the unique Wet'suwet'en house system of governance. It is being utilized to develop a holistic interdependent framework for measuring the healthiness of the territory and getting back to better management practices on the territory. Ecosystem based management is the foundation for the development of the Wet'suwet'en Territorial Stewardship Plan (WTSP) and is based upon the collective ownership and exclusive jurisdiction of the thirteen house groups. The WTSP is one tool to support the house groups rather than to do the work for the house groups. One of the central principles of this model is identifying what to protect and what part of the territory may be suitable for development if done in a responsible manner.

The WTSP's goal is seeking long-term economic development that respects the Wet'suwet'en system of governance and is able to maintain healthy relations to the territory. The question remains, is that possible? The Wet'suwet'en overall seek responsible economic development as defined by the house groups; not only to protect the territory in essential areas but to advance revenue sharing and compensation. Negotiated agreements for consultation and accommodation in mining and large project developments are needed as determined by the house groups. Interim measures may be needed as well. Exploring different economic development structures such as obtaining the Canada Revenue advanced ruling for public body status that identifies tax privileges on the whole territory for Wet'suwet'en business ventures were considered

so as to maximize economic benefits. The formal programs of the Wet'suwet'en, including this management tool, are just that, providing key information to assist the house groups and hereditary Chiefs make the best decisions.

All of this information has been rolled up into various layers of information to help define areas of protection, habitat restoration, and so on, depending on the need. One of the main purposes of the territorial plan is to inform the Wet'suwet'en about various levels of land use planning; the most recent being the provincially led lands and resource management plans (LRMP's). As stated, in Wet'suwet'en territory there are three main watersheds, the Bulkley, Morice and Lakes. These were previously known as timber supply areas. Each of these watersheds has a strategic land use-plan, a provincial planning process that began with the high conflict area of Clayoquot Sound in the early 1990's. Since that time strategic land use planning has evolved through five phases concluding with the phase of the Morice Lands and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) negotiations as one of the "Legacy LRMP's" (British Columbia 2006). The Wet'suwet'en did not participate in the Lakes or Bulkley LRMP's. Due to the new "legacy" process the B.C. Government introduced with the Morice LRMP, the Wet'suwet'en entered into the provincial planning for land use process. At the end of the process, a government-to-government agreement was negotiated with the Wet'suwet'en, to the dismay of some of the stakeholders involved in the process (Morton 2010: 132).

The governance or collective decision making concern for territory management with the watershed planning process was primarily for protection (as a foundation for

Wet'suwet'en sustainability) of certain areas. Shared decision making with the Crown, which may possibly lead to co-management agreements, or co-jurisdiction arrangements and revenue sharing may be sought as determined by the house groups and or clans. There may be house groups that do not want any development on their house territory and so have notified industry and government of that being the case. Hopefully ensuring there are no negative impacts to the watershed and fellow neighbouring house groups and Nations. This ensures will stay true to ourselves as a collective, taking care of each other and the ecosystems and territory.

A key aspect of the WTSP is a consultation and accommodation policy which was finalized in 2007. This document outlines the referral process to support the house groups and Chiefs decide on important resource development issues on the house territories. This is a huge task as hundreds of resource development opportunities/referrals arise which requires notification to the house chief/group and response is needed within a specified time frame. This is also a key step in assessing resource development to identify possible cumulative impacts amongst the many resource sectors.

The Office of the *Wet'suwet'en* WTSP's Criteria and Indicators for Territorial Stewardship and Sustainable Forest Management (2003) outlines a vision for sustainability; with three principles working together to realize the vision:

The WTSP Criteria and Indicators have been organized under three fundamental principles, which represent the *Wet'suwet'en* vision for their people and their territories:

- Respect and support for the Wet'suwet'en culture and Wet'suwet'en law (inuk nu'at'en)
- Protection and maintenance of the ecological integrity of the territories (yintah)
- Provision of meaningful, sustainable economic opportunities for Wet'suwet'en communities (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2003: 5).

The idea that sustainable development is essential to maintain the integrity of the territory and ecosystems also connects to the resilience of the Wet'suwet'en surviving and having a good life. When decisions are made on the territory that negatively influence a people's wellbeing there is much concern and protest as this may have disastrous impacts on the people. The needs for sustainable development is twofold, to maintain a healthy territory and a healthy people. The WTSP has indicated a section for a social profile and the information from this report could aid in establishing that information.

Yin: the territory, the animals and all that is

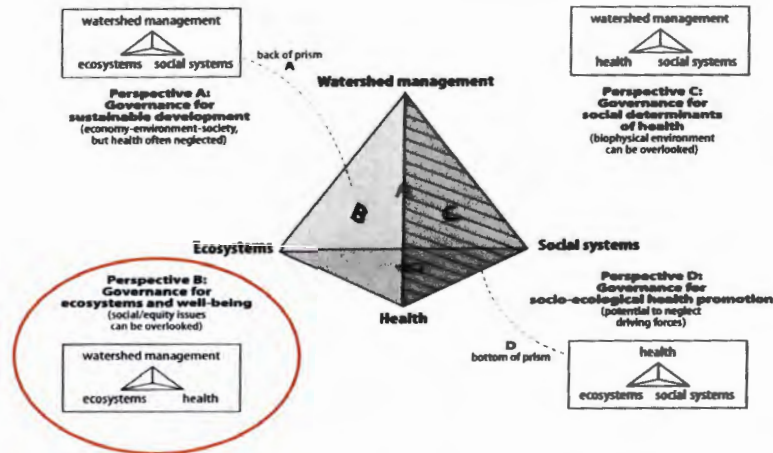
One relationship that is central to our *yintahk* is to keep the water, lakes, rivers, streams, glaciers and wetlands [to name a few] clean, pure and of good quality and quantity. Taking care of the water is a key aspect to *yintahk* and a key aspect of resources such as *ggis*, *tësdli*, *talok* (spring, steelhead and sockeye) salmon, *bīt* and *dikiy* (char and trout), lake fish, habitat restoration and protection. A water management zone of the government-to-government agreement created a no mining zone in a large area of the territory, 8.2% of the Morice LRMP. This resulted in a number of parks being established primarily the Morice and Atna parks (Morton 2010: 103). As

the Morice River is one of the 8 most sockeye producing rivers on the Skeena Watershed much attention was focused on protecting this river, habitat and water quality and quantity (Gottesfeld, Rabnett and Hall 2002: 23).

The Wet'suwet'en are seeking community input in these new collaboratively managed parks. This summary highlights the different approaches in sustainability, with the Wet'suwet'en seeking aspects of living that are important to sustain us whereas the provincial land use planning strongly focuses on economic and industry interests.

The Parkes et al. prism framework outlines within a watershed, catchment or river basin, the focus for sustainable development is a triple bottom line of economy, society and environment (2008: 37). The Wet'suwet'en sustainable development perspective based upon the ways of knowing or understanding the 'laws', also identifies three main focus areas: **Wiggus** and support for the Wet'suwet'en culture and Wet'suwet'en law (*inuk nu'at'en*), protection and maintenance of the ecological integrity of the territories (*yintahk*) and provision of meaningful, sustainable economic opportunities for Wet'suwet'en communities (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2003: 5). The two concepts of sustainable development from the Prism framework and the Wet'suwet'en perspective are similar however expressed differently.

Governance perspective for ecosystems and well being



The Parkes et al. Prism model outlines that watershed governance provides benefits to communities and people from the ecosystems, referring to these benefits as ecological goods and services.

These include provisioning services such as food and water; regulating services, such as regulation of floods, drought, land degradation and disease; supporting services such as soil formation and nutrient cycling; and cultural services such as recreational, spiritual, religious and other nonmaterial benefits (2008: 18).

Parkes et al. provide a draft table identifying the various goods and services to help illustrate the importance of recognizing watersheds and ecosystems for people's health and wellbeing. This is exciting as most indigenous groups have this idea or belief that we are all connected not only do we benefit from the 'goods and services' but we also have a responsibility to keep the balance with the natural world. We must maintain healthy and respectful relations to the natural world to ensure that these benefits continue on as long as possible. This concept speaks to the ways of knowing and ways of being that Martin (2003) refers to in her 'getting centered' aboriginal methodology.

In getting back to the ways of knowing, as a basis for governance for ecosystems and health, *Yintahk*, or ecological integrity, is a strong requirement of healthy water, air, ecosystems and intact habitats, sacred places and biodiversity. This is very important so the Wet'suwet'en can survive and be well in their homeland. These are just a few of the 'benefits' that the Wet'suwet'en receive from the territory. The ways of knowing concept promotes being centered in your culture and for the Wet'suwet'en learning and knowing your 'place' in the world relates back to the oral history. Due to pesticide and herbicide use, deforestation, mountain pine beetle epidemics of such huge proportions, and less biodiversity in the territory, there is great cause for concern for Wet'suwet'en wellbeing, ecological integrity of the house territories and the drainages or watersheds.

Because the people of the land have been there since time immemorial, this entails concern for immense longevity and relations to the territory. One of my favourite stories from Estace (Wistace) was told by a Lihksilyu chief from *C'inegh lhay yihk* (House of Many Eyes),

Charlie Bazil, a present day Witsuwit'en, recited the kungax which depicts the shaping and creation of this land: "Manatoo – that's Estace. There's a lot of stories about him. You can see his tracks along the canyon, all the way to the trapline. They say he ran away with water and at each place where he spilled some there is a lake there now" (personal communication) (Mills 1994: 76).

Antonia Mills goes on to say that when Father A.G. Morice, a missionary, came into the area and was posted in the Stuart Lake area, he learned the Carrier language and he cites the *Kungax*:

Eustace steals water from the old man who guarded it and sprinkled it across the land, forming the ocean, rivers and lakes that the Witsuwit'en know today. The account continues:

When he had well nigh done with his distribution, he threw away, by a rapid movement of his arm, what remained in the...water-wood or wooden pack whereby are also denominated the square wooden boxes imported from amongst the Coast tribes...thereby producing what we now call Neto penren, or French Lake...

The very mention of Neto penren (white man), or French (or Francois Lake) is to me unmistakable evidence that the story came to the Carriers proper through the Hwotso'tin (Witsuwit'en), the Kitikson's (Gitksan's) immediate neighbours. That lake is one of the Hwotso'tin's favourite hunting resorts, and among the other subdivisions of the tribe, there is not, I dare say, one out of fifty Indians who ever as much as saw it, let alone obtained an exact idea of its dimensions (Mills 1994: 77).

The connection to the land is expressed through the *Kungax*, the laws, language and cultural practices in the feast hall, and everyday living. Keeping the territory healthy, to sustain the land and the people is a primary focus of the Wet'suwet'en, at the house group level, and in the territorial planning and management work.

The WTSP itself is based upon an ecosystems based model for *sustainable* forest management and territorial management. It identifies what the Wet'suwet'en have identified as important and necessary to ensure viability and protection so that key plants, habitats, ecosystems and animals can survive today and into the future. These ecological goods and services are protected in the following manner:

Best practices of current conservation biology theory are used as a basis for planning resource development activities at the watershed and sub-regional levels within Wet'suwet'en territory, with particular focus on the maintenance of connectivity at all scales (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2003: 34).

The idea of ecological integrity is strongly in line with Wet'suwet'en wellbeing or health you cannot have one without the other. This is a communal law and cultural practice that is integral to a way of life. This conflict directly with the resource industry and the provincial government who often promote using the environment to its maximum potential and most cost effectively (e.g. clear cut logging). This is a fundamental difference in well being, *wiggus* confronting 'wealth'.

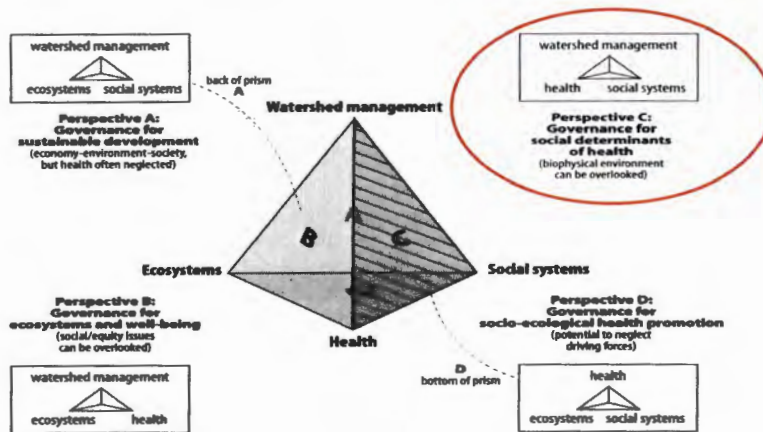
The Wet'suwet'en have a long standing battle with forestry companies and contractors to suspend the use of pesticides and herbicides on the territory for fear of potential contamination of Wet'suwet'en foods, water supply and harm to the habitat. This was one of the key components of the provincial LRMP government-to-government agreement. One of the concerns with the quality and quantity of water and ecological integrity leads directly to the concerns with food contamination; from fish in the river and the lakes, to berries, medicines and game such as moose, deer, mountain goats, beaver, bear and so on. The Wet'suwet'en need access to healthy Wet'suwet'en foods for healthy growth and development. This is essential to combat the high levels of heart disease, diabetes and possibly links to other conditions which have been identified in the Wet'suwet'en Community Needs Assessment (1995). Food security is a concern for many families and accesses to Wet'suwet'en food year round on a regular basis is an issue at both community and the Wet'suwet'en Nation levels.

The foci of a Wet'suwet'en social-ecological approach for ecosystems and wellbeing are: Wet'suwet'en land status summary by house group (key indicators based

upon the WTSP criteria and indicators), protection for source water and fish and animal habitat, access as needed, stewardship role is respected and there is monitoring to ensure ecological integrity; land restoration and lake rehabilitation for Morice Lake and there must be respectful use of Wet'suwet'en knowledge and culture. This perspective is also similar to the Parkes et al. perspective of governance for ecosystems and wellbeing. The most evident difference would be the cultural beliefs and protocols that connect the Wet'suwet'en to the territory and the stewardship responsibilities to work towards ecological integrity which are a central responsibility of the Wet'suwet'en. This is an area of the prism framework that diverges from the Wet'suwet'en perspective of governance although the outcome is similar, namely to have good health and healthy ecosystems.

Governance perspective on social determinants of health

Yihk, families and house system



Grandparents, extended family on both the maternal and paternal side have clear responsibilities to teach and guide their house members throughout life's roles. Rites of passage, building up of physical strength and marriage alliances were part of the Wet'suwet'en ways of the not too distant past. Following the laws of not marrying someone of your house or clan was a key foundational law. The family helped you grow into a specific role in your family or house, such as a hunter, good speaker, good with tanning, etc. This social system is based upon the inherent laws, oral tradition and cultural practices of the Wet'suwet'en.

When the Wet'suwet'en signed off the Accord of Recognition and Respect in 1994 with the provincial and federal Crowns there was a Joint Human Services Working Group established (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1998). A key part of this capacity building initiative was to be prepared to implement self-governing agreements. This group was

committed to identifying the most pressing and urgent health and social issues in Wet'suwet'en territory. The Wet'suwet'en Community Needs Assessment (1995a) was completed in all of the communities, both First Nations and urban/rural centers (on and off reserve), in Wet'suwet'en Territory with the majority of the survey work completed by the Wet'suwet'en. The 1995 needs assessment identified eight social dimensions or domains which are socio-demography, residential characteristics, recreation, culture, employment/education, health, social problems and economic growth/decline.

From the needs assessment a number of priorities were identified from the youth, adults' and elders' perspectives of each other. The social concerns that were identified led to the creation of a Wet'suwet'en Human Services Strategy seeking government support for newly created programs and services to address the identified pressing matters. These services were administered in the newly created Human and Social Services Department of the Wet'suwet'en Nation Office. The initial work of establishing a family and community development strategy was framed around a "Wet'suwet'en Integrated Authority and Child and Family Services Authority" whose vision was:

To strengthen our Wet'suwet'en culture, individuals, family and communities through leadership, education, and specialized services to ensure the ongoing health and vibrancy of our Nation (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1997a: 5).

A key part of the strategy is to build programs and services following Wet'suwet'en traditions, laws and cultural practices. This is a key component of a self-governing people. The Wet'suwet'en integrated human services strategy proposed

building upon the existing services offered through INAC programs and services and those offered by Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health. As each of the 5 First Nations communities has a different level of programs and services the integrated strategy defined a needs based approach.

In the Office of the Wet'suwet'en publication, *Inuk Nu'at'en*, Recognizing History, Restoring Justice section it says:

We have experienced many injustices. We live with and suffer from these every day. Our very presence on the territory has been damaged and disrupted. We live with the pains of residential schools, of being torn from our lands and our communities. We have witnessed constant attempts by the Crown to impose the Indian Act and the repressive policies of the federal governments on us. Our veterans have fought for and defended this country yet they have been denied many of their rights as Wet'suwet'en because of this fact. Our youth face an uncertain and uninviting future. Our communities have suffered terribly. We do not accept responsibility for the creation of these circumstances. They result from the policies and actions of the Crown. We are taking responsibility for undoing the harm which has been caused. Only we can do so. ***We will place a new memory in the minds and hearts of our children (emphasis added: 3.1).***

This new beginning must take place on the entire territory and in our communities as well. Our people want to find our communities and our Nation to be sources of health. The treaty will ensure that we have the highest quality, culturally appropriate and fully modern education, health, social, justice and other community-based services (1997b: 3.4).

The new social memory seeks to shift our families and communities from state dependency. We need to move out of the poverty trap to recognize our inherent strengths, our distinct language, and our connection to living in our homeland where we belong. This is critical; to maintain our ways of knowing, to be ourselves, and to have this recognized and respected in all facets of life is essential.

Being caught in the poverty trap is “suggested as a departure from an adaptive cycle. If an adaptive cycle collapses because the potential and diversity have been eradicated by misuse or an external force, an impoverished state can result, with low connectedness, low potential, and low resilience, creating a poverty trap” (Resilience Alliance 1998b: 1). This is what must continue to overcome. The outcomes of an impoverished state is to have negative indicators such as high levels of child apprehension, low levels of a formal education and high levels of child poverty. This has been the key focus around the formal programs and services of the Wet’suwet’en Office (Office of the Wet’suwet’en 1997a). The Wet’suwet’en is in a unique position as they offer culturally based programs and services directly to Wet’suwet’en members.

As Parkes et al. state in *Ecohealth and Watersheds*, “focusing on the social determinants of health requires us to shift attention to the ‘cause of causes’ of health inequalities and a recognition that the root causes of many health challenges lie outside of the health sector” (2008: 36). The Wet’suwet’en vision of an integrated approach to being ‘strong’ has a natural interdependent nature which has connections to the house territories and the spirit in the land.

The relationship between social determinants and health is a concept I would like to focus on as it strongly *connects* these relationships in an integrated or holistic manner. The concept of a strong person is presented in the following section.

I have heard many times over the years in rather heated terms the need to address the larger social inequities. Why are so many Wet’suwet’en struggling to make

ends meet, especially here in our homeland? This is seen as a big injustice, as elder Roy Morris stated, "We get the crumbs off the crumbs" and Johnny David said,

The trees that they have taken off our territory, the government has been receiving the money and they're putting it in their pockets - now we want the stumpage fees. We want the stumpage fees from all the trap lines they have logged.

Where do they get the money to be driving nice cars, to have a railroad system, or to be flying in the air? This is our money that they're using and I am walking on my feet.

In the old days these people that trapped each territory, they protected the trees in the blocks so that the animals would flourish. Now the government has trapped all our territories and they have all the money and the way they treat us, they throw us little bits and pieces to eat. That's it. (Mills 2005: 142).

To be able to address the social inequities there needs to be greater connection to the social-ecological approach and have more sustainable development initiatives in the house territories. This is where the greatest challenge lies for the Wet'suwet'en. How can there be sustainable livelihoods at the house group/territory level yet ensuring ecological integrity of the territory?

In my experience I can see that the many Wet'suwet'en house groups may be caught in seeking to protect the territory from further intensive resource development and destruction yet still need to find livelihoods for income. However I believe there is interest in exploring the concept of 'sustainable' livelihoods, greener or locally based developments rather than partaking in the regular boom and bust nature of the big resource industries. For example, Kyahwood Finger-joint facility in Kyah Wiget (Moricetown) which has recently reopened its doors and employs up to 60 people is a

value added facility which is done in a more sustainable manner than most forestry related developments in the north.

The Morice Land and Resource Management Plan (British Columbia 2007) summarizes the Wet'suwet'en Office's economic development work to date, which has involved a substantial amount of research and hiring of specialized services to support the house groups determine the priorities and needs for sustainable development opportunities. There must be funding equity in core programs and services at the community and Nation levels however we must also work towards becoming economically self-reliant as well, so this has led to much work with the house groups to explore and define what that might look like. The issue of sustainability and how one earns a wage is difficult as many of our people rely on industry and resource development initiatives. The house group research work was sought to explore more types of jobs that led to greater economic diversity to create more sustainable livelihoods. Economic opportunities needed to be in line with the governing principles of *wiggus* and *yintahk*.

In conjunction with these agreements and planning processes, the Wet'suwet'en has completed numerous studies to ready themselves for economic development, including:

- Wet'suwet'en Forest Sector Action Plan
- Wet'suwet'en Tenure Project
- Wet'suwet'en Tourism Strategy
- Wet'suwet'en Trail Strategy
- Wet'suwet'en Tourism Services
- Wet'suwet'en Economic Strategy
- Wet'suwet'en Cultural Heritage/Archaeology Initiative

- Wet'suwet'en Capacity Projects on G.I.S., Tourism, Silviculture, Cultural Heritage/Archaeology
- Wet'suwet'en Burning for Berries (British Columbia 2007: 8).

For a short time I sat on the Witsit Economic Development Corporation along with 5 other directors working together to develop partnerships and tourism strategies to support local ecotourism related businesses and a more sustainable job creation approach. I learned the need for partnerships, effective communications, readiness and the long standing issue of separating business from politics as the latter will certainly end potential business opportunities (Naziell 1997b: 13). Realizing that in today's world, wages and money do have value and are a key part of everyday living therefore sustainable job creation is a priority to further support greater self-sufficiency. I believe that greater self-reliance may lead to enhanced personal and community health and growth and therefore more positive living outcomes for children, families, communities and the Nation. With a collective efforts and commitment to work together to foster strength, such as *lh'tis*, this can be realized.

The prism perspective, of health and sustainability speaks to this concept:

Perspective A provokes consideration of population health as the "*real*" bottom line of sustainable development (Parkes et al. 2008: 38).

I believe this bottom line is most suitable and I would strongly support this perspective of the bottom line being population health and a people's wellbeing. There was a strong interest in becoming economically self-reliant to be able to generate wealth and identify projects or initiatives that the people sought as important, such as elders care, language

revitalization or sports and recreation to further promote living to sustain us. Finding the balance between economic opportunities while maintaining ecological resilience of the land is one of the most demanding challenges for leadership, across many nations and territories of this land.

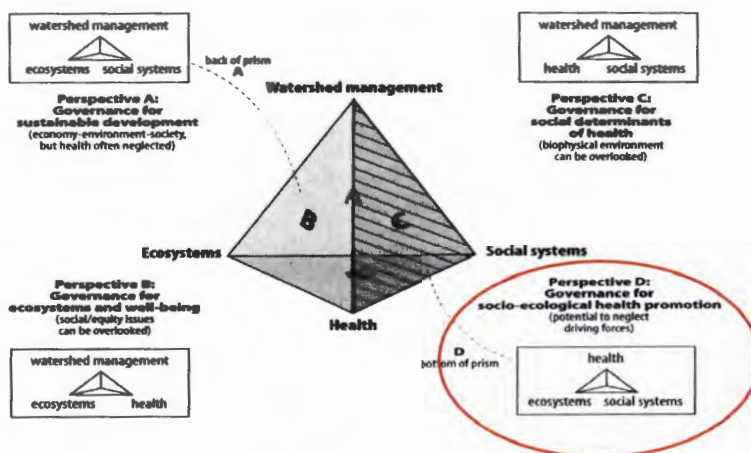
Being and becoming a strong Wet'suwet'en person is a key part to our collective wellbeing; we as a people are seeking to rebuild our families after having gone through horrible experiences over the decades, by building up resilience, reciprocity and having youth and families participate in regular healthy Wet'suwet'en activities. We can do this on our own, by strengthening our family relations and wellbeing and with formal supports from a supporting Wet'suwet'en agency. Without this key family health aspect, the struggle will continue and inequities will become inter-generational, and further '*anomie*' will deepen. It is important to help each other become strong Wet'suwet'en, to teach formal external services providers, health officials, school teachers and so on, to offer their services by following a Wet'suwet'en perspective. We must promote our perspective in order to facilitate improved programs and services to work towards reducing the social inequities.

The Wet'suwet'en as a collective need to continue focussing on minimizing poverty levels, otherwise we will continue to witness and be a part of low socio-economic status which often leads to greater health, social and education challenges, to name just a few. We must continue to move towards improving education outcomes, promote healthy living and formally link our systems to each other in a sustainability

framework. A long term goal may be to have policy fall under Wet'suwet'en governance framework based upon the laws, cultural practices and language. This will further promote and build up healthy family development.

Wet'suwet'en social determinants of health include a sustainable livelihood by house group needs, economic opportunities at the community level being realized and self-governance to include programs and services for family development (i.e. child welfare and good public administration) which are offered in line with Wet'suwet'en cultural wellbeing approach. Again the broader social-ecological framework is fairly similar to the Wet'suwet'en perspective. However there are broader issues that must be addressed such as land claims and jurisdictional issues that are outlined in the driving forces section of this paper. A multi-stakeholder process is generally not suitable unless these larger jurisdictional matters regarding planning for land use are addressed. Until there is a way to address these larger political matters the social equity concerns will more than likely continue. Thus I discuss the links in chapter 3 to the driving forces section to look at these larger concerns and issues.

Governance perspective for Social-Ecological Health Promotion



As stated previously, the Wet'suwet'en are a kinship based people following a matrilineal form of descent and organized into house groups and larger clans. This social structure is the basis of family care, an interdependent relationship between the maternal and paternal clans, with established marriage alliances between Chiefs and families, in-laws and extended family. The house and clan have responsibilities to feed their families, following use rights and spousal rights to the territory. The social-ecological connection for the Wet'suwet'en cannot be any clearer, as the house group is a group of family members connected by the mother. Your lineage follows your mother and it cannot be changed. It is your birthright. Along with a family house kin group there is also a connection to a specific house territory which is directly linked to your family or house group. There are cultural protocols and laws to be followed which are usually taught at an early age, to know the boundaries of house groups, local habitats, access to

certain plants and medicines, place names and the potlatch system (Mills 1994: 117).

This too is a key aspect of our social system.

The responsibility to teach the many intricate teachings primarily rested with the house group mostly the grandmothers and grandfathers worked to ensure their children and grandchildren received a name. Later on in life aunts and uncles may pass on title names to nieces and nephews (1994: 117). This was done mostly by living in close living quarters to each other and supporting families to raise their children.

The Wet'suwet'en have many territory-based laws consisting of house Chiefs with feast names taking care of the territory, fishing sites, burning berry patches, and monitoring how many animals could be harvested on the land that they were responsible for. This monitoring and management allowed for the resources to continue on ensuring availability all year round as best as possible. This is sustainability. Following the cultural laws and protocols to ensure you have enough food and maintain good relations within your house group and across the house groups is important. This system has many rules and gets complicated with marriage alliances, grandfather rights and so on. The idea is that there is a system to be honoured and adhered to.

The Chiefs are the key enforcer of the regulations and settler of disputes and keepers of the peace. Again this worked towards keeping balance and reciprocity amongst families and ensured relations were taken care of. This does not mean there wasn't hardship as there definitely were cases of starvation, sickness and war. There are many laws and cultural practices to ensure that 'relations' were maintained and

followed. This was essential to keep families and house groups in good relations, and access to territory and therefore livelihoods ensured and respected. If this was out of line then conflict arose and had to be addressed through compensating another chief or house group for breaking a law. This may equate to sharing resources, granting access to the territory to be used or by compensation. You had to pay and take steps to re-establish 'peace' (Mills 1994: 153). Peace is a central component identified in the *lh'tis* diagram and is a main way of being in Wet'suwet'en 'justice'. If there are extensive measures needed to correct your situation, to achieve peace, you may find yourself in a position to give away everything at the feast or *c'ist'et ket nedigeldes*, I am left with no clothes (Hargus 2007: 318).

The house and clan systems provides a clear place for a Wet'suwet'en to belong. Learning the key teachings that every Wet'suwet'en should be taught from a young age is an essential part of growing up Wet'suwet'en. Learning the place names, boundaries, building up strength and responsibility are key parts of Wet'suwet'en health promotion and educational initiatives. In the draft Wet'suwet'en Language Authority terms of reference, the following principles were identified:

Draft Principles (not all provided):

- Wet'suwet'en are best able to fulfill the responsibility of governance
- Wiggus or *respect* is the overall principle in relating to one another, with staff, government people and other guests
- We believe in the establishment of Wet'suwet'en Language programs both in the home, service delivery and in schools; we believe this approach will
 - effect a positive self-image, sense of belonging and strong identity

- lead to greater success in secondary and higher education careers,
- facilitate the obtaining of employment,
- allow genuine options for all students in choosing a way of life,
- Facilitate more harmonious relationships between the student's culture and the mainstream society (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2006a: 1).

All of the work around language retention and the need to have Wet'suwet'en language taught at home, school and work is pulled together in a Wet'suwet'en language and culture plan (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1999). This language work highlights the connection to well being, healthy connections to the territory, and all that is to be strong and whole.

Learning that your wellbeing is connected to your house group responsibilities is a key message that needs to be promoted to Wet'suwet'en families, youth and children. I believe that as more and more families are reconnected to where they belong and learn their rights and responsibilities they will further strengthen the system. This will help further build up learning cultural responsibilities, as house members participate and become more involved. This is the time to promote the teachings, responsibilities and interdependence amongst the house groups and house territories in the watersheds. Being a strong person with everyone able to live their life to the fullest is expressed through a distinctly Wet'suwet'en language and cultural life lens. Promoting Wet'suwet'en concepts of strength and health *lh'tis*, as the basis for all services with an interdisciplinary approach may lead to more improved health conditions, a better quality of life and healthy ecosystems.

One of the most pressing social issues identified was to prevent the high levels of child apprehension, as the Wet'suwet'en Nation, unfortunately, has the highest level of children in care in the province. The Wet'suwet'en are often struggling with the highest numbers of children in care as are our neighbours and close relatives, the Lake Babine Nation. To negotiate for this specialized service at the community level with child and family services requires completion of a very formal and methodical process identified for First Nations bands to obtain funding from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Affairs Canada (AANDC) and the BC Government (Government of Canada, AANDC Program 20-1).

Child welfare and protection issues are the most oppressive and legally the most difficult face of the state in our families' lives in our recent history. The third and final attempt was to complete the work required to illustrate community readiness, political support, and outline a good decision making processes (at both the hereditary and band council levels) to support families in crisis at the community level. A Wet'suwet'en child and family services agency is an opportunity to have the Wet'suwet'en hereditary system partner and collaborate with the communities of Moricetown and Hagwilget. This would create a meaningful culturally relevant governing structure to meet the needs of community, children and families and to work to achieve healthy Wet'suwet'en family development. The Wet'suwet'en Office has developed, in partnership with Moricetown and Hagwilget, a traditional decision making process to support family development (personal communication Debbie Pierre: Feb 22, 2011). This is amazing

work that is instrumental to our wellbeing. Child welfare is deemed to be at the heart of self-governance, as healthy families lead to healthy communities and a healthy Nation. We must come to a place of working together amongst families, between levels of government and service organizations to stop the child apprehensions. We need to help families, children and youth reconnect, stay together and become strong and healthy. This includes speaking Wet'suwet'en, leading healthy, productive lives and living a good life.

In Figure 4 there is an illustration of my interpretation of what it looks like to be a strong person, based on the many things I have learned and am still learning. This includes mother clan and house teachings, following your matrilineal side, growing up responsibly with the language and cultural ceremonies, learning your responsibilities as a member of a father clan, as a spouse and the laws and expectations in the feast hall. Knowing your spiritual connections to the land, medicines and songs are the two largest circles in Figure 4 as I have consistently heard that this is a foundational piece of our 'being'. All these elements are key parts of a strong person. This "*Lh'tis*: A Strong person or a strong Wet'suwet'en definition in Figure 4 presents a learning tool to understand a Wet'suwet'en 'being' to help inform formal services and program supports in health, education and child welfare. This is crucial to be whole, spiritually connected and not 'lost' as the elders would say. To be *dihldzu*, hardworking, nice and beautiful and respected in the community is a goal to work towards. For house members to learn that

they belong to a house group and clan, have responsibilities and become familiar with basic Wet'suwet'en laws and protocols, and with medicines and foods is an important connection many families still enjoy. *Lh'tis* cannot fully capture a holistic concept but is utilized to begin dialogue around defining what strong and healthy is.

From a governance perspective of social-ecological health promotion there are commonalities between the two broad concepts of social ecology and health promotion. Both create resilience. A social-ecological approach includes resilience of ecological integrity by sustainable development, to achieve goals such as food security and sustainable livelihoods, and a strong person creates resilience by utilizing the laws and responsibilities to take care of each other and the territory. Resilience of the ecosystem and of the individuals that make up the house groups and clans go hand in hand. Figure 4 represents this interconnection of land and person and kin responsibilities and is intended to show what the interdependence entails and may also be a tool for Wet'suwet'en teaching and sharing.

In governing and making formal decisions affecting a watershed, the whole prism approach that Parkes et al. have outlined is needed to make good decisions as it connects each of the four broad areas of ecosystems, watersheds, social systems and health. I believe this social-ecological approach fits well into a world view that believes we are all connected, that the language and culture are the strength and foundation of our wellbeing or health and are based upon the ways of knowing, as Martin states. This

is important to maintain the idea of 'getting centered.' Details of the relationships of the adapted social-ecological framework are outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: To Re-Frame to Work from the Center

How to *re-frame*, or to work from the center or core to be flexible and reflexive to the relatedness to self and all other beings (what Karen Martin refers to as Entities 2003) is what this chapter is about. I will present the driving forces of a social-ecological approach and identify the relations between the four main components of health and sustainability to complete the adapted social-ecological framework that recognizes, *Yinka dinii ha ba ten*, the ways of the people of the earth.

In their chapter on conceptualizing relationships between Health, Ecosystems and Society Parkes et al. state

The last decade has therefore witnessed a re-emphasis on the environment as context for health, including proposals for a 'socio-ecologic systems perspective' for epidemiology (McMichael, 1999) and a convergence of research, policy and practice seeking to re-link social and ecological understandings of health (Parkes et al., 2008: 4).

I support connecting the dimensions of a whole person with ecological integrity as one. This is based upon our knowledge and language, belief systems that we are all connected.

As Parkes et al. outline in *Ecohealth and Watersheds*,

Drawing on anthropology, epidemiology, public health science and systems ecology, the emerging field of ecohealth has involved researchers focusing on 'ecosystem approaches' to health and sustainability (2008: 4).

Looking across the many specialties and academic institutions, some are finally coming to a place of recognizing the relationships between and amongst each other, using an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approach. I believe this is important from

my experience working with the many ministries, whether land or people based, and repeating the same messages over and over again but with different people. A multidisciplinary or integrated approach would be beneficial.

In this chapter there are two main sections, a summary of the driving forces of health and sustainability which summarizes the driving forces as self-determination, *balhats* and *inuk nu'at'en*, self-governance and self-reliance which is somewhat different than the Parkes et al. driving forces. An outline of the relations of the five dimensions of the adapted social-ecological framework are presented to illustrate how the way of being, i.e. establishing relations amongst the four main governance perspectives of health, social systems, ecosystems and sustainable development. A diagram of the adapted social-ecological framework is presented at the beginning of each section to aid in understanding the framework.

Following each main section the summary of indicators found to support the relationship concept is provided in the Appendix identified. The Wet'suwet'en primary source is identified at the top of each section while the specific indicators to support the relationship focus are identified in a chart. I have utilized the main Wet'suwet'en planning documents to bring forward much of the formal work to help support the idea of a social-ecological framework. Each Appendix has a summary page provided in a poster at the end to highlight some of the main elements and indicators to realize the vision from the Wet'suwet'en primary sources.

The Driving Forces: Self-determination, *balhats*, *inuk nu'at'en* and self-reliance

Our *dinizë* and *tsekožë* (men and women hereditary Chiefs) over generations sought different ways to protect the integrity of the territory and in so doing protect the wellbeing of the Wet'suwet'en. Battles or wars amongst the tribal peoples are well documented in the oral histories of the local peoples. More recently, protests and presentations made to Ottawa and to the Queen of England and to the Church were part of our history. So the Wet'suwet'en fought against the colonial powers (as I would say most indigenous people have) as to why the Wet'suwet'en were being moved off the land. Families were set up in permanent locations with little or no provisions, movements were restricted to reserve only and access to the territory was cut off.

The most recent strategy in our history is working with the band councils, volunteers and many academic experts and specialists towards *working together* to launch a legal strategy to protect the natural resources of the territory. This was a collaborate effort that brought the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs together with the elected leadership of the tribal and band councils to come together pursue this monumental challenge. This in itself was a driving force for change. This began with and stems from the *Delgamuukw Gisday Wa* court challenge. The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en as two separate Nations have continued/begun the challenge to stop the exploitation of the land. In the research, planning and discussions to prepare for this court case, intensive efforts were made to identify what areas needed protection in

Wet'suwet'en territory. The key concepts of defining what natural resources are to be protected and what is identified for responsible development was laid out in a preliminary manner as a result of the first *Gisday Wa Delgamuukw* 1991 decision. The fact that resources were being extracted at a frenzied rate off the territories with no resource sharing agreements and with unknown cumulative impacts to the territory were not and is not acceptable.

In 1997 the final Supreme Court decision was finally presented that led to changes in aboriginal case law. Namely the recognition of oral history, of the legal right to the land itself, the duty to consult and accommodate, identifying what an infringement of rights and title may entail and outlining the economic component of aboriginal title, to name a few of the major points (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2002a).

Satsan, as the Wet'suwet'en speaker stated, "We are a unique people. We are the first people of this land. We have a different history, language, spirituality and sense of how to govern ourselves. When we speak about respect, these differences between ourselves must be respected. That respect cannot flow from only one direction" (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1996b: 9).

At this time we draw on our cultural practice of oral tradition to primarily guide this work and to have both the federal and provincial Crown recognize the Wet'suwet'en governance system. It is so crucial for a tribal Nation to do this work. The challenge is that there may be many communities or band councils within one tribe/Nation and there may not be consensus on how to make decisions at these various

levels (personal, family/house group, community/band or Nation). I believe that one of the most obvious and damaging colonial impacts that faces our people today is the concept of majority rules. The process of voting and not utilizing a consensus based approach as the main process of decision making has had disastrous impacts on first peoples. Impacts include diminishing community spirit, cooperation and working within an environment of inequitable resources has eventually lead to huge differences in wealth and health amongst community members. As the first peoples of these lands, collectively speaking, I believe we are in a governance crisis.

In Wet'suwet'en territory there is the Wet'suwet'en house system with the hereditary system/*balhats* being the central governing body. There is also the band council election system with a formal election process that the federal government usually outlines. Across Canada, the significant education gap, the shortage of adequate housing and uncertain comparability of child and services are some main concerns identified in First Nation on reserve programs (Office of the Auditor General of Canada 2011:8). Low voter turnout, complaints of the same large families getting the majority of votes and making the choices for funding allocations, job opportunities, or housing allocations are perceived to benefit only those families who are elected in. The voice of elders and our knowledge holders are often not a strong part of this decision making process unless there is a custom election code designed to do so.

The voting process where the council comes together and makes decisions rather than the using the consensus building approach may lead to further fractions,

alliances and marginalize community members even more. Apathy, a further lack of trust and discouragement sets in if the band council is not inclusive in their decision making process. In the interim until self-governance is realized collaborating and making decisions by consensus building is one way of overcoming the inequities.

Much energy and attention is on 'crisis management' in our homes and communities and competing for limited resources to alleviate the poverty and the many challenges that come with it. Many communities struggle with funding shortfalls and immense waiting lists for affordable housing and post-secondary student funding supports for example. Social development and housing are two of the most demanding programs in first nation communities to administer. The Auditor General of Canada report believes there are four structural impediments to improvements in living conditions on First Nation reserves (2011: 5). It goes on to say that clarity about service levels, a legislative base for programs and commensurate statutory funding instead of policy and contribution agreements are needed (2011:5).

There is a dramatic shift in the wellbeing of the Wet'suwet'en in a few generations where everyone was taken care of by their house group/clan to almost a third of communities' members living with seriously low levels of income and significant housing needs. There have been many improvements and positive results in the last decade in most of the bands/villages/communities. However there are still larger governance issues that need to be addressed at some point. For some we have lost sight of 'being' Wet'suwet'en and are lost, not fitting into the Wet'suwet'en world nor

mainstream society. I certainly experienced this many times working in the education and especially the child welfare field. I am fortunate to have worked alongside many good people in the system or systems working to strengthen governance, have good administration and meet the needs of the people.

How the Wet'suwet'en house system makes decisions is crucial. Everyone must be taught and learn how this is done according to Wet'suwet'en teachings and in accordance with the house and clan governing structure. This is a pressing matter as most people do not speak their language, fewer and fewer are brought up with the teachings of the feast hall (i.e. names are not being passed on). The difficult situation of confronting lateral violence, people that use bullying and aggressive behaviours as a main form of communication in the workplace and in the community is a real problem that destroys relationships. This unhealthy behaviour is creeping into more and more band offices and into First Nation work places and creates challenges for collaboration, consensus building and dialogue.

Some house groups in the area are now revisiting their internal decision making process as their needs to be more understanding of house based decisions. Final decisions are usually presented in the feast hall when there is consensus, especially in relation to important decisions. This is what represents cultural continuity in our decision making process as a people and a Nation, following our consensus based decisions based upon the leadership and guidance of the house chief. This leads to greater political accountability as decisions are made by consensus which would

practically eliminate wrong doing and abuse of power; two key components needed for good governance (Wilson Raybould 2011: 41).

Inuk Nu'at'en, Our Own Law, was pulled together early in the treaty negotiations process to define a starting place for the Crown to understand the Wet'suwet'en position in treaty negotiations (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1997b). One aspect that really struck me is that our laws have not changed which is quite different from federal and provincial governments. The key aspect of treaty making was to have the Crown recognize the self-governing component of the Wet'suwet'en house system.

The December 2010 Wet'suwet'en office newsletter states in an article about the Governance Authority:

On October 2009, Wet'suwet'en Chiefs and House members frustrated by 14 years of negotiations costing over \$12 million while the Crown continues to sell off lands in dispute, and permit exploitation of natural resources on Wet'suwet'en Territories, unanimously opposed any further Treaty negotiations until the Crown recognizes Wet'suwet'en Governance Authority...During 2010, Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs pulled back from the treaty negotiations to review its relationship with the Federal and Provincial governments. Meetings with clan and house members clearly identified governance, and the authority of House members over their territories to be the highest concern for all Wet'suwet'en (2010: 2, 3).

The Wet'suwet'en Vision of a Treaty With the Crown states the negotiations with Canada and British Columbia are based upon three beginning principles of recognition, respect and reconciliation (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1996b: 3). The principle of recognition means recognition of Wet'suwet'en lands, of the harmful policies of the past and the recognition of an imbalance of power (1996b: 5-7). The principle of respect

means to respect our government and our relationship with our lands, and respecting our differences (1996b: 8-9); and the third principle, reconciliation “offers us an opportunity to bridge our differences, to establish better relationships for the future and to end the isolation of our peoples from one another. Reconciliation, in our vision, has to be based on and flow from the principles of recognition and respect” (1996b: 10). These principles for the basis of self-governance still exist today, fifteen years later.

As stated, other decision making processes might creep in and ultimately lead to a non-Wet’suwet’en system of decision making and begin moving us away from our inherent dialogue and indigenous knowledge-based way of ‘being’. We see other organizations making decisions that are based on majority rule: a simple majority vote following an election process (most band council elections); including First Nations Summit and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) process, national and regional offices (although these organizations are still be promoting indigenous rights and ways of being). There is the corporate board (Carver Model) often seen in a provincially incorporated entity as a not-for-profit society which may have received delegation from band councils to manage specialized services and funding agreements.

A consensus based approach fosters inclusion by promoting participation in the dialogue and deliberations of working through an issue or problem. This may strengthen trust and a sense of belonging in the process as members are *part* of the process as they know where they fit. Central to the dialogue process is a solution oriented and adaptive learning focus, considering all sides of a situation and finding the most suitable outcome

for all parties involved. I witnessed this numerous times working with the elders and *dinizë* and *tsekožë* working through a dilemma or situation; dialoguing around the table, usually in Wet'suwet'en, possibly reaching out to other speakers and elders overnight and then coming back the next day or so with the most suitable response. 'Sleeping on it' referring to an informed process not highlighting concerns of fatigue. Then the situation can move on with clear direction. To me this helps facilitate calmness and may restore peace to the conflict as all parties agree with the outcome and help build confidence in making good decisions. This is more suitable in a small community than a voting process which clearly creates winners and losers and continual alliances, disharmony and unbalance. However a consensus based approach does require time.

Other models do not come from a consensus building approach. The most common way of doing business at the community and or Nation level today in many first people's lives is that of the band council system. In the Wet'suwet'en territory there are five band councils, Moricetown, Wet'suwet'en First Nation (Broman Lake), Burns Lake Band, Skin Tyee and Nee Tahi Buhn as well as many Wet'suwet'en live in Tse K'ya (Hagwilget village). So how each band council or First Nation community will realign themselves under Wet'suwet'en governance if interested is ongoing discussion that requires openness, dialogue and consensus building. Misalo's, Victor Jim, outlines a number of recommendations in his paper, "Nukanic Nali (Keepers of Our Language)." He too supports a consensus model of decision making in his recommendations, specifically #19:

The consensus model of making decisions should be used. This method of decision making has served the Witsuwit'en well for centuries. This system of decision making gives all involved a chance to speak on the topic being discussed. This process also eliminates people from looking after their own interest; one has to think of all their House members rather than themselves or their family members. Of course there is always room to improve but we must remember our ancestors have used this system and it has served them well (1999: 57).

On Sunday, March 13, 2011, at a recent smoke feast for the passing of *dinizë Woos*, Roy Morris, two 'government' chief councillors, as they introduced themselves, expressed a strong interest to realign themselves back under Wet'suwet'en governance and teachings, 'to go where they belong'. I was just elated to hear these young leaders commit to working with their community members to see how best this can be done, learn Wet'suwet'en language and culture and participate at the governing table of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary Chiefs and Nation. This means a commitment to possibly move away from the Indian Act band council role and recreate a community based constitution or charter of governance that is embedded with the cultural laws and customs of being Wet'suwet'en. Roy would have been pleased to hear such news as many of the elders and Chiefs have always promoted this at the various communities' levels; sharing where the members belong and the need to commit to learning and sharing the strengths of the Wet'suwet'en culture, together as a people. In working together, greater achievements can be made in keeping the language and culture alive, the territory protected and utilized well and a future with more possibilities of self-reliance.

Do the Wet'suwet'en need to create a Constitution or charter to outline the decision making process for the territory and the band councils/communities? Does each community/band have its own self governing body that derives out of the Wet'suwet'en constitution or charter which is based upon Wet'suwet'en laws? Or is there a self-government community-based agreement for each of the five communities/bands including their own constitution or charter with no connection to Wet'suwet'en ways of knowing and being? This is a key element of the governance work. Do we move to a voting style or elections or continue with a consensus building, dialogue system and house system based i.e. appointing, that is grounded within our culture? I believe this is the work that the Wet'suwet'en Governance Authority will be addressing. The Peeling Report (2004) has outlined some choices that the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs (a people also with a house based social and land system) may consider in developing an appropriate governance structure for their people:

The Gitanyow in particular have given a lot of hard thought to the way in which their system works in terms of legitimacy, power and resources. Their system can meet any concerns about legitimacy. But generally First Nations will be faced with a choice between:

- a) Remaining with the Indian Act
- b) Modifying the Indian Act so that its failings are addressed
- c) Reverting to a traditional form of governance
- d) Modifying traditional forms of governance
- e) Creating something new (Peeling 2004: 22).

The Gitanyow Chiefs have chosen to stay with their form of governance and are not in treaty negotiations at this time.

Deciding on the actual process of how the larger issue of reconciling the two governing systems needs to be presented for input by the house/clan and community members. Do we continue on with the Indian Act policy as the basis for community administration (foreign and often oppressive social policy frameworks) or move towards recognizing and implementing *Inuk Nu'at'en* and create Wet'suwet'en social policy frameworks for programs and services at the community level? The Wet'suwet'en laws may provide the foundation for the health and social policy areas for education, health, social development and especially justice, and could be co-implemented and possibly administered by the community councils (much like now but following Wet'suwet'en culturally based policies and legislation). This could apply or link to social-ecological systems too.

To reconcile our differences with the Crown may require that co-jurisdiction or co-management arrangements be negotiated, such as being engaged in the provincial watershed planning process, i.e. the Morice Lands and Resource Management plan (MLRMP). The collaborative parks management agreements came from this process. We need to determine the best and most suitable form of economic self-reliance while making sure that the resilience of the people and the territory is upheld, collectively. No one stands alone.

Dora Wilson, Yaga'lahl, of Clan Lax Gibuu, addressed the interconnected nature of local relations that articulates the ownership groups. She was asked in the court if her claim to territory was limited to the lands of her own House, Wilps Spookw. She replied (Transcript, 4485): 'the way that question is put, it seems like we are only interested in one particular little spot. The way our system is,

and the way we depend on one another and support one another, I think there is more interest than in just in our own personal territory. Like for instance, I have mentioned already the different Houses that we helped in the feast, and the different Houses that helped us in the feast. So what happens to those territories is of concern to all of the chiefs, and concern of all of the Houses (Daly 2005: 164).

Historically, self-determination and self-governance includes a consensus based decision making process that is inclusive and follows the principles of Wet'suwet'en laws of *wiggus*, *inuk nu'at'en*, *yintahk*, *bahlats* and our oral traditions, *kungax*. An effective house based and community engagement process will clarify and define a self-governing process (structure) and will connect the decision making process to the jurisdiction, authority and responsibility of territorial management and family development. This approach is similar to what Parkes et al. refer to in the watershed management process as being integrative, participatory and interdisciplinary.

Self-Reliance: Human Health and Development

The other component to the Wet'suwet'en driving force is the need for self-reliance. The vision of *yintahk* or ecological integrity is much easier to understand than a holistic and interdependent system of care for people. The 'people' side of health and sustainability requires the same attention and focus as trees and water. I recall *Wigetimstachol* sharing this concern about the many pressing issues our families are facing, saying 'we can't keep working to protect the territory and not support our families to be healthy and know their traditions and customs. Who will be carrying out the responsibilities of *yintahk* when our people do not know their language or their

responsibilities as house members and as future leaders?”³ I have always understood that the main purposes of our governing body are to protect, promote and educate. The houses and clans need to identify what is to be protected, for exclusive use and for shared purposes (site specific areas, *Kungax*, language and so on) and then collaborate on what the most important and urgent teachings are and how to implement them. There have been more concrete results in what is to be protected on the land. One of the long term goals is to protect the natural resources of the territory to ensure that the healthiness of the territories will be healthy enough to support those yet to come.

Daly states, “The chief is expected to be *ama’ andzi*, a “good example”, and maintain the honour of the House and its ability to be a good provider to all in need, no matter what the season may be” (2005: 280). The sustenance from the land is to keep us healthy and strong so we can pass on our knowledge of medicines, sacred sites, have traditional fishing sites for harvest and so on. If this is gone or badly fractured then we do not have the ability to carry ourselves in a healthy manner into the future. Indeed the inheritances and the house system form of tenure are key components of our hereditary system; passing on the names, gathering resources from the territory to support our feast business, and distributing goods from the territory are all factors that rely upon the ‘benefits’ of the territories (Mills 1994: 61). Each house group and clan already does much of this work; we need to ensure that more and more families,

³ Personal communication with *dinizë*, *Wigetimstachol*, Dan Michell of Moricetown/Kyah Wiget. This is a message echoed repeatedly by many of the hereditary chiefs over the years.

especially the hard to reach families are included to keep us 'strong' and connected to the territory.

The National Collaborating Center for Aboriginal Health's report by Reading and Wein states that a landmark study conducted by Chandler and Lalonde (1998) revealed that among First Nations people in British Columbia, rates of suicide varied dramatically and were associated with a constellation of characteristics referred to as "**cultural continuity**" (2009: 18). Cultural continuity might best be described as the degree of social and cultural cohesion within a community. Reading and Wein state that according to Chandler and Lalonde, low rates or an absence of suicide in a community appear to be related to: land title, self-government (particularly the involvement of women), control of education, security and cultural facilities, as well as control of the policies and practice of health and social programs (ibid). Cultural continuity also involves traditional intergenerational connectedness, which is maintained through intact families and the engagement of elders, who pass traditions, language, and connections to the territory to subsequent generations. Also working with most elders who are speakers promotes dialogue, cultural teachings and clarity of the ancestral laws and traditions (ibid).

Health and wellbeing from a social-ecological perspective takes on an important new approach and for me clarified how the many silos of programs and services can actually be conceptually pulled together, integrated and understood. I believe this is a key aspect of self-determination and realigning ourselves, at all levels, with Wet'suwet'en ontology, or way of being. Carrying out our lives in a manner as

consistently as possible to our teachings to achieve the whole being aspect in an interdependent and collective manner is essential. We are self-governing and are able to create the legal space and jurisdiction to develop and create education, health and child welfare frameworks that are more compatible and suitable to the Wet'suwet'en. The newly released British Columbia Assembly of First Nations Governance Toolkit (2011) outlines governance from a range of subject matters and jurisdictions categorized by Indian Act Governance, sectoral governance initiatives including specific initiatives including comprehensive governance arrangements (Wilson Raybould 2011: 15). As Belanger and Newhouse point out in *Emerging from the Shadows*,

The transition from paternalism to community self-sufficiency may be long and will require significant support from the state, however, we would emphasize that state support should not be such that the government continues to do for us that which we want to do for ourselves (2004: 11).

There are some historical challenges in funding formulas and the government funding agreements from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to First Nation bands and or tribal councils.

The average per capita expenditures of all Canadian governments on non-indigenous Canadians stands at about \$15,000/\$16,000, while it is only about \$9,000 for Aboriginal Peoples. While there is some debate regarding the way this is calculated, it is clear that spending for First Nations and other Canadian Aboriginals is way below par with spending on non-indigenous Canadians. There is, therefore, a serious issue of equity that helps explain why services to Aboriginals are not held to standards for non-Aboriginal Canadians (Brunet-Jailley 2010: 8).

Why discuss funding in the self reliance section? How a government will generate revenue is a critical factor of self governance. Certainly equitable levels for

essential or core services is essential. However Nations also need to be clear on how they will be generating their own revenue to be self governing and how they will equitably distribute resources provided.

A group of Nations are taking the federal crown to court over the lack of implementation as the state does not have the capacity to implement and support new funding agreements other than operating in the colonial structures of the past. The Lands Claims Agreements Coalition (LCAC) consists of “many modern treaty governments and organizations of Canada working to ensure that comprehensive land claims and associated self-government agreements are respected, honoured and fully implemented in order to achieve their objectives” (Wilson Raybould 2011: 37). Self-reliance cannot be obtained within inequitable funding levels and inadequate implementation of self government agreements.

Ladner promotes the idea that to build resilience and have community wellness there must be a connection to self-determination and self-governance:

If self-determination is to be meaningful it must be grounded in, and consistent with the culture of the community. Beyond this, if self-determination is to be effective and is to achieve meaningful results – particularly in terms of community wellness, creating resiliency and dealing with conditions which enable/disable communities in crisis – than it must be an expression of that community (beyond cultural compatibility) and provide for effective governance (broad ranging, efficient, accountable, and responsible) (2009: 97).

A critical insight from the field of ecohealth is that human health and well-being are important outcomes of effective ecosystem management. This presents researchers, practitioners and policy makers with the challenges of integrating knowledge from

multiple disciplines and demands, and has reinvigorated attention to cross-disciplinary, intersectoral and multi-stakeholder governance strategies that harness the common ground between public health and sustainable development (Parkes et al. 2008: 5).

The connections in being strong again are to be self-governing and provide programs and policies within Wet'suwet'en *inuk nu'at'en*, within an objective of being economically self-reliant. In addition, one of the key concepts of human health is the belief, law and practice of *wiggus*, the sacred balance of an interdependent connection to all that is. Being able to come together as a people to establish programs, offer services and have real outcomes to improve the quality of life requires good administrative structures, collaborative practices and effective decision making that people can rely on and trust on a regular and consistent basis. Much of this work is already in place, it needs to continue and strengthen. When one can understand the relationships when considered together, there are more positive outcomes, focused results and recognition of a way of being that can be a powerful driving force for social change, land protection and sustainable and responsible development. It is important to say that the notion of driving forces of change is a reflection of the adaptive approaches of the *dinizë*, *tsekožë* and leadership.

Parkes et al. have identified governance, power and development as the driving forces for their health and sustainability prism framework. The adapted Prism Model illustrates the Wet'suwet'en governance perspective with the driving forces changed to self-determination, self-governance and self-reliance. The four main governance

perspectives inform the relationships in the five main areas of a social-ecological approach.

A summary of the driving forces includes self-governance to continue following a consensus based decision making at the governance level. Governance is inclusive and recognizes the rights and responsibility to take care of ourselves. Self-determination and self-governance is to be based upon Wet'suwet'en laws, *bahlats*, *inuk nu'at'en* and our inherent cultural strengths. Wet'suwet'en social policy framework is for both health and ecological integrity in is delivered an integrative manner. Any sustainable development opportunities will derive from house group and community development objectives.

The section below provides a summary of the Wet'suwet'en ontology or way of being, of the five relationship areas that make up the adapted Wet'suwet'en social-ecological framework.

A Way of Being: Recognizing the Relationships

I work from the center out utilizing the *relationships* aspect identified in the Parkes et al. Prism framework. I draw upon the main governing 'way of knowing' perspectives outlined in chapter two to inform the main domains captured in the following 5 areas presented in the Parkes et al. Health and Sustainability framework:

1. The links between ecosystems and health with the indicators presented in Appendix E;
2. The links between land and natural resource management adapted to *yintahk* and stewardship with the indicators presented in Appendix F;
3. The links between Health services and infrastructure adapted to Wet'suwet'en Wellbeing and Services with the indicators presented in Appendix G;

4. The links between equitable community and social development, including social determinants of health with the indicators presented in Appendix H;
5. The links between social networks, cohesion, health promotion and education, including social capital (social capital being about the value of social networks, bonding similar people and bridging between diverse people, with norms of reciprocity) adapted to *Ama'andzi*, belonging and peace with the indicators presented in Appendix I. (2008: 8)

The outcome of working from the center out is to recognize a Wet'suwet'en way of being. I use the term *relationships* instead of 'links' in this adapted version of the prism model of health and sustainability as it recognizes what is already there, 'relations'; see figure 5. The headings of five areas are also adapted to reflect a Wet'suwet'en perspective. The Social Planning and Research Council lead researcher Scott Graham provides a definition of indicators in their guide, Tools for Action Series. It states

Indicators are measurements (i.e. statistics) that tell us about the present state of something that is important. Indicators are usually subjective or objective. Subjective indicators can be explained as representations of community member's perception of themselves, some aspect of their community and the relationships between the two. The concept of subjective wellbeing (SWB) has been proven to be a reliable and valid way of organizing research on subjective aspects of community life. Objective indicators, on the other hand, are the quantitative facts of community life (i.e. local economic growth, the number and size of sidewalks, etc.) Objective and subjective indicators are equally important because they both provide pieces to our understanding of the overall state of community life (2008: 4).

The indicators identified in Appendices D to I, have been identified and defined by the Wet'suwet'en through needs assessments, house and clan meetings and community based research projects. Most of the statistics presented in the adapted social-ecological framework would be considered subjective indicators especially around the cultural responsibilities, stewardship, health and social systems. However there are

Recognition of: *Yinka dlnil ha ba ten*: the ways of the people of the earth
A Social-Ecological Framework for Sustainability

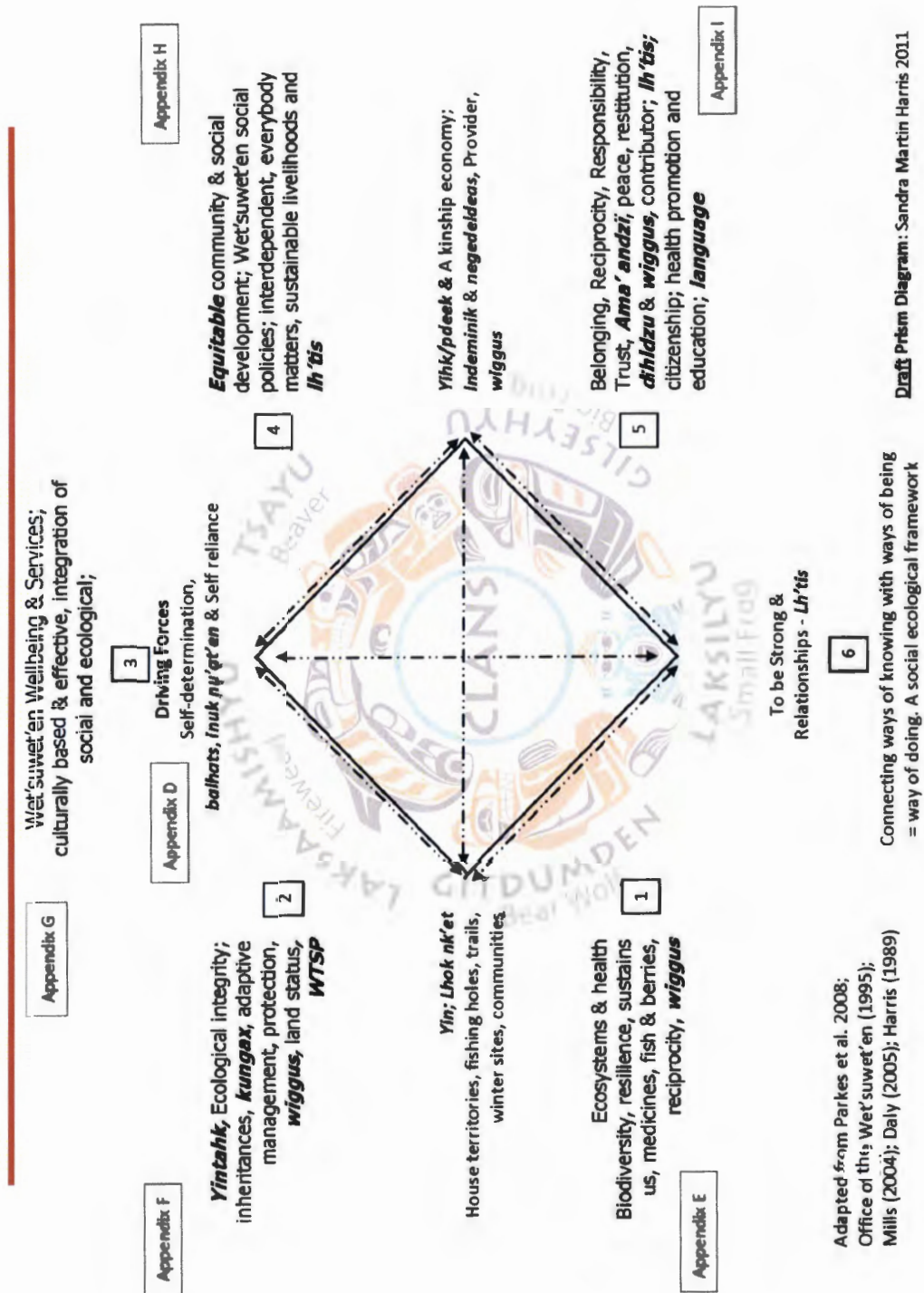
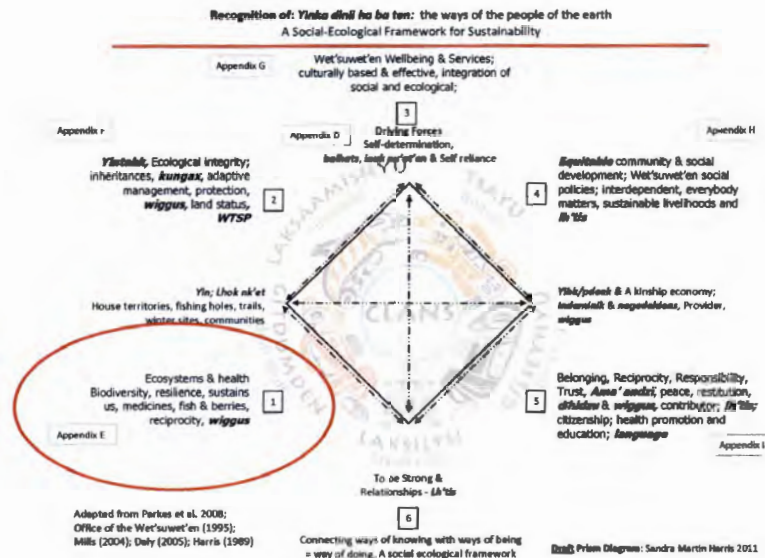


Figure 5 Wet'suwet'en Social-Ecological Framework for maintaining "Ways of Doing".

some objective indicators included in the needs assessments that identify employment levels, educational attainment, birth and death rates etc. I have summarized from the primary sources what the indicators are to provide what the Wet'suwet'en have determined important to measure and I have also provided some indicators for consideration. There are gaps in the indicators and certainly there are updates required however that is beyond the scope of this project as it requires extensive comprehensive community planning across the five first nation communities, 3 main urban centers and 13 house groups within Wet'suwet'en territory.

The following sections outline the relationships between the main five dimensions. None of this work can replace the personal commitment of each house and clan member to fulfill their cultural teachings and responsibilities. Indeed what this research project is hoping to promote is that cultural practices be used in everyday living alongside mainstream living. The strength of the culture is to support healthy living throughout life, here in the Wet'suwet'en homeland or wherever one resides and maintain your 'being'.

Relationships between ecosystems and health



Parkes et al. have identified watersheds as an appropriate setting for health and wellbeing and identified ecological goods and services provided by ecosystems. A table illustration is provided to identify ecological goods and services that a watershed might provide. It illustrates the value and need of people to be connected to a 'place' as the watershed provides much needed services and resources to those living in that place (Parkes et al. 2008 :19). I really stumbled when I came across this as it really challenged me to see the territory as an entity separate from me. This speaks to the idea brought forward earlier that indigenous people do not see themselves separate from the land, or the natural world; there is no need of convincing of the inherent and life giving connection to ecosystems. In fact wellbeing and health depends on this connection to the 'earth' that sustains us.

In the WTSP there are a number of *specific indicators* that highlight the relation of ecosystems to ecosystem health (emphasis added). The WTSP identifies that ecosystem based forest management is practiced within Wet'suwet'en territories including:

- Respect and support for Wet'suwet'en culture and Inuk Nu'at'en
- Wet'suwet'en maintain opportunities to hunt and gather food, medicine and materials for sustenance, trade and customary purposes in accordance with their cultural framework and the laws of their feast hall
- Development and implementation of inventory, protection, mitigation and restoration measures for threatened ecosystems and species
- Opportunities for cultural renewal and cultural transmission are maintained
- The spiritual attachment of the Wet'suwet'en to their territories is recognized and respected (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2003: 34).

The connections are based upon healthy Wet'suwet'en foods, salmon, lake fish, *digii*, *yin timi*, *niwis*, and *mī'o* and therefore clean water and the strong belief that we are stewards and responsible for ensuring ecological integrity and resilience. The Wet'suwet'en have significant relationship to the ecosystems in the Morice watershed expressed through each house group as seen in Figure 6.

Management can only focus on the human interaction with the land, and this often involves the belief and value that you only take what you need and that you must give something back to maintain the 'balance' of reciprocity. Giving back means many different things, respecting the animal and using all its parts, putting the salmon guts and bones back into the river and so on. This is part of the sacred balance, *wiggus*, when you receive or take something, you must leave or give something back in return.

Morice Land and Resource Management Plan

Map 9 - Ecosystems of Cultural Significance

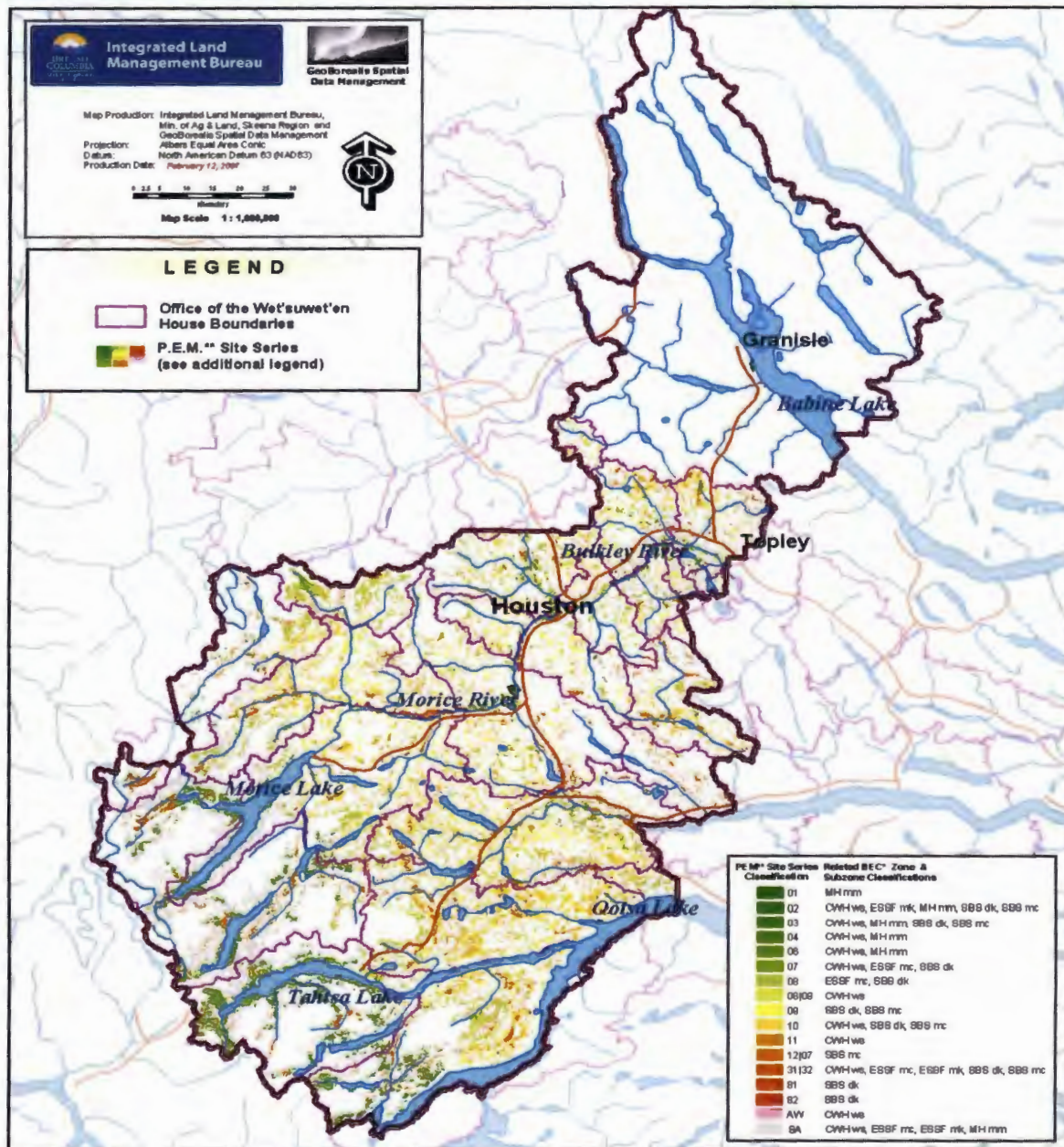
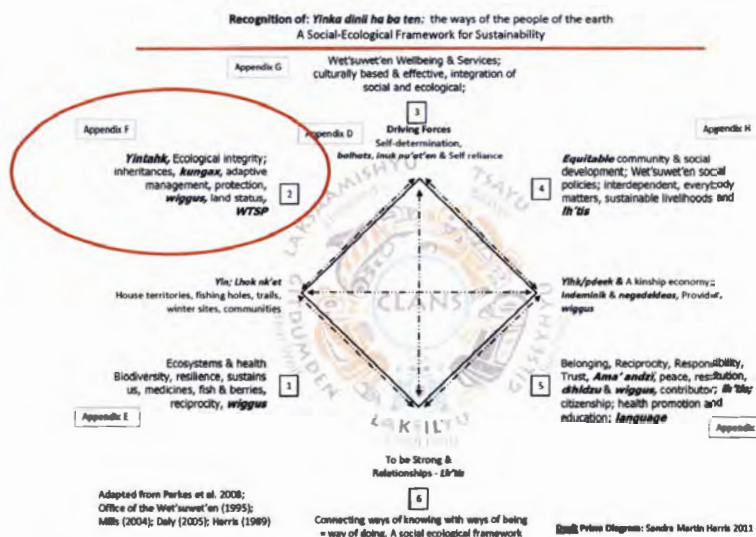


Figure 6 Morice Lands and Resource Management Plan: Wet'suwet'en Culturally Significant Areas in Morice Watershed identified by House Group. Source: British Columbia 2007: 71.

There are dozens of indicators that fall under each of these main categories but I do not have permission to share this information in full. I have identified the main areas that fall under the broad ecosystems and health perspective. Other indicators as identified in Appendix E are deforestation and human settlement pattern impacts; levels of inadequate housing and food security issues. What are the levels of low income families and the need for good maternal and infant health care? Finally what is the emergency preparedness plans in the event of natural disasters and what are the waste management plans in all the communities within Wet'suwet'en territory (as most landfills are near full!).

The full summary of the indicators for relationships of ecosystems and health from Wet'suwet'en sources are provided in Appendix E on page 138.

The relationships between *yintahk* and stewardship



The role of house Chiefs is to monitor, steward and take care of their house territory and of their house group members, and fulfill their father clan responsibilities. In Daly, Dan Michell explained the authority of the Witsuwit'en Chiefs in relation to their territories:

It was handed down to us by our forefathers. And we are brought up in those territory where we know that we belong to the land and the land belongs to us. That is one way of putting it, and all the resources in it we are entitled to it. And that is why we are taught to respect the land and everything that's in it (2005: 271).

The WTSP's goal is to seek long-term sustainable development that respects the Wet'suwet'en system of governance and relationships to the territory. The actions of people affect the healthiness of the lands and waters. The WTSP's criteria and indicators section says

Wet'suwet'en issues and concerns about resource management within their traditional territories have been compiled within fourteen categories representing key areas that the Wet'suwet'en have identified as being of high importance during land use planning initiatives. The second component involved development of criteria and indicators that have been designed to address or remedy Wet'suwet'en issues and concerns." (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2003: 4).

The understanding behind sustainable economic opportunities was to move beyond the boom and bust reality of northern living and to develop smaller locally based initiatives to capitalize on the large young population. Various capacity building, mentorship and incubator strategies were implemented to further enhance land

restoration work, cultural tourism planning (house/territory based and regionally based), and entrepreneurial development.

The Wet'suwet'en 13 house groups have their own decision making process. We can come together on broader governance issues and collaborate and use the WTSP as a management tool to help make informed, timely decisions that can be tracked and monitored over time to ensure the best information and implementation practices are met. The Wet'suwet'en have further utilized the data in a Wet'suwet'en Land Status inventory by house group; it is an interactive file for house groups to better understand what the status is of the indicators identified in and as part of the house group territory (David DeWit: personal communication).

One of the main purposes of the territorial plan is to inform the Wet'suwet'en about various levels of land use planning. It provides an understanding of concerns for land or water protection, highlights species, habitats, and ecosystems that may be endangered or threatened and creates a baseline of the 'inventory' of the house territory. At a house level, or an ecosystem or watershed level, common indicators may be grouped or connected with features that move across the territory, i.e. air quality and wildlife corridors.

It is important that a social-ecological framework approach be designed for the entire territory (region and watersheds) and considerations be made to the Nations that are connected to the Wet'suwet'en; developmental impacts up and down stream may negatively impact our natural resources and all those things that rely upon a healthy

ecosystem to survive. The challenge at home is to make sure that when a house group decides to pursue economic development initiatives, there is dialogue with the neighbouring house groups and Nations whose territory it may impact as part of their decision making process. There is not an 'anything goes' policy on the territory; we are to follow the governance system and laws.

We need to ensure there is *wiggus* in our internal decision making process otherwise we would be behaving much like the governments or industry, with little or no respect for the collective rights and title of the Wet'suwet'en and our neighbours. This often butts up against the strong cultural practice of one house group or clan not interfering with another's business. This creates challenges in pursuing economic development opportunities. Cultural rights to the land are optimized for potential revenue sharing agreements, however impacts are not known or identified and neighbouring house groups are isolated from the decision making and knowing what the outcomes might be. Respectful communications with the focus on solutions will help us move through important decisions together. This is especially true around *negedeldeas*, which is the practice of a father granting permission and access to his territory, to his son (who is a different clan and so has a different territory) until his son's passing.

Unfortunately some families today misinterpret this use and permission to the territory as being access to *their* traditional lands, not realizing it is a different house and clan's. To complicate matters further, when the provincial trap line system came in, trap lines were sometimes registered to the son and his family and not the father's

house/name. This is an ongoing and sensitive matter that is still on the table for discussion at the house groups and territorial planning level.

The focus on an integrated water resource management approach has strong links to the Wet'suwet'en ecological integrity or *yintahk* approach. Although the Wet'suwet'en are organized, for the most part, on a clan/house territory basis which extends across 3 main watersheds of Bulkley, Morice and the Lakes and are mostly within the easternmost part of the larger Skeena watershed. The driving forces of development, as manifested by the resource extracting companies and the provincial and federal governments, allow the environment to be compromised in a way that is not acceptable to Wet'suwet'en environmental concerns and perspectives. The Morice LRMP process, developed specifically to have more Wet'suwet'en participation, led to further conflicts, disagreements and stand stills with the 'stakeholders' in the process. Eventually this led to a higher level government to government process, a separate higher level agreement outside of the collaborative stakeholder process.

Highlights of the Morice LRMP agreement include:

- 8.2 percent of the total plan area, or approximately 123,000 hectares, more than 300 times the size of Vancouver's Stanley Park, set aside as protected areas (PAs).
- Development of water management objectives and an ongoing water quality monitoring framework.
- Best management practices for important wildlife habitat areas, fish habitat, water quality and rare and endangered ecosystems.
- Continued partnerships with local First Nations to ensure effective and ongoing plan implementation and monitoring (British Columbia 2007b).

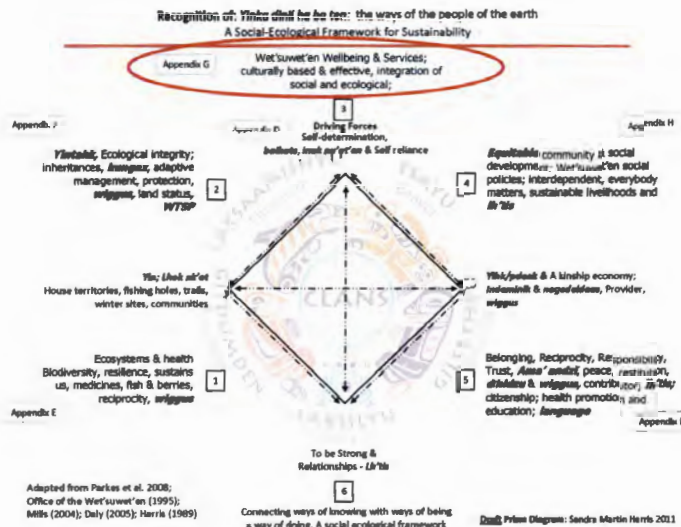
A key outcome of the Morice LRMP is a water protection management area to protect the headwaters which led to essentially a co-management agreement to protect the Wet'suwet'en interest in freshwater sources and salmon/fish habitat.

The relationship between **yintahk** and stewardship falls within ecological integrity or resilience. This speaks to the need for ecosystem based management practices, respecting Wet'suwet'en governance of the territory, realizing sustainable development projects, revenue sharing, respect for decision making and effective monitoring and enforcement capabilities.

Parkes et al. have identified watersheds as the most suitable management unit, utilizing an integrated water resource management approach (IWRM) and have summarized four key ecological concepts for consideration in the ecohealth approach. Recognition of the house territory approach, ecological integrity and that industry developments be based upon **inuk nu'at'en** and **wiggus**, are the main relationships for **yintahk** and stewardship. These two governing perspectives of social-ecological approach are similar in nature.

A full summary of the indicators for **yintahk** and stewardship is presented in Appendix F on page 144.

The relationships between Wet'suwet'en Wellbeing & Services



The concept of a strong person, *lh'tis*, is that everybody matters and belongs to a homeland and a 'people'. Language, customs and practices of a people are needed and shown to be essential components of community and family development work. In working in the various systems of education, health and justice the predominant world view is not an indigenous one or one that is even friendly to indigenous people, it is often the individualistic and Eurocentric. So what is being taught to Wet'suwet'en children (outside of our homes) to learn of the appropriate cultural teachings and protocols? I often came across the medicine wheel concept in our area and seek a more culturally appropriate Wet'suwet'en model of what good health is. As we have a complex system, how we define healthiness is a daunting challenge. However I have pulled together a diagram that illustrates that main concepts of a strong person, as I

understand there is not a word or term that translates to healthy. 'A strong person' includes teachings from the mother's house and clan (*yihk/pdeek*), the father's house (*Bica'giltis*) or clan, spiritual connections and responsibilities and connections to the land. Another important relationship is *indeminik*, the role of your spouse, which has clear recognition and responsibilities in the feast hall and is often done with much humour and laughter.

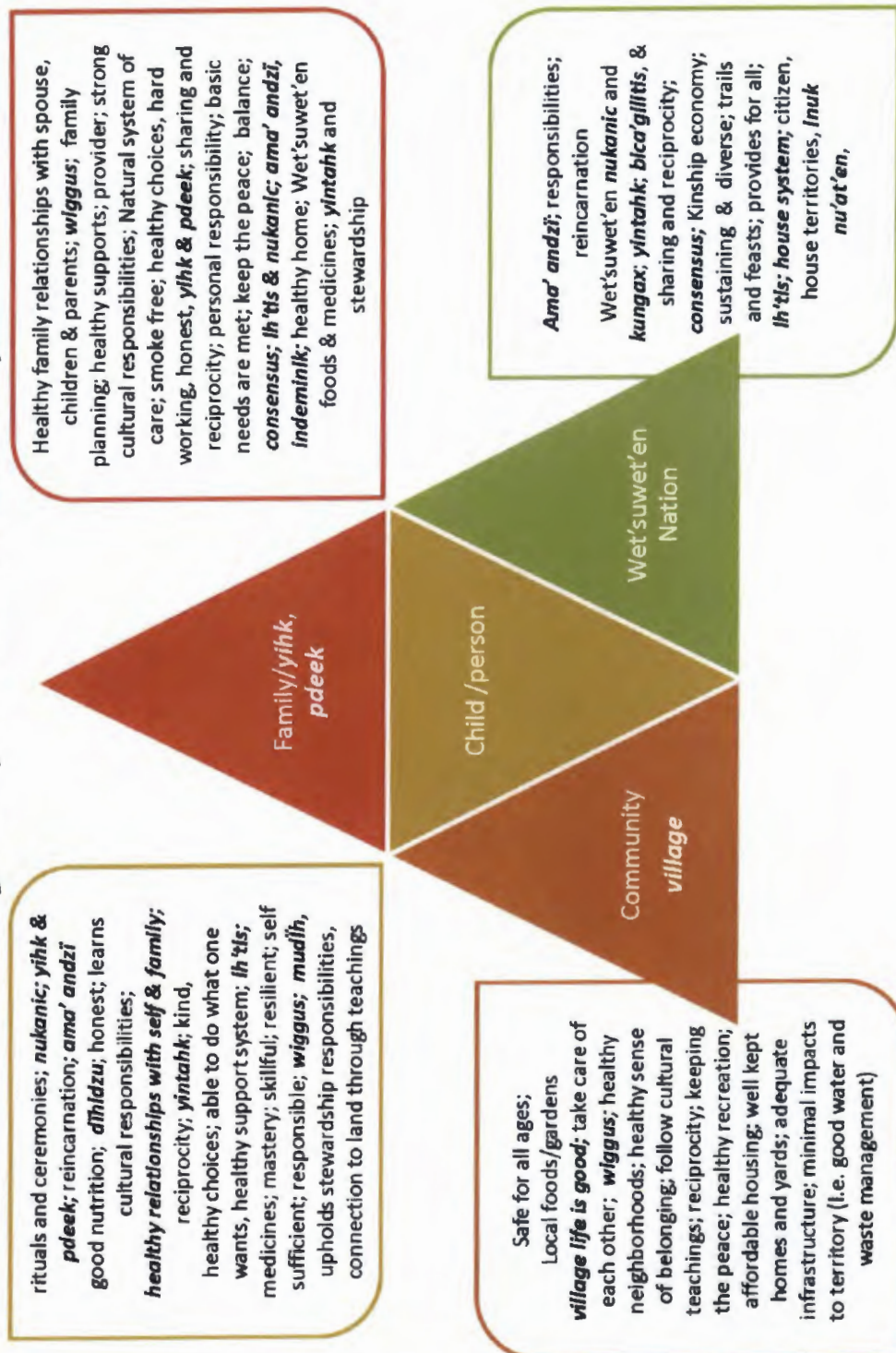
The *lh'tis* diagram is a basis to start discussion on creating a formal illustration that is more suitable to the Wet'suwet'en for health promotion, teaching and sharing as stated earlier. As stated there is already significant resources that speak to Wet'suwet'en system and teachings. This diagram is meant to weave together the many aspects of wellbeing into a formal illustration. Health and wellness are foundational pieces of a people, community and Nation. We have many negative health indicators telling us that we have ill health. It is extremely important that we define what wellbeing is so that we can promote and formally teach our 'way' to help alleviate these overwhelming conditions; thus the 'strong person' diagram.

Being in close living quarters in small communities, the idea of peace and balance is essential to life thus the strong consensus based approach which the elders and speakers still utilize today. One of the more difficult situations in offering programs and services is the idea of 'entitlement'; many citizens *demand* services or extra supports. This flies in the face of Wet'suwet'en teachings where family members were taught to be *dihldzu*, hardworking, self-sufficient and responsible for your actions. This

may be one area where dependency on income assistance (welfare) and government programs and services are weakening the Wet'suwet'en social system; or perhaps a combination of not enough personal resources to support the high and complex needs of house/clan members. This dependency situation is due in large part to the historical colonial realities of an imposed patriarchal system wanting to reform indigenous people into something they are not. The legacy continues. See Erickson for a Gitksan service delivery analysis to be more *wilp* based for child and family services by the Gitksan Treaty Office (2003).

The Wet'suwet'en belief in reciprocity, responsibilities and citizenship led me to pull together another diagram to illustrate the relationships we have as a tribal people or Nation; see Figure 7. I have learned that strong and respectful 'relationships' are a key component of healthy living of a kinship based people. I have found that people are often blurring our relationships amongst the different levels of our lives. The diagram shows the roles and responsibilities of the four main relationship areas to build on one another and may realize the vision of a strong person, community and or Nation.

Promoting Healthy Wet'suwet'en Relationships



Sandra Martin Harris : draft diagram: August 2011

Figure 7 Understanding Relationships of the individual, family, community and Nation.

The Wet'suwet'en developed a Human and Social Services strategy which included a building upon of the existing community based services offered either through Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development or Health Canada. These programs were deemed to be the building blocks or foundational services that could eventually be realigned under a Wet'suwet'en cultural policy framework. There may be a need to pursue partnerships with the federal and provincial government for much needed community based services. Any and all services need to be linked to achieve multiple objectives.

With so many government and ministry levels, questions arise regarding program and services' accountability, responsibility and inequitable funding resources which may lead to jurisdictional conflicts (Parkes et al. 2008: 35). Conflicts arise as there may be gaps in services, such as enforcement of laws and regulations. The frustration with the barrage of separate ministries, project initiatives and jurisdictional gaps and or duplication with either or both the federal and provincial Crowns are stifling at these broad levels. With the strong relationship, albeit mostly oppressive, with the Federal State, there is often more jurisdictional banter between the federal and provincial governments, funding disputes and often unwillingness to work together that is just baffling in my experience. This situation has directly led to Jordan's Principle in the child and health services where a young child from a first nation's community died as his specialized health needs were caught up in the bureaucratic machines of the state. A conflict ensued between the federal and provincial governments as neither wanted to

fund the high cost health necessities of the child. So the little boy died waiting for services while the state bickered over who was responsible for the costs. I must say, there are many good people attempting to work within these systems and affect change however I have found the bureaucratic machines are immense and slow to change. I am certain that this ongoing relationship between the federal and provincial governments or intergovernmental relations is a huge challenge to clarify and have work effectively.

The relationship aspect of Wet'suwet'en wellbeing and services is to connect the various objectives from health, family development, land restoration and land protection as described in Parkes et al. (2008: x). In fact some objectives will look quite similar if not the same in the broad social and health fields. Parkes et al. have identified linking 'upstream' determinants of health, re-integrating social-ecological issues, linking watersheds with determinants of health and wellbeing and governance for both health and sustainability in their health and sustainability prism model (2008: 49).

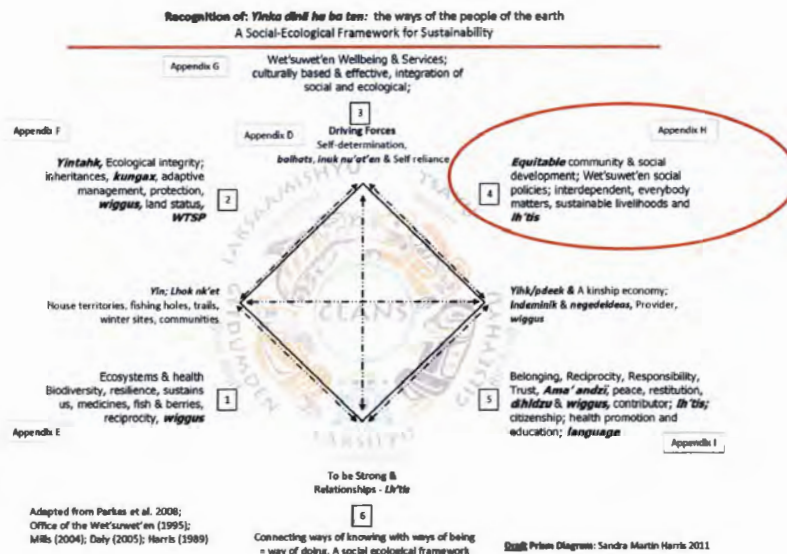
An emerging vision of wellbeing and services is to eventually be self-governing and be able to provide health programs and policies within Wet'suwet'en *inuk nu'at'en*. This may include revenue sharing agreements negotiated and in place to meet the priorities of the people that will strengthen families, strengthen language use, and realize the vision of the people. Obviously the work 'at home' is needed before reaching out to outside agencies, or done in conjunction with the at home community development work. The idea being that a government is to work towards meeting the priorities of the people, especially in relation to our families, wherever they reside.

Being able to reach out and positively impact non-Wet'suwet'en institutions so as to receive compatible services and programs may also be necessary. We must continue to come together as a people to establish programs, offer services (minimal but effective) and have real outcomes to improve the quality of life (i.e. sustainable jobs).

The main indicators for relationships between Wet'suwet'en wellbeing and services are that any human or community development initiatives are to be culturally relevant based upon *lh'tis*, and maintain a peace and restitution approach at the house and clan levels. The use of Wet'suwet'en medicines and healing methods are available as may be desired along with appropriate counselling methods, healers, and on the land and language teachings; this may help re-establish connections to the spirit in the land. Child welfare and healthy family development are the heart of self-government. This includes maternal care and early childhood development which are to be based upon strengths of the Wet'suwet'en social system, language and laws and connections to the spirit in the land. There are good public administrative practices in place with regular monitoring and evaluation following an adaptive learning and management approach utilizing consensus building approach at the governance level. Finally the services are to be linked to meet multiple objectives with a minimal number of agencies. We need to move away from sectoral or fragmented services or they need to be offered within a broader social-ecological framework with a vision of an integrated approach. I believe these components reflect the years of work at the Nation and community levels.

The full summary of indicators for Wet'suwet'en wellbeing and services from various Wet'suwet'en sources are identified in Appendix G on page 147.

The relations between Equitable Community and Social Development (Including socio-economic determinants)



Parkes et al. suggest that the social process of watershed governance, as a collective often multi stakeholder process, can fulfill both ecosystem management and public health objectives that should involve adaptive management, social learning and collective decision making (2008: 31). They go on to say that if these processes are “conducted in way that builds trust, social cohesion and **reduces inequities**, watershed management can not only reduce environmental hazards but also improve environmental and social determinants of health” (emphasis added: *ibid*).

Social and health determinants focus mostly on the individual although this field is moving toward capturing other types of indicators as well, usually in the quality of life studies or looking at 'community' wellbeing and working more from an integrated manner⁴. This data helps inform leadership, program managers and funding agencies of program results, identify what may be working well, and determine what resources and supports are needed to improve the service to be more effective. There is an immense challenge in defining the appropriate scales of identifying indicators or determinants: there are individual, house/clan, community and Nation levels; "increased resilience on socio-ecological systems at multiple (nested) scales, ranging from individuals through families, communities, sub-catchments, river-basins and bioregions and the global biosphere" are all to be considered in the work we do (Parkes et al 2008: 21).

However one thing is clear from this data and indicators, there are certain historical inequities in first peoples' lives. Again the negative indicators such as literacy needs, family violence and alcohol and drug abuse tell us that there are ongoing issues. Again I believe speaks to the spiritual crisis, being disconnected from identity and territory and not feeling whole or 'strong'.

As stated in the governance section for social determinants and social-ecological health promotion to reduce inequities we need family development that focuses on

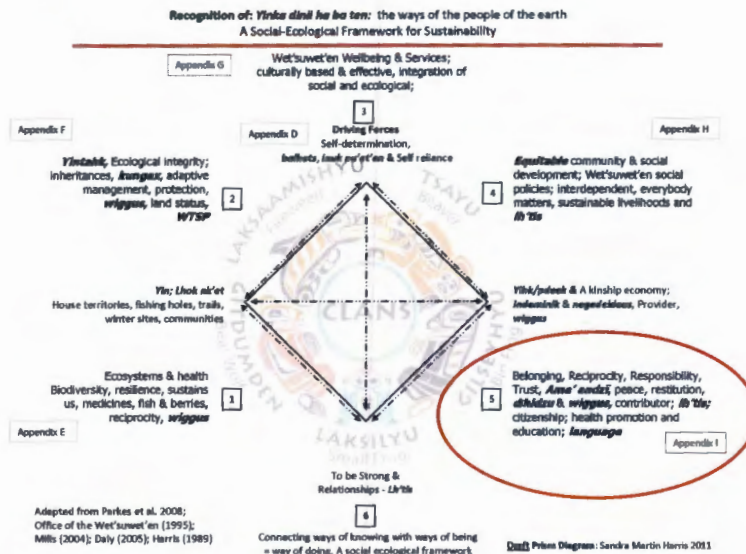
⁴ See Baldwin, S., Godfrey, C. and Propper, C., (Eds) of *Quality of Life: Perspectives and Policies* and the provincial health officer's report: *Pathways to Health and Healing*, 2007 Report released in 2009. This book and report provide some understanding of a broader approach to understanding indicators, or social determinants.

growing 'strong' Wet'suwet'en, connections to the land and language, there is a formal social policy framework being developed; and there is sustainable livelihoods that have minimal damage to the territory.

The main Wet'suwet'en indicators for relationships between Equitable Community and Social Development are that self-determination and self-governance be based upon Wet'suwet'en laws and cultural practices; we maintain a consensus building decision making process following our inherent ways. Any formal governance work needs to include a Wet'suwet'en social policy framework. Social equity is to have more sustainable livelihoods and greater economic diversity to have greater employment and education outcomes. This may lead to improved health and healthier ecosystems. There is a commitment to language, culture and territory based teachings as a priority and foundation for all programs and services. There must be well rounded governance representation in employment, with local committees and councils to include women, youth and elders. *Lh'tis*, a strong person concept is the basis for a service delivery model and finally there is an adaptive learning model for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of sustainable livelihoods and social policies.

The indicators for equitable community and social development as identified in Wet'suwet'en sources are outlined in Appendix H on page 150.

Relationships between *Ama' andzi*, Belonging and Peace



There are more and more research studies illustrating the need to have a culture intact and transmitted to the following generations for first people's survival, healthiness and growth (see Chandler and Lalonde 1998, and Kirmayer and Valakakis 2009). In the social development field the concept of taking care of ourselves is a key principle based upon our responsibilities to take care of ourselves, our children, siblings and extended family.

Belonging and inclusion are terms that are used more frequently by first peoples rather than social cohesion; however I believe they speak to similar concepts. A strong ancestral collective way of 'being' is a source of strength for social learning; to maintain relations and earn trust amongst and within families so relationships are taken care of. Respect, reciprocity, connections and relationships are components of the kinship based

people which are more clearly defined in the Wet'suwet'en family roles, especially for those in lead roles, *dinizë* and *tsekožë*. The house system is the social network. However there must be a realization that there are a growing number of community and Nation members that are questioning and showing little respect for the house system. The social network is starting to weaken from the many impacts of colonialism; this can be seen in some feasts where the participation level is not that great, especially from the large young population.

The reason most Indigenous people endure unhappy and unhealthy lives has nothing to do with governmental powers or money. The lack of these things only contributes to making a bad situation worse. The root of the problem is that we are living *anomie*, a form of spiritual crisis, caused by historical trauma that has generated an "Aboriginal" legal economic response that is not authentic and is designed by non-indigenous people to serve the interests of the colonial regime and capitalism (Alfred 2009: 53).

I firmly support the reality that many first people are in a spiritual crisis, after working in the education and child welfare fields and seeing the levels of disconnection to culture and lands. Working with families in crisis, many families struggling as a *blerdec* family (family breakdowns), I could see the despair and frustration families were working through in their daily lives. When cultural activities were offered such as going out on the territory to pick berries for the day, there was a bit of laughter, support and smiles. Making connections with families to their cultural practices takes a huge amount of time and resources, but is well worth it. This can also be seen in working with youth, although working through the layers of being cool, anger and peer pressure is also a challenge, just getting participation in cultural activities is a full time marketing

challenge as most cultures experience. However, once a connection is made I also see and hear of life changing stories. Spending a day or a few days on the 'land' with an uncle or at a culture camp, a young person has made a small connection to something 'core'. I believe this is making a spiritual connection. This anomie is the main reason for identifying the need for health promotion, appropriate education including teachings and family development supports, based upon a Wet'suwet'en perspective of what it means to be strong.

The National Collaborating Center for Aboriginal Health released a report by Reading and Wein which specifies mechanisms of colonial practices occurring in 'diverse domains such as environmental relationships, social policies and political power' (2009: 21).

The political agenda of the 20th century colonial system was to assimilate and acculturate Indigenous peoples into the dominant culture. This agenda is evident in legislation and social policies that reward assimilation through resources and opportunities, while punishing cultural retention through creation of inequities...

Perhaps the most powerful mechanism of assimilation was the residential schools, which are often considered the vanguard of genocide and re-socialization of Aboriginal peoples (125-126). Through these schools, culture, language, family ties and community networks were destroyed for generations of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children. The result has been dramatic and devastating socio-cultural change among all Aboriginal peoples, including disengagement by many from their ancestry and culture. (2009: 21)

When aboriginal people's family and language and cultural ties are broken, isolation, racism, loss of identity, harsh discipline and abuse may seep in (Reading and Wein 2009: 22). This I have witnessed throughout my life, conditions of exclusion,

isolation, and as our elders would say, being 'lost', a large part of our population and is now intergenerational. I would say about 35% of our people are marginalized and excluded at the community level. These families are most often the poorest families with the greatest need for extra supports yet they are the most hard to reach. This situation also applies to many of our families who live away from home. Following the dislocation from the territory and breaking the 'spirit' of the people with the land, the assault of breaking the cultural teachings, language and forced removal from families has certainly created inequities today. Members who are considered 'lost', have lost their connections to their homeland and their people, and may not know where they 'belong'. This is indeed anomie.

I believe a factor such as belonging to a nation/tribe includes respect for the cultural teachings, language and protocols and an increased sense of self-esteem, pride and self-worth. Cultural continuity includes Wet'suwet'en teachings, laws and practices being taught and reaching Wet'suwet'en families. This also extends to having good relations, being 'strong' and are participating and engaged in the Wet'suwet'en governance, land stewardship and social system. Participating in the feast system, being heard and involved in local decisions at the house and clan level helps build trust, confidence within the house and or clan; and strengthens relations and members feel included and respected. On the other side, if disconnected and 'lost' and members do not feel like they belong or can participate in the feasts system then negative indicators

will likely continue such as language loss, apathy, suicide, high literacy needs, what Ladner refers to as communities in crisis (2009: 91).

To pursue a formal education is to sustain us; previously the salmon, berries and medicines of the land did, so do education today (Dr. Jane Smith: personal communication: June 2011). This is one area where cultural continuity can be carried over into an institution in partnership and collaboration. One such collaboration is with School District #54 (Bulkley Valley). They have partnered with eight Aboriginal organizations and signed off an Enhancement Agreement *'Alhk'ikh Ts'édilh - Walking Together* on June 8, 2006. The purpose of this agreement is to monitor the achievement of our Aboriginal learners. The Wet'suwet'en are the largest indigenous population at 23% of the student body and the ancestral lands which the schools are based. The Enhancement Agreement Goals are:

- I. Student Success: Improving the academic success of all Aboriginal students will improve the future for all Aboriginal Nations.
- II. Culture: Recognizing and honoring the cultural, historic, and linguistic heritage of Witsuwit'en students, as well as the heritage of all Aboriginal students.
- III. Sense of Belonging: Supporting students in the development of a sense of belonging through participation in activities where they feel included and safe, experience success, and develop enhanced positive self-esteem.
- IV. Health and Wellness: Improving the Health and Wellness of Aboriginal students, including physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health and well-being (School District #54 2006).

Education services much like health and child protection systems comes with difficulties in working with these large bureaucratic entities who are slow to change and be inclusive of the Wet'suwet'en. With a constant pressure on the outside of the

systems working to influence systemic changes there are more and more Wet'suwet'en working inside the systems working to influence systemic change. Overall this may lead to systemic improvements and changes. Health promotion and education is needed based upon *lh'tis*, to support the immense work already underway, to reach out and help further strengthen as a people with our language, culture and connections to the territory.

In the past consensus decisions were made to restore peace and resolve conflicts in the house group and community. This sometimes led to drastic decisions such as death, banishment, name removal, compensation and or severe punishment such as crippling. Decisions took place to arrive at the most suitable resolution (Harris 1989: Section 6 IV). Our social process of keeping the peace is a key foundational component of Wet'suwet'en being. This system has been impacted by the colonizers' new religions, laws and teachings that was mistakenly lead to believe that their new 'ways of being' would somehow make you a better person or 'a' person in their eyes. I believe this has led to anguish, self hatred and sometimes not being accepted back 'home' once returned from residential school, foster homes and even the public school system in the early years. There has been much work in our communities to 'make peace' with such a dark time in our history.

The late Wah Tah Kwets, Pat Namox stated, "We have to create new memory in the hearts and minds of our children and families", to strengthen our relationships with each other, to revive our language and maintain our connections to the spirit in the land

(Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1997b). The concept of restitution rather than punishment is a strong foundational piece to being responsible and accountable for your personal actions. There is an expectation that there will be an admission of wrong doing and then restitution given to correct a wrong.

Connecting social-ecological systems with synergies between the environmental and socio-economic determinants of health can arise when social processes generate health benefits through empowerment, justice and social cohesion while also enhancing ecosystems (Parkes et al. 2008: 8).

The main indicators for relationships between *ama' andzi*, belonging and peace are belonging, every Wet'suwet'en knows their house and clan and father clan and practices their house group responsibilities especially to the territory. Members feel included, in decision making, in carrying out responsibilities on their house territory and in the feast hall. There is fairness, everyone can participate in the house system and dialogue with their wing and house Chiefs as needed; members can speak to issues in a respectful manner and be heard by their house and wing chiefs.

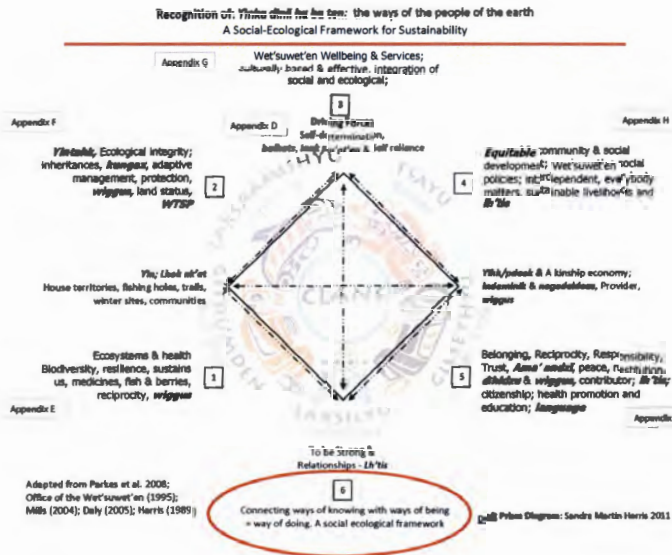
There is equity, again to strengthen as a people, in many ways, legally, politically and also in our homes and communities to fulfill our responsibilities to each other, to the house groups, community and Nation. As a basis of health promotion, education and family development and restorative justice, we will utilize *Lh'tis*, a strong person and healthy relationships. There is consensus based decision making; not voting or majority rules for important decisions. We commit to restore peace and seek restitution

to support clan members as may be requested and needed. Early childhood learning will be based upon cultural and intergenerational teachings, language and territory connections including parental involvement. There will be good maternal health care and culturally relevant curriculum available and utilized especially for children and youth in the formal education system. All of these points are woven from the many social planning services work to date.

As stated previously the real bottom line of sustainable development at the territorial management level is population health. The wellbeing of a people is a positive outcome of this approach. The wellbeing of the people equates to the wellbeing of the land and vice versa.

Indicators of the relationship between *ama' andzi*, belonging and peace from Wet'suwet'en sources are outlined in Appendix I on page 155. There is a section at the end where I suggest including more cultural indicators based upon Wet'suwet'en ways of knowing and being identified from the various Wet'suwet'en sources as well.

connected



...to highlight three priority areas for understanding the health benefits of watershed management in relation to overcoming poverty and inequalities; promoting resilience; and as a context to apply existing environmental health tools. Each of the priority areas are based on a view of watershed-based management as “double dividend” strategy—improving health by addressing both its environmental and social determinants. (Parkes et al. 2008: 41)

The north is plagued with boom and bust cycles of resource development that shifted in the late 1950's from small logging operators and family agriculture development to big industry. This shift resulted in industrial sawmills, clear cutting of the forests and short term gains at the expense of the Wet'suwet'en. I understand that this change to clear cutting was one of the main motives to make the *Delgamuukw and*

Gisday Wa court challenge, as there was fear that the ecological integrity and resilience of the territory would be severed, possibly ending a way of life.

It is important to find and create indicator categories that fit into your community, or Nation or both in this case. I would like to see the community indicators updated by the communities, as Moricetown is now in the comprehensive community planning process with a community plan to be ready in the next few months or so. The Nation also needs to update their planning work as the first round was completed in 1995. In a fairly recent 2007 report, "A Review of Social Indicators for Land Use Planning in British Columbia" author Dr. Shawn Morford, states:

According to several experts consulted for this review, a better option is to focus first on selecting an indicator framework as discussed above and then select indicators that are consistent with this framework. Frameworks link indicators to sociological or systems theory and give the selection of indicators a structure. The state of science on social indicators, especially related to land use and land management, is still emerging, and there are differences across disciplinary lines about various theories and their associated indicators. Additionally, the criteria for selection of indicators will strongly influence the indicators selected. An initial suite of indicators is required to begin the dialogue on their application in land use planning processes and SEEs (socio-economic and environmental assessments) (2009: 26).

The 'framework' that the indicator work fits into has the Wet'suwet'en laws and cultural practices as a foundation. This foundation connects to a social-ecological approach with self-determination, sustainable development, health and wellbeing, and the Wet'suwet'en social structure as main components of it.

In contrast, an approach to managing natural resource systems that takes into account social and ecological influences at multiple scales, incorporates

continuous change, and acknowledges a level of uncertainty has the potential to increase a system's resilience to disturbance and its capacity to adapt to change (Resilience Alliance 1998a: 4).

The Health and Sustainability Prism Framework has been adapted to present a Wet'suwet'en perspective as presented in Figure 5. The outcome of the adaption, reframing of the prism healthy and sustainability framework working from the center out is based upon Wet'suwet'en ontology. The five main relationship areas as presented in chapter 3 are also reframed and presented from 'the center out', as Karen Martin (2003) states.

The main concepts or ways of being are presented under each heading with some reframing required from the original Parkes et al. prism outline. The first part section "Ecosystems and Health" includes conservation biodiversity and management decisions at the territorial and watershed levels that ensure there is ecological resilience. Decisions at the territorial planning level consider all four governing perspectives of the social-ecological framework. This is needed to sustain us with healthy foods and medicines, fish and berries, sharing of that which sustains us through reciprocity. There is concept of the sacred balance, *wiggus*, that we are all related which is to be honoured and respected. And finally in following our *yintahk*, there is some focus on effective waste management (including waste water, reducing and discarding waste) in each community within Wet'suwet'en territory.

The second section is "*Yintahk* and Stewardship", which again promotes decisions that ensure there is ecological integrity and resilience and continues to

support our inheritances from the 'land' to sustain the Wet'suwet'en. There is a spirit in the land and *kungax* (oral history) connects the Wet'suwet'en to the territories. The Wet'suwet'en decision making process utilizes a consensus approach and utilize an adaptive management way of doing business. There are certain sites that need protection to ensure sustainability of key habitats and species. There is recognition and respect for *wiggus*, as the premise for all life and all that is. And finally the Wet'suwet'en may utilize various planning tools such as the Wet'suwet'en territorial stewardship plans to support their house group decision making.

Thirdly the relationships between "Wet'suwet'en Wellbeing and Services" include offering culturally based and effective programs and services to achieve better health according to *lh'tis*, ensuring teachings are holistic, linking territory and social teachings according to Wet'suwet'en cultural practices. Services need to be delivered in a social-ecological framework. There is a focus of services on cultural strengths and assets, throughout life, to support healthy family (and children) development. Community based programs and policy frameworks will eventually come under Wet'suwet'en laws and cultural practices. This largely supports the existing Wet'suwet'en services.

The fourth area of relationships is between "Equitable community and social development". The main components include following *inuk nu'at'en*, our laws of taking care of each other as our main social system with a clear understanding of the different relationships we have in our lives as presented in the Healthy Relationships diagram. We

have self-determination at the personal level, community and Nation level within our territory. There is consensus decision making process as the way of 'doing business' for governance. Finally there is a commitment to language and culture, linking language, territory and well being as a priority and foundation for all programs and services. The Wet'suwet'en maintain the adaptive learning model for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programs and services and collaborative partnerships with outside agencies may be pursued as needed.

"Ama' andzi, belonging and peace" component is the final section of the adapted social-ecological framework. The main elements or indicators include that citizens are strong and whole, connected to language, culture and territory. There is peace amongst families and within the Nation. The feast system and the many responsibilities are upheld by the house and clans. There is consensus decision making process which includes house members. The educational achievements are based upon Wet'suwet'en teachings (social-ecological) as the foundation alongside formal educational achievements. And finally any health promotion work and educational teachings are based upon *lh'tis*, a strong person and *wiggus*, sacred balance and interdependent relationship with all that is.

Although the main topic areas are fairly similar to the Parkes et al. prism model, the main difference is that most indigenous people believe in the relational or kinship view of the world; we are all related. The governance method is to utilize a consensus based approach which could extend to a collaborative multi-stakeholder approach once

outstanding legal and rights and title issues are addressed in a manner suitable to the Wet'suwet'en. Health promotion must be done in a culturally appropriate manner and is compatible to Wet'suwet'en laws, cultural practices and oral histories. And finally the Wet'suwet'en, like many indigenous peoples, can identify and share the inheritances, the 'benefits' from the land, water and ecosystems. In general there is not a need to be convinced that there are benefits, as Parkes et al. outline in their paper.

The areas that are congruent between Wet'suwet'en perspectives and ecohealth approach are that ecosystems and social systems need to re-integrated; sustainable livelihoods link to increased social equity that may result in improved health. The need is for more policies that re-integrate health and sustainability objectives to realize the double dividend that Parkes et al. promote. These components are a weaving of the many initiatives of the Wet'suwet'en brought forward and reframed, from the center out into a social-ecological approach.

This chapter provided an outline of the ways of being, understanding the laws, of the people and the land to illustrate the importance of the relations between these five main areas. When based upon ways of knowing, and linking to ways of being, the relations create a social-ecological framework that reflects, *Yinka dinii ha ba ten*, the ways of the people of the earth.

Chapter 4: Giving Back

Being so intensely involved in implementing appropriate child welfare models, entrenched in treaty negotiations, land use planning and keenly listening to the voices and needs of our people has helped me understand the importance of relationships in the Wet'suwet'en homeland. A framework would be helpful to illustrate the big picture vision of sustainability, of a people and territory. Searching for a conceptual framework that reflects an indigenous view of the territory that includes the people, social/cultural and economic components is hard to find. The Parkes et al. Health and Sustainability Framework comes close to identifying the connections between the ecosystems, land and the people.

Our knowledge base and understanding is a critical component of taking care of the territory and the people, and this is a most fundamental aspect of self-determination. To me this means how we learn, make decisions and/or collective choices, share information and look at how we are doing with the decisions that have been made. Parkes et al. state in the final chapter of *Ecohealth and Watersheds*,

The experience we do have has been constrained by institutional environments oriented historically to top-down management, more narrow jurisdictional and sectoral mandates than required by the ecosystem approach, and existing laws, policies and regulations that support historical orientations based in reductionism and management of ecological systems for maximization of the production of (usually) a single resource (2008: 44).

I clearly understand this from working at the Wet'suwet'en self-governance table. By starting with recognition of a social-ecological framework there is an

opportunity to understand sustainability that is woven to include wellbeing and ecological views of the world. Arabena states in “Indigenous Epistemology and Wellbeing” her recommendations for acknowledging “Indigenous epistemologies of the Universe as an interconnected whole...for health and wellbeing.”

It is difficult to address gaps in knowledge with theories that are developed within fragmented, reductionist modalities. These are easily perceived by Aboriginal persons as specific knowledge’s that isolate peoples rather than disciplines that promote inclusion (2008: 35).

My primary goal of this research project was to define a Wet’suwet’en way of being framework. My four main objectives are to articulate a social-ecological framework, center the framework within a Wet’suwet’en context, align these to existing indicators of the Wet’suwet’en and finally a summary of the indicators are presented in a poster format to illustrate the vision and elements of the social-ecological framework.

I have adapted the health and sustainability prism model to outline a framework that is inclusive, holistic and illustrates the connections between the areas of health and ecosystems. In chapter two I provided a summary of the Wet’suwet’en governance perspectives or ways of knowing about wellbeing and ecosystems. In chapter 3 I highlight the Wet’suwet’en relations between health and ecosystems from a ways of being approach. The alignment of Wet’suwet’en ways, of knowing and of being informs the adapted social-ecological framework, as an approach to maintain the ‘ways of doing’. The appendices provide a summary of the indicators with a poster presented at the end of each section to highlight the main elements or indicators.

In summary, the Wet'suwet'en way of being, social-ecological framework has four main governance perspectives, based upon the Wet'suwet'en ways of knowing which were presented in chapter 2. The main perspectives were sustainable development, ecosystems and wellbeing, social determinants of health and social-ecological health promotion. The main elements of these perspectives are to maintain connections to the territory, economic opportunities must align with *wiggus* and *yintahk*, and health must be realized according to *lh'tis*, linking spiritual connections of the people with the land through our unique governing system. The governing perspective informs the relations, between the four main subject areas to realize wellbeing and healthy ecosystems.

The five main relationship areas as presented in Chapter 3 are also reframed and presented from 'the center out', as Karen Martin (2003) states. The main aspects of the relationships or ways of being are based upon the driving forces and 5 main aspects of a social-ecological approach. First the ecosystems and health relationships focus on *wiggus*. The Wet'suwet'en are connected and have responsibilities to maintain healthy respectful and reciprocal relations to the land, water and ecosystems. Secondly is the *Yintahk* and stewardship aspect which promotes achieving or maintaining ecological integrity or resilience. Thirdly is the Wet'suwet'en Wellbeing and Services section which identifies the need for culturally-based and effective programs and services to achieve better health according to *our ways*, ensuring land, spirit and relations are included. There is integrated services based upon a Wet'suwet'en social policy framework. The

fourth relationship piece is equitable community and social development which identifies sustainable and responsible livelihoods with development to be more inclusive and more equitable as determined by house group priorities and or planning. And finally *Ama' andzi*, belonging and peace relationships which includes being connected to culture and territory as a source of strength with formal health promotion, education and family development offered utilizing the *lh'tis*, healthy relationships to the land and people. This adapted way of being framework links the strength of the culture, language and relationships to the land.

Maintaining the relations, or the way of doing, as Martin states, is an outcome of being centered which provides the how of linking the indigenous knowledge with the laws and cultural practices, the ways of being of a people. The adapted social-ecological framework is an illustration of how to keep or maintain the relations between the land and the people. A Wet'suwet'en social-ecological framework, centered on *Yinka dinii ha ba ten* must be based upon the Wet'suwet'en ways of knowing and ways of being to stay true to ourselves. Once governance, administration, program and service delivery are defined, working toward a common vision and achieving multiple objectives, there is synergy, growth and 'progress' towards achieving a good life and ecosystems that can sustain us.

Having a framework to understand the relationships and the potential indirect and direct impacts to health, wellbeing and ecosystems there is greater opportunity for social change and more sustainable land management practices (Parkes et al 2008: 42).

Being able to measure and track how well these inter-relationships are working is a key component of this social-ecological approach. Graham cites Besleme and Mullin's key lessons about being clear on what the limits and expectations of creating indicators are and how they are created, in his Tools For Action guide,

As the development and use of community indicator sets continue, it is important to remind ourselves and one another what indicators can and cannot do. Indicators do not substitute for action, and they also should not be expected to cause change in and of themselves. Indicators are simply measurements showing time series data that reflect trends in community conditions. In the process of their development, indicators do serve to stimulate community visioning and unite different interests, but they cannot single-handedly bring about change. Indicators are nothing more, nor should they be anything less, than the information base for a larger advocacy and action strategy that utilizes existing resources in a community (Graham 2008: 13).

There is a fairly strenuous process to reach consensus in defining indicators, working through a number of critical issues to help define and be clear on what gets measured; a number of strategies and research projects have defined a priority set of indicators or measures of progress for the Wet'suwet'en which define the main domains that are in the following presentation or public reports. These indicators or statistics are used to help measure if the goals or strategies identified are actually working. There needs to be regular monitoring and evaluation, adapting and fine tuning of the strategies to ensure they are meeting the targets identified.

The public report should serve several functions, including: to draw attention to priority areas so resources can be strategically located; to raise public awareness about select areas of community life; to feature areas of success; to inform the planning processes of public non-profit and private institutions; to stimulate

local interest in contributing to the solutions of community problems, etc. (Graham 2008: 50).

There is much work required to work with outside agencies to realize better outcomes in the health and land management areas and this social-ecological framework will help shed some light on what the Wet'suwet'en might be seeking. Having an interdependent framework that illustrates what is already there, *Yinka dinii ha ba ten*, will assist in realizing effective collaborative working relationships and hopefully greater social equity and healthier Wet'suwet'en people and Wet'suwet'en ecosystems.

There are real challenges in implementing a social-ecological framework, right from the governance level to creating meaningful jobs in the territories, to understanding health promotion. The challenges to the Prism health and sustainability framework as Parkes et al. have identified are:

- a) Spatio-temporal Scale: scales are too divergent to be compatible; from local to regional or global
- b) The Public Health Paradox: health promotion approach is hard to define results
- c) Ecological Goods and Services on a Watershed Basis: promoting the idea that everyone benefits from the ecosystems (not so difficult for the Wet'suwet'en)
- d) Poverty and Watersheds: pursuit of sustainable livelihoods is needed which may lead to greater social equity and improved health
- e) "New-generation" Policy Instruments: incompatible systems that don't know how to reflect a holistic approach/ only know a western science based approach
- f) Building Capacity for a Paradigm Shift: need to build up capacity and teachings across many sectors to achieve a shift in thinking and doing
- g) Governance challenges and opportunities: watersheds as place based context for governing both health and sustainability; health is not yet in all policies and services are not integrated (2008: 49).

If land use planning in the province can utilize a social-ecological approach as well then there would be a greater chance of reconciliation between indigenous people and the state. As it is now land use planning has a strong focus on resource development and creating wealth, revenue and jobs. This is often done at the expense of the indigenous people and further disregards our inherent and special relationship to the land, expressed through our language, laws and *balhats*.

By stepping back and revisiting the people's vision of 'a good life', today and for future generations, we need to formally link the social and health aspects in planning for land use and sustainability.

The final chapter, my 'giving back' is to respect Wet'suwet'en protocols and provide a reporting back or giving back to the Wet'suwet'en, to *re-present* my research back to my relations. As I have not carried out any direct interviews or questionnaires for this project it is not required for me to have participation consent forms. It is important and essential that I keep the Wet'suwet'en Office informed of my research project. I have presented a draft of the diagrams and main concepts in February 2011 which valuable feedback was made and I incorporated as stated in the methodology section.

How to move forward with this research project? The Wet'suwet'en must review these key diagrams to ensure the social-ecological framework fits the concepts of interdependence, sacred balance, caretaking of the territory and wellbeing of the people. I have brought forward key components of the social-ecological framework of

Parkes et al. (2008) Health and Sustainability Prism model. Although the Wet'suwet'en utilize the territory house based approach to territory management there are key concepts in a social-ecological approach that are compatible to achieving healthy ecosystems, sustainability and good health. I do not suggest that the Wet'suwet'en adopt a watershed approach however I do strongly state that a social-ecological approach be considered as it is more reflective of who we are.

This approach can be utilized in many areas, territory based decision making which strongly links to healthy territory and ecosystems. The social and wellbeing components can be added into the land status summary to help develop the social profile of the Wet'suwet'en. This includes a strong person, *lh'tis* concept that the many programs and services the Wet'suwet'en offer (the one Wet'suwet'en term may not fully capture the idea of wholeness and may require more than one Wet'suwet'en word or phrase). Finally this can assist in informing the governance work that will be revisited soon. The social-ecological framework largely recognizes what is already in place in the formal Wet'suwet'en programs and services, it is linking the components together to create a larger visual aid to understand wellbeing and sustainability.

There also needs to be discussion around the vision posters of the 5 main topic areas and the driving forces section. A refinement of the indicators is needed so there is an appropriate and agreed to measure of results and reporting out to the houses, clans and communities. The indicators information is provided in the appendices section.

I would like to present my research project of a Wet'suwet'en social-ecological framework based upon the *Yinka dinii ha ba ten* in the Wet'suwet'en homeland as part of my process to complete my master's degree in First Nations Studies at UNBC. I will make my project available to the Chiefs and local Wet'suwet'en agencies upon completion and am willing to participate in any further dialogue on the subject.

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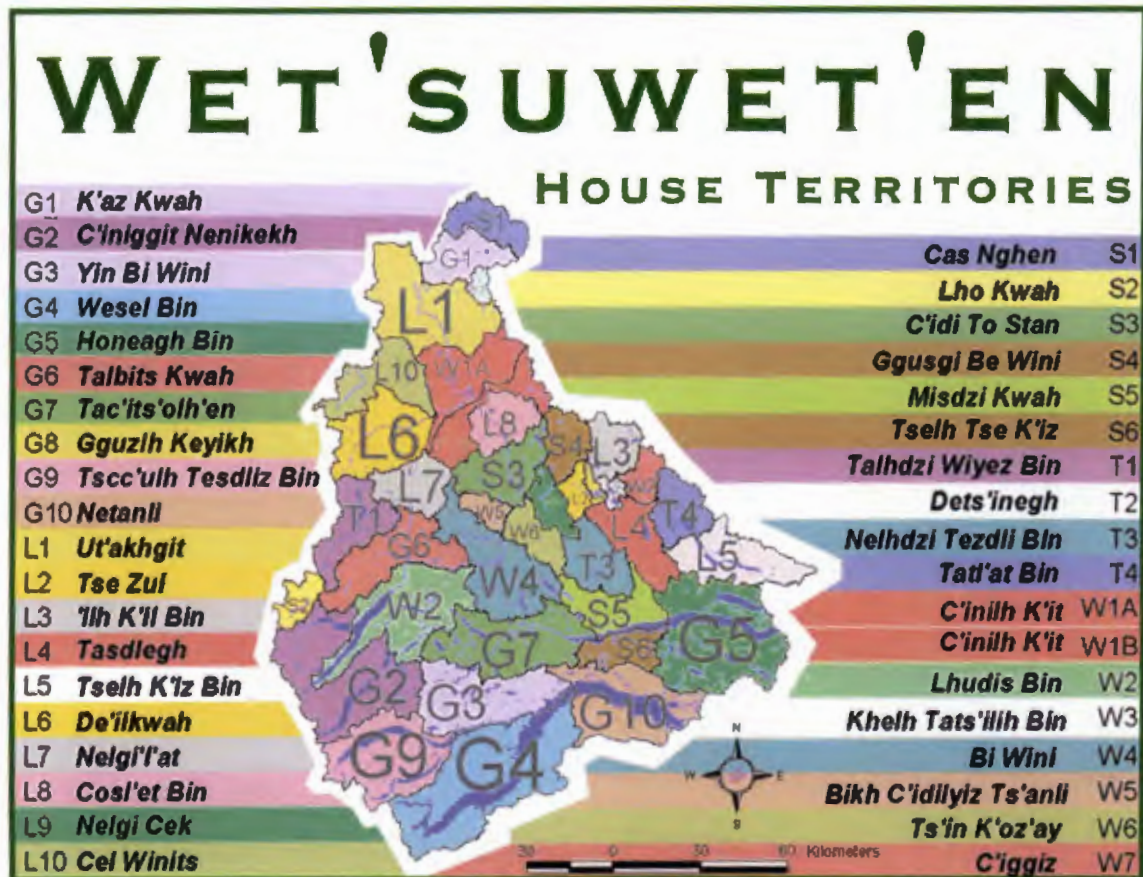
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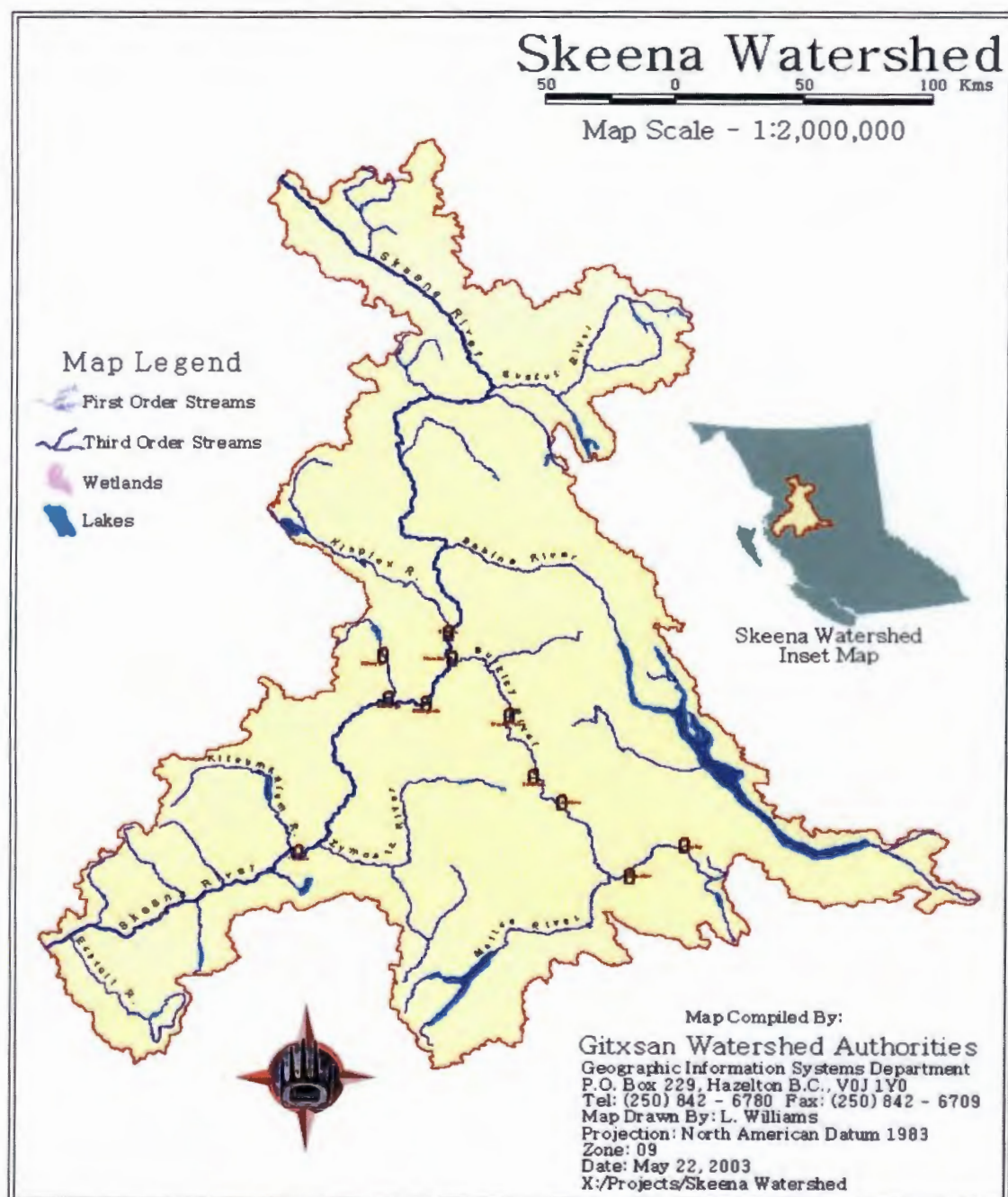
Appendix A: Wet'suwet'en House Territory Map



<http://www.wetsuweten.com/wetsuweten/culture-society/> (accessed June 5, 2008).

The house groups are defined sections of territory that are often defined by land features, boundary markers of streams, lakes, mountain ranges, and other landscape features. The names of the house territories reflect this as well. (Note: In this Wet'suwet'en House Territory Map G stands for the Gilsehyu (big frog) clan; L is for the Lihksilyu (small frog) clan; S is for Lihksamisyu (fireweed or killer whale) and T is for Tsayu (beaver) clan; and W stands for the Gitdumden (bear or wolf) clan.

Appendix B: Skeena Watershed Map



Skeena Watershed Map www.skeenafisheries.ca Accessed Jan 23, 2011

Appendix C: Wet'suwet'en Glossary*

Alhk'ikh ts'ədilh	walking together
Ama' andzi	a good example (in reference to a chief's behaviour); (Daly 2005: 280); may be an old word or a loan word from the Gitksan
Bahlats	feast system, potlatch, governing structure
Bezayuu	larger family of the same clan (similar to wilnadaahl of the Gitksan)
Bica'giltis	father clan (Harris)
Biligg'idetsat	always being fed, lazy person (Daly 2005: 280)
Binī winī	he or she is intelligent
Bīt	char
Bits' ac'elt'it	father clan
Cinegh Ihay yihk	House of Many Eyes; one house group of the little frog clan
C'ist'et ket nedigeldes	I am left with no clothes (to give away everything at feast); Mills 1994
Digii	huckleberries
Dikhco	blue grouse
Dikiy	trout
Dīlhdzu	hard worker; nice and beautiful, with all the best qualities (Daly 2005: 280)
Dinizē	male hereditary chief
D'lokwa kyo	the whole family lived there like a town
Ggis	spring salmon
Gilsehyu	big frog clan; one of the five clans of the Wet'suwet'en nation;
Gitdumden	Bear clan; of the five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation;
Habats`el	father clan (KWES 1997a)
Indeminik	Spouse role in feasts (loan word from Gitksan); (Hargus 2007)
Inuk nu'at'en	our own law
Kungax	oral tradition; stories
Lhighah	Saskatoon berries
Ih'tis	strong person (extended to a holistic approach; may include <i>ama' andzi</i> and <i>dīlhdzu</i> for an expanded holistic approach)
Lhok nk'et	fishing holes
Lihksamisyu	fireweed clan; one of the five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation;
Lihksilyu	little frog clan; one of the five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation;
Mī'o	cranberries
Mudīh	leader; often in reference to the church chief

Negedeldeas	son is granted permission to use father's territory after father's passing but only until son's death (permission doesn't extend past son); Mills (1994); also spelled negedeldus
Niwis	soapberries
Nukanic	Wet'suwet'en language
Pdeek	clan
Skizë	child of a hereditary chief; prince or princess
Talok	sockeye salmon
To'	water
Ts'an	totem pole
Tsayu	Beaver clan; one of the five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation;
Tësdli	steelhead
Ts'aqu tseh nenisdzilni	women standing in front; women in leadership
Tsekožë	female hereditary chief
Ts'elkiy'	eel
Ts'e 'inholhiy	honesty or honest
Yin timi	blueberries
Wetey	strong, venerable
Wet'suwet'en	translation is people of the lower drainage (in relation to the Lake Babine people; people down the hill)
Witsuwit'en	new orthography spelling for people of the lower drainage
Wiggus	respect; inter relatedness; sacred balance with animals, plants and all that is
Yihk	house group; matrilineal kinship based group; <i>wilp</i> to the Gitksan
Yin	territory/ ecosystem
Yinka dinii ha ba ten	the ways of the people of the (surface) earth
Yintahk	sacred laws that govern the territory and the relationship to it; old spelling is <i>yintah</i>

*Wet'suwet'en terms are not consistently spelled in the new orthography system as the dictionary has just been published some words accessed from First Voices, website <http://www.firstvoices.com/en/Wetsuweten/words> or from Sharon Hargus, Wet'suwet'en Grammar book (both in works cited). Daly (2005), Harris (1989) & Naziel (1997a) and Mills (1994 & 2005) is also utilized. I would like to thank Sue Alfred for clarifying the Wet'suwet'en terms to ensure I am using the appropriate words.

Appendix D: Driving Forces: Self Determination, *Bahlats*, Inuk Nu'at'en & Self Reliance

"Indicators are measurements (i.e. statistics) that tell us about the present state of something that is important" (Graham; 4).

Wet'suwet'en Indicators for Self-determination and Self Governance:

In the *Inuk nu'at'en, Our Own Laws* (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1997b) document a number of principles are identified to present a clear outline of what a treaty might be look like. The Caring for our Territory section says,

- Our presence on the entire land base in Wet'suwet'en territory must be recognized and affirmed. **Seven standards (following bullets)** must be met as treaty arrangements are created to provide assurance that we will be able to reassert and reinforce our presence in relation to the entire land base in our territory.
- These standards indicate that the Wet'suwet'en presence on the land needs to be understood in terms of the realization of:
- Our occupation of the territory for living, economic, cultural, spiritual and other purposes so as to provide for the many generations of our people to come.
- Full access to the comprehensive range of natural resources so that we can engage in economic, cultural, spiritual and other related endeavours.
- The continued reinforcement and full enjoyment of our Houses, Clans, and Feast system (***Bahlats***).
- The ecological health and sustainability of our territory so that our children and our children's children can continue to enjoy the harmony, bounty, and beauty of the land.
- The full exercise of our cultural pursuits on the land and with regard to natural resources.
- The affirmation of our spiritual values with regard to the land and all of the living things it contains.

Self-governance and self-reliance:

Inuk Nu'at'en:

- The recognized presence of jurisdictional and institutional arrangements which will enable us to full exercise Wet'suwet'en governance so that we are able to accomplish our social, economic, and environmental, cultural, spiritual and political goals in relation to our entire territory (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1997b).
- A Wet'suwet'en Constitution, decision making framework, rule of law, sovereign nations concept; the Wet'suwet'en Office just announced the start of a Governance Project (announced in December 2010); this will be the second attempt at creating a document that recognizes and affirms the Wet'suwet'en decision making system based on a house/clan system of governance with keen interest of two First Nations/Bands interested in coming under Wet'suwet'en governance; a consultation and accommodation policy has been completed in 2007;
- The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs table has been a strong and consistent voice ensuring that any initiatives are true to the Wet'suwet'en laws, traditions, language and cultural practices and at times feels like progress is slow and the standards too high; however this process has worked towards a distinctly Wet'suwet'en approach in negotiations, program and service delivery and working to meet the needs of the people
- Consensus based decision making at the governance level especially
- Administrative control of local services such health, education, child welfare and social development and housing i.e. self determining and self governing administered within a Wet'suwet'en social policy framework (as stated in ***inuk nu'at'en***); land stewardship to be based upon ***yintahk*** and WTSP
- Variety of community engagement initiatives at Nation and community levels to further support house groups decision making process; ensures there is effective communication, consultation and participation in all important decisions



Driving Forces

Self determination,
bahlats and *inuk nu'at'en* &
Self reliance

Yinka Dinii ha ba ten

"the ways of the people of the earth"



A *vision* of self determination, *bahlats* and *inuk nu'at'en* (self-governance) and self reliance is:

Self determination: the Wet'suwet'en recognize and honour the cultural laws, practices and strengths of being Wet'suwet'en

Self governance: the Wet'suwet'en pursue a formal process to express *inuk nu'at'en* (our laws); social policies are created within an 'our ways' framework

Self reliance: Wet'suwet'en realize a diverse range of economic benefits that will sustain us, so we have good health and enjoy a good quality of life, both individually and collectively throughout our whole lives; we all participate and contribute to Wet'suwet'en Society

Some key elements of the vision to work together towards achieving:

- The Wet'suwet'en create a shared vision to identify a clear path to achieve healthy individual and collective growth, responsible economic growth and healthy living based upon Wet'suwet'en cultural strengths in our homeland and in communities
- The Wet'suwet'en participate in important decision making at the house and clan levels, following a consensus building process; this process may be formally defined in a charter, constitution or other document
- Wet'suwet'en follow, *yintahk*, ecological integrity to realize resilience of the territory ecosystems; economic development will be pursued in a sustainable manner; important decisions will be made by consensus in a collective manner as may be needed as guided by the house system
- Wet'suwet'en carry out stewardship responsibilities and also house, clan and father clan responsibilities throughout our whole lives following our cultural practices



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Appendix E: Relationships between Ecosystems & Health

Indicators identified in the Wet'suwet'en Territorial Stewardship Plan (WTSP):

WTSP Definitions:

Principle: A general truth or law, basic to other truths.

Criteria: A standard or rule by which a judgment can be made; a model, test or measure.

Indicator: An instrument or device that measures or shows position or condition (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2003: 2).

Relationships between ecosystems and health
WTSP Principle: #1 Respect and Support for the Wet'suwet'en Culture & Wet'suwet'en Law (Inuk Nu'at'en)
#6 Criterion: Wet'suwet'en maintain opportunities to hunt and gather food, medicine and materials for sustenance (<i>i.e. health</i>), trade and customary purposes in accordance with their cultural framework and the laws of their feast hall
<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important Wet'suwet'en hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering areas are accurately located, delineated and then protected by deferral of resource development activities, as well as through restrictions on recreational use and access in order to protect culturally important habitats, species and Wet'suwet'en harvesting opportunities • Wet'suwet'en people maintain opportunities to access sufficient fish resources within their respective house territories to support the current and future sustenance, ceremonial and trade needs of house members. • Management plans for parks and protected areas incorporate provisions to allow Wet'suwet'en to continue to hunt and gather plant and animal resources within these areas and specific agreements are negotiated as necessary to address critical conservation concerns. • Bilateral tables are established between forest licensees and affected Wet'suwet'en houses to negotiate deferral of resource development activities or outright protection for areas that the Wet'suwet'en consider to be culturally or ecologically sensitive.
#8 Criterion: Wet'suwet'en access to important sacred and spiritual sites is re-established (where necessary) and maintained through the development and implementation of enabling legislation and/or policy tools.

Indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The spiritual attachment of the Wet'suwet'en to their territories is recognized and respected • Areas identified as being sacred or having spiritual values receive interim protection (immediate and indeterminate deferral of all resource development activity or planning) in the absence of a treaty.
WTSP Principle #2: Protect and Maintain the Ecological Integrity of the Territories (Yintah)
#1 Criterion: Ecosystem based forest management is practiced within Wet'suwet'en territories
Indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wet'suwet'en are fully involved in herbicide and pesticide application processes (usually a zero tolerance for pesticide use)
#3 Criterion: Development and implementation of inventory, protection, mitigation and restoration measures for threatened ecosystems and species
Indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to vulnerable wildlife species is limited in order to prevent poaching by closing and/or deactivating secondary and tertiary roads, avoiding the development of "loop" roads and severe limitations on incremental access into critical habitats (including but not limited to calving areas, wintering areas, movement corridors and escape terrain). • Wildlife habitat assessments are completed for all proposed harvesting areas. • Critical wildlife habitat and migration corridors adversely affected by past resource development activities are restored to functional status. • Fish habitat features adversely affected by past resource development activities are restored to functional status. • Wet'suwet'en traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is given full consideration during initiatives to identify and develop management objectives for critical habitat areas for species with cultural and/or ecological importance, including woodland caribou, grizzly bears, Coho and sockeye salmon.
#4 Criterion: No adverse effects to riparian features and function within the Bulkley or Morice watersheds
Indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best riparian management practices are mandatory in riparian management zones for all riparian features • Riparian buffers are regularly widened beyond prescribed limits to protect and maintain landscape connectivity and movement corridors for

<p>wildlife. In addition, the multi-functional nature of riparian buffers along fish bearing streams will be fully recognized and actively managed for.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective policy instruments and associated standards and field procedures are developed and implemented to keep cattle away from streams, wetland areas and sensitive habitats • Restrictions are implemented and enforced to limit jet boat traffic in the Bulkley and Morice systems in spawning areas and in the vicinity of riparian nesting, denning and rearing habitats. • Restrictions and/or incentives are used to avoid removal of riparian vegetation, including large cottonwoods on public, private and municipal lands adjacent to the Bulkley and Morice Rivers. • Sensitive drainages or at risk runs are managed in a manner which ensures protection, particularly when these are runs that have cultural and/or subsistence importance to the Wet'suwet'en. • Wet'suwet'en have a veto on any hydro development within their territories that could potentially have a significant adverse effect on culturally important fish stocks.
<p>#10 Wet'suwet'en opportunities for cultural renewal and cultural transmission are maintained</p>
<p>Indicator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas identified by the Wet'suwet'en as important cultural landscapes are deferred from resource development (in the absence of a treaty)
<p>Wet'suwet'en Community Needs Assessment (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1995):</p>
<p>Environmental Health Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobacco and Snuff Use • Heating source type(also identified above); use of wood for heating purposes • Youth: Skin allergies or other skin diseases present; Hay fever, asthma or other allergies: other serious problems with joints or bones • Adult: emphysema/chronic bronchitis/persistent cough: skin allergies or other skin diseases; serious trouble with back pain • Senior: arthritis; stomach ulcer; high blood pressure/hypertension • Reframed as Chronic disease: diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, musculoskeletal conditions, cancer, severe mental illness (Center for Aboriginal Health: Part 111) <p>Indicators:</p> <p>Residential Characteristics – Chapter 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dwelling type (single detached); length of time in current residence • Residential financing (rent, certificate of possession, live with others,

<p>social housing, room and board, own/mortgage, band owned and rent or mortgage free)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location and age of permanent residence • Rooms in home; Number of bedrooms; Basement in home • Home security (home insurance) • Smoke detectors in home; Fire extinguishers in home; Fire exits in home • handicapped resident in your home and home handicap accessible • overcrowding: perceive residence to be overcrowded; levels of shared shelter situations (homelessness or couch surfing)
<p>Others indicators for consideration:</p> <p>Beehive burners – locally exempted from closure; contributing to serious air quality issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replenish Morice Lake for sockeye run (O.W. 2006b) • Opposition to fish farm development ‘downstream’ • Mountain pine beetle epidemic: forest health issues (ethnobotany and biodiversity to be maintained); • changes to hydrology cycles, agricultural and intensive logging impacts to water and increased sediment; • levels of deforestation and further human settlement patterns’ impacts – land status summary by house groups (David Dewit: personal communication)
<p>Indicators at the community or First Nation Band Level for consideration:</p> <p>Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mould contamination; levels of renovations or home replacement • Proper ventilation of housing units; length of waiting lists • Number of homes requiring major repairs • Utility costs <p>Food Security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of children and families on income assistance: Level of use at local food bank (if available) • Number of personal gardens and community gardens <p>Waste Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify levels of resource consumption; # of recycling programs and composting • Level of waste water • Volume of waste diversion from landfill; zero waste policy in place <p>Emergency preparedness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community based emergency plan (flooding, forest fires, hurricanes/tornado, excessive snow, prolonged power outages and

pandemics)

Maternal Care:

- Number of newborns that are breastfeeding; age of mother; education levels of mother
- tests for contaminants in breast milk; levels of maternal smoking
- maternal alcohol and drug use (HIV, Hepatitis, STD's)
- immunizations including flu and tuberculosis (also for elders)



Ecosystems & Health

Yinka dinii ha ba ten

"the ways of the people of the earth"



An emerging **vision** of connecting ecosystems to health:

Belief that health and well being is intricately connected to the health of the land and ecosystems, **wiggus** for the Wet'suwet'en.

Yintahk or ecological integrity is a strong basis for making decisions to ensure the territory sustains the Wet'suwet'en.

Wet'suwet'en have access to healthy, affordable local foods and to safe affordable housing.

Utilize effective management practices following **yintahk**, **wiggus** and **inuk nu'at'en** to ensure biodiversity & water source protection; key habitats and sacred sites are protected

In following **yintahk** waste management practices are in place to have zero waste in the landfills.

Some key elements of the vision to work towards achieving:

- Wet'suwet'en are to be able to hunt, gather healthy food, medicines following our cultural way

- Families participate in subsistence activities to learn their stories, monitoring and responsibilities associated with stewardship

- There is greater aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity

- Wet'suwet'en foods are part of our regular diet especially salmon and berries

- Local Healthy foods are affordable and accessible; there is no diabetes in our families

- There is a "**lh'tis**" balanced approach in our daily lives

- There is less and less waste in the landfill

- Water is safe to drink and waste water is adequately treated

- Wet'suwet'en have safe affordable homes free of mould and minimal repairs

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Appendix F: Relationships between *yintahk* & stewardship

Indicators identified in the Wet'suwet'en Territorial Stewardship Plan:

WTSP Definitions:

Principle: A general truth or law, basic to other truths.

Criteria: A standard or rule by which a judgment can be made; a model, test or measure.

Indicator: An instrument or device that measures or shows position or condition (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2003: 2).

WTSP Principle: #1 Respect and Support for the Wet'suwet'en Culture & Wet'suwet'en Law (<i>Inuk Nu'at'en</i>)
Criterion: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Traditional boundaries are used as a basis for management 2. Cultural heritage inventory and interpretation is adequate to ensure resource development activities do not cause unnecessary adverse effects to the cultural integrity of the territories 3. Respect and protection for Wet'suwet'en cultural heritage evidence (i.e. not destroyed)
WTSP Principle #2: Protect and Maintain the Ecological Integrity of the Territories (<i>Yintah</i>)
Criterion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem based forest management is practiced within Wet'suwet'en territories • Development and implementation of inventory, protection, mitigation and restoration measures for threatened ecosystems and species • No adverse effects to riparian features and function within the Bulkley or Morice watersheds
WTSP Principle #3: Provision of Meaningful, Sustainable Economic Opportunities for Wet'suwet'en Communities
Criterion: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wet'suwet'en maintain control of their traditional ecological knowledge and any related economic opportunities 2. Wet'suwet'en benefit directly from resources removed from their territories by third party interests through a system of resource rents and royalties

3. Wet'suwet'en actively participate in the economic benefits their territories generate through the allocation of significant resource tenures that fit with their traditional cultural framework
4. Economic initiatives are socially, environmentally and economically sustainable for Wet'suwet'en and non-Native communities within the territories.
5. Economic opportunities, which are consistent with Wet'suwet'en cultural and socio-economic objectives, are supported.

Wet'suwet'en Community Needs Assessment (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1995)

Links between land and natural resource management Indicators:

Economic Growth/Direction – Chapter 9:

- Community growth/decline:
 - Growth areas: housing, sawmill and employment
 - Reasons for economic growth and decline: education, lack of funds, poor management, no jobs, forestry/sawmill



Yintahk and Stewardship:

Yinka Dinii ha ba ten

"the ways of the people of the earth"



A vision of **yintahk** and stewardship is:

wiggus: the Wet'suwet'en must maintain opportunities to hunt, gather food, medicine and materials to sustain our ways

Wet'suwet'en follow **yintahk**, ecological integrity or resilience of the territory – especially responsible and sustainable economic development

Decisions to follow the **yihk** and **pdeek** system

Inuk nu'at'en is the basis for meaningful, sustainable economic opportunities for the Wet'suwet'en

Wiggus also means respect for interdependent nature of relations to the land as basis for Wet'suwet'en wellbeing and strength



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Some key elements of a vision - to work together towards achieving:

•Decisions of the territory are made following Wet'suwet'en consensus based decisions as a collective following Wet'suwet'en protocols

• Wet'suwet'en carry out our stewardship responsibilities and also house, clan and father clan responsibilities throughout our whole lives

•Relationships to the territory must be maintained, responsibilities to fishing holes and house territories must carry on

•Wet'suwet'en house territories and waters resources to be kept in as natural state as possible with minimal cumulative impacts from development

•The spiritual attachment to the territory is recognized and respected in any development

•Wet'suwet'en actively participate in the economic benefits their territories generate through agreements that fit within our cultural framework

•Job creation leads to a more diverse and locally based economy with focus on sustainable livelihoods

Appendix G: Relationships between Wet'suwet'en Wellbeing & Services

"Indicators are measurements (i.e. statistics) that tell us about the present state of something that is important" (Graham: 4).

Relationships between Wet'suwet'en Wellbeing & Services
Wet'suwet'en Community Needs Assessment (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1995):
Indicators: Health – Chapter 7: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional healing; aware of traditional healing; number used traditional healing • Annual frequency of contact with Health care professionals • By youth, adult or senior age category; Rate of annual visits (under or over hospitalization rates) • Rate general assessment of personal health (three point scale): health habits, medication, food groups, stress and safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health habits: exercise, or smoke tobacco, chew snuff and alcohol use ○ Medication: take prescription medication, take over the counter drugs ○ Food groups: eat dairy products, fruits and vegetables, breads and cereals, meat and proteins ○ Stress: level of worry, feel lonely, depressed, or feel happy, relaxed, get adequate rest, bring work home, wake up refreshed ○ Safety: wear seat belts, obey traffic laws, confide in someone, or smoke in bed, mix prescriptions, walk alone, drink to excess, take risks, drive impaired ○ Chronic health problems: chose from a list; top conditions identified, by age category (i.e. diabetes) • Identify the most poorly rated health services (leads to access issues to health services)
Other considerations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low and high birth weights; life expectancy and infant mortality; age of mother • nutrition factors • cultural practices around pregnancy, birth and early years (i.e. reincarnation) • special health considerations for hepatitis, STD's and HIV positive parents • immunizations and flu shots; car seat use

- Assessments (ages and stages assessment tool)
- family support and fetal alcohol affects, building prevention and awareness
- smoking, and second hand smoking in the home;
- Wet'suwet'en language and curriculum; intergenerational teachings
- School readiness for kindergarten
- Violence; domestic disputes, court appearances, children who witness violence, court orders, peace bonds, violent offenders, youth justice diversions, school expulsions, spaces available for shelters and transition homes
- Number and level of child in care population (apprehension); reason for apprehension, placement, level of care needed; Wet'suwet'en participation in placement; continually connection to Wet'suwet'en teachings; ageing out
- Youth justice, rates of FAS/FAE
- Levels of Disability
- Food insecurity and nutrition levels; and level of daily exercise
- Levels of mortality and reason of death
- strong person, *lh'tis* concept; holistic perspective of health which reflects physical, spiritual, emotional and mental dimensions and especially the interrelatedness of these dimensions; this is most noteworthy
- Mental health; depression (including children and youth), historical traumas, grief and loss; levels of referrals
- commitment to healing at personal, family and community level (strong links to cultural continuity i.e. *lh'tis* approach)
- death by suicide and attempted suicide; hospital admissions and RCMP reports
- levels of bipolar, schizophrenia, mood disorders, FASD, substance abuse levels

definition of Wet'suwet'en '*lh'tis: strong person*' shared and promoted across all programs and services

As a failure of silo approach to address complexity of most health issues is especially true for Aboriginal peoples who have historically been collectivist in their social institutions and processes; specifically the ways in which health is perceived and addressed (Reading n.d.: 3)



Wet'suwet'en Wellbeing & Services

vision: *lh'tis*, a strong person



Yinka dinii ha ba ten
"the ways of the people of the earth"



An emerging **vision** of Wet'suwet'en wellbeing and Services is:

Wet'suwet'en social policy framework comes under ***Inuk nu'at'en***

Service model promotes and follows the ***lh'tis***, a strong person model for health, education and child welfare

Services to be integrated and working in collaboration and partnership with appropriate agencies to realize the vision as may be necessary

Promote healthy relationships in partnership with ***lh'tis***

Healthy living is based upon Wet'suwet'en cultural strengths and relations to land, people and ecosystems

Some key elements of the vision - to work together towards achieving:

•Wet'suwet'en offer culturally based and effective programs and services

•Wet'suwet'en services to be offered in a collaborative and integrated manner

•Commitment to 'be strong' at personal, family and community levels; appropriate healing methods and teachings are available to assist in addressing historical traumas, complicated grief and mental health concerns as needed

•Wet'suwet'en medicines and healing approaches are accessible and utilized as needed

•***Lh'tis*** promotes holistic health, no smoking, connections to the territories; local foods are readily available

•***Lh'tis*** includes healthy relationships, with family, spouse, house group and Clan and especially maintains connections to the territory

•Family planning with age appropriate relationships, good maternal and infant care; active healthy promotion in all Wet'suwet'en programs



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Appendix H: Relationships between Equitable Community & Social Development

“Indicators are measurements (i.e. statistics) that tell us about the present state of something that is important” (Graham: 4).

Relationships between Equitable Community and Social Development (including social determinants)
Wet’suwet’en Community Needs Assessment (Office of the Wet’suwet’en 1995) the following chapters highlight the indicators identified by the community members:
Indicators: Chapter 2: Socio-demographic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age & Age Category, by Area (place of survey area) • Gender, by Area (place of survey area), by Age and by Age Category • Marital Status: married, legal, common law, single, separated, divorced/widowed • Income: indicate total income (1994); Income by Age Category; median income
Recreation – Chapter 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities; leisure time; indoor and outdoor activities; not participated in but would like to • Volunteering; willingness to help in following areas; areas of personal involvement
Education and employment, Chapter 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest level attempted and or completed • Level of formal education completed; literacy levels • Short term certificates/workshops/tickets • Language most often spoken at home, work school and social functions • Employment status at time of survey • Assessment of working conditions • Assessment of job satisfaction • Length of tenure; current occupation • Transportation; have a vehicle at time of survey • Licence/ticket; valid driver’s licence • Improving employment opportunities; relocate, go to school or on the job training levels of interest

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation rates • Employment insurance levels • Other sources of income; income assistance, social security and part time wages; percentage of income is government transfers; levels of child and senior poverty
<p>Culture – Chapter 6:</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clan; identify mother clan and identify father clan • House Territory; identify house territory • Traditional language; youth, adult and senior levels of speakers and interest to learn • Genealogy/family history; level of knowledge and interest to learn • Traditional name: have a name and understand what the name means • General cultural knowledge: level of knowledge for ethnic roots, historical events, cultural beliefs, cultural practices, treaty process and social problems • Identify sources of cultural knowledge: parents, grandparents, other relatives, elders and school • Cultural activities: identify activities in which participate: feasts, canning fish, berry picking and preparation, camping, fishing, smoking fish, hunting, canning wild meat, drying fish (top 10 responses) • Traditional healing: level of awareness of Wet'suwet'en traditional healing • Participation in traditional healing activities: sweat lodge, healing circle, smudge ceremony, talking circle, traditional healer, spiritual songs, spiritual songs and drumming
<p>Economic Growth/Direction – Chapter 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic satisfaction: who is responsible for day to day management of your finances • Sources of income: wages, income assistance and social security/pension • Total annual income: 1994 by income category and by gender • Satisfaction with current income
<p>OW Economic Opportunities: sustainable jobs, diverse economic base</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gitanyow, Gitxsan, Wet'suwet'en Regional Tourism Strategy, Phase II (2005) • Wet'suwet'en Eco and Cultural tourism development Study (2002b) • Morice Forest District Tourism Opportunity Study (2002c) • Community Forests (Burns Lake and Smithers) • Forest License • Revenue sharing agreements (CANFOR)

- Wet'suwet'en Trust
- Wet'suwet'en public body status designation; Canada Revenue Advanced Tax Ruling
- Wet'suwet'en Forest Sector Action Plan
- Wet'suwet'en Tenure Project
- Wet'suwet'en Trails Strategy
- Wet'suwet'en Tourism Services
- Wet'suwet'en Economic Strategy
- Wet'suwet'en Cultural Heritage/Archaeology Initiative
- Wet'suwet'en Capacity Projects on G.I.S., Tourism, Silviculture, Cultural Heritage/Archaeology
- Wet'suwet'en Burning for Berries
- Number of Wet'suwet'en employed in sustainable livelihoods not single industry employment, more social enterprise, entrepreneurial developments and community economic development approaches; i.e. carvers, basket weavers, artists, etc. with a balance of gender and age; i.e. local foods

Hagwilget and Moricetown Child and Family Services Agency: Needs Assessments Report, March and April (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2004):
What describes a healthy *family* in Hagwilget? (indicators listed helped inform relationships diagram Figure 7 on page 84)

- Positive living environment (safe, level of volunteers, no family violence)
- Cultural and family connections (participation in cultural activities; family events)
- Free of alcohol and drugs
- Other (employment, parents together, good nutrition)
- Free from abuse

What describes a healthy *community* in Hagwilget?

- Cooperation and neighbours supporting each other
- Drug and alcohol free
- Community activities and cultural events
- Support and safety for children
- Free from violence and all abuse
- Other (traditional values, jobs, no bingo)

What describes a healthy *family* in Moricetown?

- Free of alcohol and drugs and other addictions
- Positive, nurturing and loving environment

- Cultural and family connections
- Other (employment, parents together, good nutrition)
- Free from abuse

What describes a healthy *community* in Moricetown?

- Communication, cooperation and neighbours supporting each other
- Drug and alcohol free
- Community activities and cultural events
- Healthy leadership and staff, strong role models
- Free from violence and abuse
- Support and safety for children

Access to 'systems' that lead to the provision of services such as health, child welfare and social development; systemic issues arise:

- In health for example: waiting lists, health needs not covered by non-insured health or denied; transportation barriers (Reading and Wein 2009: 16)



Equitable Community & Social Development



Yinka Dinii ha ba ten
"the ways of the people of the earth"



An emerging **vision** of equitable community and social development is:

wiggus: the Wet'suwet'en must maintain opportunities to hunt, gather food, medicine and materials to sustain our ways

Wet'suwet'en follow **yintahk**, ecological integrity or resilience of the territory – especially responsible and sustainable economic development

Decisions to follow a consensus model at the **yihk** and **pdeek** level

Inuk nu'at'en is the basis for meaningful, sustainable economic opportunities for the Wet'suwet'en

Wiggus also means respect for interdependent nature of relations to the land as basis for Wet'suwet'en wellbeing and strength



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Some key elements of the vision to work together towards achieving:

- Wet'suwet'en carry out our stewardship responsibilities and also house, clan and father clan responsibilities throughout our whole lives
- commitment to language and culture as a priority and foundation for all programs and services
- create a Wet'suwet'en social policy framework
- Collaborative partnerships with outside agencies as may be needed
- well rounded representation in employment, local committees and councils including women, youth and elders
- **Lh'tis**, a strong person, as the basis for a service model
- Job creation leads to a more diverse and locally based economy with focus on sustainable livelihoods to reduce social inequities
- Adaptive learning model for ongoing monitoring and evaluation

Appendix I: Relationships between *ama' andzi*, belonging & peace

“Indicators are measurements (i.e. statistics) that tell us about the present state of something that is important” (Graham: 4).

Relationships between <i>ama' andzi</i> , belonging and peace
Wet'suwet'en Community Needs Assessment (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 1995):
Indicators: Health – Chapter 7: Emotional Health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living alone; as an adult, senior or youth • Family connections; number visits in last 2 week period • Social; number of visits with family, friends and neighbours in last 2 week period • Personal activities; had enough to do all of the time; seniors level of leaving the house everyday; level of feeling lonely • Community safety perception; feel part of the community; feel safe to walk in community during day or night
Hagwilget and Moricetown Child & Family Services Agency: Needs Assessment Report (Office of the Wet'suwet'en 2004)
Hagwilget and Moricetown: Indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community you usually live in; Length of residence • What community do you feel the strongest connection to (i.e. belonging) • Level of family involvement with child protection social workers
Other indicators: Community based: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of belonging contrasted to social exclusion • Labour force: participation rate, types of work; seasonal, SNDS labour market statistics • New employment opportunities; new jobs per Community Futures Development program created in past five years (related to Wet'suwet'en or Moricetown and Hagwilget) (MacKendrick & Parkins: 13) • Education; (both Moricetown independent school and public elementary schools in the Hazelton and Smithers districts,) and post secondary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FSA reading writing and mathematics outcomes (Grade 4 & 7); exemption levels of first nation students ○ minimal levels of individual education plans (limited number of

- streaming of Wet'suwet'en students)
 - graduation rates
 - access to trades and certificate programs
 - post-secondary enrolment and level of completion
 - Wet'suwet'en curriculum (i.e. Herbarium project)
 - Wet'suwet'en language programs from kindergarten to university
 - use of Wet'suwet'en knowledge, cultural practices being shared
 - sense of belonging, anti-racism (teaching diversity and respect for all)
 - anti-bullying; inclusion
 - parental involvement in school activities; Parental volunteer hours at school if permitted;
- Population change; gender discrimination; racism (Morford: 19)
- Healthy relationships and age appropriate
- Access to basic community services: availability of ambulance, fire, police and schools and alcohol and addictions services and counselling

*Self-determination – as the most important determinant of health

Proposed Wet'suwet'en indicators: to lead a good life, *lh'tis*, a strong person, a way of being, *Ama' andzi*, a good example (Office of the Wet'suwet'en; Mills; Daly, Joseph & Main Johnson and Wet'suwet'en Elders and Speakers); is only a short summary of a complex social system

Wet'suwet'en Knowledge (in language, *kungax*, *inuk nu'at'en*, *balhats* for example):

- Is aware of and can recite Wet'suwet'en Creation story and stories from their House or Clan
- Know of the house group and Clan names, house groups Chiefs and wing Chiefs
- Follows Wet'suwet'en protocols in public audiences, as a host or as a visitor in another Nation's territory
- Shares cultural teachings in school projects with permission and guidance of elders, Chiefs and family members
- Demonstrates healthy respect for self, others and the environment (especially own house territory and fathers, and later in life spouses)
- Cultural heritage and artefacts concerns are identified in the Wet'suwet'en territorial plan
- Participates in community based functions, surveys, and healthy activities (CRIMSIN)

House and Clan teachings: *ama' andzi*, belonging , peace

- Taught, understands and participates in the rites of passage from birth to death; cultural protocols for marriage, pregnancy, parenting, grand parenting and elder responsibilities are taught by elders, Chiefs and parents and house and clan members
- Names, children receiving Wet'suwet'en names and progressing through adulthood with more and more responsibilities; i.e. grooming
- Attends Wet'suwet'en cultural gatherings, feasts as host clan, learns roles and responsibilities as house group member, being groomed on teachings
- Taught Wet'suwet'en teachings of *lh'tis*, to be strong; to know and speak the language, take personal responsibility of actions, is honest and trustworthy, hardworking and contributing to home, school and Wet'suwet'en house group and larger society; is taught humility, mastery of their gifts (as seen by family and elders and father clan); taught to be self sufficient yet shares and follows reciprocal sharing amongst house/clan and with others; everyone receives these teachings with special attention for those members who fall into line with a house or chief name
- Spiritual teachings from walking the land, knowing *kungax*, may be reincarnated (as witnesses by family and larger house group), taught to problem solve and be strong and resilient (as opposed to demanding/entitlement of goods and or services); *wiggus*, respectful of self, others and of all that is;
- Monetary paybacks, debts are cleared as soon as possible and not accumulated over any length of time; takes care of business in feast hall in a timely, respectful manner following Wet'suwet'en protocols
- All decisions needed are discussed and clarified before final decisions are made in the Feast Hall by house group (with good attendance and understanding) and possibly Clan depending on the decision at hand; promoting inclusiveness, lifelong learning, accountability and transparency and open dialogue under guidance and direction of house chief and wing Chiefs following Wet'suwet'en protocols; i.e. consensus building and strengthening consensus and keeping the peace
- Any decisions do not benefit house chief directly, any and all benefits to be shared and distributed amongst house and clan and Nation depending on the level of benefits
- Participates in Wet'suwet'en sustenance activities following house territory protocols
- Eats Wet'suwet'en foods on a regular basis
- Attends culture or family camps on house territory on a regular basis

- Utilizes cabins for House members on their territory
- Is aware of the location, healthiness and status of house group territory; 'walked the land'; Knows the Wet'suwet'en territory place names, rivers, mountains, etc.;
- Assists in caring for elders, neighbours in house group, and in community as may be needed
- Respectfully asks questions of elders, Chiefs, local agency staff; rarely displays anger; house groups are engaged in decision making process, especially youth and women (is inclusive)
- Earns and demonstrates trust of family, house group, clan, community and Nation; displays humility, gratitude and respect in life's roles and responsibilities
- Demonstrates healthy relationships and is age appropriate
- Speaks and promotes Wet'suwet'en language at home, school and work place
- Participates in local bartering and trade of goods as needed
- Utilizes traditional medicines and spiritual teachings under proper guidance of a healer (as needed); knows of culturally significant areas in house territory
- Understands boundaries, rules and limitations in the home, school and work place; families support and understand and reinforce this at home
- Parents and caregivers understand healthy growth and development; age appropriate behaviours are exhibited and taught; following Wet'suwet'en knowledge, laws and protocols
- Takes responsibility for actions throughout life; this is a key responsibility and teaching; self-determination at a personal level, building up resilience
- Offers prayer, mediation, connections to higher power on a regular basis
- Utilizes social media in a healthy, supportive manner (new moccasin telegraph)

Father clan, *ama' andzi*, belonging , peace:

- father clan responsibilities being utilized from birth to death; (not rely on the band office as main support system)
- Attends Wet'suwet'en cultural gatherings, feasts as father clan, grandfather clan; participates in songs, dancing and *Indeminik* (spouse role) of the feasts; practices from young childhood throughout life
- Assists in caring for elders, neighbours in father clan, and in community as may be needed
- Provides guidance and advice to children and family members as may be

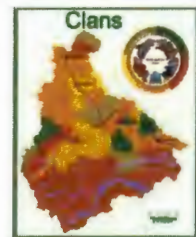
needed to help correct and make right inappropriate behaviours

***Ama' andzi* and peace:**

- Is taught and groomed to be a good example, ***ama' andzi*** to become a house or wing chief
- Taught and follows ***lh'tis***, is a strong person
- House and wing chiefs work together to keep the peace amongst the house groups, within constraints of not interfering with each other's business and dealing with issues that arise
- understands to settle a dispute there must be support, dialogue and consensus building and personal responsibility for actions
- to settle a dispute agreement for restitution, action to make right again are decided by house group, elders and possibly father clan; must be followed



Ama'andzi, Belonging, & Peace



Yinka Dinii ha ba ten

"the ways of the people of the earth"



A vision of **ama'andzi**, belonging and peace:

Wiggus: we are all connected, **lh'tis** is the foundation for health promotion and education and territorial stewardship

Inuk nu'at'en as the basis for laws and responsibilities to take care of each other and the territory

Social system is the feast house, **pdeek** and **yihk** are the natural system of care and promote and teach the Wet'suwet'en to grow strong, **lh'tis**

Ama'andzi, belonging, peace and restitution are key factors to being connected to Wet'suwet'en social system and have good health;

Yintahk ensures all Wet'suwet'en are connected to their house territory and know of their house responsibilities in the feast hall, **balhats**

Some key elements of the vision to work together towards achieving:

•Foundational law of **wiggus**, sacred balance and interdependence with all that is, is taught and shared to all Wet'suwet'en; roles models including leadership follow **wiggus** to ensure they are a good example, **ama'andzi**

•All Wet'suwet'en are taught and grow up with the teachings of **Inuk nu'at'en** so that everyone knows where they belong; displays humility, gratitude and respect in life's roles

•Natural system of care provides a system that promotes personal responsibility, participation and healthy relationships

•Wet'suwet'en attend cultural gatherings and feasts and learn cultural responsibilities

•Knowing **kungax**, spiritual teachings from walking the land, may be reincarnated; are taught to problem solve and be strong and resilient; have and live **wiggus**, of self, others and all that is

•if not at peace with a problem or offense the house chiefs/group will work to correct the situation and bring peace to the situation