

**RIVER OF KNOWLEDGE:
FIRST NATIONS POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS ALONG LISIMS**

by

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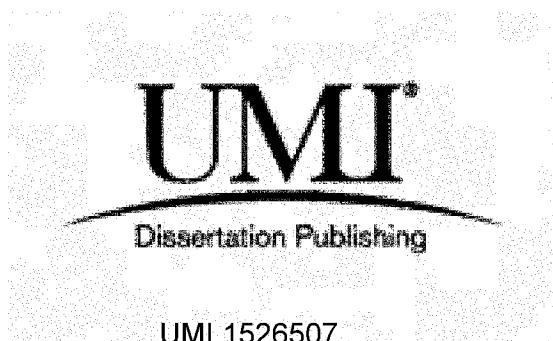
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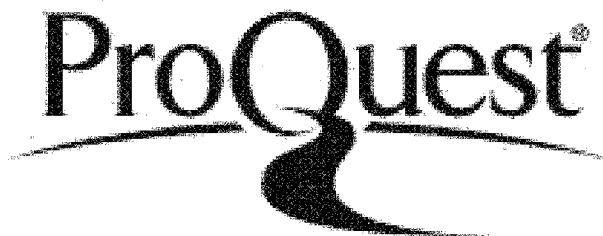


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Abstract

My interest in the Master of Arts program is to study the impact that the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a has made on the Nisga'a Nation by providing post-secondary education. This thesis focuses on the educational journeys of four students while attending the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute and how they were able to succeed in obtaining their Bachelor of Arts degrees within their own traditional territory. Stories of success are important to hear, so that others can see education is not achieved overnight, but is a series of small steps taken every day. These educational journeys are metaphorically equated to a journey along the K'alii Aksim Lisims River that runs through the territorial lands of the Nisga'a. There are four classifications of action that organize my presentation of each student's journey in education: 1) Taking the Helm, Exploring Options 2) Life Currents of the Student 3) Learning to Paddle 4) Coming Ashore. Based on the Lisims (Nass River) these themes emphasize how life experiences involve different water currents and depths, runoffs, reflections, and routes.

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This thesis is dedicated to the loving memories of my mother,

Wilma Flora Wilson, October 18, 1938 - November 10, 2007

and my grandparents,

Alexander John Wilson, September 1, 1914 - October 10, 1980

and Julia Arbutus Collinson Wilson, May 16, 1916 - November 28, 2003.

Chapter One: Introduction

I am a Haida woman who grew up in Prince Rupert, British Columbia. I married a Nisga'a man in 1995 and moved to the community of Gitwinksihlkw. I began working at the WWNI in the Fall of 1994. Since WWNI is a small organization, I worked in multiple jobs, and currently hold the position of "Student Support and Registration Administrator."

Having the privilege to work within the WWNI has pushed me to complete my own Bachelor of Arts and to pursue the Master of Arts program. At the WWNI, I am able to further my education, work full-time and continue to participate and live within the Nisga'a culture.

This would be difficult if I were to attend another university, since it would not be possible to participate regularly in Nisga'a cultural activities. It is essential for me not only to succeed, but also to show my children the importance of cultural and academic education. At this point, they think it is "awesome" that mom has homework too and we all can sit at the table and study together. Going to school elsewhere would create a different picture and a much busier lifestyle, demanding more travel time and the expenses of needing to go to work and school simultaneously, and curtailing my opportunities to meet my cultural obligations. The WWNI provides the same level of education, but is on a much smaller scale than other universities in British Columbia while providing a full range of support for students.

Like myself, many of the students at the WWNI are committed to their studies and also to maintaining their Nisga'a culture. My own learning journey began when I was a child in Prince Rupert, and has taken me through the process of learning Nisga'a culture after my marriage to a Nisga'a man, and then through my post-secondary education.

The late Jacob McKay, former Chair of the WWNI, was dedicated to his role in bringing post-secondary education to the Nass Valley. He once stated:

Only by learning to share did the Nisga'a people flourish in our rugged and isolated corner of British Columbia. Today, we are forging full partnerships with other educational institutions in order to provide top quality, culturally appropriate post-secondary education to everyone who lives here in the Nass River Valley.

Increasingly, we welcome students from other parts of the world as well. (Jacob McKay, "Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute ", 2009)

I hope that this account of the learning journeys of the four graduates of the WWNI will be useful additions to the story of Nisga'a education. In writing this thesis, it has been my honor to share these stories and the dedication of the past generations to bringing education to the Nisga'a territory.

Research Question and Approach

The goal of my research is to document the culturally relevant processes and practices by which post-secondary education is attained within a First Nations community in Northern British Columbia - this documenting will serve as a knowledge foundation for future generations of Indigenous educators interested in self-determining culturally specific post-secondary education frameworks. Through this research thesis, I demonstrate that delivering formal education in a rich, flourishing cultural context can enhance the experience of Indigenous students and can offer something beyond more standard non-Indigenous approaches to post-secondary educational experiences and frameworks.

My approach is a "strengths-based" one, using storytelling to build on the work of authors such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and her work of expanding Indigenous knowledge that is not defined by colonial views or expectations. There are many authors who have mastered the art of expressing strengths-based knowledge using oral literature through Indigenous storytelling, including Jo-Ann Archibald (2008), Julie Cruikshank

(1990), and Verna Kirkness (2013). The question at the center of this research focuses on understanding the transformational potential of post-secondary education. Specifically, I ask: “How might strengths-based, nation-located stories offer insight into the Nisga’a Nation’s on-going efforts to establish education in the Nisga’a First Nation and associated communities? Answering this question involves qualitative research methods, mostly in the forms of personal ethnographic knowledge collected as an embedded member of the Nisga’a Nation, and story-telling based interviews with key participants in the Nisga’a educational system of the Nass Valley.

Purpose of Research

My specific goal in this research is to share stories that illustrate the potential of providing post-secondary education in a First Nations context under First Nations ownership and control. This research, then adds to the ‘library’ of stories demonstrating the success of a Nation based approach. I present accounts of several graduates of the Wilp Wilxo’oskwhl Nisga’a Institute (WWNI) who have successfully completed undergraduate programs and attained the degree of Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies while studying in the Nass Valley. This approach is in harmony with the tradition of oral transmission of knowledge in Nisga’a culture. I want to capture the excitement expressed by students and families about having a local university campus within Nisga’a territory. I also want to draw your attention to the students’ stories of empowerment. This thesis is thus about success, and will be written subjectively from the perspective of my experience inside the Nisga’a community rather than as a distanced critical evaluation of the impact of the WWNI written from an external perspective.

I will look at post-secondary education from an Indigenous perspective, documenting the growth and success of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute through stories shared by several graduates. While I researched the history of advanced education in the Nass Valley, and while I collected information on the numbers of registrants and success rates, and other measures of performance, I focused primarily on a story-telling approach by interviewing four students who had successfully completed their Bachelor of Arts: Nisga'a degree at the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute. In turn, I would like to provide insight into their individual journeys, and how they overcame various issues to attain success in their studies. It is my hope that these stories will encourage and inspire others to pursue learning.

Documenting the experiences of students who have gone through the process is central to my research because I want to explore ways that these students gained empowerment as they gained knowledge. This will be revealed through the students' own stories of self-empowerment and improvements of the quality of their lives as a result of their post-secondary education. Delivering post-secondary education within the community also has an impact on entire families. The majority of past and present WWNI students have a family member that attended. As the WWNI celebrated its 20th anniversary in June 2013, Deanna Nyce, WWNI President and Chief Executive Officer, proudly reflected during the Convocation ceremony in Gitwinksihlkw:

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute is serving generations of Nisga'a families: fourteen (14) families with three generations (grandmother, mother and child) have attended Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a, and forty-four (44) families with two generations of attendance. (Personal Communication).

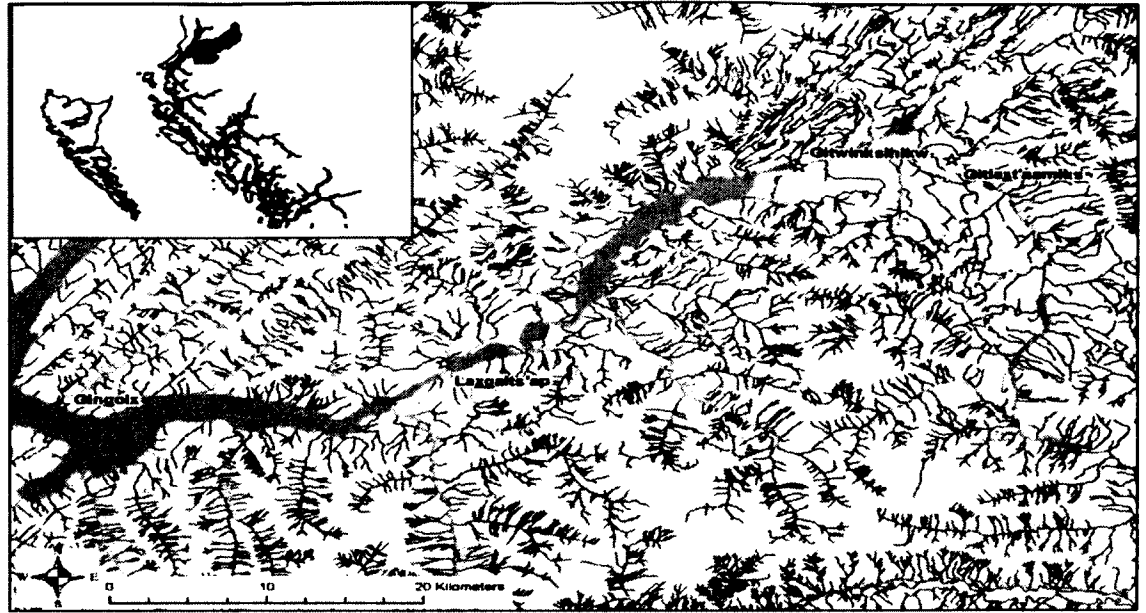
Nisga'a Territory

Nisga'a territory is located in Northern British Columbia. The Nisga'a connection with the land governs who they are and who they have become in history. The land is described in a number of cultural stories that reflect how the Nisga'a people live and how ownership of land is maintained. The Nisga'a hold the knowledge of their territorial lands, work together as a Nation as active stewards of the land and continue to live in the same area as their ancestors. This dedication and cultural knowledge demonstrates the Nisga'a have been here since time immemorial.

The Nisga'a Treaty became effective May 11, 2000. The Nisga'a Treaty resulted in 100%-Nisga'a owned lands. According to the Nisga'a Final Agreement it is

Comprised of 1,992 square kilometers, more or less, of land in the lower Nass Valley consisting of 1,930 square kilometers, more or less; and 62 square kilometers, more or less... (Nisga'a Final Agreement, 1998, p. 31).

The whole of the Nisga'a Traditional Lands area, some 14,830 square kilometers, is subject to control by the Nisga'a in partnership with the governments of Canada and British Columbia (Raunet, 1996, p. 74). As taught by their ancestors, Nisga'a people are aware of all the surroundings such as the land, mountains, streams, rivers, and food sources available. This map of Nisga'a lands shows how the K'alii Aksim Lisims River - as a large watershed - connects all four Nisga'a communities through its streams, glaciers and surrounding water ways.



Map of Nisga'a Territory
(Source: Nisga'a Lisims Government, Land and Resources Department)

Nass River, K'alii Aksim Lisims

'K'alii Aksim Lisims' (the Nass River) will be used through this work as a central metaphor. The thesis will unfold as a journey along Lisims to explore themes that have developed from the students' stories. As with the students' life experiences, I take and understand the river as reflecting experiences of different water currents, depths, runoffs, reflections, and routes that are constantly changing from day to day. In navigating the river, it is important to be aware of your environment, the need to be alert and observe where you are, what you are doing, who you are in nature's elements and why you chose this path. Similarly, the students' decisions in life are parallel to the movements in the river and reflected in their paths. The communities of the Nisga'a Nation have always been located along the river and shaped by its forces. Similarly, the students' lives are shaped by their experiences in their lives and their education.

One purpose of the student stories is to inspire others to utilize the WWNI. I want to celebrate having a university within one's own community, looking at how it is an immense opportunity for the Nisga'a nation to prosper. These students' stories, may motivate and encourage others to take the first step in education. Each individual participant in this research has a personal post-secondary experience and a story to tell. Common student routines that my research examines include 1) balance of school life with everyday routines and responsibilities such as maintaining one's personal life, 2) issues around employment, 3) challenges and opportunities of family/social life, cultural activities and duties. These are explored throughout the various sections of my thesis, which are broken down as follows.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to my thesis topic and approach, and introduced myself. I summarized how I will organize the discussion of the context and background of my study and how I implemented my research.

Chapter 2 provides background and context for my study. I will begin by explaining the Nisga'a theory of education-that it is a lifelong project wherein experiential learning is central, and that storytelling and feasts are important methods of knowledge transmission.

Chapter 3 will describe the process by which the Nisga'a took control of education on their territories, gaining control of primary and secondary education. The next step was the development of a Nisga'a post-secondary institution, and I will explain the process by which the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a was developed, bringing post-secondary education to the Nass valley. This will continue with a discussion of Indigenous research on education, and completing the chapter with adding additional information on the research context (Nisga'a communities, culture, the land and the river).

Chapter 4 explains the theory and methodology of the study. Indigenous research principles underlie my research, particularly the decolonizing of knowledge about Indigenous peoples and the use of storytelling to transmit knowledge. I will then explain the application of this method in my study, describing how the students were selected and their stories collected.

Chapter 5 provides stories from a small sample of the WWNI student base collected in open ended interviews and gives the student's voices to tell their own stories of success and struggles with being a student without having to be removed from the culture. By sharing these stories from an Indigenous perspective my goal is to inspire current and future students pursuing higher education.

Chapter 6 is my reflection and analysis of the stories. Common threads are encountered by the students, who hold many roles. The chapter is organized by the use of the metaphor of the river that is a vital component in the life of the Nisga'a Nation.

Chapter 7 concludes with my discussion of the importance of sharing Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a students' educational journeys and to demonstrate that it is never too late to pursue education. As each individual has a busy lifestyle, education can provide structure, personal growth and enhance your lifestyle with career opportunities.

This thesis is important for me as it provides the opportunity to share stories of empowerment and focus on Nisga'a education. There is not much in Western literature that reflects this history. This is a way to share with the wider society the potential of Indigenous education in a rural area. I feel that this is a story that needs to be acknowledged and recorded for current and future generations. It is important to acknowledge that throughout

my thesis I use Nisga'a, Haida, First Nations, Indian, and Aboriginal interchangeably to represent indigenous people.

Chapter 2: Background and Context

Ts'im gan wilaak'il's wil luu sisgihl gandidils" is the philosophical basis for Nisga'a education. Translated [T] literally, it means "within the pursuit of knowledge, therein one will find the true meaning of life." For the Nisga'a, one of the main prerequisites to attaining the aspirations of Indian education is the involvement of all the Nisga'a people, children and adults, in the pursuit of quality education. Education is a total way of life. (McKay and McKay, 1987, p. 64).

McKay and McKay's statement, almost 30 years ago, is a testament to the importance of Nisga'a education. It also underscores how education is a life long journey. For the Nisga'a, language and culture made them a strong society and will make them a stronger society again in the future. With a firm sense of identity and deeply rooted historical ties to their land, the Nisga'a Nation has been and will continue to be a powerhouse in society.

Nisga'a customs and traditions have been passed from generation to generation through a strong oral culture of educating each other, often through storytelling. This 'storytelling' of the Nisga'a history continues today as a living culture. Storytelling can be seen at feasts and is taught in schools from nursery to the university level. The stories are more commanding and compelling when told in the Nisga'a language. Although they are also translated from Nisga'a to English, some indescribable power seems to be lost in translation. Indeed, during the transformation into English some knowledge or meaning seems to evaporate. There are so many branches of the story to the Nisga'a that it cannot be told in one sitting – it might not even be transferable in a lifetime since it is always evolving, always alive and changing. I explore these historic facts within the confines of this thesis because Nisga'a education is an important story to be told and to fill the gap of this topic within written literature. Anchored in this understanding of the importance and impossibility

of story, and storytelling, this chapter will cover a historical glimpse of Nisga'a education. In my research, I found very little on the subject of the historical story of Nisga'a education. In this chapter, I essentially tell the story, as I know it, of Nisga'a education. I can only hope not too much is lost in translation.

Nisga'a Education: Pre-Missionary

Nisga'a education has always existed. The Nisga'a developed and maintained a culture that has continued to current generations. With each generation, the Nisga'a have adapted to advances in technology while still holding the historical knowledge of their ancestral way of life.

The Nisga'a people continue to tell oral stories, the heart of which is the land where they have always lived. These oral stories of the Nisga'a have been passed on from generation to generation. These are also known as adaawak. Adaawak are

...stories about the history of the Nass Valley and of the Nisga'a people, some of these stories answer questions about the history of the Nass Valley and of the Nisga'a people. Some of these stories answer questions about the Nass Valley and the animals and plants that live here... Other adaawak tell about the past of each of the many huwilp and pdeek. These stories record the activities of people who were members of those huwilp or pdeek long ago. These adaawak do not belong to all the Nisga'a people. They belong to just one wilp or pdeek. By listening to these stories Nisga'a learn about the properties, values and beliefs of each wilp and pdeek. (Nisga'a Language and Culture Department, 1996, p. 29).

These adaawaks are shared and practiced throughout the Nisga'a lands and are spoken at every Nisga'a feast. The lands and environments are the classroom for learning the knowledge that transforms into stories, which are education. On the land and water, the Nisga'a hunted moose and mountain goats, fished for salmon, eulachon, halibut, cod and red

snapper, crabs, cockles, clams, hunted sea lions, and picked assorted berries such as blueberries, huckleberries, raspberries, lava berries and they collected mushrooms. This is what the stories teach. During these activities, and through storytelling, elders teach by their actions and convey their knowledge about the land, such as the history of the Nisga'a Nation, landmarks as guides, territories belonging to Sim'igats, various plants for consumption and medicinal purposes, the animals in the area, and many food sources on the land and from the river, ocean, streams and lakes. All these activities still exist today, so learning about the land where the Nisga'a live is an important tool that allows the Nation to maintain equilibrium. Stories and land based activities ensure that food sources are not depleted and/or land resources are not overharvested, so that they are able to replenish for future use. Indeed, as others have noted:

Traditional teachings are conveyed through example, through stories and songs, in ceremonies and most importantly, through engagement with the natural world which is governed by laws of life just as human beings are. (Castellano, 2004, p. 98).

Despite being an oral culture, the Nisga'a people have developed written publications. Printed texts document Nisga'a oral stories and traditions told directly by the Nisga'a people. Books compiled and published by School District No.92, Nisga'a Tribal Council and/or the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a include such stories and traditions. One important element in all these texts is that they tell a wide range of Nisga'a stories to educate their people about their past. A full listing of these texts is provided in Appendix A1.

Four of these are Nisga'a volumes that contain priceless knowledge for the education of future generations. The four Nisga'a Tribal Council volumes are Nisga'a Origins-Volume I, Nisga'a Clan Histories-Volume II, Nisga'a Society-Volume III and the Land and Resources: Traditional Nisga'a Systems of Land Use and Ownership-Volume IV. These

volumes were collected and printed by the Nisga'a Tribal Council, now renamed Nisga'a Lisims Government. Most importantly, all content in the texts is written by individuals within the Nisga'a Nation.

These volumes were based on the oral stories told by various Nisga'a members and contain a full listing of the authors of the stories both by their Nisga'a and English names, age, and the wilp that each member belonged to. The interview transcripts also provide reference numbers. These reference numbers are important for locating the original primary source of the story that documents each elder. The names and the stories in each of these volumes have been passed on since time immemorial. Many of the authors in these volumes are no longer with us, but through the publication of their stories and voices, their knowledge continues to strengthen the Nisga'a Nation. All the Nisga'a publications are central and surround the entire aspect of re-indigenization. The reason these are important to this thesis, which explores my story of belief in the value of education in the Nass Valley is because these stories are told directly from the wilp or the clan and only those within that specific clan can tell their clan stories. Through storytelling the Nisga'a have maintained a strong culture of who they are and their origins. These texts are, in essence, educational tools.

These texts are highly recommended for all ages, because the culture is always evolving, with technology, population and environmental growth in surrounding and neighboring areas. It is important, from the perspective of individual responsibility, for each Nisga'a citizen to learn their clan history and clan stories in order to carry this to the next generation. The Nisga'a Nation continues to follow protocol from the previous generations. It is thus important to understand the past and history of one's identity in order to succeed in the future. Most importantly, these publications are based on experiences and stories told

from previous generations of Nisga'a people. The act of oral history at the feast is a crucial factor in learning your history, since each clan out of respect can only tell their own clan history. It is in the feast house that the stories are told directly from the Sim'oogit to their members and their guests in attendance.

From an educational perspective, which is what this thesis is focused on, these sources of knowledge of the past and the stories of protocols are what has made the Nisga'a Nation strong today, honoring their forefathers' traditions. The history started and continues to thrive along Lisims, the Nass River. It is here the Nisga'a people had an abundant access to art and materials to enhance the culture. Haida artist, Bill Reid best reflected how these art materials were living pieces of art that were used on a daily basis to survive and prosper.

The people of the Northwest Coast were rich. Their sea even richer. They were enormously energetic, and they centered their society around what was to them the essence of life: what we now call 'Art'. (Samuel, 1992, p. 23).

Some of these items would include: clothing, cedar bark mats, totem/memorial poles, moose hides, pelts, cradles, masks, caskets, gravestones, jewelry, nets, blankets, and robes, all displaying the many crests of the Nisga'a Nation. These items are seen in everyday life and at ceremonies that show others which house or clan you belong to – each of these items tells stories and holds the possibility to educate members of the Nisga'a Nation. The house or clan you belong to would dictate where you were able to use the resources of the land for hunting, fishing or picking berries or seeking medicinal herbs. These traditional lands and waters are where names are acquired and in turn can represent different rites of passage, when used by an individual. Nisga'a society recognizes names as belonging to one of the four clans, as told in the Nisga'a, People of the Nass River:

The ancient people, our ancestors, were given animals to be used as crests by each wilp. The crest animals are the one, which showed them how to live, what to eat, and how to catch and prepare the different food animals. This is how our forefathers lived. (Nisga'a Tribal Council, 1993, p. 22).

Each clan took on crests and they became unique to only that clan. It is these symbols and crests that, when used, would describe the art and material culture within the Nisga'a Nation. The 'art' was proudly seen on woven and button blankets, totem poles, gold/silver/copper carvings, and headdresses. These are important in Nisga'a history since individual clan items such as Sim'oogit's regalia; button blankets and headdresses are passed from generation to generation – all of this also comprises part of the educational history of the Nisga'a People. Using this expression of art with the crests tells historical stories of individual tribes and their way of life at that time. The crests were discovered in everyday life and sometimes with the help of the halayts (shamans) and/or naxnok (the supernatural). The stories of crests were transmitted and saved orally and explained to many generations following within each wilp.

Stories explained the four crests used: Gisk'aast (Killer Whale Tribe), Ganada (Raven Tribe), Laxgibuu (Wolf Tribe) and Laxsgiik (Eagle tribe). It is through oral stories that the arts and material culture is described in great detail – we see this in an array of carvings such as masks and totem poles. Examples include animals taking on human forms, otherwise known as transformations; these transformations occur with the squirrel, grouse, raven, mountain goat, killer whale, wolf, bear, eagle, beaver, halibut, frog, starfish, birds, salmon and many more animals. Indeed, as the Nisga'a nation recognizes, “by listening to these stories Nisga'a learn about the properties, values and beliefs of each wilp (house) and pdeek (tribe)”. (Nisga'a Language and Culture Department, 1996, p. 29). Art and artistic

expression, then, is also at the heart of Nisga'a education, in the past and surely for future generations.

Nisga'a history is alive today due to the art of storytelling and the sharing of these historical Nisga'a voices from generation to generation. Each story may be unique to each individual clan, but as the Nisga'a Nation is still present, and due to their treaty, they own their traditional lands where these stories occurred. These stories are told with pride and honor to their ancestors and are repeated on the territories in which they occurred. With each name an adawaak, a story, is attached, this represents the materials available to that tribe. These are all important tools of knowledge for survival of the Nisga'a culture through the power of storytelling, by educating each member about their history and where they are now in society. It is significant since learning never ends and nor will the stories of who the Nisga'a are as a people, which ultimately informs the education of the Nisga'a Nation in contemporary times.

Nisga'a Education

I don't think anybody anywhere can talk about the future of their people or of an organization without talking about education. Whoever controls education of our children controls the future. ("Wilma Mankiller," 2012).

The Nisga'a people have long aspired to grow and prosper within their lands and waters, keeping their language, culture and health while building a strong economy. One of the key steps in their progress was the acquisition of control over the education of Nisga'a people, achieved through the development of an independent School District 92 (Nisga'a). This was established on January 1, 1975 and was the first Aboriginal school district in the province of British Columbia.

The struggle to gain control over the education of the Nisga'a people, and to bring quality education to the Nass Valley was a struggle that began many generations ago. As the need for education beyond what was provided in Nisga'a homes and the four Nisga'a communities was recognized, education in the Nass Valley was initially provided by missionary teachers. Later, residential schools, Indian day schools, and boarding schools provided non-Indigenous settler-oriented education to Nisga'a people. A major shift to this settler-dominated educational framework took place when three young Nisga'a citizens who attained their education outside of the Nass Valley at the University of British Columbia, returned home in the 1950s to dedicate themselves to Nisga'a Education. These pioneers were the late Bertram McKay, the late Alvin McKay and Shirley Morven. I admire and have a high regard for their efforts. Their footsteps eventually led many Nisga'a people into the field of education.

My research on Nisga'a education has found very few 'formal' academic historical publications. Therefore, an important source of information about the development of education for Nisga'a people is a binder, which might be called 'Nisga'a literature' entitled *History of Education in the Nass and Events Leading Up to the Creation of School District No.92*.

I use Nisga'a literatures, or works that are not officially published, archived, or circulated beyond Nisga'a geographies. For the Nisga'a people these materials are alive knowledge generating works which will be referred to as such in this thesis.¹

¹ In my thesis defense at the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute, the value of Nisga'a literature was reinforced.

The binder was compiled by the Nisga'a Tribal Council, and their Executive Administrator, Rod Robinson in 1985. In "Section L", written by Alvin McKay, seven phases in Nisga'a Education are identified as Phase 1) 1900's Church Missionary taught schools, Phase 2) Mid-1920's Residential schools, Phase 3) Mid-1930's Missionary Run Village Schools, Phase 4) Early 1940's Department of Indian Affairs (D.I.A.) Village School, Phase 5) 1945 Boarding Program, Phase 6) Late 1950's Indian Day Schools and Phase 7. Phase Seven has five major milestones: 1) 1950's three Nisga'a British Columbia certified trained teachers returned to the Nass, 2) 1950's Master Tuition Agreement was introduced, 3) Early 1960's Residential Schools discontinued, 4) Late 1950's Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) started to use the B.C. School Curriculum and 5) 1950's Indian Day school had little to no supervision.

The history of early Nisga'a education clearly depicts their strength as a Nation to act, and eventually take control of Nisga'a education. However, it is clear that the Nisga'a welcomed education in their territory and used their skills and strength of their identity of who they were and how they wanted education delivered to their current and future generations. The determination of the Nisga'a Nation was instilled through direct communication from generations of cultural learning from living in an oral society and the use of storytelling. This is the story of Nisga'a education as gathered and reported by the Nisga'a Nation.

Phase One - Church Missionary Teacher Schools

In April 1860, at the invitation of certain Nishga leaders, presumably including Kinzadah, Duncan arrived on a visit to Ankida...At Ankida Duncan was treated to a traditional Nisgha friendly welcome. (Patterson, 1989, p. 20).

William Duncan was a church missionary teacher in Metlakatla on the Northern Coast of British Columbia, where he settled to teach his faith. "Metlakatla, British Columbia, is a small community that is one of the seven Tsimshian village communities in British Columbia, Canada. It is situated at Metlakatla Pass near Prince Rupert, British Columbia" ("Metlakatla First Nation", 2014). Duncan came to the Nass to honour an invitation that was bestowed upon him from the Nisga'a. However, the Nass would be different than the settlement in the Tsimshian territories. The Nisga'a directly involved themselves with Duncan's efforts, so they were working side by side with the missionaries rather than being directed by them.

The Missionary was obliged to **act in collaboration** with the Nisga'a Leadership at Kincolith. The Nisga'a were not only the main focus of the missionary, they were also the primary agents in evangelizing themselves during this period. (my emphasis, Patterson, 2012, p. 230).

As with many First Nations groups in the northwest, in the 1800's there was a culture shift from direct participatory learning of their culture to new ways of learning. Focusing on the teachings of the missionaries in the Nisga'a Nation, it has been noted that:

Missionary work among the Nishga was began in 1864, before the diocese was formed by the Rev Robert Doolan, who gathered Christian people from the lower Naas and, using rafts, floated to the mouth of the river where the new Christian community of Kincolith was established....The pattern all over the northwest coast followed that of Duncan - removing the Indians from their "heathen" past by establishing new Christian communities, and leaving the unconverted Indians in the old villages with the long houses and communal ways of living. (McCullum and McCullum, 1979, p. 83).

Before the advent of missionaries, the Nisga'a people were trained and taught by their elders, especially their aunts and uncles. These teachings of cultural education covered a wide variety of lessons that helped them survive. This education taught them who they were as individuals and how they fit within the Nisga'a Nation. Each person belonged and had a place with the Nisga'a society specifically within one of the four tribes of; eagle, wolf, raven and killer whale. They were given the knowledge about that tribal family, including land ownership involving hunting, fishing, berry picking, trap lines and other food gathering rights and stories that belonged to that tribe. Learning occurred through listening to stories and observation and gradual active participation in adult activities. The skills acquired maintained their way of life and thus the way of life for the Nisga'a Nation and the Nisga'a language and culture. The Nisga'a language and culture are closely woven together and together they represent the identity of the Nisga'a Nation. This identity is still maintained and remains unique and intact because of Nisga'a history and stories of contact, despite incursions from the wider society and visiting missionaries.

As a result of the arrival of the Missionaries there was a period of rapid change in Nisga'a culture. The missionaries believed their way of life was superior, and tried to change others to be more like them. Despite early efforts by missionaries to learn Nisga'a and preach in that language, English became the accepted language spoken by the missionaries. Eventually it came to be spoken by all Nisga'a people and the Nisga'a people still today use English as a first language. The Nisga'a language has come to be endangered. This outside contact then, and especially the disciplined missionary education, forever changed the Nisga'a way of life, not only with the language but also with the introduction of different foods, clothing, skills, tools and weapons.

Phase Two - 1920's Residential Schools

In the 1920s, Nisga'a students began to be sent away from the Nass Valley to attend residential schools. Like other First Nations across Canada, it is commonly known that residential schools had a severe and deeply negative impact on First Nations. Also affected was the Nisga'a Nation. These destructive ways included the removal of children from the community to attend school with little contact with their families. Many residential schools were developed throughout Canada at this time. The Nisga'a and many northwest coastal First Nations were sent to Coqualeetza in Sardis and the Alert Bay residential schools, both in British Columbia, but hundreds and hundreds of kilometers away from the Nass Valley.

The use of English was mandated for the children who were sent to residential school. In the Nass Valley, it is commonly known from generational stories told by Residential School survivors, and as shared by my Nanaay, that the "children were punished if a child used their traditional language, or if a child did not abide by the many new rules such as stepping out of their gender roles. She also shared with me that when she was at Coqualeetza she and her friends were disciplined for climbing trees, this was to see the surrounding area and how far away from home they were, because it was unladylike" (personal communication). The students learned quickly what the rules were and that breaking any of them would result in harsh punishment. The mistreatment brought fear and doubt to the children at residential school about their identity and also about what had been learned from their parents, because in this environment they were being punished for what they learned at home. It engrained doubts about who they were since they were restricted from freely expressing themselves as shared by my Nanaay who told me that her "time away from home was hard for the entire family unit. Being taken away was devastating to her, her parents, her

siblings and to her future children, the next generation. She said that she was away most of the year and was excited to go home, but home was different after being away. She was cautious in what she would participate in and was always in fear of having to go back to the 'sad school' where everyone had short hair" (personal communication). At the residential school they would cut the children's hair shortly after they arrived. Children stayed for most of the year, since parents could not afford the payment to bring the children home for visits. This physical separation was extremely hard for both the parents and the children, and it brought chaos and a breakdown to the immediate family unit. This was my belief, as I got older and tried to ask my mother about residential school, she would stop talking and told me that it was not to be talked about. This was also one issue that was sensitive to my mother every time it surfaced in the media.

Phase Three - Mid 1930's Missionary Run Village Schools

During this time all Nisga'a children from grades one to six attended the missionary-run village schools in the Nass Valley, while the older children were still sent away to residential school to attend the higher grades outside of their home communities.

The Missionary Run Schools usually consisted of one classroom. All ages and levels were taught together simultaneously. Alvin McKay notes "each community was assigned a nurse and her husband was automatically the teacher - whether trained or not"... School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), Section L). The missionary schools still were not structured with set guidelines or personnel with training or experience in academic fields. With no training, these 'teachers' were limited to what they knew –their educational efforts, arguably, did not enhance the lives of Nisga'a children.

Phase 4- 1940's Department of Indian Affairs Village Schools

The Department of Indian Affairs took control over the Missionary Run Village Schools in the early 1940's (McKay and McKay, 1987, p. 68). During this time, teachers with limited training came to the valley and did teach from updated textbooks, although these “updated” texts were still outdated and behind the provincial curriculum by a decade. The goal of the schools was not to educate the village children. “These government-funded, church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children” (“Truth and Reconciliation”, 2014). We must remember that schools in Canada were once part of the governments' plan to assimilate us (Monture-Angus, 1995, p. 79). Parents were forced to send their kids to residential school rather than attend the one classroom schools in the villages. The children attending residential school at this time were still secluded in the school system and kept away from the influence of their culture and community. For many people, then, education during this time was still another attempt to forcibly make Nisga’a children use only the English language (School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), 1985, Section L, p. 2).

Phase 5-1945 Department of Indian Affairs Boarding Program

In 1945 the Department of Indian Affairs introduced the Boarding Program. The Boarding Program meant sending off young teens at the Grade 9 levels to live in boarding homes and attend school in the Vancouver area (McKay and McKay, 1987, p. 68). This change galvanized parents and Nisga'a members to support the Nisgha Tribal Council to approach D.I.A. to build proper schools so younger children in grades 1-8 could attend schools in their own communities while living with their own families (School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), 1985, Section L, p. 5-6). Nisga’a people felt passionate about this because of

the pain knowing that their children were going to be sent away to attend grade 9 at a Boarding school and live in room-and-board situations without their families nearby. This “shipping off” of children meant they would experience culture shock linked not just by being away from the community, their family, and their land but by being immersed in a wider society of people.

Phase 6-1950's Indian Day Schools

In the 1950's, the Indian Day Schools, located in Kincolith, Greenville and New Aiyansh in the Nass Valley had expanded and had separate classes from two to six rooms depending on the size of the community. Robinson's report to the Nisga'a Tribal Council, (School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), 1985, Section L, p. 2). does not include the community of Canyon City, now known as Gitwinksihlkw. According to Irene Seguin, "many of us went to a one classroom Indian day school that had grades 1-6 in the Salvation Army Day School" (Irene Seguin, personal communication, October 30, 2014). In many ways, the education system was a continuation of earlier missionary schools; Seguin, for instance, noted she understood similarities to her mother attending the missionary school here in Gitwinksihlkw as a girl. This greatly affected two generations in her family, but she is proud to still have held onto her Nisga'a Language and is currently teaching Nisga'a Language at the WWNI. She is also a current student working towards her Bachelor of Arts degree –an indication about the deeply felt conviction of being educated on Nisga'a territory for Nisga'a peoples.

Even by the 1960's, schools were still controlled by DIA, which hired the teachers for each community. Due to the remoteness, many teachers only stayed one year at the most. The impact of this was to inspire even further efforts to secure Nisga'a based education, as the Nisga'a Nation was unsatisfied with the quality of education Nisga'a children were

receiving. United together, the Nisga'a researched how to bring change by gaining control of education in the Nass Valley. The teachers hired did not respond well to the remoteness of the Nass Valley and were unprepared for the dedication required for long term student success. This is well documented:

The trained teachers were not certified by Victoria, since most of them were trained in other provinces. Many of these teachers were beginner teachers, and the bulk of them were 1st or 2nd year college students looking for work. All hiring was done through the Vancouver office via Ottawa office - most of it by phone or letter correspondence. The result of this practice was that many teachers could not fit into the isolated Nass communities, and left at Christmas or Easter time. (School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), 1985, Section L, p. 3).

The Nisga'a highway, today known as Highway 113, was in the 1960s a narrow dirt road, with deep potholes. On a good day, the highway took two hours to travel, one way to Terrace, the nearest city, to shop for everyday basic necessities such as groceries, clothing and gas. Greenville and Kincolith were even more isolated, these "two communities relied more on trips to Prince Rupert by boat" (Irene Seguin, personal communication, October 30, 2014). The isolation of the Nass Valley directly impacted the new teachers: the remoteness was unexpected and many were unprepared and quickly left. This led to a lack of educational continuity in the Nass, something many knew could only be solved by taking control of our own education. Many teachers had good intentions but were met with the cultural shock of how isolated the communities were.

During this time, to attend a higher grade level than grades 7/8, students still had to leave their community to go to school via boarding homes located in the Vancouver area and some as far away as Alberta, or they were directly placed in residential schools. Leaving home will always be difficult, but Nisga'a children had to leave in order to pursue education.

This was a difficult time for the citizens of the Nisga'a Nation to send their children off to school in faraway communities where they could not be under the protection and guidance of their parents. At the time, this was the only option to gain higher levels of education that would one day bring a better quality of life as an adult. This approach resulted in the disconnection with the Nisga'a culture, and the Nisga'a language that was experienced in everyday life when the children were at home with their parents and extended families. The education learned at home regarding their ancestors was, and is still today, a powerful tool that is shared through storytelling, and the children who had to leave the Valley for school were separated from that at a crucial time in their lives.

Phase 7-Five changes in Nass Valley Education

Due to the many factors just explored, Nisga'a people strived for change in the education received in their homelands. The Nisga'a began to investigate and become proactive, to ensure a change occurred around an improvement in education for their Nation.

The first change, as mentioned above, was during the 1950s, when Bert McKay, Shirley Morven and Alvin McKay became the first Nisga'a people to obtain higher education and to receive their British Columbia Teacher Certification. Bert McKay received his educational certification in 1954 and Alvin McKay was certified as a teacher in 1955. Shirley Adams (nee Morven) became inspired through her teaching and later returned to university and obtained two degrees in education.

All three of these 'early forbearers' of formal education in the Nass returned to teach in the valley: their goal was to bring an education curriculum on par with the rest of the province of British Columbia but for Nisga'a people, on Nisga'a land. Each was very proactive in informing the Nisga'a communities about how to create change and each had

become directly involved in their children's education. This commitment, along with their leadership was of enormous importance. The previous education system up to this point had such a hard impact on family dynamics, but Alvin, Bert and Shirley were dedicated to and believed that education would empower the Nisga'a Nation. They suggested that in future years, educated Nisga'a children who learned on par with the rest of the province but who were trained and educated on Nisga'a territory, would grow to become leaders, teachers, and administrators and would ultimately enhance their people's ways of life. From their vision came another educational milestone in Nisga'a education history.

The next milestone was the development of the Master Tuition Agreement. This agreement provided British Columbia with guaranteed federal funds based on the previous year's head count of students. As a result, First Nations in higher grades were quickly integrated into the public schools in the urban areas—it made good financial sense to a colonial education system to draw on student numbers from First Nations communities. But it made little to no sense for First Nations communities like those in the Nass. Education numbers were about acquiring the most money possible based on the number of students enrolled. Many Nisga'a students were enrolled in Vancouver and Terrace, but mainly in Prince Rupert. The Fishing industry was strong at this time and families moved to salmon canneries such as Sunnyside near Port Edward, B.C. Educational dollars flowed out of Nisga'a communities and children remained educated away from their homelands.

The third change occurred in early 1960s when children no longer were forced into attending residential school. Still, based on the distances away from their home communities, many older students were encouraged into trade certificates or diploma programs that had shorter timelines to complete, rather than pursuing a degree which would

take up to four years or more. Overall, there was not much success with many Nisga'a students: many of them returned home without achieving their trade certifications. These certifications from my perspective were not successful as anticipated due to the distance of being away from home and the lack of family support; many students still carried the trauma of residential school experiences and had to deal with racism. Racism and bullying is an issue that is still seen in current society. However, there were many that did succeed obtaining full certifications and this may be due to being more focused and finding their own healing paths quicker than others to deal with the issues of trauma and racism in urban areas. Nisga'a students who attended the trade course had to travel approximately 100km to Terrace, the next community out of the Nass Valley. At this time the roads were narrow and unpaved, therefore it was about a two hour drive. A few students went to the larger urban areas with trade programs, like Vancouver. With these programs still being offered long distances away from home, most students that attended were again isolated from their homes and communities. Trades Programs for which students had to move away or travel long distances did not generate much success for the Nisga'a peoples.

The late 1950's saw the fourth change in education when the British Columbia School Curriculum was put in place and used throughout all British Columbia schools. Obtaining higher level grades and trades training out of the Nass Valley continued for many years and was a struggle for the Nisga'a Nation. Through this struggle, the Nisga'a became empowered and focused on obtaining Nisga'a control of Nisga'a education. What made them successful was their knowledge of who they are, this was learned through the process of generations of storytelling of the Nisga'a heritage. Jo-Anne Archibald reflected that "Elders' life stories can show how we, as Indigenous peoples, survived and how we can keep our

cultural knowledges intact. Their life stories depict resilience and resistance to colonization" (2008, p. 43). This method of storytelling is powerful and I believe knowing who you are in society, reflects strength of identity and self-confidence in everyday life routines. This collective strength of the Nisga'a Nation prepared them for the long struggle of gaining control of Nisga'a education.

The fifth change was the "Nisga'a parents and the Nisga'a Tribal Council (NTC) leaders decided to deal with the haphazard handling of the education of the youth...it was decided that the NTC would open discussions with the Education Services of DIA ..."

(McKay and McKay, p. 72). The superintendent was supposed to visit the school in the Nass twice a year, at the beginning of the school year in the fall and at the end of the school year during the spring, but this frequently did not happen. At this time, the Terrace region was upgrading their educational services, and the Nass had been left an entire year without any superintendent visits. Alvin McKay reflects his strong disappointment that the Nisga'a school was a low priority:

In 1973, D.I.A. decided to set up the Terrace region for its own school Superintendent-a whole year lapsed without any services, and the Nass Valley schools were in actual fact being run on the decisions of their engineering department....A vital ingredient for the continual growth of the educational services to a school district depends on the regular consistent monthly supervision of the District Superintendent of Schools. Up to the take-over of S.D. #92 - there was not evidence of these services. (School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), 1985, Section L, p. 6).

It was becoming more evident that in order to provide the education level that was required in Canada and across the world, the Nisga'a people would have to take control to bring a higher educational standard to the Nass Valley. This was voiced by Nisga'a people themselves; "The main reason for the educational failure from the 1870's to 1974 in the

development of Nass Valley Schools was that Nisga'a education was handled and administered by agencies outside of the Nass" (McKay and McKay, 1987, p. 71). Frustrated by the situation, the Nisga'a Tribal Council went to meet directly with the Ministry of Education. It is the time in this story to speak of the Nisga'a creation of an independent First Nations School District.

Creation of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a)

The Nisga'a are also the leaders in the field of education--we are the first Indian group in Canada to have complete control over our educational system, through our status as British Columbia District 92 (Nisga'a). (McKay and McKay, 1987, p. 66).

The Nisga'a Nation strove for the rights to their lands while at the same time they fought for the rights to quality education. Nisga'a leaders wanted the standard of education to be at the same levels that were seen across Canada. They knew that when the treaty came to the Nisga'a, they wanted to have their own people in those positions of governance.

Sometime ago, the Nisga'a started to notice their language fall into disuse among the young. Children had to leave their people and travel to the city for basic education. The cultural shock was too much of a strain for most of them and ninety percent dropped out of school before graduation. So, the Nisga'a's took up another fight. Demanded and won, the right to control education of their children. Nisga'a Elementary School was the first Indian school district in Canada when it came into being on January 1, 1975.

James Gosnell continues as to why this was so important to the nation:

They said high school or education was in the bright lights of British Columbia. Come to the bright lights. This is where education is and we said - no! We can bring education home rather than export our children to all the schools throughout the province. We said, we will import the school and education to our children right here in this valley. ("CBC Digital Archives", 1978).

The continuity of cultural stories combined with the use of the Nisga'a language is an important factor in who the Nisga'a are as a Nation. It had become a major concern to many Nisga'a, the witnessing of their members leaving their traditional lands and the consequent great decline in use of the Nisga'a language. It took great determination and strength of the Nisga'a to stand together and construct a plan of action to convince the Minister of Education that it was imperative to have control of education on Nisga'a lands

When planning to take control of education, the Nisga'a composed a detailed plan that involved incorporating the Nisga'a language and Nisga'a culture into the educational system. This system would be called the Bilingual-Bicultural Department and would start at the Nursery schools and continue from Kindergarten to Grade 10. The strength of the school would come from the Nisga'a people:

The school cannot effectively function unless the community is actively involved. The separation of the school, its teachers, administrators, its philosophy and practical application from the community only leads to mutual ignorance, mistrust and apathy. The school must use persons within the community in all facets of school life. It must also adapt and use the cultural experience of the community, if it is to be relevant to the students. (School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), 1985, Section A).

The creation of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) took many years and involved many discussions with the Ministry of Education. It was through these meetings and correspondence that the Nisga'a demonstrated the importance of breaking away from School District No. 88 (Skeena-Cassiar). The Nisga'a were supported by the first Aboriginal (and Nisga'a) M.L.A, Frank Calder. Mr. Calder was a very active and pioneering member in the fight for Nisga'a land rights and control over Nisga'a education. As M.L.A, Frank Calder wrote in one letter to Honourable Eileen Daily, Minister of Education, his views of the

Nisga'a process moving forward; "I and my tribe are anxious to reach a final decision on this vital project soon in order that you may be able to make an announcement during this Spring Session of the Legislature". (School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), 1985, Section B).

During the February 13, 1974 meeting between the Nisga'a Delegation and the Minister of Education, at the Legislature in Victoria, Mr. Flemming, Deputy Minister of Education "stated that the Department of Indian Affairs supports the new school district under provincial jurisdiction... and 'passed' the agreement of a new school district. The agreement including "The Government of British Columbia agrees in principle to a new school district in the Nass Valley" (School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), 1985, Section B). School District No. 92 (Nisga'a) doors opened on January 1, 1975. This was understood as a great accomplishment for Nisga'a control over Nisga'a education.

The bill gave the Nisga'a people a voice to implement direct needs to improve the quality of education. School District No. 92 was established, and the district erected a new school in New Aiyansh. This opening of the new school represented a source of pride for the Nisga'a nation and the Nisga'a people carved and raised a traditional carved pole called the 'Unity Pole'. This was the first totem pole raised in 100 years and it still stands in front of the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary High School in New Aiyansh. The efforts were summarized and reflected upon by one of the early pioneers:

In January, February, March 1976, each of the five communities were canvassed as to the name to be applied to the new complex. All five of the communities unanimously agreed since it involves the whole Nass Valley) to call it the Nisgha Elementary Secondary School. (McKay, Alvin, "n.d.", p.14).

Today, there are four schools that are part of School District No. 92, one in each Nisga'a community. The Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School opened on January 1, 1975

in New Aiyansh. My husband was six years old, but he recalls "I still remember when we all left the Indian Day School where education was provided further down the hill and together we all marched to NESS carrying all our supplies and that is how we moved into the new school" (Harry Nyce, Jr., personal communication, November 30, 2014). It was a very significant time for the young Nisga'a people and a step forward in providing a strong sense of community through education. Greenville Elementary School opened in 1975 and had numerous name changes to their school: Laxgalts'ap Elementary School to Alvin A. McKay Elementary School, and it is currently named Alvin A. McKay Middle School. This was the community that Alvin was from and his efforts in education were honoured by renaming the school after his legacy in 'bringing education home'. Alvin returned not only to become the First Nisga'a Superintendent for School District 92, but he taught in the elementary/secondary schools for many years and later became the first Nisga'a Culture instructor for the Nisga'a University, Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a. The Nathan Barton Elementary School opened in 1976 in Kincolith. Kincolith was the most remote Nisga'a community with no road access until 2003. Transportation was by float plane or boat. When the road opened in 2003, it linked directly with all the Nisga'a communities; Laxgalts'ap, Gitwinksihlkw and New Aiyansh. The road provided them with direct access to the other communities and Terrace. This road gave them the opportunity to attend all Nisga'a community functions and feasts. One of these functions was the Gitwinksihlkw Elementary School opening on September 1994 in Gitwinksihlkw. This school is modelled after a traditional Nisga'a longhouse. Gitwinksihlkw is the smallest of the four Nisga'a communities and is directly adjacent to the Nass River. The community is small but has a big heart. Irene Seguin recalls that "the community collectively agreed to sacrifice their sports field, since it

was the only place large enough to build the school" (personal communication, October 30, 2014). Today, in 2014, Gitwinksihlkw has an elementary school but still has no field. (Nisga'a Language and Culture Department, School District No.92 (Nisga'a), 1996, p. 60-64). These facts are important to my thesis because with education taught on Nisga'a lands, students are active in their education that includes learning their language and culture.

Education in the Nass Valley is still important. Many instructors are returning home to join efforts in providing education within School District No. 92. Not only are they returning home, but they are also staying home and utilizing the local University, WWNI. As a parent, I am very grateful that my children can attend school within their community in which they live. This enables not only my children, but many others, education from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and also to continue on to University. It is also at the University level that Nisga'a education involves many levels of Nisga'a Language and Nisga'a Culture courses that lead into certificates and later a degree. When the Nisga'a gained control over their education, they also became fully responsible for continuing the story telling of the Language and Culture in the formal education system.

Education is, synonymous to the bond with Nisga'a language and culture. This thesis follows - is indeed an outcome - of that fundamental belief pertaining to Nisga'a lands and Nisga'a children's and youths' future well-being. Through education, these are woven together and this learning process will continue the survival of the Nisga'a Nation. In order to fully understand and maintain a passionate attitude toward the educational process of the history of the Nisga'a, you must visit the territory. You must see and hear directly from Nisga'a who they are. The ties to the land, the mountains and the Nass River are imperative to their cultural stories that educated each Nisga'a to their heritage. It is from that place, a

place of connectivity to the land, to the water, that I write the story of my own journey with education in the Nass Valley. My story is part of a much larger history, a much longer story.

Chapter Three: Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI)

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a is a Post-Secondary institution whose mission is to assure that students of the Nisga'a Nation and non-native have access to quality education in the Nass River Valley. (Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a, "n.d.", p.i).

WWNI and University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC)

The development of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a is closely entwined with the history of the University of Northern British Columbia for two reasons. One reason is coincidence; the university was just starting-up at the same time that the WWNI was in its formative period. The second reason is that UNBC took as part of its mandate to develop a strong program in First Nations Studies, and consequently was able to recognize that offering education in First Nations language and culture, in partnership with communities, was a uniquely appropriate educational prerogative. This chapter provides some of the history of the relationship between WWNI and UNBC, including some of the history of both institutions.

The name of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a, translated as "The Nisga'a House of Wisdom", means where wisdom is contained and acquired. The doors are always open to welcome and assist students and visitors; this is similar to a feast house, in that it is convivial. The WWNI course offerings are in response to the communities' educational requests. The WWNI staff guides and assists students in achieving higher education by providing guidance into an educational path that leads to their requested degree. For example, a student may attend WWNI for the first few years completing courses towards a program outside of the Bachelor of Arts such as a Bachelor of Psychology and transfer to finish the last two years at the UNBC Prince George campus. The WWNI gives the students the opportunity to complete as many courses as possible at home before moving. WWNI will at this time guide

students to the resources at the Prince George campus such as UNBC housing, the UNBC writing centre, and the UNBC First Nations Centre and keep in touch with the students until they return home for the regional convocation. This mandate is also applicable to students from outside the Nisga'a Nation. Students from as far away as Norway, Japan, China, New Zealand, England and across Canada have also attended the WWNI for a semester or academic year while completing their Bachelor degree, or doing data collection for their Masters and Doctorate degrees, or post-doctoral research.

Nisga'a Lisims Government granted the WWNI authority over Nisga'a Research. A protocol was drafted for students who want to conduct Nisga'a research. A prospective researcher provides the WWNI a thorough and complete research protocol. If approved by the WWNI, the researcher is guided and supported by WWNI throughout their project. This gives WWNI the ability to process and monitor all research involving the Nisga'a Nation. It also ensures that any researcher must submit in writing a detailed research proposal to the WWNI. All requests are reviewed and decided by the WWNI Board of Directors, which then responds with a letter. When the research is completed, it is formally presented to the WWNI Board of Directors for consent, before it is brought to the thesis defense stage. When the project has been approved by the student's university institution, WWNI receives an original signed completed copy of the student's thesis. Post-doctoral researchers also follow the same protocol.

The WWNI is also part of the Nisga'a Language Authority, which is associated with the British Columbia College of Teachers. Acting as the Nisga'a Authority, WWNI can recommend a candidate for a Level One Teaching Certificate qualifying them to teach Nisga'a language in the provincial school system. Most applicants have completed academic

linguistic courses and WWNI's First Nations Language-Nisga'a certificate. More recently most applicants completed their full Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies. This process is mainly utilized by potential teachers in the Nisga'a School District No. 92 (Nisga'a). This is an exciting trend to observe, seeing more Nisga'a applicants entering the education force. By having WWNI as a local university has fully contributed to bringing education home to the Nass Valley. Students are able to complete certificates and degrees, and have found inspiration to continue their journey by returning home to share their educational wealth as instructors for not only School District 92, but also to teach courses for the WWNI.

The WWNI also offers courses in the urban centres upon request where there are Nisga'a Urban locals; Prince Rupert, Terrace and Vancouver. Once dates have been set, the WWNI instructors from the Nass Valley are committed to weekly commutes to provide courses in the Nisga'a Urban Locals to provide these courses. This is also true of other instructors who travel into the Nass Valley. Depending on the set up for these courses, instructors move to the Nass for the entire thirteen weeks of the semester; some teach on weekends and there are also consecutive teaching days throughout the semester. All of these have a long history, a stretching and curving history that is not so unlike the Nass River against which the WWNI is located.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a was the outcome of research for the 1988 Nisga'a Population and Training Needs study requested by the Nisga'a Tribal Council. The study was conducted by David Nairne & Associates Ltd of North Vancouver. The purpose of this study was to contribute to the ongoing process of human resource development among the Nisga'a people as they moved towards settlement of comprehensive land claims and control of local resources" (David Nairne & Associates Ltd, p. 1). This study gave the Nisga'a people

a voice by compiling knowledge that reflected their individual community needs and proposed training for the future. This included the four communities of the Nisga'a Nation; Greenville, New Aiyansh, Canyon City (now Gitwinksihlkw) and Kincolith. Information gathered from community workshops and surveys gave the Nation a collective voice and identified their needs and goals for each community in order to strengthen the Nisga'a Nation as a whole. One of the main findings was that people in the Nass wanted to obtain higher education and training with certification. They also wanted to enhance economic development to employ more Nisga'a members within and outside of the Nass Valley. The study documented that "education and training is vital to the creation of a healthy labour force, which is of course the backbone of the economic process" (David Nairne and Associates, 1998, p. 1). Nisga'a Tribal Council responded to the study and moved education as a priority for the Nisga'a Industry Adjustment Committee. The Chair of the Tribal Committee stated that:

In 1985 the Nisga'a Tribal Council (NTC), established an Industry Adjustment Committee with a mandate to determine the training needs needed to implement a Treaty. The Committee noted that access to post-secondary education remained illusive to the majority of the Nisga'a population and recommended the establishment of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (WWNI) to provide formalized post -secondary education. An educational administrator from School District #92 was seconded in August 1993 and, in December, the WWNI was incorporated under the Society's Act of BC, governed by an Interim Board of Directors appointed by the Nisga'a Tribal Council. **Nisga'a post-secondary education came home.** (Evans, McDonald & Nyce, 1999).

Focus groups and discussions began on the topic of bringing Post-Secondary education home to the Nass Valley. This decision was wholeheartedly supported by the Nisga'a Nation and is now law in the Nisga'a Treaty; "Post-Secondary Education, Section

103, Nisga'a Lisims Government may make laws in respect of post-secondary education within Nisga'a lands...and Section 104, "Nisga'a Laws in respect of post-secondary education will include standards comparable to provincial standards..." (British Columbia, Canada and Nisga'a Nation, 1999, p. 177). Deanna Nyce, Chief Executive Officer for WWNI reported to the 16th Annual Nisga'a Education Convention on October 6, 1995; her report included a few historical moments that led to the creation of WWNI. She noted in 1991 the four Nisga'a communities (New Aiyansh, Greenville, Kincolith and Gitwinksihlkw) with the assistance of the Industry Adjustment Committee formed a plan to bring post-secondary education home to the Nass. During this time more members from other Nisga'a institutions were added. This included a representative from Nisga'a Tribal Council, School District No. 92, and the Nisga'a Valley Health Board. The result of this committee was the authorization to establish a Post- Secondary institution under the Nisga'a Societies Act. WWNI was incorporated under the Societies Act in December 1993.

There were five key people in the creation of the WWNI: Deanna Nyce, President and WWNI Chief Executive Officer, Ian McKenzie, WWNI Board Chair, Dr. Geoffery R. Weller, UNBC Founding President, Dennis MacKnack, UNBC Regional Operations and Dr. Margaret Anderson, UNBC Regional Northwest Chair. These five people realized a framework that was suitable to the Nisga'a Nation. When UNBC was first established, five major themes of study were developed 1) Environmental Studies 2) Northern Studies, 3) Women Studies, 4) First Nations Studies and 5) International Studies. The First Nations Studies theme at UNBC emphasized teaching of language and culture courses in partnership with First Nations communities, and was the ideal program for the WWNI to offer so that students could obtain one of three certificates in two years; the certificate in General First

Nations Studies, the certificate in First Nations Language in Nisga'a and the certificate in Nisga'a Studies. These three certificates then ladder into the Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies-Nisga'a. This is important to note in this thesis, as Nisga'a education was a priority and the First Nations program answered the Nisga'a peoples' request to bring education home and this venue was through WWNI and UNBC. WWNI was able to offer courses that were academically parallel to the same standards of UNBC and students received accreditation upon completion of courses. The WWNI Board of Directors, faculty and staff directly provided and participated in the success of each WWNI graduate. It is their dedication to their work in Nisga'a Education that made WWNI successful. The WWNI uses a slogan that describes us as 'A small university making a big difference'. This difference can be seen with the other UNBC regions as well. UNBC has three main regional campuses: South-Central, Peace River-Liard and Northwest. The WWNI maintained that WWNI instructors were to be paid on par with the main Prince George campus. However, in order to save on travel costs, WWNI utilized local educated talent from the Northwest. Robin Fisher, UNBC Dean of Arts, Social, and Health Sciences stated that all instructors must teach to their degree level. For example, someone with a Bachelor of Arts could only teach within the Bachelor of Arts program and someone holding a Master of Arts degree could only teach to the Master of Arts level and only your area of study. The only exception was with the Nisga'a Language courses, since many of the fluent speakers were not formally credentialed. The Nisga'a language instructors completed linguistic courses and were fluent in the Nisga'a language both written and oral (Deanna Nyce, personal communication, October 7, 2012). Their credentials as fluent speakers and cultural experts are acknowledged by the university and by the WWNI.

The Nisga'a Nation continued to thrive with persistence and determination that resulted in joining forces with a new university, the University of Northern British Columbia. Charles Jago, former UNBC president describes this union as the beginnings of the first community-based initiative “based on a protocol agreement signed by UNBC and Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (WWNI) - the Nisga'a House of Learning (sic) Wisdom - in 1993 for a five year term (renewed twice, in 1998 and 2003). The two entities also signed an affiliation agreement in 1998, giving WWNI authority to offer UNBC degree-programs in specific disciplines" (Jago, 2004). The WWNI/UNBC Protocol agreement was renewed again in 2014.

The Nisga'a Elders are a very important part of the WWNI. They come forward with a large database of knowledge and advice on multiple subjects that involve Nisga'a language, culture, mapping, plants, fishing, buildings, traditional names and territories. Each Nisga'a Elder's perspective is unique and vital to the Nisga'a way of life, present and past. In return the WWNI remunerates the Elders for their expert traditional knowledge when they participate in courses with students. The Elders are very generous with their time and knowledge.

Growing up I always heard that it takes a village to raise a child and more recently it took the Nisga'a Nation to bring education home and build a university. The focus of the WWNI is to provide quality post-secondary education to both Nisga'a and Non-Nisga'a students.

The WWNI is a non-profit society that is recognized as a Revenue Canada-Charitable institution for tax purposes. Donors receive tax deductions for monetary

donations to WWNI. Over the years, these donations are slowly growing and making a difference by allowing the WWNI to continue the educational services to the Nisga'a Nation.

WWNI Board of Directors

The governance of the WWNI involves community members who are strong cultural knowledge holders as well and they each bring their own story to the job of governance. The Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Board are all Nisga'a Nation members, residing on Nisga'a lands. The WWNI Board of Director are essential in the educational direction of how the WWNI continues to meet the needs of the Nisga'a Nation. This leadership guides the educational direction of the WWNI and impacts students educational story of how education is obtained in the Nass. This board speaks on behalf of the Nisga'a communities needs and concerns in post-secondary educational programs. The WWNI Board members attend monthly meetings and, collectively, the WWNI Board, Faculty and Staff are the heart of the institution. These are the people who helped thirty-eight students' graduate with their Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies and numerous certificates in the past 21 years and achieve their educational goals. Please refer to Appendix C1 - Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Graduates.

The WWNI Board of Directors is composed of five voting members, plus the WWNI President/Chief Executive Officer and the WWNI Chief Financial officer. (Appendix D1 - Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute Board of Directors). The WWNI Chair is appointed by the Nisga'a Lisims Government Executive Committee and each of the four Nisga'a Villages are represented by their appointed WWNI Director. The WWNI Honorary Director is chosen by the WWNI Board of Directors. The role of the Honorary Director is to provide guidance and recommendations to the Board of Directors in providing educational services in Nisga'a Language and Culture to the Nisga'a Nation. The role of the WWNI Board of Directors is

varied: 1) to establish protocol/federated agreements with other post-secondary institutions; 2) to govern the WWNI academia; 3) to develop and maintain WWNI policies and procedures; 3) to oversee the WWNI organization; 4) to report Nisga'a Village requests and provide future courses of action; 5) to promote and inform their communities of WWNI current events and academic programs; 6) to oversee financial assets and resources and; 7) to ensure the longevity of the WWNI, as stated in the WWNI Society Act.

The WWNI Board of Directors have a number of committees: the WWNI Personnel Committee, WWNI Finance Committee, WWNI Advisory Committee and the WWNI Building Committee. These committees each have a Chair appointed by the Board Chairperson. The WWNI Board itself has the following officers of the Board, they are as follows: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary-Treasurer and Directors that are appointed by the Board Chairperson. These committees are important, since each member of the committee brings to the table their community members' educational interests or their organization's future training needs. This is critical information in order to respond to the educational needs of the communities. This is important, as it gives the Nisga'a Nation members a platform to voice their vision for current and future educational programs to not only meet the current job market in the Nass Valley but elsewhere in the province of British Columbia. Expressing their voice gives Nisga'a members a venue to shape how education will support employment in the economy. The leadership of each individual WWNI Board member represents each Nisga'a community as they gather to represent and guide the post-secondary educational needs of the Nisga'a Nation.

The WWNI committees were large for a few years, but as operational costs became higher, the committees in turn became smaller. Each committee member receives an

honorarium for their time and input towards increasing and sustaining the educational needs that WWNI provides. Deanna Nyce reflects that:

During the Nisga'a Tribal Council days, before Treaty, the WWNI Board had members from each of the entities. These included School District No. 92 (Nisga'a), Nisga'a Valley Health Board, and Nisga'a Economic Enterprises. Soon after Treaty this changed as the WWNI Board could no longer sustain the size of the Board or the honoraria. (Personal communication, October 7, 2012).

Today, the WWNI continues to utilize the wisdom of each committee to meet the educational needs of the Nisga'a Nation and their urban locals in Prince Rupert, Terrace and Vancouver. In a supporting role, part of the committees function as an avenue to post-secondary education. The committees are an extension of WWNI that connect the institute with the educational needs of the Nisga'a public service entities.

WWNI Faculty

The faculty of Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute consists of at least 95% qualified educators from the Nisga'a Nation. The WWNI instructors are contracted each semester. Most of the instructors completed their credentials outside of the Nass Valley. They committed their time and efforts at other institutions in order to return home with the knowledge and their acquired skills to make the Nisga'a Nation stronger and more self-sufficient. WWNI provides them an opportunity to share their knowledge. The WWNI has also been honoured with many other highly respected instructors that have shared their talent in promoting higher education. With the creation of the WWNI, these amazing educators are sharing not only their knowledge, but are role modeling educational prosperity in the Nass Valley. Please refer to Appendix E1 - Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute Faculty. There are twenty seven (27) PhD. level instructors that have come to the Nass Valley to teach at the

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute. These instructors have a wide diversity of educational history in their own academic fields and it is great to see this talent at WWNI. The instructors each bring a story of what influenced or directed them to their discipline. These background stories of the instructors facilitate the trust and relationship building with the WWNI students and staff. Communication through storytelling about oneself is from the heart and gives the storyteller a reflection of their personal journeys and what has been accomplished along the way. Although - these instructors are not Nisga'a, they have brought wisdom. In their teachings they have not only gained the respect of the people but also learned about the Nisga'a Nation. Some instructors have only taught one semester, but students remember and still discuss the variety of instructors teaching methods, and most importantly their storytelling.

WWNI Staff

The Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a staff are primarily members of the Nisga'a Nation, as seen in Appendix F1 - Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute Staff. The WWNI staff work directly and alongside the WWNI Institute President/Chief Executive Officer, Faculty and students to ensure a solid daily foundation for the institution.

The majority of the present and past staff are WWNI-UNBC alumni's and/or current students that have earned either a Certificate in Nisga'a Studies, a Certificate in First Nations Language-Nisga'a, a Certificate in First Nations Studies and/or the Bachelor of Arts degree-Nisga'a. Since all staff have been students, or are students working on their own higher education degrees, they are familiar with all the course offerings. This shared experience forges a connection that makes students relationships more open with the staff. The WWNI Board of Director encourages staff to partake in the courses. The dedication and camaraderie

of the staff makes the work enjoyable, straightforward and rewarding. The WWNI staffs are the heart of the WWNI organization. Once a year, the entire WWNI revels in the success of convocation not only as individuals, but as a community.

UNBC Regional Operations

The University of Northern British Columbia is unique in its northern and regional mandate. It is a university "in and for the North" and it is committed to serve the needs of northern people and significantly amongst northern people, First Nations People. Regional Operations is the prime agent within UNBC to fulfill the northern, regional and First Nations community mandates. Regional Operations will forge partnerships with other units of the University and with external partners to achieve those mandates. (UNBC Regional Operations, 2014).

UNBC's Regional Operations office is a direct route for the WWNI to access assistance with services in obtaining course approvals, grade reports, course outlines and other university issues. That office is the first point of contact for service for the WWNI and UNBC Regional campuses. Dennis MacNack, now retired, was the founding Director of Regional Operations. He graciously oversaw the provision of all services to the WWNI and the three regional campuses. The regional operations staff is the core source of the regions' successes. Each employee in this department has always provided service with the utmost respect and patience when staff at the WWNI requested information or assistance. They are also part of our story.

At the beginning, learning all the rules and regulations that are required at a university was overwhelming. Dennis MacKnak was able to facilitate a system that made for a smooth learning curve for the WWNI with all UNBC departments, such as the Deans and Registrar's departments. It was through the Regional Operations meetings during the Fall and Winter semesters at the UNBC Prince George campus that the WWNI and Regional staff

learned of the current services provided by UNBC. We also had tours of the Prince George campus from year to year, as programs and facilities expanded, such as the Northern Medical Building. These meetings covered administrative and educational regulations. For example, information on changing policies, forms, and the staff that were involved in the registration process. Being able to personally meet the overwhelmingly large staff from the UNBC President's office, UNBC Registrar's office, UNBC Library, UNBC First Nations Centre and all the departments in between is equally productive. During these meetings, meals are shared and friendships developed. These have continued for many years with each of the regions. Overall, the Regional Operations office staff has been and continues to be extremely supportive and welcoming. The Regional Operation meetings and that department have directly impacted the knowledge and services needed for WWNI to provide quality educational services to the WWNI students. They are also part of our story.

WWNI and Northwest Community College (NWCC)

In 1988/89, the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a and Northwest Community College (NWCC) re-signed a Protocol Agreement that permitted WWNI to offer courses in two areas: Vocational-Technical programming and Career and College Preparation programs.

Vocational-Technical programming at WWNI is comprised of a large range of short-term and long-term courses. The WWNI offers courses that are requested by the Nisga'a communities and they are mainly offered on a cost recovery basis. The courses are delivered in the requested community and also at the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute.

A sample of short-term courses would include: Occupational First Aid levels 1-3, Marine First Aid, Traffic Control/Flagging, Food Safe, Bear Awareness, Building Service Worker 1 and 2, Workplace Hazardous Material Information Systems (WHIMS),

Construction Safety, General Radio Operator, S-100 Fire Suppression, Red Cross Babysitting and Home Alone. Examples of long-term courses include the Office Technology Program, Log Home Building, Carpentry Level 1 and 2, Plumbing and Electrical and Home Support Care. All these courses have expiry dates; therefore, the WWNI offers these courses every few years. Many of the instructors for these short and long term courses are contracted from outside of the Nass Valley.

The Nisga'a Nation has had a long standing relationship with the NWCC, mainly with the trades programming that initially had all courses delivered only from the Terrace campus. As noted by the longest faculty member of WWNI:

The Nisga'a sanctioned by Nisga'a Tribal Council had a long-standing relationship established in 1975 coinciding with the inception of School District No. 92 (Nisga'a). The first School District employee shared with Northwest Community College was Maurice Squires, whose title was "College Coordinator". (Deanna Nyce, personal communication, October 7, 2012).

WWNI Institutional Partnerships

The WWNI has many academic partnerships with other institutions around the world. These relationships are directly impacting the Nisga'a community as many of those institutions are also re-Indigenizing their own social structures. It is essential to see other education programming at other institutions and have the WWNI maintain a similar academic level as other institutions involved with First Nations Studies. WWNI partnerships have included the Open Learning Agency (OLA), the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT).

With these partnerships, the WWNI is able to provide a wider range of courses that are requested by the Nisga'a communities. For instance in 2013 the WWNI was able to offer

courses in Office Administration with our partnership with NVIT. Instead of a group of students going to the NVIT campus, the WWNI was able to have an instructor from NVIT teach onsite for a six month program. This allowed students to achieve higher education at home without relocating their families.

WWNI is a member of the following organizations:

- First Nations Education Steering Committee
- Vancouver School of Theology Native Ministries program
- Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association
- National Association of Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning
- Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies
- Yuuhadaax, Centre for Indigenous Scholars
- University of the Arctic
(note: WWNI students, including myself, have taken Circumpolar North Courses with the University of the Arctic as part of their Bachelor of Arts degree.

Having a formal relationship with all these gives the WWNI an insight to what is currently being offered at other institutions and how indigenous instruction is supported and implemented.

WWNI Academia

Working in the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a as the Student Support and Registration Administrator has given me with a personal insight with each of the students from the various program as they obtained certificates and completed their Bachelor of Arts degree. I have become a part of their stories, and they have become a part of my own story. Working with the WWNI since the Fall 1994 has provided me with many direct opportunities to get to know the people of the Nisga'a Nation and follow their journey through post-secondary education. This relationship has developed to the present day and I have seen how each former student gives inspiration to their own Nation, tribe and immediate family members.

It is impressive to welcome a new student, assist and guide them during their studies, witness their graduation from UNBC-WWNI. Then hear that they went on to achieve higher credentials for example, graduate with a BA at WWNI then obtain a Bachelor of Education elsewhere. These students' success has transformed their family's quality of life forever. (Deanna Nyce, personal communication, October 7, 2012).

Some students continued on to acquire their Bachelor of Education and are currently teaching for School District No.92 (Nisga'a). Many of the students from WWNI have continued and remained in the Nass Valley as leaders, principals and administrators. There are also WWNI alumni or students who have taken WWNI courses employed in almost every Nisga'a entity: including Nisga'a Lisims Government, Nisga'a Village of Gitwinksihlkw, Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks, Nisga'a Village of Laxgalts'ap and Nisga'a Village of Gingolx, Nisga'a Valley Health Authority, Nisga'a Fisheries, Nisga'a Commercial Group of Companies, Nisga'a Essential Skills & Training, Hli Goothl Wilp-Adokshl Nisga'a, The Nisga'a Museum, and a few students with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police - LISIMS/Nass Valley Detachment.

Having a university facility within arm's reach in a rural area is crucial and beneficial for all Nisga'a. The WWNI course offerings provide the entire Nisga'a Nation the potential to become a nation of educated citizens, which in turn is important for the Nisga'a who became the first in signing a Treaty. Therefore, with this new acquired power, they must develop the skills and accreditation to run the Nation in all areas of governance, education, health, economics, social services and utilities. Here at the WWNI, programs can be offered to people in current or future positions while at home, allowing them to fully participate in daily cultural and community activities. At the WWNI, students are able to attend university without having to leave their homes and the support of their communities. This allows

students to attend and achieve higher education, to be able to maintain their identity within the community, family and culture and at the same time role model for their community, tribes and the people in their nation. Preserving the spiritual connection with the land and the culture is important and very significant to who a First Nations person is. Direct participation in the culture confirms, strengthens and re-energizes your spirit:

Soon they all go together with other villages nearby and learned to work together. This is why this Nass valley is called the bowl of unity. The bowl is where they got the fish and meat they share and what binds them together is peace and love for one and another. For as long as the river shall run, that is how long the people shall be bond in peace and unity. Our forefathers told us that no one is ferocious enough to stop that river from running and to try to separate the Nisga'a. The Nass River belongs to the Nisga'a and it always will. Lisims. (Nisga'a Lisims Government, Saytk'ilhl Wo'osihl, p. 2).

Chapter Four: Methods and Methodology

The educational and socialization processes of the various First Nations cultures throughout this country were seriously undermined by the formal education system that imposed upon the people some very different values and denigrated their spiritual practices, their languages and their overall way of life. It is, therefore the challenge to today's peoples to correct the situation created over three hundred years of assimilation. To achieve this, the First Nations children of today must know their past, their true history, in order to understand the present and plan for the future. First Nations cultures must once again be respected and the traditional values must again be held in high esteem. (Kirkness, 1992, p.103).

A research method, most broadly, might be understood as how research is undertaken, where the research knowledge comes from and - to a lesser extent, how it is learned. In this thesis, I understand 'storytelling' as a research method - it is through stories and storytelling that I come to this work, to the conclusions I reach in my research. Research methodology, on the other hand, is the broader conceptual framework that explains why a researcher chose the methods used to gather information - methodologies guide the direction of methods in this study, including of how Indigenous knowledge is obtained and acquired.

This chapter explores the methodologies and methods of my research; it is divided into four parts. I begin by exploring the research method and methodologies through storytelling. This method of storytelling will explain where the knowledge comes from and how it is learned. This is how culture is transmitted from generation to generation. The second section is the theoretical framework that will discuss the process of storytelling and why it is important in the Nisga'a culture. Decolonizing methodology, the third part, will reveal how Nisga'a culture is in an ongoing process of relearning the cultural aspects of governance. The final section is re-indigenizing, applying methodology to the Nisga'a culture. This is how the

Nisga'a Nation is currently learning from their history and their ancestors and using this knowledge today to enhance a stronger Nisga'a Nation.

Method

The methods used in this thesis included one on one interviews, personal knowledge of cultural learning within the Haida and Nisga'a cultures and research of indigenous teaching methods of storytelling.

One of the most common Indigenous means of storytelling is an introduction of oneself before telling a story. An introduction of where you are from reveals "the unique aspects of our tribal cultures are held in esteem because they emerge from those ancestral interrelationship found in place. Our tribal affiliations must be acknowledged - it is about identity and respect" (Kovach, 2009, p. 37). Growing up and being part of a First Nations culture, whenever I encountered someone new, they would ask who my mother and grandmother were. This was crucial in order to see and understand my family lineage. In Chapter 1, I gave a brief introduction of my employment status in relation to this thesis and will continue here by sharing the story of where I am from and how I was "taken into" the Nisga'a culture.

My family belongs to the Raven clan in Haida Gwaii, I am from the Na7ikun Qiigawaay, my clan is Those born at House Point. My grandmother was Julia Wilson (nee Collinson), fondly known as Nanaay, and my mother was Wilma Wilson, both of whom have now passed on. They were my biggest supporters in everything I have accomplished. From birth, they were my confidants, my disciplinarians, my teachers and my storytellers. This is important to share since the Haida are my ancestors, and my ancestors are highly treasured. It is our ancestors that deserve the credit of the Haida Nation's successes today. They have

paved the road and endured hardships so that current generations could be self-reliant and obtain the education needed in order to survive and maintain our Haida culture and heritage. The Haida Elders, Chiefs and Matriarchs always have kind words to share, stories of our culture, encouragement and disciplined words of wisdom. When they spoke it was with the best intentions and their words were spoken from the heart and were and are spiritually uplifting. Most teachings learned are remembered with fond memories evoked by the context in which they were taught, such as when we prepared fish, deer meat, herring eggs, and halibut, canning and baking. For instance, when canning fish, crab or deer meat, there are teachings about the canning process. It feels as though a rhythm of momentum begins, like the soft beat of a drum, continuing as stories are told of who taught them how to 'can'. The telling also includes stories about the food being processed from the land and how everything has a spirit and it too must be respected through practices such as returning shells or fish to the ocean, so its brothers will return to visit. Sometimes the storytellers kindly reveal their own individual personal journeys and reflections to prompt us to move forward.

Due to colonialism, First Nations had an extreme change in culture with the introduction of foreign laws, new technologies, sickness, forced changes in family dynamics and an invasion of their lands, to name a few. Colonial practices continue and are still present within society. Daes reflected that "our struggles have continued into the modern world" (2000, p. 4). However, colonialism was not successful in erasing the First Nations identity. Many First Nations are strengthening their culture through stories and feasts, and slowly their voices are being heard. First Nations are uniting together to bring back the culture.

Indigenous people have made significant strides toward reconstructing their identities as autonomous individual, collective, and social beings. Although much remains to be

done, the threat of cultural assimilation to the North American mainstream is no longer overwhelming, because substantial pride has been restored in the idea of being Native. (Alfred, 1999, p. 2).

For my research, employing an Indigenous methodology is crucial - as is beginning by situating yourself in the culture you are researching. One way to do this is - and the way I have chosen to do it - is to reflect on my own identity. Awareness of your identity begins as a child and the immediate family has the strongest influences telling stories of your heritage with the laws that are followed. Willie Ermine reflects that "for Aboriginal People, first languages and culture are crucial components in the transformative learning process" (1999, p. 102). For example, the Haida Nation are descendants of a matrilineal society. Regardless of where you live, a Haida mother and child will always belong to the same clan.

The Haida nation is made up of two groups of People - Raven and Eagles - each of which is divided into clans. Because we are a matrilineal society, lineage and property are passed down to the next generation through the female line. In other words, 'We follow our mothers'. (Smithsonian Nation Museum of the American Indians, 2005, p. 147).

The Nisga'a Nation is also matrilineal, which made it quite comfortable for me, as a Haida woman, to join a Nisga'a family. The Nisga'a tribal system is complex and complete with its own cultural rules. There are many similarities between the Haida Nation and the Nisga'a Nation; they both have strong beliefs and feast systems that we follow and highly respect. It is at these feasts that the Sim'oogit tells the clan story of the Chieftainship he holds. Many of these stories are told in the *Nisga'a Clan Histories* (1995). My birth roots are from the Haida Nation. Similar to the Haida people, the people of the Nisga'a Nation want to ensure longevity for their culture by using their strong feast system. It was at a Nisga'a feast in Gitwinksihlkw that I was "taken in" through a Nisga'a cultural adoption into

the Ganada Wilp of Ksim Xsaan by the late Lavinia Azak. She was one of the matriarchs from Gitwinksihlkw who "took me as her youngest daughter". My Nisga'a name is Hlguu Ksim Ganaaw, which translates to Small Lady Frog. It is also the Nisga'a version of my Haida name Jaada Gaawjuu meaning Little/Small Girl. Being 'taken in' was an important occasion, being Haida and being accepted in the Nisga'a Nation. This naming ceremony gave me a place and a cultural role within the Nisga'a society. As stated in the introduction of *Nisga'a Clan Histories*, "Each clan also took various animals to be their crest or emblem." It is important to have a name in First Nations communities and the Nisga'a have strong cultural ties. As Hubert Barton explains,

Having a name means having a place in our society, having rights to territories, and having a history. It is through owning a name that we know who we are. This is of such fundamental importance that almost everything in our culture revolves around this fact. (Nisga'a Tribal Council, Nisga'a Society, 1995, p. 7).

I first met Lavinia Azak in Victoria, B.C., during the summer of 1994. It was over a short period, but I bonded with her. During this time, I was engaged to be married and going to school and working part-time, and it was great to spend time with Lavinia being far away from my family. What I enjoyed the most was her sharing the stories of being part of the Nisga'a culture. This sharing of knowledge through storytelling develops into a strong relationship of trust and respect (Cruikshank, 1990 and Archibald, 2008). I truly missed my Haida culture and family and it was nice to share this time with an elder. When we moved to Gitwinksihlkw that winter, I was honoured by her request to "take me into her family". Her family, like mine, is from the Raven clan.

Now I belong to many families: my Haida family, my husband's family and my adopted Nisga'a Raven family, the Ksim Xsaan House. It is important as a First Nations

researcher to abide by cultural laws and traditions to honour my Haida and Nisga'a clans.

Indigenous methodology begins from seeing yourself located in the culture.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

Stories are important in oral societies in order to help you understand, where you have been, where you have come from and the hope for the future of the culture. Sometimes the stories include information on how to sustain the culture over time. In order to maintain sustainability, the Nisga'a have ten Laws, also known as Ayuukhl Nisga'a. These laws are embedded in Nisga'a stories and have been laid out explicitly as the Ayuukhl Nisga'a. The most important law is used in every aspect of governing oneself and others... This law is respect. It is commonly known in the Nisga'a culture that 'Respect' is the main law and "if you do not have respect then every other law will be broken" (Nisga'a Tribal Council, 1993, p. 125). The next law is Education, meaning that each member contributes knowledge to the Nisga'a Nation. The third law is Chieftainship and the Matriarchy. In the Nisga'a culture, which "is a matrilineal society, these two people are equal" (Nisga'a Tribal Council, 1993, p. 127). Next is the Settlement of estate, this is "when the occurrence of a death, property is returned and wealth does not entitle status, this is earned" (Nisga'a Tribal Council, 1993, p. 127). This refers to the transferring or passing down of traditional names within a Wilp. The law of Reciprocity means that the property earned through a marriage is returned after a death. This occurs when a spouse passes away and all marital cultural ties such as sharing of territorial rights go back to the clan when one becomes a widow/widower. Marriage and adoptions "sacrosanct of marriage vows" and "keeping the family bloodlines separate, no intermarriage within one tribe" (Nisga'a Tribal Council, 1993, p. 128). Through example,

action and storytelling, these laws are inculcated into young people, creating an awareness of their identity as Nisga'a. This awareness of your identity begins as a child. The immediate family has the strongest influence. The stories that are told reinforce Nisga'a heritage, and the laws that are to be followed

A prime example of oral traditions or storytelling continuing within immediate families is the same story told by three generations. Chief Hleek, Nisga'a Sim'oogit Dr. Joseph Gosnell, stated the principal reason for the creation of the crest system during a Nisga'a Culture lecture.. It was to prevent two members marrying within the same tribe. This type of relationship is forbidden, and known as "hawahlkw". The union of members of the same tribe is also referred to as "kaats" (personal communication, March 18, 2009). Sim'oogit Hleeks' father had also stated the importance of why the Nisga'a Nation clan system kept same tribe members from uniting together within the same tribe. Here is the information, as told by Sim'oogit Wii Gadim Xsgaak, Eli Gosnell, Joseph Gosnell's father, re-telling a story told to him by his father:

My father defined the word "clan" as one blood representing the root of a family tree right from its origin. This root, therefore, binds the clan as one body and one blood. So the clan system segregates different blood. The law of our forefathers was to never marry a member of your own clan, because Laxgibuu, Ganada, Laxsgiik or Gisk'ahaast are each of the same blood. The example of marriage laws of the Nisga'a are as follows: Laxgibuu would marry a Laxsgiik; there is different blood between these two clans. Gisk'ahaast would do the same to Laxgibuu or Ganada; these four clans would intermarry. So that there would be strength and power - this was the purpose of these families to form clans. (Nisga'a Tribal Council, Nisga'a Clan History Introduction, 1995, p.1-2).

Divorce is the next law. In earlier generations this was a rare occurrence and only if a life was compromised did a divorce occur. The eighth law relates to war and peace. "The Sim'oogit's role was to prevent wars and maintain peace since K'amligihahlhaahl gave us enough land, he gave us enough resources...we won't have to go outside of our own territory, to take someone else's" (Nisga'a Tribal Council, 1993, p.129). Trading was also a law, trade with neighbouring tribal Nations for livelihood supplies. The final law was "penalties", one is called restitution or Ksiiskw, payment for senseless loss of life (Nisga'a Tribal Council, 1993, p.129). These ten laws are still respected today in the Nisga'a culture, but with the loss of entire tribes living together, and now in individual dwellings, it has become difficult to enforce each law.

The Nisga'a ten laws are one of many cultural aspects of why things are done the way they are and at the same time these laws and stories teach Nisga'a pride of their ancestors and willingness to contribute to that legacy. Storytelling is a powerful method in tribal societies. The power of storytelling affords people the opportunity to share the lessons and teachings of the past, present and future events. It talks about leadership, roles and responsibilities, self-governance and self-determination. It is through the stories from the Nisga'a elders, leaders and educators that came before me, that I am able to share the story of Nisga'a education and it is an important story because colonial stories have for too long been dominant.

The Nisga'a have always viewed education and physical territory, including land and water, as intimately linked. This thesis follows that fundamental belief. Chieftainships are tied to the land and river through stories and songs. It is important that young people continue to learn these stories. Learning these stories and songs is important to the survival

of the Nisga'a culture for those that hold future Chieftainships and Matriarchal roles (Nisga'a Tribal Council, 1995; Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a, 2000; Nisga'a Lisims Government, 2008).

Another, albeit slight more complicated and less "formal" methodology is the recognition of paradigms. A paradigm is a theory of knowledge - it can be seen in many First Nations cultures such as Nisga'a culture, Haida culture and Māori cultures. Looking at cultures from a paradigm view shows that each culture has their own specific identity that is unique but some have the same culture beliefs in their origins and generational ownership of land and historical stories that are tied to the lands in which they each live. These philosophies and storytelling are ways of keeping each of the cultures alive, giving each nation a parallel of relatedness, connectedness and validity of the importance of each culture. The Nisga'a paradigm begins its focus from within the Ayuukhl Nisga'a, which is the cultural law of the Nisga'a, it branches into so many areas that it covers every aspect of being Nisga'a. Smith explains this in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, "identifying as Māori and as a Māori researcher, is a critical element in Kaupapa Māori research" (1999, p.196). This is parallel with First Nations doing work on their own Nations. My focus is on identity and survival of the Nisga'a, as related to learning and education. An important aspect of the Nisga'a Paradigm is to acknowledge that it is a living and practiced culture. It is important in First Nations culture to know who you are, where you came from and this will determine your place in society. There are many parallels within the Nisga'a and Haida Nations such as being from a matrilineal lineage and how you learn about your culture. Your immediate teachers are your family and extended family known in Māori as whanau (Smith, 1999, p.169). These are the people who are connected through genealogical and geographical kinship ties, culture, and spiritual beliefs. Teachings are learned and inculcated through

respect, visual representations, oral traditions, and by teachings which reinforce lifelong practice.

The late Dr. Bertram McKay taught for the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a about culture, and every year he would take the students to Fishery Bay during oolichan season. He would always comment that firsthand experience and direct observation included being out on the land and using your five senses of hearing, sight, smell, touch, taste and in particular, spirituality and dreaming. This form of learning would then be engrained and show the importance of the Nisga'a relationship to the land. This method of educating students about their land and resources was a powerful method of engaging the students with first hand or direct experiences. Many of his previous students still continue to share stories of participating in the culture at that time with others community members. Dr. McKay's method connected education directly to the land and he shared with his class that through 'direct participation' is how he learned the process of making oolichan grease.

Direct participation in the culture confirms, strengthens and re-energizes your spirit. It is an invisible boost, like a wave in the water that ripples out from the point where a stone is dropped, sending positive vibes to all those around you. It reaffirms your identity, giving you confidence in your sense of who you are. This confidence is an important tool, to be able to uphold yourself within your nation and other outer societies. The Nisga'a practice of learning by doing is similar to the Māori "Kaupapa" philosophy of being active within all levels of the culture to ensure learned practises for the current and future generations (Smith, 1999, p. 184).

To make a concrete connection to my research on the value of offering post-secondary education while residing on Nisga'a territories many students attending school and or/working are able to maintain direct participation in Nisga'a cultural practices and

harvesting of foods and plants throughout the year. They experience and participate in the preparation of oolichans, salmon, seal meat, berry picking, drying and smoking salmon. It is during this time that stories are shared and life lessons are learned just as in the classroom. This is what I describe as the First Nations classroom. It is a methodology itself. This is learning wherever you are, it is a hands-on experience or active learning process that is applicable to everything within the culture and it is a constant ongoing lifelong learning experience. It is important to participate within the culture or it will slowly drift away, or the individual who does not have the opportunity to participate will drift away from the culture.

The Nisga'a culture is a way of life that has flourished since the beginning of time. Each person born into the Nisga'a Nation has a specific place in the Nisga'a society. All tribes have an adaawak: an oral history of family/tribal stories. As Gadee'Libim Hayatskw, Rufus Watts, explains, this is the oral literature of the Nisga'a and verifies the origin of houses and their place in society, and these stories can be told only by members of that specific clan. (Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a, 2000, p.15). These stories can be elaborately discussed at a feast, or during a one-on-one sharing, or to instruct and sometimes discipline young and old.

The knowledge and wisdom of ancient and contemporary Indigenous peoples, especially their traditional ecological knowledge of specific homeplaces, represents a treasure trove of important but historically neglected environmental knowledge and wisdom. (Corsiglia and Snively, 2003, p.103).

The culture is how all four Nisga'a communities along the river interact with one another. The interaction between the four tribal clans (Raven, Eagle, Wolf and Killerwhale) is functional, as each respects the other and their place in the Nisga'a Nation. Every person contributes to culture, since it is how (s)he lives within the Nisga'a society and honors the clans in which s/he belongs. This also

includes "Indian" dancing with the Haida and Nisga'a Four Crest dancers. Many symbols are used within the clan systems to tell the history of the tribe. It is through these displays and interactions that the culture can be seen, heard and felt physically and emotionally. The knowledge gained through seeing and participating in these events cannot be gained from books. It must be experienced. Students who are able to do their post-secondary education on Nisga'a land are able to maintain their place in their clan and community and to learn through their involvement in cultural activities.

Knowledge is powerful in storytelling, as well as in directly experiencing the land and its resources as the Nisga'a people demonstrated in Volume IV, *The Land and Resources*. This volume includes invaluable information for future generations. The land provides all the materials needed to survive. This knowledge was respected and acknowledged within the Nisga'a Nation wilps (the Houses within the four clans). In the Traditional Nisga'a system of different wilps managed the organization of their harvesting activities in different ways (Nisga'a Tribal Council, 1995, p. 19).

An Indigenous methodology also respects the contribution of language to the process of research and education. Knowledge of the Nisga'a language is very important and tightly connected to the culture. For example, Sim'algax, speaking in Nisga'a, can teach many cultural lessons at once by just using the language. The Nisga'a language can instruct, advise and council all at once. Such as 'hawit', this is a command for stop. Using the traditional language, this command is softer and will get an immediate response of respect rather than using the English word 'stop'. Archibald also describes this understanding of the loss of translation when transferring stories from First Nations language to English. "Indigenous stories have lost much educational and social value due to colonization, which resulted in weak translations from Aboriginal languages to English (Archibald,

2008, p. 7). Telling and re-telling stories restores the system of knowledge transfer interrupted by colonization.

Cultural education at the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a is an important tool for storytelling and relearning cultural ways and languages. Education at the WWNI involves participation by local elders and other methods of bringing in the language and culture, including through technology, such as using the Nisga'a Language App. These are direct methods of learning about Nisga'a language and culture. In the Nisga'a culture, the main logo that represents the Nisga'a is a hayatskw known as a copper shield and this is also the logo for WWNI. It is a symbol of wealth among West Coast First Nations people. The copper shield alone visually represents the Nisga'a culture. Deanna Nyce recently commented that the hayatskw is a powerful symbol for the WWNI because education creates wealth.

Decolonizing Methodology

It is important for every Nisga'a and every First Nations person to hear their cultural stories that reflect a 'way of life' that has developed and corresponds to their ancestral lands, traditional foods and family lineage. As an oral culture, this is how learning skills are obtained and brought to the next generation. This is, and will continue to be, an ongoing process of instruction from generation to generation. Educating by storytelling is an important skill to bring forward. It provides clear understanding of who they are in society. This Nisga'a process of relearning involves all the cultural aspects of upholding oneself within their 'wilp' and demonstrating or relearning the 'laws' and the language that is in unison with the culture. Smith discusses the importance of First Nations peoples surfacing as scholars and having their stories "written by someone who grew up within Indigenous communities where stories about research and particularly about researchers (the

human carriers of research) were intertwined with stories about all other forms of colonization and injustice" (1999, p. 3). She continues with concern and recognition that "many Indigenous researchers have struggled individually to engage with the disconnections that are apparent between the demands of research, on one side, and the realities they encounter amongst their own and other Indigenous communities, with whom they share lifelong relationships, on the other side (Smith, 1999, p. 5). However, there is a steady growth of Indigenous researchers and it is about time First Nations start recording and produce written works of success because there is a lot of it (Smith, 1999, p. 7).

Relearning the Nisga'a stories in the Nisga'a language is crucial for each generation to pass on the accurate stories for future generations. This will ensure that no meaning is lost in translation if/when translated to English. There are different levels of Nisga'a language that is being taught at the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a. Having this educational facility is a manifestation of self-governance for the Nisga'a Nation. It replaces the colonization of institutional practices that were forced upon First Nations such as residential schools and the 'Potlatch Law' to name a few. Relearning the language is not only important, but also relearning the Nisga'a art that gave life to the cultural/family historical stories. During the potlatch law,

Much had already been taken away or destroyed. Playing in the crawl space under his grandfather's house in Gitwinksihlkw, the young Joseph Gosnell did not understand why anyone would carve such beautiful figures on the dusty wooden beams. It was only years later, after returning from residential school, that he realized the foundations of his grandfather's house had once been the towering Nisga'a totem poles that graced the main street of the remote village. (Rose, 2000, p. 156).

The above quote gives a powerful example of just one story that affected so many First Nations across Canada. These hidden carvings are an example of how the Nisga'a people maintained

their history and pride of who they were. This is also how the Nisga'a were able to regain their culture and their unique traditional art forms that are still used today

Re-Indigenizing Methodology

"Although there are limitations in applying research framework language to Indigenous ways of knowing, these frameworks can assist Indigenous researchers by naming and acknowledging three distinct aspects of Indigenous research: (a) the cultural knowledge's that guide one's research choices; (b) the methods used in searching; and (c) a way to interpret knowledge so as to give it back in a purposeful, helpful, and relevant manner" (Kovach, 2009, p. 43-44).

The importance of storytelling is an example of re-Indigenizing knowledge. Re-indigenizing means relearning and making the language and the culture Indigenous again. The very act of writing this thesis, which in some ways is my own storytelling, involved the process of story collecting, and then analyzing the stories' contents, is a re-indigenizing methodology. I am trying to contribute to help fill a lack of knowledge produced by Indigenous peoples, about Indigenous peoples, and am trying to fill a gap in the history of the Nisga'a Nation. This method of thesis writing is a re-storying of the educational history of the Nass Valley, of the Nisga'a people. Bearing in mind the essential Nisga'a law of respect, my research method included recording and presenting these stories in their entirety (edited only to remove filler words like 'um'). Finally, I had the interviewees review the edits for approval to include in this thesis. I then analyzed the stories in the context of Nisga'a culture.

The Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute is a place of re-indigenizing by providing an opportunity to re-unite the Nisga'a people with their culture and language. Deanna Nyce reflected that "it has been successful in bringing post-secondary studies and graduate completions that have continued to enter the workforce immediately. WWNI graduates are

often recruited to employment opportunities on or before their graduation" (personal communication, October 7, 2012). This success has been noted in the recent External Evaluators' Evaluation report. The late Dr. Renate Eigenbrod noted,

I consider the Institute's greatest strength its foundation in Nisga'a culture and language (the most heavily enrolled courses). This total reversal of residential school policies (which I heard often in my various conversations) contributes to building a healthy identity, confidence in one's capacity for leadership and therefore is a crucial aspect of decolonizing education corresponding with the goals and objectives of the Nisga'a Treaty achieved after 113 years of negotiations (2014, p.5).

The WWNI is also re-indigenizing the Nisga'a language by using technology through a partnership with First Voices; they launched the Nisga'a language app on January 25, 2012. This Nisga'a language app is a free download that can be accessed through the First Voices website <http://www.firstvoices.com>. It is commonly used in the WWNI classrooms and can be seen used at Nisga'a feasts. Nisga'a feasts are important events where the language is spoken. It is at the feasts that clan lineages are shared through storytelling of current and past generations. It is at the Nisga'a feasts that re-indigenizing occurs from the moment you walk in the door and this participation and experience will always remain with you as you encounter other aspects of life.

Connectedness, or a sense of belonging, is core to a culture. As stated previously, each person in an Indigenous culture is born and immediately a part of the culture and this relationship will occur for an entire lifespan. This is also seen in the Haida culture. When I became engaged to be married, my uncle Dempsey, the late Chief Skidegate, spoke to me about living within Nisga'a lands and within the Nisga'a culture. He stated that I was born Haida, and will always be Haida, and Haida Gwaii would always be my home. He told me

that my marriage was another thread in strengthening the relationship ties between the Haida and Nisga'a Nation. These words were said to me over twenty years ago, but I can still hear these words - they were and are, very powerful for me to hear. It is teachings and guidance from our Elders about our identity that is an important reminder of who we are and where we are from. These are all linked back to the methodology of storytelling.

There are many forms of re-Indigenizing such as repatriation of researching and bringing home traditional museum pieces, visiting archival collections of written pieces, photos and films. These would include the works of "both Franz Boas and Edward Sapir, two of the foremost scholars in the American Tradition, who studied the language and culture of the Nisga'a people..." (Anderson and Nyce, 1999 p. 283). These early anthropological works would convey a portion of a story of the Nisga'a history. In future, Nisga'a researchers will be able to work with their materials and re-incorporate them into the story of the Nisga'a nation. This will be a part of the re-indigenization process.

The main focus of re-Indigenizing is the willingness to learn and enhance the culture and then sharing this knowledge with others. First Nations peoples, including the Nisga'a Nation, have been using the method of storytelling for generations and have kept their culture alive and prospering. That will continue as 'long as the river flows'.

Chapter Five: The WWNI Student Stories

Our ancestors said, 'Go outside and you'll find something there. It's not going to come in here and say, here I am, take me! You got to go out and look for it. (Emma Nyce, "n.d", p.52).

Data Collection of WWNI Student Stories

I have chosen to collect information in the form of stories from four WWNI graduates. The process started with reviewing the WWNI alumni. It became clear to me that these students were a representation of each of the four Nisga'a villages, and at the same time representative each of the four Nisga'a clans. The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate the potential for successful delivery of post-secondary education in the culturally rich environment of the Nass Valley. The students selected are highly successful individuals. These students have all agreed to the use of their names, demonstrating in accordance to the Nisga'a Common bowl, that everything is shared. The four students are Kathryn, Allison, Pamela and Carey. Each student signed a participant consent letter (appendix E1).

I met with each student individually and conducted short interviews that were recorded. The interview process consisted of ten "in-depth, open-ended" questions. LeCompomte and Schensul note that "in-depth interviewing is...exploring a topic in detail to deepen the interviewer's knowledge of the topic. Open-ended refers to the fact that the interviewer is open to any and all relevant responses" (1999, p.121).

Once I had transcribed the interviews, each student reviewed the transcription for use in this thesis. The ten questions asked were based on the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute, family, Nisga'a culture and Nisga'a traditional lands:

1. What made you decide to attend WWNI?
2. How or what role did family have in your schooling?

3. What influences had effect on your decision to further your education?
4. Was attending WWNI on Traditional Nisga'a Lands an important factor?
5. How has attending WWNI impacted your educational growth, if any?
6. Describe your experiences at WWNI.
7. Do you practice the Nisga'a culture?
8. How do you identify yourself within the Nisga'a culture?
9. How and has active participation within the Nisga'a culture enhanced your educational experience as a student at WWNI?
10. Do you have any further comments you would like to add about your educational experiences with WWNI?

This primary source of information stems from the students' lived experience. This thesis gives the students a voice to encourage and inspire others. They embody an example of success, and, by sharing their stories, they provide insight into a formal education being obtained here in the Nass Valley. In addition to collecting stories, participant observation was also used in this study. The principal source of this was my being a direct participant and a community member for twenty one years in the Nisga'a Nation and an employee at the WWNI. This experience ensured a deeper understanding of myself within the research process. All students are all clearly known throughout the Nass Valley and as Schensul, Schensul and LeCompete explain: "We conduct ethnographic research because we find it can be an effective tool for both understanding and improving conditions faced by research participants and others in similar situations." (1999, p. 7). The ethnographic methods used for this thesis included observing the students being students for years and using open ended interviews with each participant to share their personal individual stories. Upon transcript approval from the students, I used the storytelling method to reflect their direct words to ensure accuracy of their stories. Although these students have graduated and are now

employed, we all still continue to have a mutual friendship and keep in contact regarding programs at the WWNI.

Direct quotes from the students were chosen and used to depict their experiences at the WWNI. Upon reviewing my interviews, themes began to surface about the shared experiences of being a student in the Nass. I then discussed these with the students, validating with them the fact of student life being hard but rewarding in the end. The validating of themes with participants, as others have noted, is part of storytelling: "that is, thematic narratives use field notes not as illustrations and examples of points that have already been made, but as building blocks for constructing and telling the story in the first place...The excerpts in an ethnographic story are not so much evidence for analytic points as they are the core of the story (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995, p.171).

WWNI Student Stories – Kathryn, Allison, Pamela and Carey

Every journey is different for every student. However, most students experience personal growth. I hope that sharing their stories will be an inspiration to those beginning their own journey in academia and during their studies. All students can relate to the shortage of time when trying to balance school, work, personal life and a family life. What is unique with the four Nisga'a students in this story is that they were able to attend university within their four communities; they were still able to maintain important connections and participate in community and cultural activities such as feasts, family functions and preparing traditional foods throughout the year.

As shown by Cruishank (1990) and Archibald (2008), storytelling is a powerful tool for accessing the knowledge that members of a culture have to share and understanding it in its cultural context. Individuals who have a strong grounding in a culture often shape their

own experiences in ways that fit with important themes in their culture. In the Nass Valley, an important aspect of culture, something that many themes can be drawn from, one that is highly meaningful is the Nass River itself. This is beautifully illustrated in the well-known use of the river as a cultural theme by Chief Joseph Gosnell when he stated, at the signing of the Nisga'a Treaty that "Our canoe has landed." I have used aspects of the river as a metaphor to segment the information that was offered by the four successful graduates into parallel sections.

The four Nisga'a students' stories have been divided into four thematic sections, each reflecting a metaphoric aspects of the K'al'ii Aksim Lisims, otherwise known as the Nass River. The four sections are 1) Taking the Helm, Exploring Options, 2) Life Currents, 3) Learning to Paddle, and 4) Coming ashore. It is appropriate to use K'al'ii Aksim Lisims since this river connects all four Nisga'a communities and is a valuable resource providing traditional foods, and it was a means of transportation for previous generations. These four stories will represent the four communities and the four tribes of the Nisga'a Nation, starting in the upper Nass with Gitlak'damix, and proceed to the lower Nass with Gitwinksihlkw, Laxgalts'ap and Gingolx.

Kathryn's Story

Kathryn's journey is inspirational. She grew up in the lower mainland and returned to the Nass Valley in the eighth grade. She went directly from high school to UNBC, a large university far from the Valley. She had some major turbulence and rerouted back home to attend the WWNI and then returned to UNBC to graduate. In between she had travelled to Switzerland and worked as an *au pair* for six months, before returning to her studies. Her story illustrates the fact that there are diverse routes to completing and working toward your education and each journey is unique to each individual student.

Taking the Helm, Exploring Options

Kathryn is from Wilps Gitxhoon, Laxgiik tribe and resides in the Nisga'a Village of Gitlaxt'aamiks. She graduated from Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School (N.E.S.S.), in 1999 and went directly to the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George in the Bachelor of Arts Program as a full time student enrolled in five courses. With little direction or how to use the university student services, Kathryn explains her experience,

I enrolled in five classes and at that time I was just 18 years old. I wasn't sure how many courses to take, there wasn't much guidance and how many courses you needed to take and what was considered full-time. I ended up failing two courses that semester and another two the following semester...So, after that I came home because I was put on academic probation and it freaked the hell out of me.

Once Kathryn had returned home, she was upset, but wanted to pursue her education. She met with Deanna Nyce, President and Chief Executive Officer, Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute and together they formulated a plan. Having failed the courses at UNBC, Kathryn was placed on academic probation and was restricted to three or fewer courses until her grades improved. Therefore, Deanna scheduled weekly meetings to ensure Kathryn's progress and guidance with papers and other assignments. This arrangement improved Kathryn's marks and gave her an organized routine of how to be a student. This gave her back her confidence to continue on to her degree. Within two semesters Kathryn's academic probation was removed.

Kathryn began her journey with great expectations and was met with turbulences that overwhelmed her from meeting her goals of succeeding in all her courses during her first year of university. This route was a learning experience in her young adult life. She learned how to be a university student after she failed a few courses, by developing the skills needed to succeed at university.

Life Currents

Kathryn states that "I was a victim of circumstance and it didn't start off as being my choice to be at WWNI. But, it really helped being at home and having the support of family and friends..." Returning home gave her the support and a place in the community. Kathryn continued to hold her head above water and utilize the local UNBC campus at the WWNI. With WWNI being a fraction of the size of UNBC, she benefited from smaller classes, more direct participation and not being intimidated to use her voice amongst her peers. When Kathryn was at the UNBC campus, this was also the time the Nisga'a Treaty was being implemented and she found herself in some classes discussing politics of First Nations Government, "I was one in a hundred people in the great auditorium (class)...The Nisga'a Treaty would come up and it was really hard to sit there, maybe the only one (First Nations) sitting there...quite a lot of them (classmates) upset about it and thinking it was a new set of government, a separate set". This feeling of being singled out in classes can be very intimidating even though the comments made are not intended to single you out, you know who you are and this is your home they are discussing. This type of discussion can isolate any person very quickly as if fighting an unexpected rogue wave on the river. Students may not agree with all discussions or comments in a class situation, but when a topic that is personal to an individual student becomes a topic of controversy, it can interrupt her ability to learn. The WWNI gave Kathryn a route to be able to continue with her studies, since the WWNI courses are all UNBC courses, she was able to stay within her intended field of study.

Learning to Paddle

Attending WWNI, Kathryn once again became immersed in the Nisga'a culture activities with family and friends; she found balance as if she righted her canoe. She reflects back that,

It definitely built my confidence. I came home from UNBC shattered. All I kept thinking was I failed, I failed and then with the support of the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a - the smaller class sizes and the location was so close, I was able to just walk down. I didn't have to worry about transportation. I didn't have to take the bus. I didn't have to worry about when the buses were on strike...It (WWNI) helped me become more responsible as a student.

For Kathryn, being able to participate in the Nisga'a culture was very important to her as a member of the Nisga'a Nation. She states "It is who I am". She notes that she learned a lot reading the Clan Histories text, developed by the WWNI for the Nisga'a culture program and shared this new knowledge with her family members,

It was neat to read our own story, our traditional story and when my uncle or when our great uncles were talking about it, I could hear them and say I know that, and I know what's going to happen next. And I was telling my uncle about, he is the Chief of our house, I was telling him about the story and he just continued on and said he didn't read it, it was passed down, it is the same story, it just reaffirms the validity of what we are reading when we can talk to somebody and they know the same thing without them having read it.

Attending the WWNI, strengthened Kathryn's student skills and also strengthened her Nisga'a identity. With this new self-confidence, she returned to the UNBC Prince George campus to complete her final year towards her degree.

Coming Ashore

Returning to UNBC's Prince George campus, Kathryn realized how much she had grown from a graduating high school student when she first arrived at the university. Now she was aware of the tools that were available to her all along, such as student services, the First Nations Centre, the Library and being able to use her voice to raise any concerns directly with her instructors. Needless to say, Kathryn had a successful year and participated

at the UNBC convocation and the WWNI convocation to share her success with her family and friends. Currently, Kathryn is employed with the WWNI as the Executive Secretary and freely shares her experience with students attending the WWNI and with the N.E.S.S. past and current grade 12 students. She always tells students "Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a set me up for more success and knowing who I was and what I needed to do and different services that were available...I wasn't that defeated little 18 year old when I went back. I was confident and I succeeded and graduated".

Allison's Story

Allison grew up in Gitwinksihlkw. However, when her mother moved to Vancouver to complete her Masters of Education at UBC, Allison finished her grade 12 year in the lower mainland and stayed to enter undergraduate studies. She is continuing the tributary current of a second generation to acquire higher education. Although, Allison has acquired both degrees, her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts outside of the WWNI, she attended WWNI to take Nisga'a Language and Nisga'a Culture courses.

Taking the Helm, Exploring Options

Allison is from Wilps Niist'axok', Gisk'aast tribe and grew up in the Nisga'a Village of Gitwinksihlkw. She currently resides in the lower mainland but is employed at the WWNI as the Funds Development Officer and is a long standing and current instructor. Her main interests at the WWNI have been in the Nisga'a language and Nisga'a culture courses. At this time Allison was a student in the lower mainland but was also a Nisga'a Language instructor in Vancouver while completing her studies. When she acquired her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of British Columbia and she moved home and was employed by the Nisga'a Lisims Government. Allison recalls her interest in the WWNI programs,

The Nisga'a studies program was for professional development, because I took on the role as the Manager of Ayuukhl Nisga'a Department, the cultural laws of the Nisga'a, and one of the requirements was that I was to increase my fluency in the language; both written and oral. And then the other courses I hoped to gain some more knowledge to help teach the courses that I was teaching for WWNI...I could not have gotten that kind of professional development anywhere else. Nisga'a studies is their at Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a institute and I think it really, it definitely strengthened my ability to work for Lisims Government in the Ayuukhl Nisga'a Department and it strengthened my ability as an instructor as well.

Life Currents

During this time attending the WWNI, she had a surge of responsibilities. Allison started a family, was working full-time, teaching part-time and was a part-time student. Her path had led her on many different routes all at once, like a surge of ongoing waves, and of course there were periods of rough choppy waters. But, Allison was very organized and was able to traverse these waves and keep afloat. She strongly states that "family is definitely important...with the basics; like financial help...family support, you know that is necessary. I couldn't have been able to take the courses without their help. They were extremely supportive".

Learning to Paddle

Attending WWNI, had influenced and confirmed Allison's wish to further her education. With the ongoing support of her family, she continued on her educational journey once again.

Helping me to see that opportunity was there and I should take it. You know, giving me the confidence to try. Because I was not going to do my MA at WWNI, since it was not an option. I was having to move to Prince George, not just myself, but my family. They just make it less scary that I had some knowns; I had a place to stay, that I knew I had funding. These are things that I could count on that made it less

scary to move and study for my masters. Not just from my parents, but from my grandmother. It has always been her biggest thing was that education was going to be your way that you're going to succeed and if you can make something of that then you go for it and take that opportunity.

Going away to school is always a huge move and an adjustment especially when you move from a rural area such as Gitwinksihlkw, which is the smallest of the four Nisga'a communities.

Coming Ashore

Allison was a student of WWNI and during her time there she decided to continue her education through a graduate program. One of her only options was to move to Prince George, where she attended UNBC and completed the Master of Arts degree. She then came full circle again, and as stated earlier, is currently employed and teaching at the WWNI. Allison ends with a few words of advice, "I would say to current and future students is to take the opportunity, get the work done and just do it because it raises up our community."

Pamela's Story

Pamela grew up in the lower mainland and returned home for a contract position. She was very interested in completing her degree at the WWNI. The WWNI gave her the opportunity to work and her family contributed with evening childcare while she attended classes. As a single parent, she credits her family and the WWNI courses with completing her degree.

Taking the Helm, Exploring Options

Pamela is from Wilps Nagwa'um, Laxgibuu tribe and resides in the Nisga'a Village of Laxgalts'ap. While attending WWNI, Pamela was employed with Nisga'a Fisheries. She clearly expressed wanting to complete her degree while working and then continuing on to law school.

The WWNI offered a degree program for my BA in First Nations Studies and I need that degree to get into Law school, so it gave me an avenue when I was looking for something to help me in the Law degree program and working with First Nations...I was able to finish that degree (BA) within two years and I was really pleased with that.

Pamela's experience was a gushing surge of waves that was always in motion. She worked, went to school and was a single parent, her time was precious and she had an agenda each day and carried out each item like small creeks making their way to the river.

Life Currents

Pamela would always comment on the four Nisga'a culture volumes and how amazing they were, especially since she did not grow up here. She commented that,

I have learned so much from those volumes, like cultural aspects. I did not grow up here in the valley, I grew up in the lower mainland and it was a really good eye opener to what is going on with the culture here and you can see the parallels of how they talk about a long time ago to today.

During her studies, Pamela joined in many hallway discussions with other students about what they read. They shared quotations from different elders from the volumes and which clan or houses they belonged to. These conversations usually carried into the classroom.

Learning to Paddle

Pamela had also attended another post-secondary institution in the lower mainland but found it difficult on her own. Moving home and attending WWNI helped.

I was going to school and being a single parent at the same time and working so I depended on my family for care giving for my children because I was working then going to school. I was gone from eight in the morning until nine or ten at night, so I relied heavily on my family and being around was a lot easier than in the city trying

to find someone to look after my kids, almost 12 hours of the day. It helped having the family around and without them I would have definitely struggled financially and emotionally as well.

Pamela comments that it is amazing to go to school and still be able to participate in cultural functions. She was busy, between going to school and attending many cultural functions to fulfill her cultural duties trying to attend every function. The Nisga'a Cultural Calendar is usually full and dates are reserved one to three years in advance.

Coming Ashore

Pamela has completed her Bachelor of Arts degree and is still exploring Law schools in the lower mainland. In the meantime, she is keeping busy and working for the Nisga'a Village of Laxgalts'ap. She ended her story with kind words,

I miss WWNI, I could do my master's degree but I am going for my law degree instead. I love WWNI, I think that it is a unique institution and a lot of people would benefit from it and I am hoping your numbers would go up in the next few years and have more graduates come out of here.

Carey's Story

Carey's story was interesting to me since we both attended school in Prince Rupert and his dedication to obtaining his education astounded me. Carey had a young family and their residence remained in Prince Rupert. Carey made weekly trips to attend WWNI for his classes, which were in New Aiyansh at that time, and then he returned home to Prince Rupert for the weekends.

Taking the Helm, Exploring Options

Carey is from Wilps Ksim Xs'aan, Ganada tribe and from the Nisga'a Village of Gingolx. He was introduced to WWNI by a current student during a visit to his mother and while submitting his resume for teacher on call position at N.E.S.S. He had been taking

courses with Northwest Community College in Prince Rupert and was working towards his degree with the goal of becoming a teacher. During that same week Carey visited WWNI and met with Deanna Nyce, they planned out his courses to complete his degree and how to obtain funding. He still clearly recalls this meeting with Deanna,

Right away she asked what courses have you taken at the community college and she asked to you have a plan on what you want to do and I was volunteering at the schools. And I mentioned I want to get into teaching and so we plotted our way through it. I still remember when she phoned they were saying that Nisga'a Studies was not a teachable subject and she had argued the fact that yes it is, saying we have language and culture teachers here that are certified. This is going into my practicum for my diploma and I had to make sure I had a teachable subject so Deanna phoned to straighten it out and I was so proud and so happy. So, it [WWNI] has impacted me quite a bit.

Carey started at the WWNI the following fall with a weekly commute between New Aiyansh and Prince Rupert for two years. He also still gives thanks for the introduction to WWNI and Deanna Nyce. He states, "I do not think I would be here (as the N.E.S.S. Vice Principal and completing my masters), if I had not taken that phone call regarding WWNI and the introduction to Deanna...after my degree I recall the WWNI staff and Deanna saying, "You got potential guy, you have got to do something. It was good!"

Life Currents

Carey clearly has many positive memories of WWNI and as the Vice Principal at N.E.S.S., he is a great motivator to the students to stay in school and continue on to their degrees. Carey's decision to live in Prince Rupert, but study at the WWNI led to both struggles and benefits of being away from home for schooling purposes. For Carey, as for many students, writing was a challenge that was like treading water. He shares his views on this point,

I had some problems with my writing. It still bothers me today that I am not an English writer. The WWNI staff supported me to put it all on paper first, so I typed like crazy and then the editing process...I can really appreciate the support of all my instructors, each and every one of them...That is what we do here and is what has gotten me here today to make sure that all our people, all our Nisga'a members are looked after. You always keep yourself aware of who is around you and you need supporters, it is important. The staff at WWNI also gave me that push.

Carey returned home each weekend, and he always returned on Monday energized for his courses. He claimed that he got more work done, it seems negative but was actually positive. "You see my wife and my kids all live in Prince Rupert and I am up here going to school. I just found more time to do my school work, more focused". As an observer, his positivity in his work and family greatly contributed to his success.

Learning to Paddle

Living in Prince Rupert his entire life, Carey explains his first visits returning home to his traditional territory in the Nisga'a Nation,

I was never born or raised here, it was 2000 when I first or second time I came up here. But, that was my cultural shock, coming up here, I was so used to hearing sirens and the city life. When I moved up here I was really nervous to start walking around Kincolith...we went for a walk every night and I met so many people just by walking. That really opened up and tore down the culture shock that I was feeling.

Carey continues that he had thoroughly enjoyed his experience with the WWNI, but the Nisga'a culture courses were the most memorable. Learning about the different aspects of the culture. He started saying the blessing in Nisga'a at the principal meetings. And co-workers would speak Nisga'a to him as well, that really pushed him to learn more. These experiences created smooth waters in his educational journey. Carey describes one class trip,

I even went down to Greenville to hang oolichans with a couple of colleagues from WWNI. Some student mentioned it and I said I had never done it so, one student invited us all to come help her hang oolichans and the whole class went down to Greenville. And one of my reports was on that, the process of how to prepare oolichans. And one story that always sticks to me about that is my expressive language that I am trying to unfold in my writing, is when a potato was thrown in the tube and filled with water, this is outside of the smokehouse. There had to be enough salt so that the potato would float up. This is how you know the brine is ready. While the potato did not float and the water was white with salt, and tasted the water and it was too salty, but the potato did not float up, so we felt around for the potato, but it and sure enough the potato was rotten. It is things like that, that I think of when I am writing and even with our cultural background, we have little reminders of what to do next and the reason why we did it. As with the oolichans, when I write, I try to be descriptive then I can put people in that place. This is where the culture portion helps, active participation.

He then stated that this little outing would stick in his memories forever and this gave him another inside look at the Nisga'a culture and how his ancestors lived.

Coming Ashore

During the two years while attending WWNI, Carey had always stated that his dream was to move back here with his wife. He has now completed his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts. He is still the Vice Principal at N.E.S.S. advocating for education and he is a permanent resident with his wife, who is also in the educational field. Carey also expressed his thoughts for potential WWNI students,

It is better to attend here at the WWNI because it is like family, I do not want to say family, but it is like a family. We will look after you, we are here. That was the message I am getting and walked away with.

Reflections

As the Registrar for WWNI, I have seen many students - like Kathryn, Allison,

Pamela and Carey - become more confident in their identity of who they are. This knowledge that is credited and learned from the Nisga'a culture and Nisga'a language is powerful for each student and at the same time it is rewarding, as an employee, to witness these personal educational journeys that enable each student to thrive in their traditional surroundings.

In this chapter I have recounted four stories of students who have studied at the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute. I have divided the stories into parallel sections based on the metaphor of a journey on Lisims, and shown that each student has come ashore to their own completion, just as the Nisga'a Nation came ashore in the treaty process. In the next chapter, I will examine the themes that I have found in these stories and connect them back to the theories that have helped me to see them clearly, particularly theoretical contributions on decolonization and re-indigenization.

Chapter Six: Journey of Knowledge

WWNI contributes greatly to the quality of life in the Nass Valley, to the preservation and growth of the Nisga'a culture and language, and to governance issues in the Valley. These contributions, and the many others WWNI makes, have made a notable difference and have changed the lives of the students. Students report such changes as diverse as successfully completing post graduate degrees...For People living in a relatively isolated area, the WWNI is an important institution. (McDonald, 2004/2005, p. 60).

Reflection of the WWNI Students' Stories – Kathryn, Allison, Pamela and Carey

In this chapter I will discuss the themes that I have found in the stories of four successful graduates of the WWNI. I have drawn on the theoretical insights of authors who have written about First Nations storytelling to explain how important it is for people to hear stories from someone they can identify with as discussed in Chapter Four. I have used the metaphor of the Nass River itself as a way of structuring the content of the students' stories in Chapter 5. This chapter will examine the themes that I have identified in light of the theoretical perspectives of the storytelling literature.

The WWNI adheres to and delivers the Nisga'a Nation's request for post-secondary courses in their communities along the Nass River. My interest in the Master's program is to study the impact that the WWNI has made on the Nisga'a Nation by providing post-secondary education not only for the nation overall but for community members as individuals.

It is important for each current and potential student to know that, regardless of which Nisga'a community or tribe each person is from, each person has the capability to succeed. Success in education has the ability to substantially improve one's well-being and self-confidence and to contribute to occupational security, financial security, and future

sustainability. This success also contributes to the longevity and preservation of the Nisga'a culture and the Nisga'a Nation.

Obtaining success involves internal motivation and external support. When education is offered in the Nass Valley, the support available draws on the Nisga'a culture, including generations of storytelling with which the Nisga'a Nation has remained strong and continues to persevere. The WWNI has contributed to the wealth of knowledge that is shared and obtained with the assistance of education in the Valley. With the support of Kathryn, Allison, Pamela and Carey, I have been able to put a recognizable face to the stories of success from within the Nisga'a Nation.

Support is all around you; in your family, in your Wilp, and in the Nisga'a Nation. WWNI Graduates' success stories are seen throughout the Nass Valley, however, this thesis focused on only Kathryn, Allison, Pamela and Carey. Their success is echoed many times in the educational successes of other students. By extending educational services to the WWNI, UNBC has raised the quality of higher education beyond the main campus in Prince George and other regional campuses in the South-Central and Northeast and the urban communities of Terrace and Prince Rupert in Northwestern British Columbia.

Working with WWNI students since November 1994, provided me with direct communication with each student and each instructor. This involved supplying course schedules, advising on the requirements for certificates and degrees, and documenting a schedule of goals for completion. Communication with the students was important to me, to talk about what they were writing about, assisting them with research, and also to provide moral support. As the Student Support and Registration Administrator, I am in constant contact with each student regarding their course scheduling and conferring with them on their

performance in courses, and assisting where possible with administrative aspects of their studies. Many students are competent with their coursework and require little external guidance, but reinforcement can be helpful, and discussing their work with an interested person often helps them to formulate their own ideas more clearly. I usually ask how their papers/projects/assignments are progressing and sometimes I can offer assistance by reminding them of the cultural lessons that they are researching. Many of these lessons can be directly experienced in every season throughout the year by participating in harvesting and cultural activities. I often direct students to one of the Nisga'a publications so they can see the words directly from an elder, or encourage them to interview an elder, or a family member. This is also when I remind them that everything starts with the first Nisga'a law: respect. I also remind them of my own student experience and tell them that I understand that the hours in the day run quickly by as does the river. I also remind them, if we take a moment to observe the river, we can also see the calmness of the currents. I can help students with my knowledge of the administrative procedures of the university in my official capacity, and I can also provide peer support with my experience as a student myself.

My interest in the Master of Arts program was to study the impact that the WWNI has made in the Nisga'a Nation by providing post-secondary education on Nisga'a territory. This is where my Bachelor of Arts Degree was obtained, while processing numerous applications for students who also obtained certificates and degrees. This is what I do, I assist students in obtaining and furthering their education. Working in a post-secondary institute such as WWNI is rewarding on many different levels. At the WWNI I can make a difference, and can even help change the course of a person's life. The impact of the WWNI can be seen

in many ways, including graduates from two (and three!) generations of Nisga'a families.

WWNI is "A small school, making a big difference".

Exploring the Students' Stories

When I chose to write about the WWNI, I knew that somehow, the Nass River also known as Kalii Aksim, should figure somehow in the story of education in the Nass Valley. Using the river as a metaphor helped me to describe the journey of learning for each student. Learning can be seen as parallel with the river since it is always moving forward and is a powerful force that cannot be stopped. Each student embarked on an educational journey that took many years and that flowed forward despite obstacles. This River can be used as a theme that evokes images of moving forward in time and the overall journey of life. I chose to draw on the river as a metaphor as it is parallel with the Nisga'a culture, in that you can spend a lifetime observing the culture and the river, as both are full of unbounded energy and constantly striving forward. This is a theme that occurs frequently in Nisga'a oratory and storytelling.

This thesis tells the story of four Nisga'a students who embarked on an educational journey. Their stories have been carefully considered through the tools discussed earlier in Chapter 4, in relation to the theoretical framework. The collected stories, viewed through the perspective of decolonization and re-indigenizaion theories, show how the process of re-indigenizing has given students at the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute such as Kathryn, Allison, Pamela and Carey, the ability to link academics to the Nisga'a culture. In her interview, Allison commented on the importance of learning in a small institution where other students and instructors share experiences and cultural insights. She mentioned the:

Caring, learning environment, you have a lot of one-on-one time with the instructor. The instructor understands what is happening, not just in your academic life, but

your home life and community life as well. Where at UBC, it did not matter what was happening at home or in my community. The courses ran, they stayed on course, you had to hand in your stuff on time, and you are in a class of 300-500 people. The instructor barely knows how to put your name to your face at UBC. Courses were definitely different at Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl. I really enjoyed having that interaction, you don't just have the interacting in the classroom, but you have it in the community as well. So you see that these instructors' are living what they are teaching, it just makes it more real, more relevant to our learning.

The students at WWNI are not only obtaining higher education, they are learning cultural stories, and the history of the Nisga'a. This knowledge is obtained from Nisga'a publications and from the Nisga'a Elders who graciously visit the classrooms to share and pass on their knowledge. This direct education in the culture is priceless. It helps students know who they are today and gives them an understanding of the previous generations' successes and challenges in all aspects of Nisga'a social and economic life that are told through forms of storytelling. A prime example of this involves Nisga'a lands and its environment. Nisga'a Language instructor Verna Williams shared an example of this knowledge that she had learned as a young woman from her father:

When looking down across the valley on the right hand side of Gitlaxt'aamiks, there is a profile of a bear's head hidden in the trees. My father explained, that you monitor this area during the month of November and if the snout of the bear is covered with snow, then there would be a lot of snow that winter. (Personal Communication, October 6, 2006).

This is one example of storytelling of observing Nisga'a lands, but there is so much knowledge in the Nisga'a Nation that it is very difficult for one individual to attain all this information.

Emerging Student Themes

The four students were not only informally observed throughout their attendance at the WWNI, but for the purpose of this thesis were formally interviewed on their student experiences while they attended the WWNI. From both the ethnographic observations and the careful analysis of the stories, a number of themes, or stories, have emerged. It was clear that two themes united all four students' journeys. These themes were 1) The Voyage of Discovering their identity through Education and 2) the Cultural Empowerment of Knowledge. I will expand on these two themes in the next section.

Voyage of discovering your identity with education

Kathryn recalls always being prompted by her mother to continue with her education. "When I was small, my mother always said when you go to University...it was never a question of, if I go and we were always given support by our mother saying when you graduate, you will go here, here, here". The seedling of the plan to attend post-secondary education encouraged Kathryn to pursue her education and led her to attend UNBC directly from high school. UNBC was close to home but still far enough away to be on her own. Fortunately, upon returning home after her first year, that was discouraging in not meeting all her goals, Kathryn had the strength and courage to complete her journey of receiving her degree. She says that going to WWNI "built my confidence". It was during this time at WWNI and taking Nisga'a culture courses that Kathryn discovered in the readings and discussions that "It is who I am, I am Nisga'a!". Kathryn is the third generation of her family to attend the WWNI.

Allison completed her final year of high school in the lower mainland and went directly to UBC to obtain her Bachelor of Arts. During this time she also co-taught the first

level of Nisga'a Language for the WWNI in the lower mainland. Allison is one of WWNI's longstanding instructors; she also currently teaches various Nisga'a culture courses. It was not until she moved home, after obtaining her degree and began working at the Nisga'a Lisims Government, that she attended the WWNI to reinforce and obtain more knowledge in Nisga'a language and Nisga'a culture. Allison further explains the importance of active participation with the Nisga'a culture and enhancing her educational goals from a viewpoint of both an instructor and student,

I could not teach the courses that I teach without having the knowledge of the Nisga'a culture and I cannot have the Nisga'a knowledge of the culture without actively participating in it. They are directly linked, the two cannot be separated. I think that is what makes at least me, a good instructor or a sympathetic instructor is that I can realize where people are at in their journey and I can help them find ways to help them and that definitely comes from having the strong Nisga'a culture background. The two are interlinked.

Allison has a strong belief in researching and learning from cultural traditions and stated that "...half of your learning comes from just being part of the community". Allison's own sense of identity was already well-developed when she started teaching and taking courses at WWNI, but she was strengthened by the process of sharing the culture in the community with the students she teaches.

Pamela had a goal and that was to complete her degree. She is a first generation graduate, and in turn she has become stronger in her cultural identity. She is now a role model not only to her community members but also her immediate family,

I did some papers and had to involve my Granny and a couple of my aunts and uncles for feedback. I think also that my courses encouraged me to attend more feasts for one and with me going to school and I was the only one in my immediate family at

the time actually encouraged a lot of my family members to continue on with their education. That if I could do it as well. There have been a couple of family members in my immediate family that have decided to continue on with their education at the same time as working and they are going through WWNI and that is great. So, I am hoping that more of my family members can see that they could do it too.

Having students like Pamela sharing her experience with family members is common and it is rewarding that student success can continue with WWNI students becoming leaders by example in their communities.

Carey shared that having a family and being able to be the best example to his children motivated him to go back to school. He said "I will start with reading to my oldest daughter. I really had struggled with reading her this story book and that is what started putting the bug in me to go back to school". Carey went back to school starting with upgrading and then came to WWNI. He graduated with his Bachelor's degree and continued with his Master of Arts degree. During this time he voiced his admiration for his family who were pushing him while writing his thesis. "My family knew that I struggled with my writing so they kept giving me that encouragement, my kids would say keep going dad, you are almost done". Carey was in the writing process of his Master's program when I interviewed him and he stated "Last night my daughter sent me an email to ask if I sent off Chapter 4 of my thesis. She is still pushing me, it is amazing." Having family support and having those around you cheering for you to succeed is very humbling and is a strong motivator to complete your goals. Carey's identity as a Nisga'a man and a role model for his family were strengthened through his success at the WWNI.

Cultural empowerment of knowledge

When I questioned Kathryn about her experiences at the WWNI, her first response was in reference to the Nisga'a culture,

With the cultural courses, it was really interesting to read the volumes and to be able to line the people in some of the exercises that we had where they would ask who is such and such a chief, who holds that chieftainship and who held it before. It really showed the lineage. Also with our cultural duties, for example, when aunt or uncle or cousin , who was not sure what was to happen next or why this was happening. I was able to help and say this is why, the course content really helped with my understanding of the culture and how it relates to our society.

In considering the theoretical perspectives of my research, an important thread was the re-indigenation of education. As is evident in Kathryn's comments, the Nisga'a culture courses offered at the WWNI helped her to become stronger in her cultural knowledge. This is a form of re-indigenization of education. Furthermore, Kathryn's ability to then explain cultural practices to her family strengthened her cultural identity, empowered her family, and connected her to the long tradition of oral transmission of knowledge in Nisga'a culture, particularly the role of strong women passing down their knowledge.

The cultural knowledge that is directly passed on from generation to generation is done so from the heart and it strengthens the identity of where you are from. Allison reminiscences that:

It would probably start off with my grandmother because in all of the Nisga'a studies [courses] you are required to do any kind of interview or research on the culture or the language. She was always the first one there to help me out. So, without her knowledge half of my papers would not have been written. And then, also my parents, just discussing or talking with them about what I was learning or teaching at WWNI really helped bring a greater community...

The sharing of cultural knowledge gives a solid foundation of your identity. Adding the academic knowledge was always important in Allison's family. She commented that "It has always been her [grandmother] biggest thing was that education was going to be your way that you are going to succeed and if you can make something of that then you go for it and take that opportunity". With this knowledge, Allison has demonstrated her respect for the Nisga'a culture into her teaching style,

I teach for WWNI and I like to incorporate aspects of the philosophy and knowing the capabilities of each and every student and just being more empathic to the situations that we find ourselves in our daily lives. That is one way that I help to practice the culture. Just to be open to the Nisga'a philosophy in the Nisga'a way of education.

One comment that was repeated when interviewing Pamela was how grateful she was to be able to gain academic knowledge and the Nisga'a cultural knowledge at the same time:

I would attend the feasts when I could and even brought my books along at feasts to read. I was able to be within the vicinity where I wouldn't have to take time off from school... sometimes it would even tie into my culture classes, I would go to a feast and hand in some report that I had learned during that day or something that I became aware of that I was not aware of with the culture. One of my teachers had all of us do that at one feast, so we attended and were able to give a report back. It was very accommodating to the culture as well.

Attending feasts was a learning experience and at the same time, as a guest to the feast, you are witnessing the history of the practices of that Wilp. This direct participation and direct observation is crucial in order to carry on the culture, because as a witness you become a storyteller to those that were not in attendance. Pamela also indicated that participating in feasts reflected her learning process:

To read about it, then practice it at the same time, that is basically what I was doing-learning about our culture and where I came from because I never grew up here. So, there is definitely a great parallel between what you read in the books and what you actually experience in the community...To live it and to learn it at the same time and that is one thing that sticks when you are trying to learn something. Well, for me anyways is that to read is something, but to do it is another. You cannot get those things out of a book.

Pamela's experience in education and being able to re-indigenize herself by fully immersing in the community cultural practices contributes to not only Pamela's identity, but strengthens the Nisga'a Nation's identity of who they are by continuing with their ancestral cultural practices.

Learning a culture and participating in a culture are personal experiences that are different for everyone, but to learn new ways of knowing is powerful. Storytelling is an important aspect of learning. The entire story, however, is never revealed all at once, this gives the opportunity for the listener to absorb and reflect what they have learned. Carey had a similar experience,

Look at the bentwood box, when I was with Edward McMillan's class that first year in the Nisga'a culture class, I met four carvers from the Nass Valley. We started talking about bentwood boxes and that was my first project for class. They were telling me what their grandfathers told them about bending wood. So, I studied it and pulled up all these books about bentwood boxes and I studied and studied it and wrote about it. When I went to go do it, my wood would not bend. I steamed the heck out of it and it just would not bend. Just could not figure out what was missing, and it took me about a week to figure it out. These guys would say you need to figure it out. So, I went back and took a look at my notes, step by step and sure enough, back then, they used seaweed to hold the steam in. I had nothing holding the steam in. So, I grabbed a rag and threw it in the boiling water to get the steam in and hang it over the

cedar and all of a sudden, within 20-30 minutes, you could see it starting to bow and bend, it was the seaweed I was missing. That really helped me out, putting that experience into writing with what were the struggles and difficulties. For that whole week, I could not figure it out until I went back to find the missing ingredient. This is just like they say in order to know the culture, you have to live it. There is a huge process and if a person thinks they are going to come into a culture and figure everything is going to be done for them, you have to do it for yourself.

Many cultural stories do not readily reveal their true meanings or lessons to be learned. It is the reader's responsibility to process it in order to gain a deeper understanding of what and why this story is being shared. Another way is to use metaphors to help assist with the vision of telling a story.

The two themes that I have identified in the stories from four students have been illustrated here with specific comments from the students. For each of them, their experience at WWNI was important in the development of their personal identity and their cultural competence. They became stronger Nisga'a citizens, and have been able to pass along their knowledge to their families and to others in the community. Their education has been a journey in decolonization and the re-indigenization of education in the Nass Valley.

Student representation

For this thesis, I chose four students who were willing open participants in sharing their academic stories. Together, these four students are representatives of the WWNI-UNBC alumni. Together, but in different academic terms, they unknowingly became my inspiration and role models for my thesis. Like many students they began their journey by taking courses as part-time students, and many of them become full-time students. This speeds their progression of studies quickly and results in obtaining certificates and then flows on to the Bachelor of Arts degree. This progression was like it started with a raindrop that quickly

streamed into a tributary. It was amazing to observe. Not only did the students obtain credentials, but at the same time, their personal growth and empowerment throughout the process were both evident and admirable. This growth was also met with turbulences such as obtaining and maintaining educational funding, employment, and the balance of time management between being a student, being involved in family functions, and being able to have a personal life with personal time for oneself.

The Wilp Wilx̱o'oskw̱hl Nisga'a Institute is an educational facility that enables Nisga'a citizens not only to enhance their education but also helps them become part of the Nisga'a Nation in learning the culture and learning the importance of who they are. Attending WWNI benefits not only themselves and their family, but also the Nisga'a Nation as they succeed and prosper.

This educational journey along Kalii Aksim Lisims and being part of the WWNI-UNBC alumni will always connect not only Kathryn, Allison, Pamela and Carey, but also every WWNI student, WWNI Board Member, WWNI Faculty and WWNI Staff. This canoe has always been upright and full of passengers through their journey. "The Nass River is the lifeblood of an uncommonly rich watershed. It ties Nisga'a villages to each other and Nisga'a Lands to the sea. It connects the past to the future" ("Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada", 2002).

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Vision for the Future

In an oral culture, the true wealth of the nation flows from one generation to the next through the spoken word. Yuuhlimk'askw. Yuuhlimk'askw is guidance and education. It ensures the next generation is prepared to lead when their time comes. A central concept in Nisga'a society. It is just one way of sharing the wisdom of the elders. (Nisga'a Nation, Province of British Columbia and Government of Canada. 2000, cover to p. 3).

I chose to write about the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute and tell the story of Nisga'a education. This was my research, research that centred on collecting stories of four students, and then theorizing those stories as powerful tools in a process of decolonizing and re-indigenizing some aspects of Nisga'a education - a process that has been unfolding for many many years, along the banks of an all-important river. Interacting with students such as Kathryn, Allison, Pamela and Carey is what I do. I do this through my place of employment - about which this thesis tells a story. It is rewarding to work with students, being able to witness their growth and maturity as they gain knowledge and gain confidence. To see the development of a student, from when (s)he first applied, through to the transformation as s/he moves towards graduation, is an honor to witness. To witness them finding their voice is a very empowering journey not only for them, but also for me. Working within the public sector at the WWNI has allowed me to strengthen my communication skills and gain trust with staff, students, instructors and extended colleagues within the Nisga'a and UNBC community. This is a story of success and empowerment, a story of strength. I believe there are too few of these stories for, about, and by First Nations peoples.

Many of the WWNI students are part of the first generation to attend post-secondary education and this has influenced others in their family to attend. There are now second and

third generations attending the WWNI. I am also the first in my family to pursue graduate studies, and like the Nisga'a students, I hope my family members will also start with a small step, the step of taking a course. Recently, when UNBC opened a Haida Language course in Skidegate, I called to inform and encourage family members to attend. Like the students I interviewed, my family and friends have been with me for the entire journey.

Based on literature and research about the importance of storytelling, by scholars like Smith (1999), Archibald (2008) and Cruikshank (1990), the method of this thesis privileged learning from different stories, recognizing that they are beneficial as cultural learning unto themselves. In this thesis, I have shown how storytelling may be used to explain different aspects of learning the Nisga'a culture. Storytelling has always reflected who the Nisga'a are and how the Nisga'a culture has adapted to today's society. This thesis was a way of re-indigenizing myself; it will also flow out to those who are part of this story, those who will read it. Not only is this thesis a vessel that brings the stories of experiences and awareness about the use of storytelling, but it is a work that reinforces the importance of participating directly in one's culture, which is embedded as a method of storytelling in itself.

My research demonstrates that storytelling and re-indigenization can be a foundation of learning and maintaining the Nisga'a culture. The WWNI central courses focus on the Nisga'a language and Nisga'a culture, both of which contribute to future knowledge holders and leadership in the Nisga'a Nation. The WWNI is small in comparison to the main UNBC Prince George campus, but it is a place that has many sources of knowledge holders that are directly linked back to the use of storytelling as a method of learning.

In writing this thesis, I have learned to treasure stories I have been told over the years, from many different people that took the time to share an important part of who they are.

Through storytelling, they have shared their knowledge of stories they have known from past and current generations. All of these stories are culturally related. They span generations and will continue to flow into the next generation through of storytelling and the growing literature. Stories are mainly told to reflect current events or specific time periods that shape our culture today. Storytelling is an important part of learning and understanding cultures since there will always be storytellers and stories to be told. These stories told, shape our worldviews and our identity within society. The stories of Kathryn, Allison, Pamela and Carey will always be important, as we are all intertwined in each other's stories of academic success and with this have gained a wider view of cultural learning and identity.

I note that there are two areas for future analysis. One would be to study a larger population, since I had only interviewed four students. But this was intentional on my part, to reflect the four Nisga'a communities and four Nisga'a tribes. It is a small sample of only four students, but it is relative to the size of the WWNI and in my opinion these students sincerely epitomize the WWNI student body.

Secondly, in my thesis, there has been a great deal of Nisga'a literature used. This could be seen as a negative since they are not directly considered "formal research" literature. But when used for this purpose of storytelling, and when these stories told are from one generation to the next, this method of transmitting knowledge cannot be trivialized - although many of the stories I used were indeed written down, they nevertheless are transcripts and records of stories, reflective of a rich oral culture. The Nisga'a literature used reflects a specific local area, the Nisga'a Nation, and each story belongs to a specific cultural clan.

These publications are printed for the purpose of bringing forth who the Nisga'a people are and where they are from. The information contained in these publications is

mainly from interviews conducted within the Nisga'a Nation. Early in the thesis, I make the point that stories are also shared at Nisga'a feasts. This place specific mode of storytelling in large groups (or directly one on one), illustrates a transferring of knowledge and a witnessing of events that occur for the purpose of the feast. Witnessing a story being told has many characteristics, such as the tone used, facial expressions, the control of voice level and body movements to depict actions. This cannot be replaced by written literature. This might be a weakness of this thesis. It is a written document. But at the same time, there are many people who can hear the same story, but may have different interpretations of what was said. This is why the storytelling of yuuhlimk'askw is important:

We need more education in all fields. I'd like to see them take the younger generation to the (government) meetings and record what they're doing. It's called yuuhlimk'askw, educating the nephews. That way, by the time the chief is gone, the nephews will know. Yuuhlimk'askw. It's a good example from our culture. It's our way. (the late Charles Alexander, "n.d", p.28).

I have learnt that each of us are always learning and all of us have a storyteller within us. Storytelling is and will always be observed in First Nations cultures, as it is imbedded in the cultural practices of restating the history of who we were and how we progressed to our current society. In my opinion, each individual we encounter, as brief as it may be, has a direct effect on who we are. We continuously share a part of our self through verbal and non-verbal communication and at the same time leave an invisible imprint on others we meet on a daily basis. This is why I enjoy my position with the WWNI - this is a place of learning and empowerment that gives a foundation of knowledge to each student wherever the journey leads them along the river. As the WWNI Student Support and Registration Administrator, I have witnessed and hopefully left a lasting positive imprint on many

students as they proceeded on their post-secondary educational journey and continue to cross paths as they stream into professions within the Nisga'a Nation as they take their place as leaders for the next generation. It is exciting to reflect that WWNI assisted so many students in all level of fields in leadership within Health, Education, and Governance... It is humbling to think how this small campus has changed lives with education. The WWNI has fulfilled those visions of our past leaders for Nisga'a education along the K'alii Aksim Lisims.

One of the main purposes of gaining Nisga'a control over Nisga'a education has been to bring Nisga'a language and Nisga'a culture into the academic field, so that it is introduced at an academic level and can also be used in the home. This is a resonance that "Education is a total way of life" (McKay and McKay, 1987, p.64). The WWNI has successfully delivered courses with both components of oral literature and written literature. Using both styles of learning has taught the students the importance of recording important events and also the knowledge of the protocols to carry out current and future cultural events.

This thesis is also a gentle reminder of how far the Nisga'a Nation has come in the field of education. Nisga'a publications and important historical dates were used in this thesis to show how re-indigenization occurs through storytelling and that educating oneself of these important events will continue to help the Nisga'a Nation flourish. Storytelling and re-indigenizing are customs of the Nisga'a culture to carry forth the cultural history. This mode of communicating has all the components that exemplify the Nisga'a culture. In the Nisga'a culture there are stories that reflect everyday aspects of life. As with the storytelling, the land and K'alii Aksim Lisims are tightly woven and consistently reflect the Nisga'a

Nation. K`alii Aksim Lisims is parallel to the culture, as it is in the perpetual flow of moving forward. Its presence is always there.

Glossary

Key: Haida words (H)

Nisga'a words (N)

Adaawak - A story/legend/history (N)

Lisims - The Nass River (N)

Ganada - The Raven tribe(N)

Gingolx/Kincolith - Place of skulls(N)

Gisk'aast - The Killer whale tribe(N)

Gitlaxt'aamiks/New Aiyansh - Place of the Pond(N)

Gitwinksihlkw - Place of the Lizards(N)

Haʷahlkw - Something forbidden, a bad omen (N)

Hlguu Ksim Ganaaw - Small Lady Frog(N)

Howaa - Thank you(H)

Huwilp - pl. of wilp(N)

Jaada Gaawjuu - Little one(H)

K'aats - To be married/going with a person of the same tribe(N)

K'alii Aksim Lisims - The Nass River(N)

Ksim Xsaan - (N)

Laxgalts'ap/Greenville - Place on ancient village (N)

Laxgibuu - The Wolf tribe(N)

Laxsgiik - The Eagle tribe(N)

Nanaay - Grandmother(H)

Nisgha - Old spelling of Nisga'a

Pdeek - Tribe (N)

Simgigat – Pl. of sim'oogit(N)

Sim'oogit - a Chief, one of the highest ranking men in the family(N)

Wahlin - Old, Ancient, antique, former(N)

Wii - Big/Great (N)

Wilp - House(N)

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a – House of Wisdom(N)

Xk'ayhl - to give a gift(N)

Yuuhlimkaskw - to give advice (in general), advice given (N)

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Appendix A1: Nisga'a Publications

School District No. 92 (Nisgha), [Nisga'a]

- Am'ugithl Nisga'a - Nisga'a Clothing, 1981
- Wil Wíldigtkwhl Nisga'a - Nisga'a in Combat, 1981
- Lip Hli Gandaxgathl Nisga'a - The People of Kámligihahlhaahl, 1981
- Wila Niinikskwhl Nisga'a - Nishga Marriage, 1982
- Hañiimagoónisgum Algaxhl Nisga'a, Nisga'a Phrase Dictionary, 1986
- From Time Before Memory, 1996

Nisga'a Tribal Council, now Nisga'a Lisims Government

- Nisga'a - People of the Nass River, 1993
- Nisga'a Origins, Volume I, 1995
- Nisga'a Clan Histories, Volume II, 1995
- Nisga'a Society, Volume III, 1995
- Land and Resources - Traditional Nisga'a Systems of Land Use and Ownership, Volume IV, 1995
- Lock, Stock and Barrel, no date
- Anhlut'ukwsim Sawinskhl Nisga'a, Nisga'a Feast Procedures and Protocols, 2008

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute

- Nass River Texts - Kincolith 1894, 1995
- The Nass River Anadramous Fisheries in Nisga'a Culture and History:
 - Part 1, Summer and Fall Salmon, 1996
 - Part 2, Oolachan and the Early Salmon, 1996
- Post-Contact Pressures, Nisga'a Initiatives and Culture Change, 1997
- Nisga'a Spirituality, 2000
- Hañiimagoónisgum Algaxhl Nisga'a - Nisga'a Dictionary, 2001

Appendix B1: Nisga'a Education Timeline and other important Nisga'a dates

1860's	Government of British Columbia established reserves in the Nass Valley
1887	First Nisga'a Chiefs Delegation went to Victoria
1890	First Nisga'a Land Committee established
1900's	Church "Missionary - Teacher" Schools
1913	Nisga'a Petition was processed to the Queen by the Nisga'a Land Committee
Mid 1920's	Residential Schools
Mid 1930's	Missionary Run Schools
Early 1940's	Department of Indian Affairs School
1945	Boarding Program
1946	First Nisga'a enter High School in Prince Rupert
1949	Nisga'a Chief Frank Calder was elected and became the first Aboriginal Member of the British Columbia Legislative where he served until 1979.
Late 1950's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Indian Day School •Three Nisga'a British Columbia certified trained teachers returned to the Nass •Master Tuition Agreement •Department of Indian Affairs started to use the British Columbia School Curriculum
1955	Nisga'a Land Committee is re-established as the Nisga'a Tribal Council
1957	(late) Dr. Frank Calder, W̓ii Lisims First Nisga'a President until 1973
Early 1960's	Residential Schools Discontinued
1969	Gitwinksihlkw Suspension Bridge completed
1973	(late) James S. Gosnell, W̓ahlin Sim'oogit Hleek Nisga'a President until 1988
January 1, 1975	Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School opened in New Aiyansh
1975	Laxgalts'ap Elementary School opened in Greenville
January 12, 1976	Nisga'a Declaration

- 1976 Nathan Barton Elementary School opened in Kincolith
- November 1, 1977 "Unity Pole", first totem pole in the Nass Valley in over 100 years
- 1984 William David McKay Bridge opens to Greenville
- 1988 (late) Alvin A. McKay, W̓ahlin Sim'oogit Daax̓heet
Nisga'a President until 1993
- 1989 First totem pole raised in Greenville in over 100 years
- September 11, 1989 Canyon City officially changed back to traditional name,
Gitwinksihlkw
- 1993 Wilp Wilxo'oskw̓hl Nisga'a, Nisga'a University was incorporated under
Societies Act of British Columbia and governed by an interim Board of
Directors appointed by Nisga'a Tribal Council
- 1993 Dr. Joseph Gosnell Sr., Sim'oogit Hleek̓
Nisga'a President until 2004
- 1994 Gitwinksihlkw Elementary School opened in Gitwinksihlkw
- 1994 Wilp Wilxo'oskw̓hl Nisga'a opens for first intake of university students
- 1995 "Education Pole" raised in front of Gitwinksihlkw Elementary School
- October 16, 1995 Gitwinksihlkw Single Lane Car Bridge opened
- March 22, 1996 Nisga'a Nation signed Agreement in Principle with Provincial and
Federal Governments in New Aiyansh (initialized on February 12, 1996)
- 1997 Wilp Wilxo'oskw̓hl Nisga'a First Bachelor of Arts: Nisga'a Degree
- May 11, 2000 Nisga'a Treaty effective date
- 2002 Road construction completed between Greenville and Kincolith
- 2004 (late) Nelson Leeson, W̓ahlin Simoogit Ax̓hlaawaals
Nisga'a President until 2009
- November 2009 Wilp Wilxo'oskw̓hl Nisga'a Institute relocated from New Aiyansh to
Gitwinksihlkw
- 2010 H. Mitchell Stevens, Simoogit K̓'aw 'een
Nisga'a President to present

May 11, 2011 Hli Goothl Wilp-Adokshl Nisga'a, The Nisga'a Museum opened

June 3, 2014 University of Northern British Columbia and Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a renewed their Agreement of Federation until 2024.

sources: Nisga'a Lisims Government Website - *Timeline*
From Time Before Memory
Nisga'a - People of the Nass River
History of Education in the Nass and Events Leading up to the Creation of
School District No. 92 (Nisga'a).

Appendix C1: Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute Graduates (1994 - 2013)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
WWNI/UNBC Bachelor of Arts: First Nations Studies: Nisga'a	1		4	2	6			1	5		7	5	2	1	1		3
WWNI/UNBC Education Diploma in First Nations Language & Culture													1				
WWNI/UNBC Nisga'a Studies Certificate		2	12		3		4	6	8	3	2			3		1	2
WWNI/UNBC General First Nations Studies Certificate		1	6	1	4		2	3	8	6	4	1		2	1	1	2
WWNI/UNBC Honorary Nisga'a Studies Certificate			1														
WWNI/UNBC Nisga'a Language Certificate					1						3	1			1	1	4
WWNI/UNBC Honorary Doctorate												1					
WWNI/UNBC: Continuing Studies-Mental Health and Addictions Certificate																2	
NWCC: Office Assistant Certificate	8																
NWCC: Career and College Preparation Completions	8	6	2	1	10	2	1	2									
NWCC: Adult Basic Fundamentals Certificate	1																
NWCC: Carpentry Entry Level Certificate										11							
NWCC: Carpentry Level II											9						
NWCC: Employment Skills Access Program																4	
NWCC: Home Support/Resident Care Assistant Certificates						16								5			
NWCC: Interdisciplinary (INTA) Participants														12	15		
NWCC: Certificate in Home Support						1											
NWCC: Course Work Completed for Home Support/Resident Care Attendant						1											
NWCC: Plumbing Level I												6					
NWCC: Electrical Level I												7					
NWCC: Residential Building Maintenance Program Certificate											11						
NWCC: Special Education Assistant														13	2		
JIBC: Aboriginal Leadership Certificate Program													4				
JIBC: Emergency Medical Responder Certificate												3					
SFU: Certificate in Professional Development					1												
NVIT: Office Administration Certificate																	6
NVIT: Office Administration Certificate Participants																	1
Transitions to Employment Certificate, Nass Valley					9												
Total	18	9	25	5	25	20	7	12	21	20	36	25	7	38	26	11	18

Appendix D1: Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute Board of Directors (1994 - 2014)

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Board of Directors	
Current Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Board of Directors: June 2014 Honorary Director, Dr. Joseph Gosnell, C.C., Hon L.L.D., O.B.C., since 2005 Arthur Azak, B.Ed, Retired RCMP Sergeant, Chair, since 2010 Stephen Azak, Retired Red Seal Welder, Vice-Chair, since 2009 Desmond P. Barton, Director, Founding member Tracy Tait, Director, since 2013 Andrew Robinson, MA, Director, since 2013	
Past Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Board Chairs John (Ian) MacKenzie (late) Dr. Jacob McKay	
Past WWNI Board of Directors: Irene Seguin Audrey McKay Lorene Plante Clifford Azak Kathleen Clayton Sally Nyce, MA Floyd Percival	Peter Cross, MA Moses McKay Rosalee Vickers Herbert Morven Phyllis Adams David Griffin, M.Ed Alvin Azak, MBA

Appendix E1: Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute Faculty (1994 - 2014)

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Faculty from Fall 1994 - Winter 2014		
(late) Alvin McKay, M. Ed	(late) Dr. Bert McKay	Deanna Nyce, PhD Candidate
Rosie Robinson	Verna Williams, Professor Emeritus	Audrey McKay
Dr. Margaret Anderson, Professor Emeritus	Dianna Rai	Peggy Venn
Dr. Emmon Bach	Allison Nyce, MA	Rosalee Vickers
Dr. Ted Altar	Irene Seguin	Edward McMillan
Dr. Kim Hansen	(late) Raymond Gonu, BA	(late) Peter Nyce, M.Ed
Dr. Marie-Lucie Tarpent	Maurice Squires, M.SW	John Corsiglia, MA
Dr. Mary Ellen Kelm	Shirley Morven, M.Ed	Thomas Weegar, M.E.S
Dr. Marian Scholtmiejer	Larissa Tarwick	Heather Young-Leslie
Dr. Issac Sobol	David Griffin Jr., M.Ed	Harry Nyce Jr., MBA
(late) Dr. James McDonald	Linda Zimmerling, M.Sc	Todd Zimmerling, M.Sc
Dr. Randolph Radney	Mitch Verde, PhD Candidate	Edward Allen, BA, LL.B
Dr. Leslie King	Carla Glen, MA	Nancy Alexander, M.Sc
Dr. Paula Sampson	Carey Stewart, MA	Derrick Reeves, BA, MA Candidate
Dr. David Suzuki	Vanessa Morgan, MA	Corrine McKay, MBA
Dr. Tara Cullis	Dean Chandler, MA	Sharon Alexcee, BA
Dr. Sheree Ronassen	Rick Swift, MA	Peter Cross, MA
Dr. Nancy Turner	Gregg Wischaruck, BA	Alvin Azak, MBA
Dr. Nancy MacKin	Angeline Nyce, RPF, LL.P	Chris Jackson, B.Ed, B.Sc
Dr. Antonia Mills	Julia Adams, BA, MA Candidate	Doreen Adams, BMath
Dr. Jean Barman	Wanda Thompson	Dr. Carla Burton
Dr. Greg Poelzer	Thomas Weegar, MES	
UNBC Instructors, Audio conference courses from other UNBC campuses to WWNI		
Dr. Greg Lainsbury	Dr. Vim Kok	Dr. Jon Swainger
Dr. Steven Roe	Dr. Rene Gadacz	Dr. Mark Roberts

Appendix F1: Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute Staff (1994 - 2014)

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Employees from 1992 to present (December 2014)	
CURRENT Staff to December 2014	
Deanna Nyce, B.Ed, PhD. Candidate, President/Chief Executive Officer	August 1992 to present
Kathryn Kervel, BA, Executive Secretary	August 2007 to present
Lori Nyce, BA, Student Support and Registration Administrator	November 1994 to present
Irene Seguin, Nisga'a Language Instructor	July 2010 to present
Raylene Chapman, CMA, Chief Financial Officer	September 2011 to present
Angela Percival, B.Comm, Accounting Clerk	July 2012 to present
Mitch Verde, PhD Candidate, Vocational Technical Coordinator	October to present
Allison Nyce, BA, MA, Funds Development Officer	June 2011 to present
Denise Azak, Receptionist	January 2014 to present
Martha Azak, Janitor	July 2013 to present
PAST Staff Members	
Nisga'a Language Instructor, Full-Time	
Verna Williams, Professor Emerita	
Nisga'a Language Instructor and Curriculum Facilitator	
Dianna Rai	
Acting Director Nisga'a Language and Culture/Nisga'a Culture Instructor	
(late) Dr. Bertram McKay	
Curriculum Consultant	
John Corsiglia, MA	
Linguist Consultant	
Dr. Marie Lucie-Tarpent	
Legal Consultant	
Edward Allen, BA, L.L.B	
Financial Consultant	
(late) Oalf Welde, Financial Consultant	
Finance	Amanda Welton, Bursar
Marilyn Tait, Bookkeeper	Orest Wakaruk, CMA, Bursar
Marilyn Davis, Bookkeeper	Bonita Young-Mercer, Finance Manger
Darrell Roze, MBA, Bursar	Douglas Smith, CMA, Bursar
Interim Chief Executive Officer	
David Griffin Jr., M.Ed	
Executive Secretary	
Linda Morven Adams-Tait, BA, MA Candidate	
Hazel Nyce, BA, Interim	
Student Support and Registration Administrator	
Hazel Nyce, BA, Interim	
Shannon Nyce, BA, Interim	

Vocational-Technical Coordinator Thomas Weegar, MES, Acting Mitch Verde, PhD Candidate Connie LaRochelle, BNRSc Shona Taner, MA, Acting Corrine McKay, MBA, Interim Edward Clayton, B.Comm	Theodore Gosnell, MBA Linda Morven Adams-Tait, BA, MA Candidate Maryann Adams, BA Patricia Squire, BSW, Interim Sally Nyce, BA, Interim
Career and College Preparation Lois Miller Derrick Reeves, BA, MA Candidate Deidre Albright, B.Ed	
Library Clerk Shannon Nyce, BA	
Receptionist Christina Percival Stephanie Azak	
Janitor Pansy Haizimsque Jackie Nyce	