

Reclaiming Haisla Ways: Remembering Oolichan Fishing

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Introduction: Who I am, Where my Place is

Hemaas, knewq Kundoque of the Helkinew clan, knewq Haisla, Kemano and Kitselas. Creator, Ancestors, my English name is Jacquie and I belong to the Killer Whale clan of the Haisla peoples. I acknowledge the traditional territory of the Lekwungen peoples and offer thanks for being able to study and live on this territory.

I acknowledge the storytellers of my community and family. Over and over again they have shared with me stories—diverse stories—of our place and about who we are as Haisla people. These stories were shared with me in the various sites where we live, work, and practice our social and cultural traditions: around the dinner table, in our feast hall, and on the boat with my Dad. I want to honor them for their teachings and their patience as I continue to ask questions about stories they have shared with me. Before going further, I also acknowledge my academic teachers, my peers, and other storytellers in the academy. In my scholarship I use this academic space to explore my identity through an examination and analysis of our stories. The analyses of our stories have also provided me with various pedagogical strategies and methods to use in my professional academic work. This article demonstrates various forms of teachings about identity, traditional teachings, and traditional territories. I illustrate that by knowing our personal stories we can regenerate our traditional Indigenous knowledges, philosophies, and values. I believe that by centering Indigenous Knowledge, we thus assert our Indigenous philosophy wherever we are! I recognize my privilege in the academy and am thankful for our Haisla stories. WA (thank you).

Throughout my academic journey as a student and an assistant professor, I have much appreciation for strengths that emerge from our Indigenous stories that highlight and demonstrate our resilience as a people. As an Indigenous student in college and university I had many sad and lonely moments of being the only Indigenous student in the class, learning about our history, our socialization, and the effects of colonization. As I reflect on my student journey, I realize that what nurtured and motivated me to complete my education programs were the stories shared with me by family and extended family. One such beautiful story is about my great-grandmother and how she canoed from the northwest coast of British Columbia to the shores of Victoria and Vancouver, British Colum-

bia and Seattle, Washington. When she arrived at the shores of Vancouver, there were camp fires and construction in what was the beginning of the development of what is now known as Vancouver. I found and saw in this story her bravery and courage to see an evolving and ever-changing world. For myself, I am in a place where I continually meet an evolving world through varied forms of scholarly knowledge here at the university. I learned through this story to overcome my loneliness and be brave and courageous in meeting our shifting world similar to my great grandmother's canoe journey experience. In my scholarship I am examining methods to utilize our Indigenous stories as a form of analysis to inform how I teach, write, and research. In this article I draw on our Creation story as Haisla people to illustrate the multiple teachings I hold and carry that shape my knowledge, scholarship, research, and teaching methods. As you read my story, you may encounter a similar teaching or you may experience new teachings from your own stories.

Kundoque is my traditional name, which originates from Kitselas territory and means "journeying over the mountain with my belongings on my back." Kitselas people are known as "those who live by the river" and are famous for living beside the Kermode bears. Kermode Bears are known as the spirit bears because they are black bears that are actually white in color. It is said that when spirit bear meets you, you must pay attention to its actions because its actions hold a message for you. The old people say that the only time you meet with spirit bear is when Creator has a message for you or if there is some healing that is needed. You never know when this meeting will take place. You could be by the river, you could be in the mountains, or you could be around your home. I had the honor of meeting spirit bear by my home. I was home with my cousin who was babysitting us children, and we were looking out our window and saw the bear lurking around the house. We watched the bear from the window until he trotted deep into the woods. I was shown through spirit bear that my identity is not only Haisla, but also Kitselas. *Kundoque* originates from Kitselas territory, and I must journey back through our stories to learn and understand my place and my identity. I believe that the message from this encounter is to remember my roots in Kitselas territory.

An important aspect of understanding my place and identity was brought out when I received my traditional name. It was in 1982 at a memorial feast in Haisla where I learned the story about my traditional name *Kundoque*. This name was given to my parents by the late Walter Write on their wedding day for their firstborn daughter. When a traditional name is given to a person in the feast hall, the custom is that it is given by someone from a clan other than your own. The name-giver explains to the people where the name is from and what it means. The keeper of the name then pays the name-giver (either in money or dry goods). Because I

received my traditional name at this feast, the teachings say that I will always know where I come from and who I am. In turn I must ensure that my children understand their traditional identities through *Noosa* (storytelling to people, families, and children). It is a powerful teaching to learn the process of name-giving and the ceremony of receiving a name that includes Elders, other clan members, and other clan chiefs as witnesses. In receiving my name I was taught that we pay everyone in the feast hall. The feast hall teachings that were illustrated show that when witnesses are paid, they are responsible for remembering my name and any other "work" that was done at the feast. In our feast hall are three other clans other than our Killer Whale clan: Eagle, Raven, and Beaver. The *Hemaas* (male chief) calls the name receiver to the front, and then he calls a *Mus Magithl* (female chief). In the name-giving, *Mus Magithl* is usually from a clan other than your own. The people in the feast hall watch and pay close attention because it is their responsibility not only to know the name given, but to also know where the name comes from. *Mus Magithl* states the name three times, either by singing it in a tune or speaking it in a loud voice. When she is done with sharing the history of the name, she is thanked and the name receiver repeats the teachings to all the witnesses in the feast hall.

In the feast system, there are also acts of cleansing, memorial, and other sorts of community-gathering events. Naming is one important ceremony that occurs in the feast hall. Other important acts for our people in the feast hall are cleansing, memorial, and other important community gatherings. These various acts signify and illustrate that our feast hall and feasting system sustain our laws, our *Nuuyum* (traditional teachings) and our identity through our clan system.

The next story I share is one about my place of belonging and who we are as Haisla, Kitselas people and the role of oolichan fishing. Kitselas is located in northwest British Columbia and east of Haisla territory. Although Kitselas is situated beside a river, the Kitselas people do not process oolichans for grease as do Haisla. When you are in Kitselas territory, you can hear the roar of the river and sounds of eagles in the mountains. During the fall in the Northwest, the land is often damp, the sky filled with dark clouds, and your feet sink into the ground if you stand still. And as a northerner, you know never to stay in one spot especially when you walk by the river. During the winter the land is white with snow. Sometimes it snows so much that the piles of snow are as high as the houses. During spring the run-off from the snow dampens the land, and the rivers flow strongly. Many times you will see moose or deer that are as big if not bigger than horses. During the summer months the rivers are filled with salmon, and the bears either lurk by the river or are in the woods picking berries. Compared with winter, summer is usually mild to

warm: not as damp, but still usually muddy ground by the river and in the woods.

The definition of Haisla translates in this way: *Haisu* means when you point at the end of the river and *sla* is added to refer to people. Haisla is known to many other Indigenous peoples and settlers as the northern tip of the Kwaguilth peoples, or as the territory and people at the mouth of the Douglas Channel. Our people speak Haisla, and because of our territorial relationship with other communities, we understand and dialogue with Tsmishian peoples and those in the Oweekeno and Kwaguilth territories. Another term that we are known as is Kitamaat, which means "people of the snow." *Kit* refers to peoples and *amaat* refers to territory or place. Our Kitamaat name became misrepresented in 1950 when Alcan Industries entered and built in our territory. Alcan attempted to bring a new face to our territory and proclaimed it to be a place called the "town of the future" and changed the spelling to Kitimat.

In the north, from Kitselas to Haisla you will drive along a river on one side with mountains on the other. You will experience the elegance of eagles throughout your journey. At any time you could see as many as 15 bald eagles perching on one tree. You will also have the honor of seeing many beaver homes. Beavers build their homes beside riverbanks and they are made of twigs and other pieces from the land. Sometimes you will see black bears fishing in the river, and if you are fortunate, you will see the spirit bear. Of all the wildlife present on this journey, the most fearful is the moose. The moose is to be feared because if you are driving and fail to see it, you will crash into the moose. If you are fortunate, you will see the moose and have time to slow down to watch it trot into the forest or cross your path.

When you are close to our territory, you will enter the town of Kitimat. Kitimat is a company town, and like many company towns it is a small residential planned place. If you turn left off the main road and follow a winding road for about 15 minutes, you will once again enter wilderness and forest. You are now in *Kuqwajeequas* territory. This is where our existence as Haisla began, where the sustenance of our being evolves, and our Creation story about our relationship to oolichans.

Oolichan fishing is vital to understanding Haisla community, people, and ways of being. I was at our oolichan camp only once. I was about 4 years old. This experience at the camp has never left me, nor has the passion to learn how to prepare oolichan fish and to understand where I come from. In remembering I have listened to many stories of the traditional connections between oolichan harvesting and how Haisla peoples came to be. However, other than the one time at the oolichan camp, I never participated in oolichan fishing again because colonial structures took me in another direction. Perhaps in my reminiscence and dreams, along with stories shared with me, I recognize the commitment to understanding and

learning our ways. Identity has to be reinforced by returning to my traditional stories and understanding accounts of my place.

Haisla Peoples: Our Place, Our Existence

Huncleesela was the first man to journey to the Haisla Territory. *Huncleesela* and some of his family left Oweekeno territory, which is south of Haisla, because he accidentally killed his wife. I was told that the law of that time meant banishment if death happened. As a result, *Huncleesela* and his entire family would be punished for the death, even though it was an accident. *Huncleesela* escaped by journeying up toward the northwest coast of Oweekeno and continued until he reached *Kluqwajeequas* just outside Haisla territory. It was told in many villages that the reason he journeyed north was because there was a monster in this area. Because of the monster, no people were living there, and he thought *Kluqwajeequas* would be a good place to hide. *Huncleesela* camped outside the territory, and every once in a while the monster would open his mouth really wide and make a loud noise. As he listened to the loud noise, he made sure he watched every movement the monster made. Eventually, as *Huncleesela* felt comfortable in his exploration of the monster, he felt brave enough to get closer. When he got as close as he could, he realized that the big mouth was not a monster at all, but flocks of seagulls swooping down to grab oolichans from the river. This story tells of the discovery of Haisla territory and the relationship to oolichans.

During *Huncleesela's* time in this area, he and his family lived in *Kluqwajeequas*. While there they noticed twigs floating in the river and found it unusual that they were not twigs left by beavers. *Huncleesela* was familiar with twigs left in the river by beavers. In his curiosity, *Huncleesela* ventured out to see where these strange twigs came from. As he journeyed east of *Kuqwajeequas*, he met with Kitselas and Kitsumkalum¹ peoples who were trappers and fishermen. The twigs he found in the river were made by Tsmishian people who used them to trap wildlife. *Huncleesela* built long-lasting relationships and family ties with Tsmishian people.

Oolichan Fishing: Core of Who we Are

Oolichan fishing is one of the most important aspects of Haisla life, along with trapping, hunting, and seafood fishing (clams, cockles, halibut, and other deepwater fish and shellfish). In our language oolichan is *za' X w en* (pronounced *jax-quin*). The old people tell us our *za' X w en* is a mystery fish because they are known to spawn only once a year. They spawn in the winter months, usually just before spring or at the end of north-wind season. Other types of fish normally spawn in the spring and summer months. Some say you could smell the oolichan season and feel a certain chill in the air; this scent and feeling is what we refer to as *oolichan weather*. Another reference to oolichans are *candle fish* because at one time the old people would fish the oolichans, fully dry them, and burn them for light.

The main uses of oolichan fish are to harvest and process for *kqlateeh*,² preserve and use for trading to other communities for *aghingt*³ and *xklucas* (seaweed). Because so much work and time is involved in harvesting oolichans, many of our neighboring communities travel to our home to trade or to purchase our *kqlateeh*.

Kqlateeh for Haisla people and to those who seek it is considered a delicacy. Not only is *kqlateeh* food, but it also has excellent medicinal use and value. The old people have used *kqlateeh* for severe cases of pneumonia, bronchitis, and other such illnesses. They say that if you have no energy to work or cannot get rid of the common cold, two teaspoons or swigs of *kqlateeh* will cure you. The taste of *kqlateeh* on fish and other foods is delicious. However, if you have it straight up without fish there is a different taste. Having it straight is like drinking vegetable oil, only with a fishy aroma to it. As you swallow *kqlateeh*, it glides slowly down your throat to your stomach. Perhaps it is the slow journey through your body that cures any illness that is there. If babies were sickly, the old women would add a bit *kqlateeh* to water and simmer this on the stove. The steam, with its *kqlateeh* aroma, would help babies to breathe easier and clear their airways. Some of the old people also said that if they did not want a certain kind of visitor (like a white person), they would simmer *kqlateeh* before the visit. If one is not raised around oolichans, the aroma is often not appealing. Visitors are then likely to leave quickly.

In the old days, our people would camp and deepwater fish close to oolichan time. They would set up their camps in the forest on one of the many islands in the Douglas Channel to fish for halibut, dig for clams, and set crab traps. While cleaning their catch, if they found oolichans in the stomach they knew it was time to prepare their oolichan camps. Another sign that it was oolichan time was when sea lions, seals, ducks, and seagulls were dipping into the water and eating the oolichan, as in Huncleesala's monster story. Oolichan time usually begins at the end of January and lasts until the middle of April.

Once all the oolichan time signs were recognized, families began to prepare their oolichan camps. People would begin to prepare and harvest their fishing tools and equipment, all of which came from the land. The men would drive poles into the bottom of the river and ensure they were firm and could withhold the heaviness of nets and the rush of the river. The women would make the *taqka* (funnel nets), which would be fastened to the poles. This particular type of netting is made of *dukqwa* (stinging nettles) and would be tied with *dunuc* (cedar bark). When preparing oolichan camps in the old way, the process of such preparations would take up to three days to complete. Much as fishers wished to preserve their gear for the following year, it was never possible because while in storage after oolichan season, wildlife would nest in the gear and ruin it. So watching for signs and preparing gear was a yearly process.

To make the *kglateeh* bins were prepared with resources from the land. The *smigatsk* (boilers or bins 15ft. x 15ft. wide and 3ft. deep) were made of wooden planks with a metal bottom. The metal bottom was coated with clay to prevent fire from getting to the wooden sides. Water was placed in the bin and left to simmer overnight. The clay and heat sealed the bin so that no fluids would leak. This step was crucial to preventing oolichan oil being wasted. Preparing the *smigatsk* for oolichan grease was done overnight. Once the gear and oolichan camps were ready and the oolichans were running, our hereditary chief and his family would go out for the first catch of the season. When he returned, he would feed the community and give permission to other families to go and do their own fishing. The first catch was celebrated, and during the feasting the people shared their plans for the new season. They told old stories from other years. As well people retold *Huncleesla's* journey, our monster story, and our oolichan story.

When it was time for communities to fish, their first catch after the celebration feast was used to make *kglateeh* and place it in oolichan bins. Haisla people always used female oolichans to make *kglateeh* because they contained more fat than males. The oolichans were then placed in bins to ferment. Before fermenting, the children's role was to dig with their hands through all the oolichans and pick out the large ones (males), which would be preserved by smoking and salting.⁴ Once oolichans were fermented, the bins were ready to be heated to boiling point to make *kglateeh*. The Elders tell that they would test fermented oolichans by hanging them over a stick: if the oolichan fell apart easily, then it was fermented enough. If they passed the test, the oolichans would be boiled steadily for a day.

This step would be repeated three times in order to produce as much oil as possible. After each boiling/simmering period, the oolichans were left for about half an hour to settle. The oolichan fishers understood the timing of how long to boil oolichans and how long to let them simmer. Afterward water would be added to the bins; they would mash the oolichans and once again leave the contents in the bin to settle. During the settling, the oil would surface, and the mashing cycle would be repeated until the fishers believed they were ready to skim the oil. In this step the men would ensure that enough water was added. During the process the men and women together would discuss whether there was enough grease before moving to the next steps. The women, who were experts in skimming the grease, knew just how much grease would be produced based on how many oolichans had been placed in the bins; the women's knowledge would thus show the men that indeed there was enough water and grease to skim.

Throughout the preparation and first-catch process, many areas of expertise were demonstrated through modeling, feasting, and teaching. Communication with one another taught what type of wood, plants, and

places were required to harvest oolichans. The older men, with their knowledge of the land, water, and what signs to watch for, would in turn pass these teachings to the young men who fished with them.

During the preparation and fishing process, timing was of great importance as well as understanding the functions of environment, seasons, weather, and animals. Timing included patience. Communicating in a respectful, teachable manner for all people was critical to ensuring that *kglateeh* would be processed in the best way possible. Timing included learning how to prepare equipment and tools to work with oolichans. Repetition was not only important for processing, but also for teaching young people. The entire process of oolichan fishing included teaching respect, honor, modeling our relationship with the land, the importance of family, and community. Oolichan fishing processes required that the whole community work together to complete this daunting task.

The task of skimming the oil from the bins involved placing the cooked oil into barrels to purify. While the women were skimming the oil, young people looked for black rocks. These would be heated until red hot and placed in the oil. When they saw flames, there were enough rocks. The old people say that placing hot rocks in the grease purifies it and that it could then be preserved over a long period (some families have kept their preserved grease for close to 10 years). To purify further, the women would continue to strain the oil until there was no meal left (parts of the fish). This is how Haisla grease becomes white and gains its reputation as a delicacy to those who seek it. These final touches make Haisla grease different and whiter than that processed by others.

Once the process of *kglateeh* was completed and the grease is sealed in the barrels, the fishers would clean their tools and their camps and then go hunting. It is said that they hunted after the oolichan process so that the *kglateeh* would harden and not spill on the journey back to the community.

Teachings of Gyawaglaab

Many diverse families were in the oolichan camps. They helped each other with varied tasks; this helping is what our people call *gyawaglaab*, meaning "helping one another." For Haisla people, oolichan fishing generates this collective aspect throughout the community. There were traditional, specific roles for all family members. When the oolichan barrels are *agaheestamas* (filled and sealed with oolichans), fishers would either rest or help other family fishers who had not filled their bins.

If families were not catching as much fish, other families who were ahead in their camps would leave to help and share their equipment and tools with others as needed. The roles of the women were to build tools and to put the final touches to the *kglateeh*. The roles of the men were to prepare the camps and to fish oolichans. Although certain roles were modeled, fishers would pitch in to help as needed. Community people who could not go to the camps helped by providing the fishing families

with food, baked goods, or other sorts of preserved food. They also waited for the fishers to return from their camps and helped unload equipment, oolichans, and *kglateeh*. People who remained in the community were mostly the really old people, those who had some form of disability, and those who did not have the equipment and resources to fish for oolichan. The community would prepare themselves for the fishers' return. They also needed to be knowledgeable about oolichan season, about timing during processing, and be able to communicate with each other when the oolichan fishers arrived. Each remaining family would coordinate among themselves which families would prepare meals and which would wait at the beach to unpack the gear.

Depending on their catch, families would return with close to 30 gallons of *kglateeh*, along with fully dried, half-dried, and salted oolichans. They would also return with wild game and other deepwater fish. The oolichan fishing season not only has many teachings, but also provides for other ways to regenerate and sustain lives and families throughout other seasons.

In the summer months families would return to their oolichan camps for shorter periods to fish sockeye, coho, and crab. During these outings the catch from oolichan fishing was eaten. The best part of camping in the summer was singeing dried oolichans. Usually this is the first thing that is cooked once the summer camps are set up. On other summer outings families would take the young people out in their boats and show them traditional landmarks and places to fish. As children we were told names of places, names of beaches, and other important Haisla landmarks.

Throughout other seasons our people would trade oolichans and *kglateeh* with other communities for *xklucas* and *aghingt*. Those who trade *xklucas* and *aghingt* with us prepare their catch in camps away from their community. This is their sustenance—and so we complement one another and trade to fulfill all our dietary and nutritional desires and needs. Other communities in surrounding areas who are not near rivers of oolichans but closer to the forest would trade berries and wild game with our people. Others would offer money for *kglateeh*. The Haisla people, along with other Indigenous peoples, were aware of what diverse communities harvested and what they could trade. In addition, the various communities learned to thrive and help one another in terms of sharing food and resources and by respecting each other's territories. Although not spoken of directly, the notion of *Gyawaglaab* is demonstrated throughout the northwest coast through trading.

Through Our Stories Our Elders Remind us About Resilience

People of the Northwest coast continue to harvest food and fish throughout various seasons. Our people continue to trade, to feast, and to teach traditional ways as much as possible. However, our people suffered a devastating tragedy a few years ago. The oolichans in our area stopped

spawning. Our old people said there were many reasons why this happened. First, it was known that pollution in our area was the major factor. Second, other fishermen said it was due to draggers, who were disrupting the oolichan run. The draggers fished for prawns, halibut, and other deepwater fish, but never fished for oolichans. If they caught oolichans, they threw them away because they had no use for them. Third, the old people knew that the cycle of oolichans matures every three years and oolichans did not have time to mature before they were destroyed and thrown back in the water by draggers. Last, it was not only Haisla people who experienced this drought; people along the coast of Turtle Island from California to the northwest coast faced the same tragedy.

This tragedy has been a reawakening for our people, and many things happened and changed. The older people in our community said that we needed to go back to the old ways of harvesting oolichans. In my storying, I choose to speak to how oolichans were harvested traditionally. However, it is important to speak to how the harvesting of oolichans has changed over time for my people. Today the differences are the following. Rather than canoes, our people use 100-horsepower punts; rather than funnel nets and poles, they use herring nets; rather than barrels, they use pails; rather than black rocks, they use lava rocks; and rather than wooden bins, they use sheet metal bins. In all this change, oolichans and *kglateeh* are processed much faster. In addition, our people are not out in the camp and hunting area for as long as they once were. They now fish the oolichans on a weekend or take a day off during a work week (most with no pay). Rather than staying in the camps for a few months, they now return to the community in order to return to their paid work. During the short time they are fishing for oolichans, they place their catch in bins and then return to their paid work. After seven days, when the oolichans are fermented, the people take their vacation and stay at their camps to process *kglateeh*. With the change from traditional ways to contemporary fishing practices, there is a loss of pre-oolichan, deepwater fishing and post-oolichan hunting. The speedy and contemporary process of how our oolichans are processed has threatened our old ways and our *Nuuyum*. Although the modeling of oolichan processing is still evident, the time, care, and space needed to teach this important aspect of our livelihood has been severely disrupted. Sharing and storytelling among fisher members is now confined to precious and fleeting moments. The visibility and presence of young people in the oolichan harvest has decreased. Through the recent tragedy, our people have reawakened to rebuild our old ways of fishing oolichan fish. The old people say we must regenerate our teaching core to who we are as Haisla peoples and revisit our relationship to the old ways of oolichan fishing processes.

The old people tell us today that due to scarcity of oolichans and other contemporary circumstances, the notion of *gyawaglaab* may be lost. The

change today is the difficulty for our people to share their oolichans and their *kqlateeh* due to the shortage of oolichans over the last few years. Not sharing is not the meaning of *gyawaglaab*. The oolichan equipment and tools are no longer prepared yearly, and children are no longer so present at the camps. The old people tell us through stories of those times when camps were directly in *Kluqwajeequas* and how the entire community was involved in oolichan harvesting as a reminder of *gyawaglaab*. Today it is mainly fishermen and immediate family who fish oolichan, and in this there is not enough time to teach others. The old people are concerned that Haisla traditions, stories, and teachings will be lost. They urge our people to learn our old ways and to share these teachings with our younger people. *Gyawaglaab* is evident in our community, but not thriving as before. Our generation must learn the meanings of our place, of our people, and of our traditional names. As I remember the meaning of my name *Kundoque*, I must journey back to our old ways of oolichan fishing and learn and share them with my children and with younger people in my community.

I Remember Our Stories: Relearning and Regeneration of Haisla teachings

Since the threat of extinction for oolichan fishing, my conviction to learn the essence of being Haisla has resurfaced. I must go directly to the oolichan camps and learn the old ways of my family and of my people. I am determined to work with my friends and family to discuss how we could once again make oolichan fishing a priority in our lives. I recognize and understand that in the process of learning we must look at how the loss of language and traditions contributes to loss of *gyawaglaab* for Haisla peoples. There have been times when I wanted to share with my children stories of Haisla and our oolichan fishing, but could not get to the core of our teachings. My conviction of not knowing *enough* terrifies me. I recognize that the stories I know do not bring forth the essence of our traditional ways. To share our stories and teachings with my children is to model how we can truly revive our old teachings. In order to have this revival, we must go oolichan fishing. In the faces of my children I see curiosity to learn and to help. I hope that they too will make their journey to understand their identity, their place, and their stories by seeing me model my journey. So far I have shared important accounts of Haisla people through our connection to oolichan fishing and our *Nuuyum*. To relearn our *Nuuyum* it is important to make our languages and history a core part of our existence in our families and in our communities.

Language is one way our parents and others retell our Creation stories. One summer I traveled with my father for 12 hours on a gill-netter to Kitasoo. During this 12-hour ride, he shared stories of many locations that represented land and water. I must say that although the islands, trees, and bodies of water looked the same to me, he identified specific areas that represent important landmarks for our history as Haisla. I was saddened

because I saw how he wanted to share and explain to me in Haisla the meaning of these places that are difficult to translate into English. Nevertheless, I heard the story in English and got the gist of the history. I have learned from this experience on the boat that I must learn our language in order to retell our history to our young people. This boat ride also reminded me that these places were shown to me before as a young person. I have learned that in storytelling we need to hear stories over and over again.

My Oolichan Vision!

I remember that as a child I was involved in harvesting oolichans and making oolichan grease. I was about 4 years of age. We were still able to fish in the mouth of *Kluqwajeequas*. Our family camp was set up on the beach and other families were around us. At the camp people worked hard at packing and fishing oolichans, keeping the fires going, and preparing oolichan bins. Other people maintained food supplies by cooking and feeding everyone. This experience and stories that were shared with me are now at a distance. However, these teachings have remained at the core of my heart and my commitment to relearn our ways. It was not too long ago that I experienced this, and indeed I look at this memory as a place of hope and important journey. The translation of *Kundoque* has resurfaced for me to make this journey. The meaning of my name “journeying over the mountain with belongings on my back” is the analogy I use to carry forth teachings of oolichan fishing, language, and place to our future. Through my story, through my children’s story, we will be able to keep our historical place a part of who we are as Haisla, as Kitselas, as Kemano and our relationship to oolichan fishing.

My father’s name is *Kgal askq touwq*, which means “new beginning.” He has shared with me many accounts of our family, our place, our history, and our traditional way of life. Throughout my educational journey I have sought his expertise about our way of life as Haisla people. I have learned from him the importance of analyzing our complex histories through methods such as storytelling. I want to honor my father for teaching me our history, our socialization, and our laws, which inform who I am as an academic and scholar. My mother’s name is *Bakk jus moojilth* (“lady always harvesting”), and she has taught me the role of leadership as an Indigenous woman. I have learned through her notions of *gyawaglaab* in our family, our community, and bring these teachings of helping one another to my scholarship. My parents have shared countless stories and teachings with me in various places and at various times throughout my life. They have both taught and modeled to me the essence of *Gyawaaglaab—wa!* (thank you).

I take these stories into my workplace and use my analogy of journeying over the mountain with my belongings on my back to share with students how important it is for them to revisit their histories and ceremonies and examine the meanings of their names. Through analysis of our

histories, we as Indigenous peoples solidify our philosophies and values not only for ourselves, but for our nations. Worldwide, our people are asserting our traditional teachings, our *Nuuyum* as keystones to regeneration of our knowledge in our communities and in our professions. Making present our *Nuuyum* in my practice reinforces my ability truly to reflect Indigenous knowledge in order for others to relearn their traditional ways of being. It is essential that we continue to explore our stories so that the next seven generations of our people can live their lives like our old stories. *Wa Aixgwellas!*

Notes

¹Known as Tsmishian people. Tsmishian territory also includes Hartley Bay, Kitasoo, Port Simpson, Metlakatla, BC, and Alaska.

²Oolichan grease. Kwaguilth and Tsmishian people call it *kqleena*.

³Herring roe, which is a one of the main sources of food of Kitsasoo, Heiltsuk, and Hartley Bay.

⁴Oolichans were smoked in smoke houses at the camps. Salting was done by placing oolichans in buckets with coarse salt. Neither type of preserving required refrigeration, and the fish could be stored outdoors during other seasons.