

THIS SPACE HERE
IN MEMORY

Yotu (Gloria Cranmer Webster)
4 July 1931–19 April 2023

LAURA CRANMER, DEBRA HANUSE, MYRNA CRANMER,
HALIE BRUCE, AND LOUISE MANDELL



Photo courtesy of the family.

Ḡilakasdaḡwla naḡḡamwayut. Ḡilakasdaḡwla li'laxwəl. Nugwa'am
Ḡixḡḡala. Gayuḡḡan laxida 'Yəlis. Gayuḡḡan laxida 'Nəmgis laxan
oskutəme. Həḡan umpwəḡe David Cranmer. Gayuḡḡamḡa'an laxida
Haida laxan əbaskutəme. Həḡan əbəmpwəḡe Pearl Weir. Həḡan

gagampwala Gwanti'lakw 'i'axsila gaxan. Ax'esdan kan malkwale kan mumalkale xa *BC Studies* journal le ganox gwagwix'ala lax Yotuwale.¹ Greetings to those who I am one with, greetings loved ones. My name is Laura Cranmer. I am 'Namgis on my father's face side. David Cranmer was my father. I am Haida on my mother's face side. My grandmother Gwanti'lakw took care of me when I was a child. I would like to remember to respectfully thank *BC Studies* journal for the reasons we are here writing about our beloved Yotu.

Laura's voice: Yotu came home to the Bay when I was in grade 8. At the time our English teacher, Mr. Newberry, had our class studying "Suzanne" by Leonard Cohen. Yotu already had the Cohen album and was surprised to see that I had the song on flip chart paper taped on the wall across from my bed. There we were, on my bed singing "Suzanne" at the tops of our voices. When it came time to go onto grade 9, kids in the Bay had the option of signing up for the boarding home program funded by Indian Affairs. Many of my contemporaries opted to move to major urban centres to board with white families to complete senior secondary. Gwanti'lakw must have called Yotu to ask if I could move to Deep Cove to complete high school at Windsor High School. My aunty Bunt had already lived with Yotu to complete her high school years and later, for training as a practical nurse. My four year stay at the Webster home, during my tender teen years, was my saving grace for the positive and structured influence afforded by my loving and generous Yotu who along with her husband John led busy lives working while raising their three children, Kelly, John, and Daniel. Further, Yotu and John opened their home to many other relatives and friends – anyone who needed a warm and welcoming space. Reflecting back on those times, I realize living in the Cove taught me in myriad subterranean ways that Yotu's aesthetic, intellect, heart, spirit, and compassion for her work and her family and love for the Kwakwaka'wakw people guided her life's work.

Modelling the values of hard work and education, Yotu's academic talent was recognized by her grade 8 teacher and so she was subsequently the first Indian girl in the province to attend a mainstream high school when she travelled by steamship to Victoria to start her grade 9 year at Victoria High School.² Her act of courage in this groundbreaking pursuit of her high school

¹ Chief Robert Joseph together with Dr. Patricia Shaw co-taught the first ever Kwak'wala course offered at the University of British Columbia in 2009 where I learned the introductory protocol in Kwak'wala. Gilakas'la Emily Aitken for your continual encouragement and continual corrections of my Kwak'wala!

² Rather than using the modern settler names for the diverse rights and title holder Nations (i.e. Indigenous, Aboriginal, etc.), Yotu continued to use the legal term "Indian."

graduation through to her BA in Anthropology at UBC (one of many firsts in her life) would have its ripple effects down through the generations of Kwakwaka'wakw scholars, and lawyers in the Cranmer family and our wider clan relations. In the following paragraphs are loving tributes to the breadth and depth of Yotu's generosity by only a few of our relatives, among many scholars and educators, for whom Yotu had such love and admiration she called them the "jewels in her crown."

One of our many highly accomplished relatives Yotu referred to as one of her jewels, Debra Hanuse, also known as Maxmawidzangga and T'la'lamdala'ogwa, offers a snapshot of what Yotu meant to the 'Namgis during the colonial and contemporary eras.

Debra's voice: Gloria Cranmer Webster, as she is known to those outside 'Yalis, blazed trails and opened doors for countless young women and men in our community and Nation. As a young woman, Yotu, as she is known to us at 'Yalis, fearlessly left the cocoon of our beautiful village and ventured off to the Big Smoke (Vancouver) and the halls of academia. This was no small feat, given that when she was born, there were traditional gukwdzi, or big houses still standing in our village and a residential school had been constructed in the community just two years prior to her birth. Her journey required her to bridge generations, worlds, and worldviews.

Through determination, hard work, and the love and support of her family, she became the first Indigenous woman to graduate from the University of British Columbia in 1956. Many of us, including those in my generation, had not yet been born when Yotu marked this first major accomplishment in her life. This accomplishment did not go unnoticed in our village. As those of my generation made our way through the public school system, our mothers and grandmothers would often remind us to follow Yotu's example and encouraged us to study and pursue our dreams.

Her trailblazing didn't end there. She returned home to our village in 1980 and was instrumental in repatriating cultural treasures, including masks, rattles, and regalia that had been confiscated in 1921 at a potlatch hosted by her father Dan Cranmer. She also helped secure funding to construct and operate the U'mista Cultural Centre that houses the Potlatch Collection.

The U'mista Cultural Centre is much more than bricks and mortar or planks and nails to 'Namgis and Kwakwaka'wakw peoples. It is a locus of cultural and language preservation and revitalization and a source of great pride. Yotu recruited Jay and Vickie Powell to our community and worked with them to develop a Kwak'wala alphabet and language instruction books,

which are still used in local schools and other venues as foundational language instruction tools. In this regard, Yotu was instrumental in building a solid bridge that will help transport our language into the next millennia.

Through the U'mista Cultural Centre, we also learned much about the history of our peoples and families. For me, repatriation of the Potlatch Collection is deeply personal. The 1921 potlatch was held at the gukwdzi of my great-grandfather I'wakalas, also known as Harry Hanuse. Yotu's father, Dan, was divorcing his first wife, Emma, who was I'wakalas' aunt. Hence, many of the treasures confiscated in 1921 formed part of my family's history. We are eternally grateful to Yotu for helping repatriate our family treasures, so that our treasure box could be made whole again, without gaps in our understanding of our place in the Kwakwaka'wakw cosmos.

She is Yotu, the legend. Through her example and trailblazing, she taught us that anything is possible. Following along the path that she blazed, I went on to obtain a BA in political science from Simon Fraser University and an LLB from the University of British Columbia.

Yotu the person was kind, humble, generous with her time and advice, and loving, in a firm kind of way, as she would not put up with nonsense or suffer fools. Ever the gracious host, her home was a place where many gathered or stayed when they travelled to 'Yalis. And it is the place where she welcomed younger women like me to bagwansapa (visit one another), share experiences, and encourage one another. It was also a place of laughter that came from sharing stories and experiences and from being welcomed and feeling welcomed.

There are not enough words to adequately thank Yotu for the gifts that she gave to us, in and beyond our beloved village. We are truly blessed that she was part of the tapestry of our lives and wish her the absolute best as she continues her journey in the spirit world, dancing with the ancestors.

In solidarity with all those who fight against oppressive laws, Yotu adopted Louise Mandell, KC, as one of the jewels in her crown. Also known as Ixts̓amga, Louise reflects on her impression of Yotu upon their first meeting.

Louise's voice: I met Yotu back in 1977 when I joined Indigenous Peoples in BC seeking a just resolution of the land question. Yotu was a great matriarch, righter of wrongs, powerful teacher, and speaker. She spoke with the qualities of the old ones - with a warm-hearted wisdom, a sense of connection and humour. She created reality with her voice. She enforced Kwakiutl law with her voice. She knew the power of words to heal, to change things. I paid close

attention to how she spoke truth to power – how she shared all she had . Her deepest generosity was her great love that she stored up like an inheritance and shared with young people like me, who wanted to learn from her. I stood taller and was more myself around her. She connected me to the power of my voice.

In the following statement offered by Myrna Cranmer, also known as Pulidi and T'akwa'ełka'nakw, (second daughter of Yotu's oldest brother Doug), the reading audience may learn of the 'Namgis perspective of settler representations in anthropology held by Yotu in conversation with Myrna.

Myrna's voice: This is a conversation with Gloria Cranmer Webster. It morphed into an anthropology class essay, at the University of British Columbia, and finally, into our book. She was my inspiration.

The world of anthropology is rife with heroes and relics. The native world has been researched and theorized from Africa to the Pacific Northwest Coast and beyond. Many people have come and gone. The theories have been matured and been exponentially conversed. The field of anthropology has widened and lengthened and today is still growing. Among the experts comes a woman who has exemplified the positive attributes and the growing knowledge of her life and her academic successes. Her name is Gloria Cranmer Webster. She was born to greatness and continues her pursuit of the enveloping field of anthropology. Her contributions are many and she continues to travel and be a part of the universal globalization of anthropology. Her life has been touched by many well-known anthropologists and she continues to touch their lives, also. In the following excerpts are conversations with and about her pursuit of her truths and her dominance in the far-reaching and ever reproduction of ethnology. The world as seen by a study and a lesson of fact versus fiction. This researcher believes Gloria Cranmer Webster's life parallels Franz Boas, the Father of American Anthropology so presents the Great, Great, Great, Granddaughter of American Anthropology, Gloria Cranmer Webster (Cranmer 2000).

This is an example of her memories, in her own words.

MY NOSE

When I was about 8 years old, I had problems with my nose. It felt like it was plugged and I talked with a pronounced nasal twang. My mother took me to the doctor, who prescribed drops that she had to

put in my nose, while I lay on the bed, with my head hanging over the side. Sometimes, the drops ran down my throat, making me gag, as they had a very unpleasant taste. Also, they didn't seem to be helping a lot.

One day, an old man from New Vancouver came to visit and, as many people did, came directly to our house for a hot meal. He didn't look anything like other men, wearing a red silk scarf around his neck, pinned with a gold brooch. He also wore gold earrings. As my mother prepared his meal, he asked her how everyone was. She told him about my nose problem. He said, "Maybe, I can help." He sat me on his lap, and began stroking the back of my neck, while he chanted. I was truly terrified, sitting on this strange man's lap. The stroking and chanting went on for some time and then he said to my mother, "Open the window, I think I have it." He walked over to the window with his hands clasped and unclasped his hands, as if he were throwing something out the window. As he sat down, he said, "You will have trouble with this one. She will be different from your other children. She was meant to be twins." Years later, when my mother recalled this experience, she laughed and said, "He was certainly right about that."

Some years later, my mother and I were going to Port McNeill to buy goods for a potlatch that my late brother Doug was hosting. It was a big deal – on the last Monday of each month, Field's store gave a 10% discount to seniors. There was an additional 10% discount, if you bought \$500.00 worth of goods. So, we really scored, buying piles of blankets, towels, dishes, etc. At the time, my son Daniel was out halibut fishing. As my mother and I were coming home on the ferry from our big shopping trip, I said, "I hope something happens, so Daniel can't go fishing and can be at the potlatch." I was thinking of some kind of problem with the boat's engine or some other gear. Two days later, I got a telephone call from a cousin, telling me that my son was in the Port McNeill Hospital. There had been a car accident. Before I got on the next ferry, I stopped by to tell my mother about what happened. She said something like, "Don't you remember who you are? Be careful of what you wish for." I am grateful that Daniel was not seriously injured and, now, am very careful of what I wish for. Maybe the power diminishes with age – who knows?

Halie Bruce, also known as Kwaxwa'logwa, another one of the jewels in Yotu's crown, shares a deeply personal story of transformation and triumph over adversity in her journey from being a child in care to becoming a powerful Kwagul lawyer.

Hailie's voice: *Yotu, in her typical wry fashion, insisted I call her YOAG – an acronym for “Your Old Auntie Glo.” Yotu gave me a sense of place, connection, and community. I came to live with my uncle in Alert Bay after being in foster care for several years. I was disconnected from my family and people. I never knew my non-Indigenous family to begin with, but I always knew and was proud to be Kwakwaka'wakw. Yotu always reminded me that, no matter where I was or where I went in the world, I'd always be tied to our culture, community, and family. And she meant it. When I started university, and was suffering from imposter syndrome – or what I thought was imposter syndrome – she would not allow it! Yotu would remind me I was a strong, proud Kwagul woman and that I come from a long line of noble women.*

When I went to law school, Yotu would send me emails always pushing me, encouraging me, and telling me never to give up. I remember writing her one night while studying trusts and real property law. Considering the distributive nature of our culture, I found the study of trusts and real property law quite challenging. In response, Yotu sent me this cartoon of a frog half in the mouth of a pelican, while choking the pelican's neck with the caption “Never. Ever. Give. Up.” Yotu was there when I walked across the stage to get my law degree ... I am grateful and honour her every day – she taught me how our laws and culture can save lives.

Laura's voice: *Reflecting on my time living in the Webster home in Deep Cove, I also recall the diverse and varied music Yotu listened to such as Nana Mouskouri, Ella Fitzgerald, Josh White, Billie Holiday, Mahalia Jackson, Joan Baez, and Leonard Cohen. The common thread that seemed to weave through these diverse musicians is the theme of resistance against oppressions and repressions of all sorts. Yotu's influence on my life went so deep it seeped into my subconscious life and surfaces at the most unexpected times! I had to research the play For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow Is Enuf [Ntozake Shange] to confirm that it wasn't my imagination that Yotu brought me to see this avant-garde play/dance/poem performance in the early 70s when I was barely thirteen. As a consequence of my institutionalized childhood, I was deeply dis-associative, and so watching this performance was as inscrutable as watching a football or rugby game – beyond my comprehension. As I learned later in life, the puzzle pieces fall into*

place with introspection and study, with application and reflection. Aware of the trauma I'd suffered as a child, Yotu provided deeply reparative experiences through facilitating new experiences and encounters that challenged me to heal and grow. By taking me to this play, I believe this was Yotu's way of showing me that suffering is experienced by many different peoples, cultures and communities. From the very personal micro level to the macro societal level, Yotu was sharing with me the value of artistic expression to navigate deeply personal psychic and moral injury.

Yotu's comment in the film Potlatch: A Strict Law Bids Us Dance [U'mista Cultural Society] on the return of the cultural treasures to 'Yq'lis, "It's as if we have come back to ourselves" for me has force and resonance because the journey for the dissociative person is to return to oneself – that was my u'mista – the return of someone or something important. As demonstrated by the moving words of only a few of the jewels in Yotu's crown, Yotu facilitated the return of not only material culture, and Kwak'wala, but the return of our psychic lives – as intangible as it is viscerally and powerfully felt in our sacred gukw'dzi. Reflecting on those early years, wherever she lived, Yotu's generosity of heart, mind, and spirit, always and everywhere, made space for the Kwakwaka'wakw worldview made manifest in her actions.