

**ENCOUNTERING THE K'IT'S A'UMS: REINTERPRETATIONS OF  
THE SPIRIT QUEST IN THREE 21ST-CENTURY  
KWAKWAKA'WAKW NARRATIVES**

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines three 21<sup>st</sup>-century Kwakwaka'wakw narratives that resonate with the notion of the spirit quest. It focuses on the ways in which these narratives give voice to reinterpretations of the spirit-quest typology in order to comment on contemporary cultural concerns. Unlike in most older Kwakwaka'wakw spirit-quest stories, the protagonists of these narratives do not obtain supernatural items, prestigious names, or ceremonial rights. Instead, the gifts they receive are faith in indigenous oral traditions and knowledge of Kwakwaka'wakw culture. By reinterpreting the spirit-quest typology in this manner, the stories highlight the importance of faith and education for the continued vitality of cultural transmission.

## **Preface**

This thesis is the original work of the author, Daniel Frim. It is based on ethnographic research conducted under the supervision of Professor Charles Menzies. Daniel Frim was responsible for conducting interviews, producing the transcripts that appear in this thesis, and writing the accompanying analyses.

This project received approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board of the University of British Columbia, under the title, “Collaborative Research on Kwakw’ala Oral Literature” (certificate number H15-00081).

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## List of Abbreviations Used in Morphemic Glossing

APP: Appositive  
 CAUSAT: Causative  
 CONN: Connective (Rosenblum 2015)  
 CONT: Continuative (Rosenblum 2015)  
 COP: Copula (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 DEF: Definite (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 DEM: Demonstrative (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 DIM: Diminutive (Rosenblum 2015)  
 EXCL: Exclusive (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 EXHORT: Exhortative  
 HORIZ.END: “End of long horizontal object” (Boas 1947:336)  
 INCL: Inclusive (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 LOC: “Generalized locative stem” (Boas 1947:247)  
 LOC1: Primary locative (see Boas 1947:271-272, 284-285)  
 LOC2: Secondary locative (see Boas 1947:271-272, 284-285)  
 LOC.NEG: Negating locative (combining LOC and NEG from Comrie et al. 2008)  
 MOM: Momentaneous (Rosenblum 2015)  
 NMLZ: Nominalizer (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 OBJ1: “Primary object” (Rosenblum 2015)  
 OBJ2: “Secondary object” (Rosenblum 2015)  
 OI: “Old (known) information” (Rosenblum 2013)  
 PASS: Passive (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 PLUR: Plural  
 POS: Positional (Rosenblum 2015)  
 POSS: Possessive (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 PREP: Preposition (Rosenblum 2015)  
 PRON: Pronoun  
 PRONOM: Pronominal  
 PURP: Purposive (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 QUOT: Quotative (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 RED: Reduplication (Rosenblum 2015)  
 SEQ: Sequential (Rosenblum 2015)  
 SBJ: Subject (Comrie et al. 2008)  
 SUBORD: Subordinate/subordinating (Rosenblum 2015)  
 TRANS: Transitive

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I owe a profound debt of gratitude to all of the consultants and elders who taught me about their culture and language. Though their names must remain anonymous here, I will always remember and strive to emulate the kindness they showed to me.

## 1 Introduction

Americanist anthropologists have long called attention to an array of beliefs and practices that are often (but not always) combined in emic discourses and that involve personal encounters with spiritual beings (see, especially, Benedict 1923). Lowie (1924:171) described “the subjective experience conveniently labeled ‘vision’” as one of the primary components of most indigenous North American religions. Whether or not it is possible to apply this observation on a continental scale, the spirit quest, in which an individual encounters a spiritual being and obtains a gift from it or establishes a relationship with it, has also been discussed extensively in the context of religious systems belonging to individual North American groups (e.g. Spier 1930, Drucker 1951, Boelscher 1988, Grim 1992). This is the case for ceremonial practices and narratives belonging to Kwakwaka’wakw<sup>1</sup> communities of northern Vancouver Island and nearby areas of the mainland coast of British Columbia.<sup>2</sup> In his first major publication on Kwakwaka’wakw culture, Boas remarked, “The American idea of the acquisition of the manitou was evidently also fundamental among the Kwakiutl, as all their tales refer to it, and, as we shall see later on, the whole winter ceremonial is based on it” (1897:336). Later, more detailed discussions to this effect emphasize contrasts between Kwakwaka’wakw renditions of the spirit-quest concept and variants found elsewhere in North America. For

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<sup>1</sup> For ethnonyms, I use the spelling and orthography most often used by the First Nation governments that represent the groups to which the names refer. Otherwise, my transcriptions adhere to the orthography of the North American Phonetic Association in order to be inclusive of readers who are unfamiliar with more specialized orthographies used only for Kwak’waka. I make use of the First Nations Unicode Font created by Professor Patricia Shaw and the First Nation Languages Program at the University of British Columbia.

<sup>2</sup> See Glass (2006) for further discussion regarding the history of this topic in early- and mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Boasian anthropology (e.g. 2006:91) and in contemporary indigenous scholarship (e.g. 2006:903).

example, in an analysis combining historical and functional approaches, Spradley (1963) focuses on the degree to which norms of hereditary transmission affect Kwakwaka'wakw performances that are rooted in the idea of the spirit quest.<sup>3</sup> He relies largely on Boas's ethnographic research among Kwakwaka'wakw communities in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, comparing Boas's information on Kwakwaka'wakw ritual practices to contemporaneous and subsequent descriptions of ceremonialism among other Northwest Coast groups. Spradley uses these geographic differences to infer diachronic changes within Kwakwaka'wakw culture, and he argues, "the guardian spirit quest appears to have been reinterpreted in the secret society ceremonial" (i.e. the initiatory performances of Kwakwaka'wakw winter dancers) (Spradley 1963:1). He explains this process of change by suggesting that it "reinforced the norms and values in Kwakiutl society, thereby contributing to social solidarity" as it bolstered "the concepts of rank and prestige gained from wealth" (Spradley 1963:123).

Spradley's account of Kwakwaka'wakw "reinterpretation[s]" of the spirit quest follows along the lines of Benedict's (1923) study, which focuses on the ways in which core elements of "the concept of the guardian spirit" have been "reinterpreted" (e.g. 1923:43) by different indigenous North American groups. Taking a Boasian approach, Benedict stresses "the intricate fortunes of diffusion" (1923:7) and characterizes the spirit-quest phenomenon as a complex that comprises disparate elements (e.g. the "guardian spirit," the "vision," "social recognition of the vision" [1923:28], acquisition of the "control of supernatural power" [1923:29], etc.), not all of which are present in all variants of the complex and whose association is "fortuitous" and historically contingent

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<sup>3</sup> My phrases, "the idea of the spirit quest" and "the spirit-quest concept," are influenced by Benedict's (1923) phrase, "the concept of the guardian spirit."



(1923:20, 84). In Benedict's terminology, reinterpretations of the spirit quest involve the rearrangement or exclusion of particular elements and the realignment of the concept with other cultural complexes: "In one region it has associated itself with puberty ceremonials, in another with totemism, in a third with secret societies, in a fourth with inherited rank, in a fifth with black magic" (Benedict 1923:84).

In the present paper, I will take a related yet distinct approach as I analyze several contemporary Kwakwaka'wakw narratives, which I recorded during a series of ethnographic interviews in 2015 and which give voice to present-day interpretations of the spirit-quest motif. Like Benedict, I will identify emerging linkages between the spirit quest and other cultural concepts. However, whereas Benedict addresses inter-group variations across North America, I will focus on variations between individual storytellers' interpretations within the more localized context of contemporary Kwakwaka'wakw culture. Furthermore, while Spradley reconstructs diachronic changes by examining synchronic differences between neighboring groups on the Northwest Coast, I will compare Kwakwaka'wakw narratives told in the early-21<sup>st</sup> century with Kwak'wala stories that were recorded during the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries and that are preserved in the Boas/Hunt corpus.<sup>4</sup> This increased geographic resolution and the use of evidence from more than one time period will allow me to explain variations between interpretations of the spirit-quest motif in terms of individuals' rhetorical goals, rather than as the results of arbitrary "fortunes of diffusion" (Benedict 1923:7) or broad-scale "social functions" (Spradley 70).

My analysis will take its primary cue from Cruikshank (1998), who illustrates

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<sup>4</sup> See Berman (1991:13-57 and 1992) for descriptions of this corpus and its history.

how First Nation elders in the late-20<sup>th</sup>-century Yukon have used, “in strikingly modern ways,” stories and narrative typologies that are “Rooted in ancient traditions” (1998:46). Cruikshank focuses, in particular, on the explanatory power of oral narratives. She devotes a chapter to contemporary stories that describe the work and predictions of late-19<sup>th</sup>- and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century prophets, who are said to have foreseen the onslaught of colonialism and to have described it in terms of indigenous beliefs. Cruikshank argues that these narratives are “told as a way of making intellectually consistent sense of disruptive changes – some past, some contemporary, some anticipated in the future, with reference to an authoritative narrative framework” (1998:129). In this way, Yukon elders present their “explanation of contemporary events, an explanation that competes with Western discourse” (Cruikshank 1998:120). Along similar lines, Berman (2004:146-159), in an analysis of “first-encounter narratives” (Berman 2004:146) from the Northwest Coast, emphasizes how indigenous storytellers invoke older “narrative framework[s]” (Cruikshank 1998:129) to represent recent and ongoing historical processes. Berman focuses on a narrative produced by the Tlingit ethnographer Louis Shotridge. She points out that at first, “the story closely follows the North Pacific Coast mythic pattern...in which the hero encounters a supernatural being who grants gifts that will become the spiritual wealth of the hero and his or her lineage” (Berman 2004:153). Berman argues, however, that the “importance [of stories like this one] is not just the degree to which they follow the mythic pattern. It is, crucially, also the ways in which they deviate from it,” alluding to older narrative typologies that provide “the charter for traditional life” in order to offer an alternative “charter for the transformation of that traditional worldview” (2004:156). Berman reveals how spirit-quest narratives are

reused and reinterpreted in a specific context to represent and comment on the colonial experience. However, Cruikshank, apart from emphasizing the explanatory or commentative roles of oral tradition, also argues that the application of older narratives to recent or current events can have important didactic functions:

Following Renato Rosaldo's insight that narratives *shape* rather than *reflect* human conduct, telling a prophetic narrative may give a storied form to proper relations. Such narratives may provide listeners with ways to think about how they should respond to external events (1998:135).

In other words, narratives not only help in “making intellectually consistent sense of disruptive changes” (Cruikshank 1998:129); they also suggest specific ways of dealing with these changes.<sup>5</sup> Following along the lines of these previous studies, I will argue that three of the narratives I heard from Kwakwaka'wakw elders give voice to the tellers' reinterpretations of the spirit-quest motif in light of contemporary concerns regarding the preservation and revitalization of indigenous culture.

The three narratives I will analyze differ substantially from each other on the level of genre: one is the teller's first-person recollection of a childhood experience; another is a third-person anecdote focusing on the teller's grandfather when the latter was a “young man”; and the last is a more “traditional” story set in an unspecified, but presumably much earlier, period of the past.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, each of these narratives

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that similar understandings of the social and personal functions of narrative have been proposed within the field of narrative psychology. As McAdams et al. (2008:989) note, “the psychological study of life stories still provides a clear and revealing window through which to view how people make meaning out of their lives in time and how they understand who they are in social, cultural, historical, and political contexts.”

<sup>6</sup> Here, I draw on Boas (1914:377-378) and Berman (1991:119), who state that the chronological setting of a story either during or after the “myth age” is a primary criterion for genre classification. Both authors suggest that this mode of categorization reflects emic understandings of narrative genres during the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries

derives its basic structure from the spirit-quest motif complex, which comprises a small set of core features that can manifest in a variety of adapted forms. In her dissertation focusing on Kwak'wala texts from the Boas/Hunt corpus, Berman (1991) draws on earlier formalist research by Propp (1968) and Meletinsky et al. (1974) to develop a detailed morphological scheme describing late-19<sup>th</sup>- and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century Kwak'wala *nuyəm*, narratives set in the “myth age” (Berman 1991:119). Berman does not devote her morphology to spirit-quest narratives, strictly defined, but she bases it especially on what she terms “the adolescent-hero plot-type” (Berman 1991:433), in which human protagonists “seek and acquire power from” (Berman 1991:607) powerful beings. These stories include, in their “minimal” form, “a journey outward,” i.e. away from the realm of human habitation and toward the realm of spirits, “acquisition” of a “treasure,” and “a return” to the human domain (Berman 1991:483).<sup>7</sup> I will borrow and capitalize

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(Berman [1991:117] explicitly draws her genre classification scheme from Hunt's written testimony). However, some of the comments I heard from consultants involving labels for narratives, such as “story,” “legend,” “myth,” “history,” *nuyəm* (lit.: “that with which one narrates”), and *nuyəmbidu?* (lit.: “that with which one narrates,” diminutive inflection), reflect different emic approaches to genre classification than the earlier emic approach Boas and Berman have described. For this reason, when Boas and Berman's chronologically based classification scheme is applied to Kwakwaka'wakw narratives told in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is best regarded as a set of “analytical categories” rather than “ethnic genres” (for this terminology, and for a discussion regarding emic classifications of oral literature, see Ben-Amos 1976). Apart from drawing on this scheme to highlight the different chronological settings of the three narratives I analyze, I do not attempt to apply it more directly or to identify these stories with specific “ethnic genres.” Furthermore, while Johnson (pseudonymous), the elder who told the third story that I analyze, labeled it with the word *nuyəm* (which was used in late-19<sup>th</sup>- and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century Kwak'wala as the name of a particular genre [Berman 1991:119]), I do not know precisely how Johnson uses this word today. Therefore, I use the deliberately nondescript terms “narrative” and “story” to refer to all three of the narratives that I analyze.

<sup>7</sup> This morphological skeleton is reminiscent of Hymes's (1981d:320) description of a basic “rhetorical pattern that pervades Chinookan texts...: *onset, ongoing, outcome*.” See,

several key terms from Berman's morphology (most of which were borrowed, in turn, from Propp 1968) in order to refer to core elements of spirit-quest narratives: the Hero is the protagonist, who experiences an Encounter (Berman 1991:461), during which he or she meets the Donor, an animal or spirit who gives the Hero a Treasure (Berman 1991:467). Berman's *nuyəm* morphology helps in identifying the Hero, his or her "journey outward," the Encounter with a Donor, the bestowal of a Treasure, and the Hero's "return" as the plot elements constituting the basic form of the spirit quest in the Boas/Hunt corpus. This outline of the late-19<sup>th</sup>- and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century Kwakwaka'wakw spirit-quest motif complex provides a baseline from which to demonstrate that, despite their differences on the level of genre, the three contemporary stories I analyze all partake of and adapt this narrative tradition.<sup>8</sup>

The element of the spirit-quest concept that is modified in all three narratives and that has the strongest consequent impact on the stories' rhetorical effect is the nature of the Treasure. In most spirit-quest narratives from the Boas/Hunt corpus, a spiritual being gives the protagonist supernatural items or sources of prestige, such as a "supernatural spouse" (Berman 1991:468), "marvelous objects" (e.g. masks, houses, "self-paddling canoes," rods that can set fire to mountains, water that can revive the dead, etc.), names, and "masked dances" (Berman 1991:648-649). By contrast, in the contemporary narratives that I recorded, the protagonists receive a different set of gifts. In one of these stories, a man who feels skeptical toward his tribe's oral traditions sets

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also, Dundes's (1965) study aimed at identifying similar core morphological patterns in indigenous North American oral narratives.

<sup>8</sup> Boas (1914:378) and Berman (1991:119) have already pointed out that narratives from different genres can be rooted in the same or similar versions of the spirit-quest concept. I extend this observation to 21<sup>st</sup>-century narratives. Cf. Young's (1983) different account of the intersections of "myth" and "autobiography" in a Melanesian setting.

out in search of proof that these traditions are true. His quest is successful, and the gift that he obtains is faith. In another contemporary narrative that I will analyze, a girl encounters a pod of whales at sea and is made aware of her tribe's special affinity to these creatures. The gift that she obtains is knowledge of the Kwakwaka'wakw beliefs regarding this affinity. Similarly, in the final story I will discuss, wolves teach a young man how to perform a set of rituals; the gift he receives is cultural knowledge. These three narratives help "make connections between past and present" (Cruikshank 1998:117) by re-forging the spirit quest in a form that is directly relevant to challenges affecting present-day Kwakwaka'wakw communities as they work to ensure the continued vitality of cultural transmission. Implicitly likening faith in indigenous narratives and knowledge of indigenous culture to precious gifts acquired from spiritual beings during quests, the stories highlight the value and importance of faith and cultural knowledge to the success of these ongoing struggles.

## 2 Faith and the Colonial Experience

In one of the narratives I recorded, the gift that the protagonist obtains during his quest is faith in a set of indigenous beliefs regarding the flood. This story was told to me by Smith (pseudonymous),<sup>9</sup> a We Wai Kai First Nation elder who lives in Cape Mudge. Before telling me the narrative in question, Smith summarized some of the beliefs that the We Wai Kai hold about the deluge. A chief named Wεqay<sup>10</sup> dreamt about the impending flood. He ordered the construction of canoes, “and he told his people to notch a boulder up there, up on that mountain” near the village site of T’əka in Topaze Harbour. Wεqay and some members of his tribe survived the flood in canoes tied to the notched boulder. After reviewing these oral traditions, Smith launched into the following narrative:<sup>11</sup>

(1) But my grandfather said– said this, Billy Assu, was listening, and he, cause he knew my grandfather– my grandfather was an adventurous [man], he climbed every mountain around here. He went to look for that– he said he didn’t believe, there was a flood. So he went to look for that rock they notched. He was up there for four days, four days (5) looking, looking, you know. Then he sat down he give up. He was gonna just come down he didn’t believe then there was a, you know, that we had a Noah, and there was a flood, he didn’t believe. Then he []– then he kicked, he sat down [] and he kicked, and there was that much moss, he kicked the moss. He said “Ohhh that’s what it is must be covered with moss” so he started using a stick, then he found it, the notched rock yeah, (10) it’s there. He started belie[ving]– he even went to this church, [] there’s building the church and he, he d– he wasn’t a follower of the church then, he was just still a young man you know and they, they started they they build that church when he was about forty years old, my grandfather. And he started to believe, he believed in, it really happened. And this Wεqay, you know that Noah we had, he said that some treetops (15) were still showing, it didn’t really uh, you know, flood everything, here. Cause we have big mountains more than some, mo– most countries you know, yeah, I guess that’s– they seen some mountains you know way up. I guess some of our people went

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<sup>9</sup> The default procedure is to keep consultants’ names anonymous. The consultants whom I cite by name below gave permission for their names to be used in this paper.

<sup>10</sup> This transcription represents how I discerned Smith’s pronunciation of the name. Boas gives the transcriptions Wεqaʔe (Boas and Hunt 1905:102) and Wiqeʔ (Boas 1966:41).

<sup>11</sup> In the following transcript, as well as in the English-language transcripts that appear later in this paper, I represent pauses using commas. I have also added line numbers for purposes of easy reference. These reflect the lineation of the transcript on the printed page; they have nothing to do with discourse units or other inherent divisions in the text.

up there too, they probably climbed you know, but I don't know how that they survived or not, there's no stories of that, you know, how many people died, no stories, (20) yeah. And so, you know, it's quite a story he told, but, it– it took him a long time to believe, because of the, you know, when he found that, notched rock. He said, “You guys should go and look at it.” We never went there I– I'm too old to get up there now I don't think I could climb that mountain. He was up there for four days.

Smith's narrative regarding his grandfather's search for Wəqay's boulder resonates clearly with the concept of the spirit quest. At the beginning of the story, Smith's grandfather departs from the beachside realm of human habitation (Berman 1991:591). He reaches the summit of a mountain, which stands in for the “spirit zone” (Berman 1991:435) that the Hero reaches either by journeying “upriver into the mountain forests, or out to sea” in narratives from the Boas/Hunt corpus (Berman 1991:592). There, Smith's grandfather experiences an Encounter (albeit with a storied boulder, rather than with a spirit Donor) and acquires the Treasure he has been seeking (faith in the story of Wəqay and the flood). He returns home a changed man. These constituents of the narrative correspond to the basic plot elements Berman identifies in stories adhering to “the adolescent-hero plot-type” (Berman 1991:433, 483).

In addition to these underlying structural congruencies between Smith's narrative and older spirit-quest tales, I believe Smith deliberately employs an allusive device to signal his story's adherence to this narrative tradition. He repeatedly states that his grandfather spends four days on the mountain. In Kwakwaka'wakw oral literature, “the primary pattern-number is four, the number of ritual efficacy” (Berman 1991:391), and this pattern-number plays a particularly pervasive role in narrative and ritual representations of the spirit quest.<sup>12</sup> For example, initiates to the *hama'ca* dance society,

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<sup>12</sup> This pattern number is widely distributed across North America. Hymes (1981d:319) notes that “Among American Indian peoples” the pattern number is “most often four.”



the most prestigious institution of the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century Kwakwaka'wakw winter ceremonial (Berman 2000:87), used to “disappear” inland from the village for four months. Their absence “simulated” (Spradley 1963:28) their journey “through the house of the Cannibal” (Boas 1966:174), a spiritual being named Bax<sup>w</sup>bax<sup>w</sup>alanux<sup>w</sup>siwe? (see Berman 2000:89-90). This four-month “disappearance” (Spradley 1963:28) was part of a broader “reenactment of the ancestor’s spirit encounter” (Spradley 1963:21) during which the *hamača* dances were originally obtained (Rosman and Rubel 1990:624). In addition, Kwakw’ala narratives from the Boas/Hunt corpus often describe spirit quests that involve, e.g., four days of preparatory bathing (e.g. Boas and Hunt 1905:125-126),<sup>13</sup> four days of walking upriver (e.g. Boas 1910:113-115), four gifts offered to the Hero by the Donor (Berman 1991:391, Boas 1935a:207), etc.<sup>14</sup> On two separate occasions, Smith states that his grandfather “was up there for four days,” and in his first statement to this effect, Smith repeats the phrase, “four days,” perhaps intentionally alluding to older spirit quest narratives and comparing his grandfather’s experiences to them.

Many Boas/Hunt texts adhering to the “the adolescent-hero plot-type” (Berman 1991:433) begin by describing a particular need or “lack” that the Hero sets out to fulfill (Berman 1991:439; see also Propp 1968:34-35, from whom Berman draws). Quests are often prompted by the Hero’s lack of social prestige, especially after he or she has been shamed or beaten in a competition (Berman 1991:439; see e.g. Boas 1935a:176), or by communal hunger and resource-scarcity (Berman 1991:439; see e.g. Boas and Hunt

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<sup>13</sup> Boas (1935b:113) lists this and a number of other examples of this motif.

<sup>14</sup> On several occasions, Mr. Allen Chickite, an elder who lives in the We Wai Kai First Nation village of Cape Mudge on Quadra Island, made explicit statements regarding the significance of fourfold repetition, both as a stylistic principle in indigenous storytelling and as an ingredient for success in ritual.

1905:7). Smith makes clear, however, that what prompts his grandfather's quest is an altogether different form of "lack." After a sentence-long preface (lines 1-3), Smith launches into the plot of the narrative by recounting, "He [my grandfather] went to look for that– he said he didn't believe, there was a flood. So he went to look for that rock they notched" (3-4). A few sentences later, Smith relates, "he [my grandfather] didn't believe then there was a, you know, that we had a Noah, and there was a flood, he didn't believe" (6-7). In this statement, Smith repeats the phrase, "he didn't believe," two times. Later, while summarizing the narrative as a whole, Smith reiterates, "it took him [my grandfather] a long time to believe" (20-21). These comments emphasize the Hero's initial state of disbelief. The lack that Smith's grandfather seeks to fulfill, in other words, is a lack of faith.

The idea of a quest for faith is not entirely absent from the Boas/Hunt corpus, but I do not know of any texts that develop this theme in a manner fully or directly paralleling Smith's narrative. One tale, which was documented by Hunt, begins by describing a feast at which a foolish commoner, Məzinəwisu?, comments, "Really I don't believe the words of our late forefathers when they say that" ghosts occupy and perform their winter dances at ʔuzoʔas (Boas 1935a:105), a 'Nəmgis fish-procurement site (Galois 1994:316). After being chastised for this statement of disbelief, Məzinəwisu? declares, "Now I'll try and purify myself and I will go to ʔuzoʔas and try to meet with the ghosts which you say live there, you liars" (Boas 1935:106). As he begins to prepare for his quest, his wife suddenly falls ill and dies. After completing his purification process, Məzinəwisu? manages to enter a house at ʔuzoʔas in which he sees ghosts conducting a ceremony that is apparently meant to initiate his wife into their

ranks. As she dances around the fire in the center of the house, Məzinəwisu? attempts to embrace her, but “It was just as though his hands cut through the body of his wife.” As a result of his experience, “he believed” traditional claims “that the ghosts were living at ʔuzoʔas during the winter” (Boas 1935:108). Like the story of Smith’s grandfather, the tale of Məzinəwisu? begins by describing the hero’s lack of faith in beliefs handed down by “our late forefathers” (Boas 1935a:105). It is unclear, though, whether or to what extent disbelief is truly the lack that he seeks to fulfill. When Məzinəwisu? first states his plan to go in search of the ghosts, he addresses the other feasters as, “you liars.” Then, when the feast continues, “the feasters all took notice of Məzinəwisu?, for it was as though he regretted his words here and here, and he hardly ate for he was downhearted” (Boas 1935a:106). Later, after his wife dies, the narrative relates, “now Məzinəwisu? really resolved to purify himself” (Boas 1935a:107). Does he hope to remedy his lack of faith by encountering the ghosts at ʔuzoʔas, or does he intend to disprove the claims made by the feasters who have chastised and humiliated him? The narrative is ambiguous on this point, but the implication may be that Məzinəwisu?’s initial goal is to debunk the traditional belief and that this intention gradually develops into a genuine desire to encounter the ghosts, especially after Məzinəwisu?’s wife dies. In Smith’s narrative, by contrast, the quest-hero is unequivocally determined to prove to himself the veracity of the story of Weqay and the flood. Smith relates that his grandfather spent “four days looking, looking” for the stone. Smith’s repetition of the word “looking” gives the impression that his grandfather makes an earnest attempt to locate the boulder. Then, when it occurs to him that the stone might be covered with moss, he says to himself, “Ohhh that’s what it is must be covered with moss.” This

sentence, especially the lengthened interjection, “Ohhh,” indicates the protagonist’s eagerness to find the stone and his excitement when he realizes it may be close at hand.

Believing (*ʔuqʷəs*) and disbelieving (*wəyuqʷəs*)<sup>15</sup> are also explicit themes in a shamanic initiation narrative from the Boas/Hunt corpus. At the beginning of this first-person tale, the narrator and Hero, Nənulu, recalls that during his youth, he vociferously denied shamans’ claims to possess healing power. Then, he proceeds to describe how he became a shaman himself during a series of encounters with a wolf. Once, while the young Nənulu is out hunting for seals, he paddles his canoe past a wolf that is apparently struggling in discomfort on a rock. Nənulu approaches the wolf and sees a deer bone lodged painfully between the animal’s teeth. He removes the bone. This act sets in motion the extended process whereby the wolf initiates Nənulu as a shaman. However, Nənulu’s stated goal in removing the bone from the wolf’s mouth is not to become a shaman or to receive proof that shamanic power is real. He addresses the wolf before he aids it, stating, “Now I shall be like a great shaman and cure you, friend...Now reward me, friend, that I may be able, like you, to get everything easily, all that is taken by you, on account of your fame as a harpooneer and of your supernatural power” (Boas 1930b:42). Nənulu compares his act of kindness to the healing acts of a “great shaman,” but he does not request to be made a shaman. Instead, he asks for the wolf’s capacity “to get everything easily.” This request is reminiscent of several prayers documented by Hunt, which hunters recited either to animals they had killed or to non-

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<sup>15</sup> Note that *ʔuqʷəs*, “to believe” (Boas 1948:35) appears to function both as a root and as a suffix following the root *wəy-*, “to fail to be” (Boas 1948:56). *ʔuqʷəs* is exceptional in this respect, because in Kwakw’ala, “Suffixes are not used as independent stems” (Boas 1947:224). Boas lists only five known pairs of roots and suffixes that are both homophonous (or nearly homophonous) and synonymous (or nearly synonymous) (Boas 1947:224-225). *ʔuqʷəs* and *wəyuqʷəs* should be added to this list.

game animals they encountered in the forest. Nənulu's request makes use of the root *hułəm-*, "to obtain easily" (Boas 1948:109), which is also attested in prayers to a black bear (Boas 1930a:188), a grizzly bear (Boas 1930a:189), a beaver (Boas 1930a:192), and a squirrel (Boas 1930a:195). The phrase that Boas translates as, "that I may be able, like you, to get everything easily" (*qən səwε? G<sup>w</sup>exsas yəχs hułəmala?aqusaχis naxweyos ?əχsəwá*), recurs almost verbatim in a text that Boas labeled, "Prayer to a Dead Squirrel."<sup>16</sup> Wolves were, admittedly, among the three animal species "most frequently [thought of] as beings that initiate the shamans" (the other two species were killer whales and toads [Boas 1966:135]), and Nənulu is presumably aware of this when he addresses the struggling wolf on the rock. However, the striking parallel between Nənulu's utterance and the "Prayer to a Dead Squirrel" is evidence that Nənulu is not asking the wolf to act in this specifically shamanic lupine capacity. It is more likely that Nənulu hopes the wolf will improve his luck as a hunter, as indicated by Nənulu's reference to the wolf's "fame as a harpooneer" (Boas 1930b:42).

The night after this initial Encounter, as Nənulu sleeps in his anchored canoe, the wolf appears to him in human form in a dream. The wolf tells him that "There are many seals lying on this island [i.e. the island near where Nənulu's canoe is anchored], friend" and that "There is nothing hereafter that you will not obtain, whatever you wish to get" (Boas 1930b:42). The next day, Nənulu recounts, "I wished to see whether my dream would come true regarding the words that Harpooneer-Body [the wolf] had said in my dream, for I did not believe in dreams and shamans and all the sayings of the people, for I only believed in my own mind" (Boas 1930b:43). He paddles to the nearby

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<sup>16</sup> The parallel phrase in the latter text is *qən səwε? G<sup>w</sup>ixsas yəχs hułəmalixdequsaχis naxweyos ?i?əχ?ənayá*.

island and discovers many seals sleeping on it. From this point forward, Nənulu is an exceptionally successful sea hunter, and, as he recalls, “Now there was one thing I believed, namely the words of Harpooneer-Body” (Boas 1930b:43). In this episode, Nənulu introduces his former skepticism regarding “dreams” and “all the sayings of the people” (Boas 1930b:43), which presumably include beliefs regarding animals’ capacity to bestow fortune on human hunters. Interestingly, though, at the beginning of the narrative, before describing his encounter with the wolf, Nənulu mentions his skepticism exclusively with regard to shamanism. Had he begun the tale by identifying his previous attitude toward “dreams” and “all the sayings of the people,” then it would have been possible to interpret his initial Encounter with the wolf, in which he asks for success in hunting, as the beginning of a spirit quest aimed at remedying a general lack of faith in the supernatural. Instead, the theme of belief vs. disbelief is apparently relegated to a secondary position in the narrative. The reason why Nənulu describes his transformation from being a skeptic to being a believer is likely in order to maximize the credibility of his narrative. While Nənulu’s memorate, like the tale of Məzinəwisu?, addresses the theme of disbelief in the supernatural, neither of these texts depicts skepticism as the primary “lack” that prompts the hero to embark on his quest. Therefore, while the topic of faith is present in the Boas/Hunt corpus, I believe Smith develop this theme differently.<sup>17</sup>

The emphasis on faith that Smith’s story seems to express may reflect the

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<sup>17</sup> The stories of Məzinəwisu? and Nənulu are not the only texts worth mentioning in this regard. See also Boas 1910:447 and Boas 1930b:1, as well as Boas’s (1966:121-125) discussion involving the latter narrative. I believe that my interpretations of the narratives of Məzinəwisu? and Nənulu in relation to Smith’s story apply to these other two texts as well.

influence of Christian concepts and narrative typologies. The idea of questing after faith is reminiscent of evangelical conversion narratives. Furthermore, Smith's grandfather spends four days scouring the mountaintop in search of Weqay's boulder before sitting down and realizing that it lies right before him, hidden beneath a layer of moss. It is conceivable that this feature of the story reflects particular Christian perceptions of "true spiritual experience" as "personal, interior, subjective" (Smith 2010:210) and of conversion as the activation of preexisting, inherent spiritual potential.<sup>18</sup> Viewed from this perspective, the goals of even the most arduous religious quests may prove to be surprisingly near at hand. The influence of Christian notions of conversion on Smith's narrative is suggested most clearly by the manner in which Smith's grandfather expresses his newfound faith: church attendance. It is important to note, however, that while some of the formal features of the hero's "conversion" show signs of Christian influence, there is nothing to suggest that his newfound faith is Christian in content. Smith's grandfather finds proof "that we [i.e. the We Wai Kai] had a Noah" (6-7; emphasis added). Although this statement explicitly compares Weqay to the protagonist of the Biblical flood story, Smith's grandfather discovers faith in an indigenous narrative. Furthermore, the possibly Christian-influenced features of Smith's story are tightly interwoven with typical features of quest tales from the Boas/Hunt corpus, such as the clear identification of a particular "lack" that the hero sets out to fulfill, the hero's journey into the wilderness, and the use of the pattern-number four, to which Smith calls repeated attention. Smith's apparent reworking of the spirit-quest concept to include

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<sup>18</sup> I draw here, and throughout this paragraph, on the lectures of Professor David Hall for a course entitled, "Religion in America: From the Coming of the Europeans to the 1870's," offered at Harvard University in the spring of 2013.

Christian motifs is evidence of the concept's continued vitality as a thematic base and structural template for narrative composition.

It is important to note that although Smith's depiction of a quest for faith, as well as the other possibly Christian-influenced features of his narrative, are not directly paralleled in the Boas/Hunt corpus, this fact alone does not fully guarantee that these features are contemporary innovations. The absence of such themes from older surviving texts may simply reflect selection biases affecting the production of the Boas/Hunt corpus. However, regardless of whether or to what extent the themes of Smith's narrative are "new," and regardless of whether they reflect Christian influence, what is important for our purposes is that Smith's unusual rendition of the spirit-quest addresses contemporary efforts to strengthen and preserve the vitality of Kwakwaka'wakw religion, a rhetorical concern that Smith articulated more explicitly at other points during the interview.<sup>19</sup>

Over the course of our conversation, Smith returned frequently to the topic of faith. At one point, he told a story in which killer whales chase a man who has transgressed the taboo against killing members of this species. Smith concluded this narrative by mentioning statements his grandfather made regarding the importance of "look[ing] after everything that's in the water." Then, Smith proceeded to say, "We had lots of stories of uh, you know that word 'ʔoʔams,' Sunny?<sup>20</sup> That's that's a good word, that's 'not ʔoʔams,' that's 'not really real' it's, it's 'like a mystery,' you know." ʔoʔams

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<sup>19</sup> On these issues, see, especially, Robertson 2012:406-413, along with the interviews that follow Robertson's discussion. Regarding change and continuity in Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonialism during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Holm 1977 and 1990.

<sup>20</sup> Another Cape Mudge elder participated in this interview, and "Sunny" is his nickname.



is either a dialectal or idiolectal variant of the word *ʔəʔums*,<sup>21</sup> which appears often in texts from the Boas/Hunt corpus, where it denotes “the ordinary, the lack of supernatural power” but “is used almost always with the negation [i.e. preceded by the negating particle *kʰiʔs*]. *kʰiʔs ʔəʔums* means the possession of supernatural power” (Boas 1966:168). In Smith’s statement that I have quoted, he provides a partially translated version of this phrase, “not *ʔoʔəms*,” which he then fully translates as “not really real” or “like a mystery.” Taken alone, the first of these two glosses seems to suggest that the phrase, “not *ʔoʔəms*,” is used to describe stories or beliefs that are untrue. However, the second gloss, along with Smith’s subsequent references to this concept, clearly indicate that “not *ʔoʔəms*” denotes a lack of verisimilitude, rather than a lack of verity.

In order to illustrate this concept, Smith told a narrative cycle focusing on a 19<sup>th</sup>-century shaman from Cape Mudge. While introducing this figure, Smith said, “It’s quite a story, it’s hard to uhm, see it’s not– seem like it’s not really true, sometime it’s like uhm, I don’t know how will you put it but it’s rea– it really was true because he got power.” Smith began the narrative cycle by describing how the shaman first obtained his healing capacities as a young man: while hunting in the forest, he encounters a double-headed serpent (*Sisiuʔ*) bearing the “picture” of his (the young man’s) deceased father between its two serpentine heads. Immediately after describing this creature, and before recounting how the young man vanquished and derived power from it, Smith remarked, “See this is, it’s hard to believe cause it’s uh, you know that’s why the word *ʔoʔəms* []”<sup>22</sup> that’s what it means, it’s hard to believe.” Smith made similar comments about other

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<sup>21</sup> Smith subsequently provided *ʔəʔoms* (possibly a dialectal variant of *ʔəʔums*) as an alternate or, possibly, more correct pronunciation of *ʔoʔəms*.

<sup>22</sup> The word here, which I have difficulty deciphering, may be “enters.”

stories that he subsequently told during our interview, sometimes referring back to “that word,” i.e. *ʔoʔəms* or the phrase “not *ʔoʔəms*.” He shared a narrative in which his great-great-grandfather walks along the beach and discovers a baby in the tidal foam. The man takes the baby home, and he has a dream informing him that he will now have great success as a hunter, fisherman, and forager, but that this fortune will cease if he allows any of his children to step over his body. He enjoys the predicted abundance until one of his children transgresses the taboo, at which point, “the baby just disappeared.” Smith remarked, “That’s kind of a hard-to-believe story, but it happened, you know my dad said it really happened. It– he doesn’t know why, why that you know, why would you know that thing would happen like that. It’s– but fish came to him too real easy...” Here, again, Smith addresses faith in “hard-to-believe stor[ies].”

At one point, while discussing the shamanic initiation narrative mentioned above, Smith made explicit the reason why he considers faith in the “not *ʔoʔəms*” to be so important. With regard to the mysterious image of the soon-to-be shaman’s father that appears in the center of the double-headed serpent’s body, Smith stated:

We don’t know why, you know. But that’s– it’s hard to believe you know, that’s, that word [either *ʔoʔəms* or the phrase ‘not *ʔoʔəms*’] that’s what it means. There’s lot of things that happened long ago that’s hard to believe. But– but I believe it [chuckles] you know if we didn’t believe it we’d just let the stories die, you know.

Here, Smith suggests that faith in oral traditions is necessary to ensure their continued vitality. His emphasis on faith, both while telling the story of his grandfather’s quest and while providing commentary on the other narratives he told, pertains to the survival of Kwakwaka’wakw belief systems. Smith argues that it is essential to continue believing in oral traditions, even if faith is must be made the object of a deliberate quest.

This rhetorical emphasis helps make sense of an otherwise surprising feature of the narrative Smith told regarding his grandfather's quest. In the story, Smith digresses to take note of the fact that the deluge did not completely cover all the mountaintops. Then, he states, "I guess some of our people went up there too, they probably climbed you know, but I don't know how that they survived or not, there's no stories of that, you know, how many people died, no stories, yeah" (17-20). Before Smith told the story about his grandfather, he summarized some of his tribe's oral traditions regarding the deluge, and he emphasized that many of W̱eqay's tribesmen did not believe their chief's prediction that there would be a flood. Presumably, these disbelievers were the ones who refused to accompany W̱eqay in his canoes and who climbed mountains in an attempt to escape the rising floodwaters. While Smith's comments regarding the people "who went up there too" (17-18) may appear, at first glance, to stray from the focal topic of the narrative he is telling (i.e. his grandfather's quest), these comments in fact play a crucial role in the story. They establish an implicit comparison between Smith's grandfather (who climbs a mountain due to his skepticism about tribal narrative traditions, which state that the flood *did* occur) and W̱eqay's disbelieving tribesmen (who needed to climb mountains in order to escape the flood due to their skepticism about predictions that the flood *would* occur). This comparison may imply that just as the deluge forced disbelievers to flee to mountaintops, Smith's grandfather's lack of faith, and his consequent journey up the mountain, were prompted by a comparable catastrophe: the advent of colonialism, with its efforts to suppress indigenous beliefs.

Berman (2004:157) has suggested that in some Kwakwaka'wakw and Tlingit oral narratives describing early colonial relations,

There is even some evidence that the arrival of the flawed and ironic postcontact world is presented as a further development tacked onto the traditional cosmogony: as a kind of second transformation that altered the landscape of the aboriginal historical era in a manner comparable to the way the myth-age transformers changed the myth world.

In some Kwak'waka texts, the deluge is either caused by (Boas and Hunt 1905:100-101),<sup>23</sup> or coincident with the arrival of (Boas 1910:480), Q'aniqilak<sup>w</sup> (Boas 1935b:137), a major transformer figure (see Berman 1991:108, 120-121, 128, 665-672, 697 and Boas 1934:22-25, 1940a:413), whom Berman (1991:625) has described as “the being who, more than anyone else, brought about the end of the myth age.” Smith’s implicit comparison between colonialism and the deluge may, therefore, be an example of the broader narrative pattern involving comparisons between the end of the “myth age” and the end of the pre-contact period. It is important to note, though, that there is a major difference between how Smith depicts the skeptics’ flight from the deluge and how he describes his grandfather’s quest for faith. Smith expresses uncertainty about the skeptics’ survival: “but I don’t know how that they survived or not, there’s no stories of that, you know, how many people died, no stories, yeah” (18-20). By contrast, he indicates unequivocally that his grandfather’s quest was successful. In this manner, Smith suggests that efforts to maintain the vitality of Kwakwaka’wakw culture and religion have the capacity to succeed, and he argues that these efforts should involve the rekindling of faith in “hard-to-belief stor[ies].” In his narrative, Smith deploys the spirit-quest concept in order to comment on this contemporary cultural concern.

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<sup>23</sup> See, however, Boas 1934:34-35, where a distinction is made between floods caused by Q'aniqilak<sup>w</sup>, “which seem to be local incidents,” and “a general deluge.”

### 3 The Spirit-Quest Motif and the Transmission of Indigenous Knowledge

Two of the narratives I recorded portray knowledge of Kwakwaka'wakw culture as the Treasure that the Hero obtains during the Encounter with the Donor. I will argue that these narratives thematize the importance of continued cultural transmission by depicting the Encounter, first and foremost, as an educational experience. Over the course of my research project, I met regularly with Ruby Dawson-Cranmer, an elder who identifies as a member of the Dzawada'enuxw and 'Nakwaxda'xw tribes and who currently resides in Vancouver, where she works as a Kwak'wala language instructor. During one of our first sessions, Dawson-Cranmer explained that when she was a child, her family had two houses, one in Kingcome Inlet and another on Gilford Island. She would often visit her mother at a cannery in Knight Inlet, making her “fortunate enough to have three homes, three places, three villages.” I asked Dawson-Cranmer, “In any of those places, did whales ever swim close to shore?” She replied,

(1) No. We're from the whale family, so – oh yeah they – not towards the shore, but we used to travel back and forth to Gilford and Kingcome, and uh, or to the cannery. One time a whale went under our boat and I screamed my head off, so my dad told me, “Don't do that,” in our language. “Those are our families,” he said, “we're the whale family.” So (5) he taught me that. So I never screamed again after I saw a whale coming, I just thought whales were so beautiful. Yeah, cause I screamed my head off when they go under. “They're just playing with us,” he said, “don't– don't scream.” Same as the porpoises, they guide us to where we're supposed to go, they ride beside of us. It's really amazing, when I think about it, when I used to travel all the way to the camp, and the (10) cannery, cause my mum and sisters worked there. I was even born up there, so nobody knows where I was born [] cannery. But that's my, uhh, what happened when we were– when I was young, about those whales, now I knew for a long time that I was from the whale family.

Several weeks later, during the first few minutes of another interview session, Dawson-Cranmer raised the topic of whales, and the following discussion ensued:

**Dawson-Cranmer:** And I was told never to be scared of the killer whales when they

used to go under (15) the boat. Cause my dad told me, “that’s your family, that’s your family,” from the 'Nakwaxda'xw [tribe], yeah. The killer whale. They’re all killer whales I think.

[**Dawson-Cranmer’s adult grandson** walked into the room and told Dawson-Cranmer and me about a recent whale-sighting in Alert Bay].

**Dawson-Cranmer:** Yeah, we were taught never to be scared of them, used to go under our boat, they (20) were just playing with us, my dad said. So we never got scared. I did get s– I screamed my head off all the time, I was a cry-baby.

[**Dawson-Cranmer’s grandson** again commented briefly about killer whales].

**Dawson-Cranmer:** So, you want me to talk to you– tell you about that story about the du– uh whales? Did I already tell you?

(25) **Frim:** Uh, I don’t know, if you could tell it, that would be great.

**Dawson-Cranmer:** Yeah.

**Frim:** Do you think you could tell it first in Kwak’wala then, then in English?

**Dawson-Cranmer:** Yeah.

lanaxwɪdənox<sup>w</sup>

laχa

Knight’s Inlet<sup>24</sup>

la-nax<sup>w</sup>a-xʔid=ənox<sup>w25</sup>

la=χa

SEQ<sup>26</sup>-HABITUAL<sup>27</sup>-MOM=EXCL.PRON

PREP=OBJ1<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> While I have not found it helpful to conduct full measured-verse analyses of this and the other Kwak’wala narrative that I transcribe in this paper, I have opted to place line breaks at clause boundaries in order to make it easier for readers to perform their own measured-verse analyses, should they choose to do so. Indentation indicates continuation of a clause too large to fit within a single line of print. The numbers that are included in parentheses to the left of some clauses are only provided for ease of reference. They do not reflect inherent structural features of the narratives, although I count each clause as a separate line in Kwak’wala passages. My analyses follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules (Comrie et al. 2008; available at [www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php](http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php)). According to these conventions, glosses printed in small capital letters represent grammatical morphemes, rather than lexical morphemes. The status of suffixes in Kwak’wala and other polysynthetic languages as either lexical or grammatical is the subject of ongoing discussion (as described in Rosenblum 2015:70-77). I do not hold a strong position on this question, but following the practice of Rosenblum (e.g. 2015), in conjunction with whose course I first began producing formal morphemic analyses of Kwak’wala, I have chosen to use small capital letters to gloss all Kwak’wala suffixes.

<sup>25</sup> My transcription and analysis here are tentative.

<sup>26</sup> This and most of the other morphemic glosses I use are borrowed from Rosenblum (2015). For a full list of morphemic glosses with citations, see the section above entitled, “Abbreviations Used in Morphemic Glossing” (v).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Boas 1947:347.

<sup>28</sup> Rosenblum (2013, 2015) first suggested using the term, “primary object,” and its counterpart, “secondary object,” to refer to what Boas (e.g. 284-286) describes as the “objective” and “instrumental” cases in Kwak’wala. I follow Rosenblum in employing these terms and in glossing the morphemes that mark these cases with the abbreviations “OBJ1” and “OBJ2.”

**We would go to Knight's Inlet.**

qaʔ	ʔiʔaxələn	ʔəbəmp	lumən
qaʔ	ʔi-ʔəx-əla=ən	ʔəb-mp	luʔ-m=ən
CAUSE	RED-do-CONT=1POSS	mother <sup>29</sup> -RELATIONSHIP <sup>30</sup>	and-OI=1PRON
niṇula	laχada	cannery	
ni-ṇula	la=χa=da		
RED-older.sibling	PREP=OBJ1=DEF		

**(30) because my mother and older sisters worked at the cannery.**

həyulis	laχa	heʔənχ
always	la=χa	he-ənχ
always	PREP=OBJ1	summer-SEASON

**Always, during the summer,**

ləgənox <sup>w</sup>	q <sup>w</sup> isuʔəla	laχ	Knight's Inlet
la-igənox <sup>w</sup>	q <sup>w</sup> is-uʔ-əla	la=χ	
SEQ-NMLZ-EXCL.POSS <sup>31</sup>	far-MOTION-CONT	PREP=OBJ1	

**we would head towards Knight's Inlet.<sup>32</sup>**

[ʔ]	doq <sup>w</sup> əlaχada	G <sup>w</sup> əyəm
	duq <sup>w</sup> -əla=χa=da	G <sup>w</sup> əyəm
	see-CONT=OBJ1=DEF	whale

**[We would (?)] see the whales.**

lanax <sup>w</sup> a	dasʔid	laχa	wap	laχa
la-nax <sup>w</sup> a	das-xʔid	la=χa	wap	la=χa
SEQ-HABITUAL	dive-MOM	PREP=OBJ1	water	PREP=OBJ1
ʔəwaboʔəs	botes	ʔumpwəʔe		
ʔəw-abo-εʔ=s	bot=s	ʔəw-mp-wəʔ=ε		
LOC-BELOW-LOC1=OBJ2 <sup>33</sup>	boat=OBJ2	provide <sup>34</sup> -RELATIONSHIP <sup>35</sup> -PAST=DEM		

**They would dive into the water behind my late father's boat.**

lamisən	q <sup>w</sup> asanax <sup>w</sup> a
la-m-wis=ən	q <sup>w</sup> as-nax <sup>w</sup> a
SEQ-OI-CONN=1PRON	cry-HABITUAL

**(35) Then I would cry.**

nikən	ʔump
nik=ən	ʔəw-mp
say=1POSS	provide <sup>36</sup> -RELATIONSHIP

**My father said,**<sup>29</sup> Cf. Boas 1948:4.<sup>30</sup> Boas 1947:339.<sup>31</sup> See Boas 1947:276.<sup>32</sup> Dawson-Cranmer told me that *q<sup>w</sup>isuʔəla* means, “We were heading towards Knight's Inlet.”<sup>33</sup> For the analysis underlying the gloss “OBJ2,” which is borrowed from Rosenblum (2013) and which stands for “secondary object,” see Rosenblum (2013:231-233).<sup>34</sup> See Lincoln and Rath 1981:405.<sup>35</sup> Boas 1947:339.<sup>36</sup> See Lincoln and Rath 1981:405.

G <sup>wa</sup>	q <sup>was</sup> a
G <sup>wa</sup>	q <sup>was</sup> -a
NEGATIVE.IMPERATIVE <sup>37</sup>	cry-?

**“Don’t cry.**

yumēs	λιλελολοχ
yu-ṃ=es	λι-λε-λυ-əla=ox
COP-OI=2POSS	RED-RED-relatives <sup>38</sup> =SBJ

## These are your relatives.

kiʔsɕimasəs	kəʔəlacox
kiʔs-ɕimas=s	kəʔ-əla=s=sɔx
not-KIND.BELONGING.TO <sup>39</sup> =2PRON	fear-CONT=2PRON=OBJ2

**You are not of the kind that is afraid of them.<sup>40</sup>**

hewaxən	ʔiti	q <sup>w</sup> asən
hewaxa=ən	ʔit-xʔid	q <sup>w</sup> as=ən
never=1PRON	again-MOM	cry=1PRON

**(40) I never cried again**

every time I s-	lanax <sup>w</sup> ən	duq <sup>w</sup> əʔaχaxada	G <sup>w</sup> əyəm
	la-naχ <sup>w</sup> a=ən	duq <sup>w</sup> -gəʔaχələ=χa=da	G <sup>w</sup> əyəm
	SEO-HABITUAL=1PRON	see-SUDDENLY=OBJ1=DEF	whale

every time I s<sup>-41</sup> when I would see the whales.

So in English?

**Frim:** Mhm.

**Dawson-Cranmer:** We uh traveled up and down from Knight's Inlet to Gilford Island probably or (45) Kingcome. And we'd go up, and uh, we'd stop all over the place and we'd see the whales, and they'd come near our— my dad's boat, it's a real ol— old East Hope boat, gillnet boat. They used to dive underneath the boat, and I used to get real scared I used to scream my head off. So my dad told me “Never do that,” uhm, “these are our family, we're from the whale family,” he said, from the 'Nakwaxda'xw. So I never did it again (50) and, I don't mind them anymore.

Dawson-Cranmer's thrice-told story explains how she became aware of her special relationship with whales. The narrative focuses on the transmission from a father to his daughter of a tradition claiming consanguinity between whales and members of the 'Nakwaxda'xw tribe. At first glance, the story bears no clear similarities with spirit-quest narratives. It lacks most of the core components of the spirit-quest

<sup>37</sup> Boas 1947:266-267.

<sup>38</sup> Lincoln and Rath 1981:179.

<sup>39</sup> Boas 1947:325.

<sup>40</sup> Dawson-Cranmer translated this sentence as, “You’re not supposed to be afraid of it.”

<sup>41</sup> This utterance was made in English



motif complex, such as a spirit or animal Donor who interacts directly with a human Hero, giving him or her names, crests, supernatural power, or ceremonial rights. Nevertheless, close examination of the story reveals distinct traces of the spirit quest.

In order to teach me about her tribe's consanguinity with whales, Dawson-Cranmer could simply have stated this belief in summary form, noting that the 'Nakwaxda'xw are thought to be members of "the whale family." Instead, she chose to convey this information by telling a story. I may have influenced Dawson-Cranmer in this regard, given that she knew I was interested in recording full-fledged narratives pertaining to the sea, rather than in simply collecting information on this topic in non-narrative form. Even so, it is important to note how Dawson-Cranmer "sets up" the story during the second conversation in which she told it. First, she provides an informal summary of the narrative (14-20). In her summary, she conveys most of the same information that is included in her more formal renditions, but she arranges this information in a different order. Dawson-Cranmer begins by stating what she learned during the experience: "And I was told never to be scared of the killer whales" (14). Only then does she provide information about the context and manner in which she learned this lesson regarding proper attitudes toward whales. After completing her summary, Dawson-Cranmer asked me, "So, you want me to talk to you– tell you about that story about the du– uh whales?" (23). This statement seems to suggest that Dawson-Cranmer regards her whale memorate as a discrete unit of performed speech, a reified "story" to which an informal summary does not do justice.<sup>42</sup> If this were not the case, Dawson-Cranmer presumably would not have offered to tell the story immediately after her

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<sup>42</sup> I am drawing, here, on Hymes's (1981c) concept of "breakthrough into performance."

summary, which includes the same core informational content. In the renditions of the story that Dawson-Cranmer proceeds to tell (first in Kwak'wala, then in English, as per my request), she begins by providing the context of the narrative, stating that she used to travel between Knight Inlet and her homes on Gilford Island and in Kingcome Inlet (44-45) owing to the fact that her mother and older sisters worked at a cannery in Knight Inlet (28-31). Then, she states that she encountered whales (33-34, 45-47); that she was frightened and cried (35, 47-48); that her father told her not to be afraid of the whales, because they are her relatives (36-39, 48-49); and that she never cried during subsequent whale encounters (40-41, 49-50). Dawson-Cranmer's formal renditions of the story in Kwak'wala and English are structured according to the temporal sequence of events constituting the plot. This helps mark them as performed narratives and differentiates them from the informal summary that precedes them.

Interestingly, the story that Dawson-Cranmer tells does not explicitly illustrate the belief to which it refers. It does not describe the transformation of a whale into an ancestor of the 'Nakwaxda'xw tribe,<sup>43</sup> and it does not recount an episode involving direct cooperation or communication between whales and the 'Nakwaxda'xw. In fact, Dawson-Cranmer's story refrains from specifying what exactly it means for her to be “from the whale family” or how this relationship originated. Instead, she opted to narrate an episode of *acquisition*. Her story focuses on the context in which she first acquired knowledge regarding her special affinity to whales, rather than delving into what this affinity entails. This new awareness is the Treasure she obtains during her Encounter.

The major contextualizing event that Dawson-Cranmer describes is an encounter

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<sup>43</sup> A 'Nakwaxda'xw wailing song preserves a tradition to this effect (Boas 1921:885).

with a group of large, impressive animals. This event resonates on a generic level with the Encounter that occurs at the climax of spirit-quest narratives. In all formal renditions of her memorate, Dawson-Cranmer begins by introducing the story's marine setting, noting that she used to travel to and from the cannery where her mother worked in Knight Inlet (1-2, 29-32, 44-45). Along similar lines, a standard feature of *nuyəm* adhering to "the adolescent-hero plot-type" is an initial "outward transition" (Berman 1991:434-435), in which the Hero departs from the littoral zone of human habitation and journeys either "upriver into the mountain forests, or out to sea" (Berman 1991:592). In some stories, he or she does so with the deliberate intention of inducing a spiritual Encounter (e.g. Boas 1935a:184-185), but in other tales, the factors prompting the hero's departure have nothing to do with the Encounter that ensues (e.g. Boas and Hunt 1905:45-47), as appears to be the case in Dawson-Cranmer's narrative. Dawson-Cranmer's whale-sighting is not supernatural or far out of the ordinary, but she recalls that it was a powerful emotional experience: "I used to get real scared..." (47-48). In this way, Dawson-Cranmer portrays the sighting as an imposing, memorable event, attributing thematic significance to the experience just as supernatural elements highlight Encounter episodes in the Boas/Hunt corpus. Again, what is most important to note is that instead of simply recounting *what* Dawson-Cranmer learns from her father, the narrative elaborates on the Encounter marking the occasion of her lesson.

One might, conceivably, object that because Dawson-Cranmer "inherits" the Treasure (i.e. knowledge regarding her special relationship with whales) from her father, as opposed to receiving it from the whales, her experience is not comparable to a spirit-quest Encounter. Indeed, unlike in Dawson-Cranmer's narrative, in most quest tales

from the Boas/Hunt corpus, the Encounter episode, the Donor, and the Gift are inextricably linked: during the Encounter, the Hero meets the Donor, from whom he or she receives the Gift. Interestingly, though, certain Kwakwaka'wakw representations of the spirit-quest concept are more flexible in this regard, allowing for these core elements (the Encounter, the Donor, and the Gift) to co-occur without being directly or causally intertwined. The performances of the Kwakwaka'wakw winter ceremonial, for example, are rooted in the idea of the spirit quest while also involving the hereditary transmission of ritual prerogatives (Holm 1990:378-379). In order to be initiated as a dancer with the right to display a particular dance, the "recipients of the various dance privileges" (Holm 1990:379) perform "dramatic reenactments of the ancestors' adventures" (Holm 1990:379) during which these rights were originally obtained (Rosman and Rubel 1990:624). Nevertheless, initiates usually inherit the right to perform specific dances from close relatives, such as a father-in-law (Holm 1990:379; though see also Boas 1940b:362-363), rather than receiving them as Gifts directly from the spirits associated with these performed Encounters. Significantly, emic discourse explicitly acknowledges the heritability of Kwakwaka'wakw dance privileges. Thus, in the context of the winter ceremonial, the concept of the spirit quest does not require that the Hero (i.e. the novice) receive the Treasure (i.e. a winter dance prerogative) from a spirit during the enacted Encounter. Although the Encounter coincides with and ritually validates the novice's acquisition of the right to perform a winter dance, this ceremonial privilege is obtained via hereditary channels, not directly from a spirit Donor.

Along similar lines, in Dawson-Cranmer's narrative, the Encounter with the whales coincides with her acquisition of the Treasure, yet she obtains the Treasure from

her father, not from the whales. I am not suggesting that winter ceremonial performances have influenced the way in which Dawson-Cranmer reinterprets the spirit-quest concept in her whale memorate. What I am suggesting is that in her narrative, as in the winter ceremonial initiation performances, the purpose of the Encounter is not to receive a new Treasure, but to renew a preexisting relationship with an animal or spirit being. In the context of the winter ceremonial, the token of this relationship is the right to perform a particular set of dances originally given by the being. In Dawson-Cranmer's narrative, the inherited token of the relationship is knowledge that the relationship exists, along with a set of attitudes and behaviors that stem from this new awareness.

Dawson-Cranmer's narrative resonates with older Kwakwaka'wakw variants of the spirit-quest concept, but in order to comment on contemporary cultural concerns, she also introduces a new element into it. Tales in the Boas/Hunt corpus often involve the Hero's acquisition of supernatural items or of prestigious names and ceremonial rights (Berman 1991:648-649). By contrast, the Treasure that Dawson-Cranmer obtains during her Encounter with the whales is knowledge regarding a Kwakwaka'wakw belief. Previously, I argued that one of the rhetorical functions of Smith's reinterpretation of the spirit-quest concept is to highlight the importance of maintaining faith in "hard-to-believe stor[ies]," and that he uses this thematic message to address current efforts to strengthen and preserve the vitality of Kwakwaka'wakw belief systems.<sup>44</sup> Along similar lines, Dawson-Cranmer's reinterpretation of the spirit quest depicts indigenous cultural knowledge as a precious resource to be carefully preserved and transmitted. Instead of

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<sup>44</sup> Faith may be an old component of Kwakwaka'wakw discourse regarding oral traditions. However, I believe it is likely that the depiction of faith as the primary object of the Hero's quest is an innovative feature of Smith's narrative. Even if this is not the case, Smith deploys this feature to address a contemporary issue.

simply stating that she, as a member of the 'Nakwaxda'xw tribe, is related to whales, and instead of offering an explicit explanation of what this relationship entails, Dawson-Cranmer told me a story describing how she first acquired knowledge of this relationship during an Encounter at sea. By narrating this experience in the adapted form of spirit quest, she invests substantial thematic emphasis in her depiction of cultural transmission and education. She portrays in a momentous light the time when her father taught her about a Kwakwaka'wakw belief, comparing this lesson to a spiritual Donor's bestowal of Treasure on a fortunate Hero.

In another narrative that I recorded, the teller likewise reinterprets the spirit-quest Encounter as an educational experience, thereby highlighting the transmission of Kwakwaka'wakw cultural knowledge. Johnson (pseudonymous), an elder from Tsax̱is (Fort Rupert), told the following story during a joint interview that also included another Tsax̱is elder, Clarke (pseudonymous). Johnson told her story twice. In the first rendition, she told the first portion of the narrative in English before switching into Kwak'wala for most of the remainder of the story. Then, she gave the entire second rendition in Kwak'wala. I subsequently returned to Tsax̱is to conduct a follow-up interview with Johnson and Clarke, during which I asked questions pertaining to the proper transcription, analysis, and translation of the narrative. With limited time available during this follow-up conversation, I chose to focus exclusively on Johnson's second, full Kwak'wala telling of the narrative, which I now reproduce:

<b>Johnson:</b>	ʔo	laṁən	ʔəχa	q̣ayalasa	nuyəm
	ʔo	la-m̓=ən	ʔəχ-a	q̣ay̓-ala=sa	nus-əm
	ʔ	SEQ-OI=1PRON	do-ʔ	tale <sup>45</sup> -CONT=OBJ2	tell.story-PASS

**(1) I will tell the story**

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Boas (1948:345).

qaʔeda (mazi liGəməsa Animal Kingdom)  
 qaʔ=e=da mas=i liq-əm=sa Animal Kingdom  
 CAUSE=SBJ=DEF what=SBJ name-PASS=OBJ2 Animal Kingdom

**of the – [to Clarke:] what’s the name of the “Animal Kingdom”?**

**Clarke:** Oh masanas babanusiwe?  
 Oh mas-ana=s ?-?-xsiu-e?  
 Oh what-PERHAPS=? ?-RIVERMOUTH-LOC1

**Oh, what is it? Babanusiwe??**

**Johnson:** yəχa nax<sup>w</sup>a G<sup>w</sup>iʔG<sup>w</sup>əbaʔa laχ  
 yə=χa nax<sup>w</sup>-a G<sup>w</sup>i-G<sup>w</sup>ə-ba-aʔa la=χ  
 PRONOM=APP all-? RED-thus-HORIZ.END-POS PREP=OBJ.1  
 yəx<sup>w</sup>aʔəʔinaʔəsida hamaça  
 yəx<sup>w</sup>-aʔa-iniʔ=sida hamaça  
 dance-POS-QUALITY.OF<sup>46</sup>=OBJ2=DEF hamaça

**– namely, all that regards the dances of the hamaça,**

qε hεmas ʔagusida hiʔʔa  
 qaʔ=i hε-m=s ʔa-gus=i=da hiʔʔa  
 CAUSE=SBJ AUX-OI=3POSS upstream<sup>47</sup>-?=SBJ=DEF youth<sup>48</sup>  
 laχa ʔaχi  
 la=χa ʔaχ=i  
 PREP=OBJ1 inland=DEM

**(5) on account of [the fact] that the young man traveled upstream into the interior**

qaʔs lεʔ la laχa kiʔs ʔaʔums G<sup>w</sup>ixsdəma  
 qaʔ=s la-iʔ la la=χa kiʔs ʔaʔums G<sup>w</sup>ə-xs-xdəma  
 PURP=3POSS go-NMLZ then PREP=OBJ1 not ordinary<sup>49</sup> thus-LIKE<sup>50</sup>-SITE<sup>51</sup>

**in order to go then to the [place of a] supernatural being.<sup>52</sup>**

gaxʔəmlawisida gigacaGabiduʔ  
 gax-m-lā-wis=i=da gik-aca-Ga-biduʔ  
 come-OI-QUOT-CONN=SBJ=DEF tooth-?-WOMAN-DIM

**And so, then, it is said that the little mouse-woman came.**

laʔəmlaʔε wəχaχa hiʔʔa

<sup>46</sup> Boas 1947:325.

<sup>47</sup> Boas 1948:241.

<sup>48</sup> Boas 1948:103.

<sup>49</sup> Boas 1966:168.

<sup>50</sup> Boas 1947:364.

<sup>51</sup> See Boas 1947:366.

<sup>52</sup> The precise meaning of the word that I translate as “being,” *G<sup>w</sup>ixsdəma*, is unclear to me. “Being” is not a literal translation. Johnson and Clarke noted that *G<sup>w</sup>ixsdəma* refers here to “something you acquire supernaturally,” which “becomes yours; it becomes you.” Both agreed that it is a “being” (by which, I assume, they meant a spirit or other entity, but which could also mean a “state of being”). “Type of thing” is probably a more precise translation of *G<sup>w</sup>ixsdəma*. (Cf. Boas 1948:323, where the nearly identical word, *G<sup>w</sup>ixsdəm*, is listed as a derivative of *G<sup>w</sup>ə-*. *G<sup>w</sup>ixsdəm* is not glossed, but the word that comes after it in the list is *G<sup>w</sup>ixzos*, “the way it is, kind”).

la-m-l̥a=ε                      wəχ=χa                      hiʔa  
 SEQ-OI-QUOT=SBJ              ask=OBJ1                      youth<sup>53</sup>

**And then, it is said, she asked the youth,**

wigilas    la  
 wi-gila=s    la  
 where-GO.IN.DIRECTION<sup>54</sup>=2PRON              go

**“Where are you going?”**

ʔo              gaχən              qən                      laluxəʔχa                      kiʔs              ʔaʔoms  
 ʔo              gaχ=ən              qaʔ=ən                      la-la-uχ-εʔ=χa                      kiʔs              ʔaʔoms  
 oh<sup>55</sup>              come=1PRON              PURP=1PRON              RED-go-OBTAIN-NMLZ=OBJ1              not              ordinary  
                     G<sup>w</sup>ixsdəma                      luʔ              G<sup>w</sup>aʔaʔe  
                     G<sup>w</sup>ə-xs-xdəma                      luʔ              G<sup>w</sup>əʔ-iʔ=i  
                     thus-LIKE<sup>56</sup>-SITE<sup>57</sup>              and              direction-NMLZ=DEM

**(10) “Oh, I’ve come to acquire a supernatural gift and what it accomplishes.”<sup>58</sup>**

Gilaga                                      lamən                                      Gilaga                                      lasGəmeʔ  
 Gi-laga                                      la-m=ən                                      Gi-laga                                      la-sGəm-eʔ  
 come-IMMEDIATELY<sup>59</sup>              go-OI=1PRON              come-IMMEDIATELY              go-ROUND.SURFACE<sup>60</sup>-LOC1  
                     gaχən  
                     gaχ=χ=ən<sup>61</sup>  
                     PREP=OBJ1=1PRON

**Come, and I – come, follow me**

lamən                                      niʔaχusaχ                                      ʔəχasasida  
 la-m=ən                                      niʔ-χ=us=χ                                      ʔəχ-as=si=da  
 SEQ-OI=1PRON                      show-FUT=2PRON.OBJ2=OBJ1              do-PLACE=OBJ2=DEF  
                     gayulasasida                                      kiʔs              ʔaʔoms              G<sup>w</sup>ixsdəma  
                     gey-ot-as=sida                                      kiʔs              ʔaʔoms              G<sup>w</sup>ə-xs-xdəma  
                     come.from-MOTION-PLACE=OBJ2              not              ordinary              thus-LIKE-SITE

**and I will show you the place of origin of the supernatural being.**

ʔoʔəm                      ʔaχa                      ləgeʔ                      gaχən  
 ʔo-m̥                      ʔaχ-a                      la-igeʔ                      gaχ=χ=ən  
 just-OI                      do-?                      go-FOLLOW<sup>62</sup>              PREP=OBJ1=1PRON

**Just follow me.**

lamənc                                      la  
 la-m̥=ənc                                      la  
 SEQ-OI=INCL.PRON              go

<sup>53</sup> Boas 1948:103.

<sup>54</sup> Boas 1947:354.

<sup>55</sup> It may be possible to interpret ʔo- as the root meaning “just only” (Boas 1948:37).

<sup>56</sup> Boas 1947:364.

<sup>57</sup> See Boas 1947:366.

<sup>58</sup> Clarke provided this phrase, along with others in the translation that are not marked.

<sup>59</sup> Boas 1947:245.

<sup>60</sup> Boas 1947:343.

<sup>61</sup> Boas 1947:255.

<sup>62</sup> See Boas 1947:326.



Now we go [i.e. let's go].”

laʔəmʔawis	heqa	lətʰeχa	mu
la-m̐-l̐a-wis	hi-aqa	la-tʰa=χa	mu
SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN	go.straight-PAST	go.straight-BUT=OBJ1	four
nəge	laχis	lalaʔas	
nək-ε	la=χ=is	lalaʔa-as	
mountain-?	PREP=OBJ1=3POSS	reach <sup>63</sup> -PLACE	

**(15) And so, then, it is said that they went straight past four mountains to their destination.**

laʔəmʔawis	lagaʔa
la-m̐-l̐a-wis	la-gaʔa
SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN	go-ARRIVE

**And so, then, it is said that they arrived.**

laʔəmʔaʔeda	gigacaGabidoʔ	nikəχ
la-m̐-l̐a-i=da	gik-aca-Ga-bidoʔ	nik=χ
SEQ-OI-QUOT=SBJ=DEF	tooth-?-WOMAN-DIM	say=OBJ1

**And then it is said that the little mouse-woman said to him,**

ʔoma	duq <sup>w</sup> aʔa	gaχən
ʔo-m̐-a	duq <sup>w</sup> -aʔa	gaχ=χ=ən
just-OI-?	look-POS	PREP=OBJ1=1PRON

**“Just watch me.**

gilʔəm	qən	dəxw̥id
gil-m̐	qaʔ=ən	dəx <sup>w</sup> -xʔid
first-OI	PURP=1PRON	jump-MOM

**As soon as I jump,**

laxəs	dəxw̥id	ʔugwəqa
la-x=s	dəx <sup>w</sup> -xʔid	ʔugwəqa
then-EXHORT=2PRON	jump-MOM	also

**(20) then you should also jump.”**

laʔəmʔawis	dəx <sup>w</sup> so	laχ	ʔəχaʔaχ
la-m̐-l̐a-wis	dəx <sup>w</sup> -xso	la=χ	ʔəq-iʔ-χ
SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN	jump-THROUGH	PREP=OBJ1	do-NMLZ=?
	ʔəχʔstoχaʔasasida		nəge
	ʔəq-ʔsto-d-la-as=si=da		nək-ε
	wide.open <sup>64</sup> -OPENING <sup>65</sup> -TRANS-?-PLACE=OBJ2=DEF		mountain-?
	təxələs		
	təx-əla=s		
	door-CONT=3POSS		

**And so, then, it is said that she jumped through the open entrance of the mountain, its door.**

laʔəmʔawis	dəx <sup>w</sup> so
la-m̐-l̐a-wis	dəx <sup>w</sup> -xso

<sup>63</sup> Boas 1948:399.

<sup>64</sup> Boas 1948:10.

<sup>65</sup> Rosenblum 2015:284.

SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN jump-THROUGH  
**And so, then, it is said that he jumped through.**  
 hεʔəml̥awis duG<sup>w</sup>alisida xiqala laχa  
 hi-m̥-l̥a-wis duq<sup>w</sup>-aλis=i=da xiq-ala la=χa  
 AUX-OI-QUOT-CONN see-?=SJB=DEF blaze<sup>66</sup>-CONT PREP=OBJ1  
 ʔəwiṇag<sup>w</sup>ił  
 ʔəw-iṇak<sup>w</sup>-ił  
 LOC-AREA-INDOOR<sup>67</sup>

**And so, at that time, it is said that a fire was seen by them indoors**  
 ləʔəl dəx<sup>w</sup>co laχa ʔəχaʔa nəge  
 la-aʔəl dəx<sup>w</sup>-co la=χa ʔəχ-iʔ-a nək-ε  
 when-SUBORD<sup>68</sup> jump-IN PREP=OBJ1 do-NMLZ-? mountain-?  
**when they jumped into the mountain.**

ʔoʔəml̥awis hixʔida kəlχʔidida  
 ʔo-m̥-l̥a-wis hi-xʔid-a kəlχ-xʔid=i=da  
 just-OI-QUOT-CONN straight-MOM-? extinguish-MOM=SBJ=DEF  
 xiqala laχa ʔəwiṇag<sup>w</sup>ił  
 xiq-ala la=χa ʔəw-iṇak<sup>w</sup>-ił  
 blaze-CONT PREP=OBJ1 LOC-AREA-INDOOR

**(25) And immediately, it is said, the fire indoors just went out**

lεʔεʔ dəx<sup>w</sup>coxdaʔχ<sup>w</sup>a  
 la-əʔaʔ dəx<sup>w</sup>-co-xdaʔχ<sup>w</sup>=a  
 SEQ-SUBORD jump-in-PLUR=DEM

**when they both jumped in.**

laʔəml̥awis wəχaxida bəg<sup>w</sup>anəm n̥ika  
 la-m̥-l̥a-wis wəχ=χi=da bək<sup>w</sup>-anəm n̥ik=a  
 SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN hear=OBJ1=DEF man-ANIMATE say=DEM

**And so, then, it is said that they heard a man speaking.**

wiga qənc ʔoʔəm niʔaʔoʔ  
 wi-ga qaʔ=ənc ʔo-m̥ nił-qoʔ  
 go.on-NOW PURP=INCL.PRON just-OI show-OBJ1.PRON<sup>69</sup>

**“Go on, let us just show this one [i.e. the young man].**

niłəχ  
 nił=χ  
 show=OBJ1

**Show him.**

gaχm̥əʔaxs ʔoma  
 gaχ-m̥-əʔaxs ʔo-m̥-a  
 come-OI-? just-OI-?

**(30) He’s here now.<sup>70</sup>**

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Boas 1948:377.

<sup>67</sup> Rosenblum 2015:284.

<sup>68</sup> Berman 1991:347.

<sup>69</sup> For the paradigm containing this medial, invisible, third-person, primary-object pronoun, see Boas 1947:252, Table II(a).

qaʔ	duG <sup>w</sup> aχεʔsoχ	gaχənc
qaʔ	duq <sup>w</sup> -gəʔaχəla-εʔ=soχ	gaχ=χ=ənc
PURP	see-SUDDENLY-NMLZ=OBJ2	PREP=OBJ1=INCL.PRON

[Show him], so that he can see us,”

ñixɛda	ñəmuk <sup>w</sup>	bəg <sup>w</sup> anəm
ñik=ε=da	ñəm-uk <sup>w</sup>	bək <sup>w</sup> -anəm
say=SBJ=DEF	one-HUMAN	man-ANIMATE

said one man.

laʔəmʔawis	ʔiti	xiqaliʔida	xiqala
la-m-ʔa-wis	ʔit-xʔid	xiq-ala-iʔ-xʔid=a	xiq-ala
SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN	again-MOM	blaze-CONT-INDOOR-MOM=SBJ	blaze-CONT
laχa	ʔəwiŋag <sup>w</sup> iʔ		
la=χa	ʔəw-iŋak <sup>w</sup> -iʔ		
PREP=OBJ1	LOC-AREA-INDOOR		

And so, then, it is said that the fire again started to blaze indoors

hɛʔəmʔawis	duG <sup>w</sup> əʔsida	hiʔʔa	da	q̣inəm
hɛ-m-ʔa-wis	duq <sup>w</sup> -t=si=da	hiʔʔa	da	q̣əy-nəm
AUX-OI-QUOT-CONN	see-PASS=OBJ2=DEF	youth	DEF	many-NMLZ
ḳ <sup>w</sup> əziʔ	laχa	ʔiʔəwənɛG <sup>w</sup> iʔasa		
ḳ <sup>w</sup> əs-iʔ	la=χa	ʔi-ʔəw-nɛq <sup>w</sup> -iʔ=sa		
sit.PLUR <sup>71</sup> -INDOOR	PREP=OBJ1	RED-loc <sup>72</sup> -HOUSE.CORNER <sup>73</sup> -INDOOR=OBJ2		
	guk <sup>w</sup> zi			
	guk <sup>w</sup> -zi			
	house-BIG			

And so, at that time,<sup>74</sup> it is said that they were seen by the youth, [namely,] the many ones sitting in the corners of the big-house.

ʔəχiʔələda	habəsəneʔ	laχ
ʔəχ-iʔ-əla=e=da	habəs-ḳən-εʔ	la=χ
do-INDOOR-CONT=SBJ=DEF	hair.on.body-LONG.BODY.SURFACE <sup>75</sup> -LOC1	PREP=OBJ1
ḳ <sup>w</sup> əzilasasa	bibəg <sup>w</sup> anəm	
ḳ <sup>w</sup> əs-iʔ-as=sa	bi-bək <sup>w</sup> -anəm	
sit.PLUR-INDOOR-PLACE=OBJ2	RED-man-ANIMATE	

(35) The furs were indoors next to where the men were sitting indoors.<sup>76</sup>

hɛʔəmʔawis	la	q̣oχa	[ʔ]	ẉiʔɛʔɛ
hɛ-m-ʔa-wis	la	q̣a-uχ-a		ẉiʔa=əʔɛ
AUX-OI-QUOT-CONN	then	know-OBTAIN-?		all=SUBORD

<sup>70</sup> The syntactic structure of this sentence is not transparent to me, so I have simply reproduced the English translation or paraphrase that Johnson provided.

<sup>71</sup> Boas 1948:304.

<sup>72</sup> This is the root that Boas (1947:247) describes as “the generalized locative stem *o-*.”

<sup>73</sup> See Boas 1947:238, 347.

<sup>74</sup> In my translation of *hɛʔəmʔawis*, I am influenced by Berman’s (1991:339-342) discussion of auxiliaries derived from *hɛ-*.

<sup>75</sup> Boas 1947:357.

<sup>76</sup> Lit.: “The furs were indoors next to the sitting-places-indoors-of-the men.”

ʔuʔigənida                      kʷəziʔ  
 ʔuʔigən=i=da                  kʷəs-iʔ  
 wolf=SBJ=DEF                  sit.PLUR-INDOOR

**And so, at that time, it is said that then he learned that all the ones sitting indoors were wolves,**

lawɛχis                                  habəsʔəneʔ  
 la-wɛ=χ=is                              habəs-kən-ɛʔ  
 go-LOC.NEG=OBJ1=3POSS          hair.on.body-LONG.BODY.SURFACE-LOC1

**having taken off their fur.**

ʔolaʔalaʔa                              bibəgʷanəma  
 ʔol-a-kala-ʔa                           bi-bəkʷ-anəm-a  
 really-?-NOISE-BUT          RED-man-ANIMATE-?

**But really, they were men.**

laʔəmʔawis                              ʔnikida                              giGəməʔəsida                              ʔuʔigən  
 la-mʔ-ʔa-wis                              ʔnik=i=da                              gəy-Gəm-ɛʔ=si=da                              ʔuʔigən  
 SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN          say=SBJ=DEF          be.somewhere-IN.FRONT<sup>77</sup>-LOC1=OBJ2=DEF          wolf

**And so, then, it is said that the chief of the wolves said,**

lamənuxʷ                                  ʔaʔuχamasχuʔ<sup>78</sup>                                  ʔaxʷa  
 la-mʔ=ənuxʷ                                  ʔa-ʔa-uχ-amas-χ=uʔ                                  ʔaxʷ-a  
 SEQ-OI=EXCL.PRON          RED-know-OBTAIN-CAUSAT-FUT=2.OBJ1.PRON          all-?

ʔəχixsdsuʔ  
 ʔəχ-ixsd-suʔ  
 do-DESIRE-PASS

**(40) “Now we will teach you all that is desired**

qaʔ                                  ʔoχaλəχsiχ                                  ʔula                                  hamaçaq  
 qaʔ                                  ʔa-uχ-?                                  ʔa-uχ-a                                  hamaça-q  
 PURP          know-OBTAIN-?                                  know-OBTAIN-?                                  hamaça-?

**to be known in order to become a *hamaça*.”<sup>79</sup>**

laʔəmʔawis                                  ʔaʔuχamacuʔsa                                  ʔaxʷa  
 la-mʔ-ʔa-wis                                  ʔa-ʔa-uχ-amas-suʔ=sa                                  ʔaxʷ-a  
 SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN          RED-know-OBTAIN-CAUSAT=PASS-OBJ2          all-?

GʷiGʷəbaʔa                                  laχa                                  ʔaxʷa  
 Gʷi-Gʷə-ba-aʔa                                  la=χa                                  ʔaxʷ-a  
 RED-thus-HORIZ.END-POS          PREP=OBJ1          all-?

yəχʷaʔəʔəneʔsida                                  hamaça  
 yəχʷ-aʔə-ɛneʔ=si=da                                  hamaça  
 dance-?-QUALITY.OF=OBJ2=DEF          hamaça

**And so, then, it is said that he was taught all the ways of all the dances of the *hamaça*.**

<sup>77</sup> Boas 1947:360.

<sup>78</sup> During our follow-up interview, Johnson suggested revising the sentence to include this word (in her initial telling, she had used the word *ʔaʔuχamasəχ* instead).

<sup>79</sup> This clause is not morphologically or syntactically transparent to me, so I have provided a slightly adapted version of Johnson and Clarke’s translation.

n̄ikiqaleda	hiʔa	ʔoʔəm	mupənx <sup>w</sup> aʔsis
n̄ik-iq-ala=e=da	hiʔa	ʔo-m̄	mu-p̄ən-x <sup>w</sup> aʔs=is
say-IN.MIND <sup>80</sup> -LOC2	youth	just-OI	four-TIMES-DAYS=3POSS
l̄eʔeʔ	laχis	ʔəχas	
la=əʔe	la=χ=is	ʔəχ-as	
go=SUBORD	PREP=OBJ1=3POSS	do-PLACE	

**The youth thought [lit.: had in mind] that his going to his place took just four days.**

muχ <sup>w</sup> ənχila	l̄eʔe	laχis	w̄awasd̄əm
mu-χ <sup>w</sup> ənχila	la-iʔ	la=χ=is	w̄a-w̄as <sup>81</sup> -xd̄əm
four-SEASON-TIME.INTERVAL	go-NMLZ	do=3POSS	RED-measure <sup>82</sup> -TIME
laχ	ʔəχasasa	uʔigən	
la=χ	ʔəχ-as=sa	uʔigən	
PREP=OBJ1	do-PLACE=OBJ2	wolf	

**[In fact,] it was four years during his time at the wolves' place.**

laʔəmʔawis	w̄iʔa	q̄oləʔaχaxida	n̄ax <sup>w</sup> azim̄as
la-m̄-ʔa-wis	w̄iʔ-a	q̄a-uχ-gəʔaχəla=χi=da	n̄ax <sup>w</sup> -a-zim̄as
SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN	all-ʔ	know-OBTAIN-SUDDENLY=OBJ1=DEF	all-ʔ-ʔ
G <sup>w</sup> igil̄asida	la	yəʔeχ <sup>w</sup> əm̄.	
G <sup>w</sup> ə-gil̄a=si=da	la	yəχ <sup>w</sup> [redupl.]-Gəm̄	
thus-DO <sup>83</sup> =OBJ2=DEF	then	dance-MASK	

**(45) Then he learned all the ways of the new[ly acquired] masks.**

l̄əmʔeʔe	χ <sup>w</sup> anaʔidida	uʔigən
la-m̄-ʔa=i	χ <sup>w</sup> anaʔ-xʔid=i=da	uʔigən
SEQ-OI-QUOT=SBJ	ready-SBJ	wolf

**And then, it is said, the wolves got ready**

qaʔs	l̄eʔ	toḁsida	hiʔa	laχ
qaʔ=s	la-iʔ	təw-od=si=da	hiʔa	la=χ
PURP=3POSS	go-NMLZ	go.forward <sup>84</sup> -TRANS=OBJ2=DEF	youth	PREP=OBJ1

gayulasas

ḡey-uʔ-as=s

come.from-MOTION-PLACE=3POSS

**to take the youth back then to where he came from.**

laʔəmʔe	n̄ikida	n̄əm	uʔigən
la-m̄-ʔa=i	n̄ik=i=da	n̄əm	uʔigən
SEQ-OI-QUOT=SBJ	say=SBJ=DEF	one	wolf

**And then, it is said, one wolf said,**

ʔoʔəm	k̄ <sup>w</sup> aʔa	laχən	haçəχsd̄eʔ
ʔo-m̄	k̄ <sup>w</sup> a-aʔa	la=χ=ən	həs-χsd̄-εʔ
just-OI	sit-POS=1PRON	PREP=OBJ1=1PRON	wash.in.wolf.dung <sup>85</sup> -TAIL-LOC1 <sup>86</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Boas 1947:327.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Boas 1948:73.

<sup>82</sup> Boas 1948:73.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Boas 1947:354.

<sup>84</sup> Boas 1948:163.

**“Just sit on my tail.**

la <sup>m</sup> isən	la	totus
la-m̄-wis=ən	la	təw-od=os
go-OI-CONN=1PRON	now	go.forward-TRANS=2.OBJ2.PRON

**(50) And so, now, I will take you,”**

niŋl̄eʔe  
 nik-l̄a=i  
 say-QUOT=SBJ

**it is said, he said.**

wi <sup>l</sup> laʔəm <sup>l</sup> awis	laʔiwida	yi <sup>y</sup> əχ <sup>w</sup> əm <sup>l</sup>
wi <sup>l</sup> la-m̄-l̄a-wis	la-o=i=da	yi-yəχ <sup>w</sup> -Gəm <sup>l</sup>
all-OI-QUOT-CONN	go-AWAY=SBJ=DEF	RED-dance-MASK

**And so it is said that all the masks went out**

qaʔeda	ḥax <sup>w</sup> a	yəx <sup>w</sup> a <sup>l</sup> əʔenɛʔ
qaʔ=e=da	ḥax <sup>w</sup> -a	yəx <sup>w</sup> -a <sup>l</sup> ə-enɛʔ
CAUSE=SBJ=DEF	all-?	dance-?-QUALITY.OF

**for all the ways of dancing,**

qaʔeda	la	q̄a <sup>q</sup> u <sup>χ</sup> asuʔsida	hi <sup>l</sup> ʔa
qaʔ=e=da	la	q̄a-q̄a-u <sup>χ</sup> -suʔ=si=da	hi <sup>l</sup> ʔa
CAUSE=SBJ=DEF	then	RED-know-OBTAIN-PASS=OBJ2=DEF	youth

**for what had been newly learned by the young man.**

ʔug <sup>w</sup> aq <sup>a</sup> ʔəm <sup>l</sup> ɛ	la	lo <sup>t</sup> cəwida	guk <sup>w</sup> zi
ʔug <sup>w</sup> aq <sup>a</sup> -m̄-l̄a=i	la	la-o <sup>l</sup> co=i=da	guk <sup>w</sup> -zi
also-OI-QUOT=SBJ	then	go-OUT-?=SBJ=DEF	house-BIG
la <sup>χ</sup> a	ʔawaGayasa	nəgɛ	
la=χa	ʔəw-q-iʔ=sa	nək-ɛ	
PREP=OBJ1	LOC-INSIDE <sup>87</sup> -LOC1=OBJ2	mountain-?	

**(55) And it is said that then the big-house also went out of the inside of the mountain.**

laʔəm <sup>l</sup> awisida	u <sup>l</sup> igən	dala <sup>χ</sup> ida	guk <sup>w</sup> zi
la-m̄-l̄a-wis=i=da	u <sup>l</sup> igən	da-əla=χi=da	guk <sup>w</sup> -zi
SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN=SBJ=DEF	wolf	carry-CONT=OBJ1=DEF	house-BIG

**And so, then, it is said that the wolves carried the big-house.**

laʔəm <sup>l</sup> awis	to <sup>d</sup> əs	la <sup>χ</sup>
la-m̄-l̄a-wis	təw-od=s	la=χ
SEQ-OI-QUOT-CONN	go.forward-TRANS=OBJ2	PREP=OBJ1
gayulasasa		hi <sup>l</sup> ʔa
gɛy-o <sup>l</sup> -as=s		hi <sup>l</sup> ʔa
come.from-MOTION-PLACE=OBJ2		youth

**And so, then, it is said that they took it to the place from which the young man came.**

<sup>85</sup> Boas 1948:90.

<sup>86</sup> See Boas 1947:373, 1948:90.

<sup>87</sup> Boas 1947:237. Cf. Boas 1947:320

heʔəm	gayulacida	ḡax <sup>w</sup> a	
he-m̐	gey-oʔ-as=si=da	ḡax <sup>w</sup> -a	
COP-OI	come.from-MOTION-PLACE=OBJ2=DEF	all-?	
yəχ <sup>w</sup> aʔəneʔ	laχida	G <sup>w</sup> əy <sup>u</sup>	Animal Kingdom
yəχ <sup>w</sup> -aʔə-neʔ	la=χi=da	G <sup>w</sup> ə-ayu	Animal Kingdom
dance-?-QUALITY.OF	PREP=OBJ1=DEF	thus-PASS	Animal Kingdom

**That is the origin of all the dances for that which is called, “Animal Kingdom.”**

heʔəm  
he-m̐  
COP-OI  
**That’s it.**

Johnson’s narrative resonates with the spirit-quest concept on a very explicit level. The story starts with a young man traveling upstream into the interior with the deliberate intention of acquiring a supernatural (*kíʔs ʔəʔums*)<sup>88</sup> Treasure. He meets a “little mouse-woman,” *gigacaGabiduʔ*, who helps lead him to the goal of his quest. During our follow-up interview, Johnson specified that the mouse’s name is Heʔamolas. Female mice often play similar roles in narratives from the Boas/Hunt corpus (1935b:162), helping the Hero find the dwelling of the Donor or instructing the Hero how to behave in the Donor’s presence (e.g. Boas and Hunt 1905:11-14; Boas 1910:423-433). In most narratives in which she appears, “the Mouse is called *HeʔamolaGa* (Quick-Woman) or *GigacaGaʔ*” (Boas 1935b:162). The mouse-woman in Johnson’s narrative not only plays the role that mice often do in older spirit-quest tales; the term, *gigacaGabiduʔ* (literally, “little mouse-woman”), and the name, Heʔamolas, are similar to the names that typically belong to this character in the Boas/Hunt corpus.<sup>89</sup>

When the young man enters the wolves’ cave in the mountains, their fire

<sup>88</sup> “Supernatural” is how Johnson translates *kíʔs ʔəʔums*.

<sup>89</sup> Interestingly, Teit (1917:435) has noted the broad distribution of this motif. He lists a Kwakwākw’ depiction of *HeʔamolaGa* (Boas and Hunt 1905:12) among other narratives from coastal and interior British Columbia in which “a mouse is an old woman noted for wisdom, and people ask her for help.”

immediately goes out, but a man tells the wolves to show themselves to the visitor, because “He’s here now” (30). The fire reignites, and the youth sees a pack of wolves, who have taken off their furs and who look like men. Kwak’wala oral literature frequently refers to the notion that animals wear removable “masks” or “skins,” without which they appear in human form (Berman 2000:63). In a narrative from the Boas/Hunt corpus (Boas 1935a:207), the Hero intrudes on a group of seals engaged in winter ceremonial activities with their masks removed (Berman 1991:264-265). The animals struggle to dress themselves quickly before the visitor sees their human forms, but when some are unable to get dressed in time, they allow the Hero to view their ceremonial prerogatives. Berman suggests that this narrative episode mirrors a real-life Kwakwaka’wakw practice: in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when an uninitiated commoner intruded on the secret proceedings of winter dancers, he or she would either be killed or forcibly initiated (Berman 1991:264-265). The animals’ practice of *removing* their masks during the winter ceremonial corresponds to the human custom of *donning* animal or spirit masks while performing winter dances (Berman 1991:265). Berman (1991:690) has demonstrated that this alternation between human and animal forms, between the roles of predator and prey, is a major theme of the winter ceremonial.<sup>90</sup>

It is unclear whether, in Johnson’s narrative, the fur-less wolves are performing a winter dance when the youth enters into their midst. However, in the English portion of her first rendition of the narrative, Johnson recounts, “And so the fire came back on and there’s these men sitting around, just like the inside of a big-house, they’re all

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<sup>90</sup> This passage is adapted from a lengthier discussion in “Textual Ethnography: The Art of Listening to Texts,” which I wrote as a second-semester term paper for Anthropology 500: The History of Anthropological Thought, taught by Professor Charles Menzies.



sitting there. And there was uhm, pieces of fur, sitting beside them. They were all wolves.” The comparison with “the inside of a big-house,” which Johnson reiterated during our follow-up interview, suggests that the wolves seated in their cave might be engaged in some ceremonial activity that humans normally conduct in a big-house. The wolves proceed to initiate the young man as a winter dancer. After the initiation, they transport him back home, along with a collection of masks and a big-house. The acquisition of these items is a widely attested motif in the Boas/Hunt corpus.

Although Johnson’s narrative closely adheres to the spirit-quest concept, she also subtly reinterprets it in light of present-day concerns regarding education and cultural transmission. In older spirit-quest narratives describing the origins of particular dances, the Donor gives the Hero the “right” (Rosman and Rubel 1990:624) to perform these ceremonies, a transfer that is often accompanied by the gift of a name (Berman 1991:649). In some stories, the Donor, or members of the Donor’s retinue, also instructs the hero how to perform the newly acquired ceremonies. This instructional process is sometimes (e.g. Boas and Hunt 1905:110) described using words built from the root-suffix combination *q̇oλ-* (from *q̇a-*, “to know,” and *-uλ*, “to obtain”), whose semantic range includes concepts of knowing, learning, and teaching (see Boas 1948:356-357).

Interestingly, Johnson’s narrative does not refer at all to the transfer-of-rights concept. The young man does not receive any names, and there is no indication that the wolves grant him ownership or exclusive control of the new ceremonies. Instead, the narrative contains an exceptional abundance of words formed from the root-suffix combination, *q̇oλ-*; Johnson portrays the primary Treasure as knowledge and the Donors (i.e. the wolves) as teachers. The first lesson the Hero “learned,” *q̇oλa* (36), during his

Encounter in the cave is that the figures in the cave are wolves. As I noted above, Berman (e.g. 1991:690) has argued convincingly that the ability to assume both human and animal forms lies at the thematic core of the Kwakwaka'wakw winter ceremonial. It is possible, therefore, that when the youth realizes he is in the presence of fur-less wolves, he is not simply being apprised of the situation at hand. We might have expected Johnson to use a derivative of the root *duq*<sup>w</sup>- ("to see") to recount the youth's visual discovery that he is in the presence of wolves; indeed, two clauses earlier, Johnson uses a passive-voice derivative of *duq*<sup>w</sup>- to describe the youth's first sighting of the cave's inhabitants (34). Instead, Johnson chooses the word *qoʔa*, "to learn." She may mean to imply that the youth's discovery is an educational step toward understanding one of the themes of the winter ceremonial, namely, the capacity to alternate between human and animal forms. Evidence for this possibility can be found in the two clauses that follow (37-38). Both are short, comprising only two words each, and both lack the quotative suffix, *-la* (see Berman 1991:357-369), which appears at the beginning of most sentences in Johnson's narrative, and which often marks the start of low-level oral-rhetorical units in narratives from the Boas/Hunt corpus (Berman 1983). This suggests that the two short clauses (37-38) are rhetorically united with the longer clause containing *qoʔa* (36), which does include the quotative suffix. In the first of the two brief clauses, Johnson recounts that the wolves had "taken off their furs"; in the second, she declares, "But really, they were men" (*?olaʔalaʔa bibəgʷanəma*). In the latter clause, the emphatic auxiliary, *?olaʔala*, "really," receives additional emphasis from the suffix *-la*, "but." It appears that the clause containing *qoʔa* and the two brief clauses that follow function in tandem, highlighting the youth's discovery that the

wolves can change into human form. This is his first educational experience in the cave.

In the sentence that follows in the narrative (40), the chief of the wolves offers to bestow the Treasure on the Hero. The verb that he uses to describe this act of bestowal is a form of *q̇aḡoḡamas*, “to teach,” which is derived from *q̇oḡ-*. In line 41, the wolves refer to the process of becoming a *hamaḡa*. I have difficulty with the transcription and analysis of the original Kwak’wala phrase, which I tentatively transcribe as *q̇oḡaḡaḡsiḡ* *q̇ula hamaḡaq*. However, the general semantic validity of the translation, “[to] become a *hamaḡa*,” is secure, as Johnson provided this translation herself. Significantly, although the morphological composition of the words *q̇oḡaḡaḡsiḡ* and *q̇ula* is not transparent to me, *q̇oḡaḡaḡsiḡ* is clearly a derivative of *q̇oḡ-*, and *q̇ula* may be one as well. This sentence describes the process of becoming a *hamaḡa* as educational, i.e. as a process aimed primarily at learning *how* to be a *hamaḡa* rather than at obtaining the rights or fulfilling the ritual prerequisites necessary to become one.

Line 42 confirms the Hero’s receipt of the Treasure, this time using a passive form of *q̇aḡoḡamas* to indicate that the young man has been “*taught* all the ways of all the dances of the *hamaḡa*” (emphasis added). Then, after revealing that the young man has spent four years among the wolves, Johnson states that “he learned (*q̇olḡaḡaḡida*) all the ways of the new[ly acquired] masks” (45). Again, a derivative of *q̇oḡ-* is used to indicate that the Treasure the Hero receives is knowledge. Likewise, when the wolves transport a collection of masks to the youth’s home, Dawson-Cranmer states that these masks are “for all the ways of dancing, for what had been newly learned (*q̇aḡuḡasuḡsida*) by the young man” (53-54). This sentence seems to equate “what had been newly learned” with “all the ways of dancing,” again identifying the dances not as

rights or property but, rather, as knowledge that the young man has mastered during his time with the wolves. During our follow-up interview, Johnson remarked, “And he did learn all that he needed to know, cause he packed it with him when he went home.” In this sentence, Johnson again identifies the Treasure with the knowledge that the wolves have taught the youth, comparing this knowledge to the more concrete items, i.e. the masks and the big-house, that the wolves give him (in Johnson’s first telling of the story, she reverts into English at the conclusion and states that the wolves “packed” the masks and the big-house in order to give them to the youth). A similar educational emphasis is present throughout Johnson’s first rendition of the narrative, which makes extensive use of words derived from *q̇ol̇*-. The first rendition also includes two attestations of the root *məlq̇*-, “to remember.” One of these attestations occurs in a sentence that I cannot confidently transcribe without further consulting Johnson and Clarke. The other attestation appears in the following sentence: “And so, then, it is said that he [i.e. the youth] was taught (*q̇ȧq̇ol̇amacu?*) so that he would remember (*qȧʔs məlq̇ε?*) entirely the song for the dance.” The root *məlq̇*-, “to remember,” may subtly imply that the young man’s knowledge is not only a coveted Treasure, but a lasting responsibility; he receives knowledge so that he will remember and preserve it.

Johnson’s narrative, like Dawson-Cranmer’s, reinterprets the Encounter episode, a core element of the spirit quest, as an educational experience. Whereas, in stories from the Boas/Hunt corpus, the Encounter often involves transferring the right to perform ceremonial dances, in Johnson’s narrative, this episode involves passing down ceremonial knowledge. In this respect, Johnson adapts the spirit-quest motif to highlight the theme of Kwakwaka’wakw cultural transmission and education.

## Conclusion

I have analyzed three 21<sup>st</sup>-century Kwakwaka'wakw narratives, arguing that the elders who crafted these stories reinterpret the spirit-quest concept in order to comment on contemporary issues pertaining to cultural continuity in the wake of colonialism. Smith's narrative describes his grandfather's quest to overcome skeptical attitudes toward a set of oral traditions. Faith is what he acquires at the end of his quest. Dawson-Cranmer's story describes how she first became aware of her tribe's special affinity to whales. What she obtains is a lesson from her father regarding this belief. Finally, Johnson's narrative describes a young man being educated by a pack of wolves. His gift, like Dawson-Cranmer's, is cultural knowledge. By incorporating faith and knowledge into the typological niche that is normally reserved for precious gifts of supernatural power and ceremonial prestige, Smith, Dawson Cranmer, and Johnson depict Kwakwaka'wakw knowledge and beliefs as invaluable Treasures to be carefully upheld and transmitted.

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