Reclaiming Kwak’wala Through Co-constructing Gw’anti’lakw’s Vision

by

Laura Cranmer

BA in English, The University of Victoria, 1997
MA in Curriculum Studies, The University of Victoria, 2002

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Abstract

This dissertation is a self-study about my attempt to re-claim my heritage language of Kwak’wala. As a critically endangered language, the First Peoples’ Cultural Council Report on the Status of BC First Nations Languages 2014 found that of a population of 7,309 Kwakwa’kawakw reporting to the council about numbers of fluent and semi-fluent Kwak’wala speakers, there are only 160 fluent speakers with approximately 497 identified semi-speakers. I have written from a critical Indigenous Studies stance, drawing from compatible fields such as narrative inquiry and auto-ethnography, and second language acquisition (SLA) theories as well as the growing field of identity theory and heritage language learning within SLA. Further, I asked for and received permission from three Kwakwa’kawakw First Nations to interview fluent Kwak’wala speakers in response to a sampling of photographs from my paternal grandmother Gwanti’lakw’s archive. As a teenager and young mother, she took many photos of our relatives who originated from our large clan with connections to far flung villages within the territory. Gwanti’lakw was responsible for my care as an infant, and during my formative years, and for a while I knew her as Mom until I grew older and could understand my true beginnings and place in our family. Through an autoethnographic narrative and analysis, I provide a reflection on my engagement with Kwak’wala and its speakers and my own identity as a language learner attempting to reclaim Kwak’wala. As an adult learner, I apply my print literacy skills to phonological memories from my childhood in order to deepen my understanding of the how Kwak’wala works grammatically, lexically and syntactically.
Preface

Employing methods of narrative inquiry (creative non-fiction) and autoethnography, this self-study conveys important benchmarks in my life as a ’Namgis woman attempting to deepen my understanding and increase my Kwak’wala speech production. As such, my story begins with my ’Namgis Ancestor Story as recounted by my paternal grandfather, Dan Cranmer. My ancestor story is the door opener to my deeply personal story shared in my Residential School Survivor Statement that precedes my formal Introduction. The spirit of my ancestor Namxxalagayu (I have come to know later in life) eclipses and swallows the pain of my personal story and allows me access to the courage and energy I need to continue the journey I have begun. I recognize my story is not only mine, but like a strong tide or river current, it pulls into its depths those who have touched my life whether positively or negatively. Out of deference to the sensitivities of beloved relatives, I have taken out certain passages in my Survivor Statement and emphasize that the devices of the creative writer to express my story, which is specific and unique to my life experience, inform the italicized creatively written sections. The Kwak’wala sections are presented in the First Nations Unicode font as well as the U’mista font. Finally, any omissions or errors are mine alone.

University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board
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Acknowledgements

The old adage, it takes a village to raise a child, could well apply to writing a dissertation. In my case, my village consists of beloved family members, my therapist, Maecan Campbell, my writing coach, Connie Frey, fellow Kwak’wala language journeyers, and long suffering ever so patient committee members. Here I acknowledge the support of my beloved relatives, Carrie Mortimer, Emily Aitken, Dr. Gloria Cranmer Webster, Margaret Cranmer, Donna Cranmer; honoured friends and critical readers Rebecca Finlay, Jeff Corntassel, and Louise Mandell, my editor-in-chief and endlessly patient husband Bill Holdom; and my brilliant children Jake, Joanna, Josh and Emily Recalma. To this list, I include Dr. Carl Leggo, Dr. Patsy Duff, and Dr. Patricia Shaw, who all demonstrated enthusiastic positive support for my writing efforts and who each provided incisive, insightful technical feedback from their respective fields of study that served to push me, with tough questions, to greatly strengthen both content and structure.

The collective belief placed in my ability to conduct my work to its fruition felt, at times, undeserved and misplaced. Here I also must acknowledge the strength of the political support represented by the ’Namgis First Nation, Whe-La-La-U Area Council, and the Kwakiutl Band Council\textsuperscript{1} for allowing me to interview Elders who are not only fluent Kwak’wala speakers, but who also embody memories of the subjects of Gwəntilakw’s photographs from the 1920s and 1930s and who allowed me to record their responses to the photos in Kwak’wala. In particular, I acknowledge Billy Peters, Norman Glendale, and Dr. Gloria Cranmer Webster for their patience, 

\textsuperscript{1} Variantly spelled Kwaguitl and Kwaguł

\textsuperscript{2} http://www.umista.org/kwakwakawakw/tribes.php
good humour, and graciousness in allowing me to record their responses to Gwanti’lakw’s photos.

Further, without the invaluable financial support shown for my work (at different stages of this eight year journey) by the Vancouver Island University Faculty Association Leave Committee, the body governing Four Year Fellowships at University of British Columbia, the Qualicum First Nation, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada for their education credit, I would not have been able to complete this work.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to all those struggling to come to terms with their Indigenous identities in this complicated modern era through their personal journeys to reclaim their heritage, and relearn their languages. I see the fifties decade, the time of my birth, as a kind of psychic terrain out of which the Indigenous people, in all our great diversity, share an historical consciousness and collective traumatic memory of the profound and particularly vicious racism targeting our peoples by the settler society. Just as there are prisoners of conscience, so too there are compatriots of conscience—Indigenous peoples springing out of the fifties who share historical memories of oppression in all its myriad forms but choose to reject as our legacy. I dedicate this work to my compatriots.
Ancestor Story²

'Namgis
Xwal'kw (Cheslakees)
J. Sykes, 1792, Campbell River and District Museum

When the Transformer, Kanik'łakw, travelled around the world, he eventually returned to the place where Gwa'nalalis lived. In an earlier encounter, the Transformer had beaten Gwa'nalalis, who was ready for his return. Kanik'łakw asked, “Would you like to become a cedar tree?” Gwa'nalalis replied, “No, cedar trees, when struck by lightning, split and fall. Then they rot away for as long as the days dawn in the world.” Kanik'łakw asked again, “Would you like to become a mountain?” “No,” Gwa'nalalis answered, “For mountains have slides and crumble away for as long as the days dawn in the world.” The Transformer asked a third question. “Would you like to become a large boulder?” Again, Gwa'nalalis answered, “No. Do not let me become a boulder, for I may crack in half and crumble away as long as the days dawn in the world.”

² http://www.umista.org/kwakwakawakw/tribes.php
Finally, Kaniki'łakw asked, “Would you like to become a river?” “Yes, let me become a river that I may flow for as long as the days shall dawn in the world,” Gwa'nalalis replied. Putting his hand on Gwa'nalalis’ forehead and pushing him down prone, Kaniki'łakw said, “There, friend, you will be a river and many kinds of salmon will come to you to provide food for your descendants for as long as the days shall dawn in the world. And so the man Gwa'nalalis became the river, Gwa’ni.

Pal’nakwala [galis] Wakas (Dan Cranmer), 1930
Residential School Survivor Statement

Submitted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

By Laura Ann Cranmer

Sept. 21, 2013 (Last edited and revised 2015)

I was born to Pearl Weir and David Cranmer Nov. 20, 1953 and raised by my paternal grandmother Agnes Cranmer in Alert Bay, BC. For the longest time people were confused and had only a fuzzy memory of my actual birth date as a kid, was it the 20th or the 25th, and I find myself having only the most tenuous relationship to important anniversary dates such as my own children’s birthdays or even my own age at times, which is not a bad thing because I continually make myself one year younger than I really am. I continually confuse the dates and ages of my children’s birthdays which my kids now tease me about and we all get a kick out of. However, the source of my life-long somewhat amnesiac relationship to birthdays is my own experience directly related to my earliest years of a lack of maternal bonding.

Although I don’t have any conscious memories of St. Mike’s before being sent there, I do recall my beloved grandmother threatening me to send me to St. Mike’s if I didn’t behave. Not knowing what St. Mike’s was but only that it must be something to be avoided—I behaved. I’m not sure how old I was when I got TB, but maybe just after I started Kindergarten my grandmother brought me to the doctor. I was sent to the Nanaimo Indian Hospital where I stayed for the next three years. If I was in Kindergarten I must have been five or six at the time, so I
think I returned to Alert Bay at the age of 9 or 10; that would have been in 1962. So my best guess when I was sent to St. Mike’s was soon after being released from the NIH. My grandmother must have told me that she was going to send me to St. Mike’s for the next school year. One of my relatives, whose mom Jessie Dawson worked at St. Mike’s, told me that I ran to her mom’s house to beg and plead with Jessie to tell my grandmother not to send me to St. Mike’s. I have no memory of any of this.

My memories of St. Mike’s are that it was noisy, crowded with many kids. I recall being put in the shower for the first time and being terrified. I recall my hair being cut and I recall being monitored for over use of toilet paper—four squares only. I was in St. Mike’s for I don’t know how long before I ran away and headed directly back to Cranmer’s Café where my grandmother fed me a bowl of Campbell’s tomato soup. She got a phone call and then told me I had to go back. Many years later she told me it was the Indian Agent who called her to admonish her for feeding me lunch and to send me right back. I must have cried and pleaded not to go back. I had lent my hair brush to another girl and one of the monitor lizards grabbed it and hit my hand with it and threw it into the garbage and yelled at me to never lend anything like that out to anyone else. I was punished by having to sweep the floor over and over and over—17 times.

I recall a supervisor named Mrs. Powell who took a shine to me. I seemed to be singled out for special things for showing progress in my education, but I recall one time she gave me a lovely book on ocean life. I do recall that she invited me to her bedroom where she’d been smoking and

3 I have always had to guess the approximate age I was for these institutional years, until I found a letter from the Department of National Health and Welfare to Gwanti’lakw informing her that her family allowance cheques would stop while I was at the Nanaimo Indian Hospital.
encouraged me to smoke. If Mrs. Powell tried to sexually attack me I have no memory of this, and I don’t ever recall any of that sort of gossip about her. Sexual attacks would occur shortly after being released from St. Mike’s—by others.

So all in all I had four years of institutionalized life, built on the precarious foundation of maternal bonding with my grandmother. I survived these dangerous institutional years by being quiet, obedient, and compliant.

When I married and had my own children (Jake, Joanna, Josh and Emily), I realized that I needed serious psychological help when my eldest girl, my beloved Joanna, turned five and I became inexplicably abusive and scornful toward her. I love my Joanna, how could I treat her in such a horrible way? I sought therapy at that time and so began my healing journey. Part of my healing journey, in hindsight, involved my return to post-secondary education where I earned a BA in English, an MA in Curriculum Studies, and now a PhD in Language and Literacy Education. I read somewhere that we study what we fear. I studied language in order to make meaning of my earliest beginnings and to articulate what happened to me. For my BA in English I gained writing skills that allowed me to strike order on the page where it was missing in my life. For my MA in Curriculum Studies I set down what I learned in my BA and picked up skills in creative writing to write a play in two acts, which essentially expressed artistically a symbolic dialogue between two eras—the colonial and the modern through the voices of seven characters. I would like to submit my MA thesis to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as part of my statement. The explanatory essay that follows the play centers squarely on my healing journey through therapy and creative writing that allowed me to express through all the artistic devices
allowed to the playwright the means to express what ordinary language poured into the frame of an academic essay could never do.

My PhD in Language and Literacy Education involves a self-study inquiring into the Indigenous heritage language reclamation processes, in my case someone who has suffered childhood trauma characterized by the institutionalization. I have been depressed for the last two years, and have gone into isolation and energetically retreated from my family and beloved friends from my early healing years. With my survivor statement, I acknowledge that my deepest yearnings for familial bonding have been thwarted by what I’ve always characterized as colonial flotsam, and while I have my children and grandchildren to live for and so much more work to do I am emotionally, and psychologically exhausted. I end this statement with the following creatively written piece (in italics to indicate a different voice) I produced at a creative writing workshop facilitated by Richard Wagamese this past June.

Long after Walter Lippman wrote about the usefulness of propaganda and his view of humanity dividing up into rigid social classes, and before Bourdieu produced his epic Language and Symbolic Power, my mother created a womb of words for me to stew in to school me in my invisibility and my silence and my passivity in the face of danger. Such is the power of theory and application and my attempt at interpreting their theories in order to use these as a framework to scaffold linguistic self-understanding.

Lippman’s idea of propaganda and its influences on the abstract idea of the purported “masses” (read scare quotes enclosing masses like fences enclosing sheep herds), anticipates Bourdieu’s
theory of habitus where our habits of speech, habits of thinking, and habits of body posture are inculcated and incubated in the word womb of the cradle of our birth. Well Bourdieu didn’t actually say the word womb, but what he meant by the habitus is the education of the body to its social class. He claims that from the moment of speech, we reveal our habitus. The propagandists stream images, thoughts, ideas and language in all of its symbolic power into the collective unconscious. Colonized peoples internalize the illusion of our inferiority, the illusion of the sleight of hand, the illusion of our addictions, our wounds that are really wounds belonging someplace else, not in our dreams, not in our clenched fists or blocked colons. Indigenous dis/eases are revealed to scientists who place our bodies under the microscope. Anthropologists need Indigenous cultures to study in order for their own academic culture to thrive.

Was my habitus really formed by chance? That’s what, I imagine, propagandists such as Lippman would have us believe. Was it really formed by the education of life experience of a young girl raised by her paternal grandmother who, although she loved me, felt me a burden (at least that’s my reflection of her); my habitus was formed by the negative space that I occupied and grew into in my mother’s womb; my habitus was formed by privileging man who was put on a pedestal while we women were seen as bearers of children and bad news. My habitus was born of the herd penned in and written in my flesh after my mother. I was the product of an illicit teen love affair and a shot gun wedding where my mother was shunned and probably scorned after her short 17 years in St. Mike’s and where she successfully embodied and expressed and manifested Lippman’s vision of the masses, the underclass, the servant class serving the elite. She also expressed Bourdieu’s notion of habitus where the habits of St. Mike’s wrote themselves
into her own flesh—the regimented daily routine that visited punishment on disobedient bodies, that visited ostracization on rebellious children. For all the punitive threats and abuses suffered, talk about the habitus of the oppressed, the body language, the lifetime of deference, the continual ready apology for taking up space, for taking up air, for taking up the pen to write out, to pound out the frustration and the discomfort of forgetting one’s original habitus, the righteous proud and regal habitus of knowing how one is to behave, eat, sleep, love, sing, pray and dream.

My habitus wants to study itself, wants to tell its own story in its own way on its own time. Hélène Cixous exhorts the writer to visit the scene of the crime. Well this means that I need to visit my mother’s womb. But she died and she died quietly without having me by her side. Family members thought I should be there at her deathbed but I had already made my peace with her by cutting off her head. Metaphorically of course, in my therapist’s office where such acts of violence are allowed, of course these acts of violence are through yelling and crying and sobbing out the habitus of silence, the habitus of shame, but shame about what exactly? Am I ashamed that my mother had given me life? Everything that I am or have become she was not. My negative habitus takes me to that which I inhabit, that metaphorical hole in the ground, like a rabbit jumping at the slightest whiff of danger, at the slightest whiff of threat, the habitus of survival has lodged itself so deep, how do I recreate or de-indoctrinate myself, I don’t know that I ever can de-indoctrinate those cellular lessons that leak, seep, peep, bleep out of me—that deferential attitude: you go first, no you go, no worries, take up all the space you want, I don’t care because I’m not there. I make myself invisible yet yearn to be seen, to have my reality mirrored with a loving presence, and yes I do have my therapist and I do have my children and my husband and my aunty and my closest friends to the end, but I have become so expert at
hiding that sometimes I feel I am a shell, a husk something spent emptied exhausted atomized and itemized like my life can be reduced to a columnar calculation, a number in the negative balance of things and whoever you see is a fuzzy approximation of me, a blurred water color outline that recedes into the folds of the paper in waves back and forth, how can I travel back in time to reprogram the cellular memory to love those original beings into existence, to turn on the love, turn up the warmth, tune up the sound, dial me in, down there my aunty Bunt describes the day she came home from school and found me in a laundry basket under the kitchen table.

Gwanti’lakw just told her to be careful of the baby and imagine her surprise when she looked under the table to find a newborn who arrived un-announced un-celebrated under the cloak of silence. I wonder what my mother felt, she must have been terrified as any intelligent woman having been inculcated with societal notions of her worth; as a female newly released from residential school that worth was probably zero. She was a successful embodiment and expression of the theory of habitus and my accidental and unwanted birth as a girl entering the flotsam of colonial times—stitched and sewn with anxiety, bones knitted with self hate, guts knotted with fear, dreams netted with hope.

One way of de-indoctrinating my cellular memory is to learn the language that describes my body, my feelings, and my relationships through Kwak’wala just on a purely descriptive basis. Never mind trying ever to speak Kwak’wala—how do we reverse the socialization, the habitus of our foundational experiences but create conditions that invite a new expression, a new experience, a new way of seeing the world and experiencing the world within the framework of verbs/action rather than nouns, the static and all seeing “I” which thinks because it can name
everything the existence of everything is owing to the I, the individual I, the encysted insular independent I, the eye of the storm and the eye of the needle?

The folly of self-belief is that the habitus of self-hate will invariably sabotage the former. I need to work on this idea with my therapist....

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) sessions began on Vancouver Island (at various urban centers located on various First Nations territories) I resisted attending and in fact did not attend any until 2013. I wrote the above statement and read it to a small group of witnesses at the Truth and Reconciliation gathering in Vancouver and located at the Agri-dome on the PNE grounds. Survivors were required to sign Informed Consent forms and then either read out prepared statements or speak directly to our witnesses in a tent large enough to hold a small support team including the videographer.

I am proud to name the following as my witnesses: Carrie Reid, Gerry Ambers, Louise Hunt, and Tobie Caplette. These women immediately established an atmosphere of quiet respect, energetic presence, and emotional and psychological support necessary to create a holding space for such deep sharing. I have worked with Carrie and Gerry in previous healing and/or therapeutic contexts and Louise and I are related, so our collective and shared history made possible the level of trust needed to tell my story. Witnessing is also a sacred cultural duty in the ceremonial traditions of the Coast Salish and the Kwakwaka’wakw.
Chapter 1: Introduction
Returning to Myself: My Personal and Academic Story and Goals

“It’s as if we’ll have returned to ourselves.”

Gloria Cranmer Webster

My paternal aunt, Dr. Gloria Cranmer Webster (hereafter referred to as Yotu), speaks the above quotation in the film “Potlatch: A Strict Law Bids Us Dance” where she explains how the U’mista Cultural Centre got its name. The old people who were consulted about what they thought the name of the new centre should be suggested that U’mista would be fitting since the centre was built to receive, store, and exhibit cultural treasures stolen by the Indian Agents and missionaries during the height of the potlatch suppression years (1884-1953) in Canada. The phrase refers to the return of loved ones stolen as slaves in times of war between tribes up and down the west coast of British Columbia. While Yotu applies this metaphor in a macro-context, here I apply it to my own micro-context. Returning to the self is an ephemeral notion that I attempt to unpack in the following pages.

From birth, as noted in my survivor statement, I have endured familial and psychic disruption brought on by the legally enforced separation of Indigenous children from parents and extended families. Having developed a life-long dissociative pattern in response to stress, I was blessed (in hindsight) with the circumstances and subsequent resources to turn to therapy in my early thirties to more effectively deal with overwhelming emotional and psychological reactions to life stressors. Certainly both my BA in English and MA in Curriculum Studies in combination with consistent therapy now spanning three decades have done much to deepen my capacity for self-
acceptance and self-love. Any residential school survivor (or descendants of such) will resonate with and recognize the struggle to break out of self-imposed social isolation to reconnect with one’s family, community, and one’s essential core self. The work of healing is the work of returning to the self. I have used the skills acquired in my BA program to construct essays and research papers in order to understand the language in which I was indoctrinated and the skills acquired in my MA program to disrupt and challenge the lessons in my BA in English.

Rather than replicating the epistemological violence of constructing a closely reasoned argument in my MA in Curriculum Studies, I chose instead to construct a play script that symbolically expressed my internal dialogue with the colonial era. Consisting of two main sections, my play, “DP’s Colonial Cabaret,” is a full-length play in two acts, and the Author’s Afterword, outlines and details the combination of the kinds of writing I engaged with, from academic to the therapeutic and from the creative to the therapeutic. In the Author’s Afterword, I refer to the work of Caribbean Canadian writer, Norbese Philip (1994), who argues, “To ‘write’ out what happened in a logical, linear way is to do a second violence” (Norbese Philip, as cited in Cranmer, 1997, p. 81). In the same thesis, I reflect on my academic journey thus far and suggest that perhaps my BA in English represented the height of my colonization. I was also deeply determined to develop my voice—that ephemeral, diffuse intangible concept—to write to provide witness to my life experience.

In her chapter, “Learning to be a Nehiyaw (Cree) through language,” Daniels-Fiss (2008) reports on how her cognitive map, shaped by her grandparents, was superimposed with colonial cognitive processes that subsumed it and in order to reclaim her original map, she had to return
“to the beginning” to recall lessons learned from her grandparents (p. 235). Adding to Daniels-Fiss, I can only surmise that my own original cognitive map was partially imprinted by my Kwak’wala speaking Elders, to be subsumed by English speaking institutions—hence the necessity of uncovering one’s linguistic origins—and expressively embodying the notion of returning to oneself.

Perhaps as a reflection of my limited consciousness about even or ever considering a protracted Kwak’wala language study for my MA, I took up the devices of poetic language. Through symbol, metaphor, alliteration, song, and image—the language of the literary arts—I could creatively express myself. Archibald (2008) cites the work of Akan who observes:

If one were to give a metaphorical description of some of the features of First Nations thought, one might say [that in order to acquire these thoughts one would] go to school in dreams, write in iconographic imagery, travel in Trickster’s vehicle, talk in metaphor, and always walk around. (Akan, cited in Archibald, p. 18)

In lieu of any competent expression in Kwak’wala, literate or spoken, I intuitively gravitated to creative language to construct a play using the literary devices of the playwright. Along the way, I learned of the theory of Artaud (1958), the French theatre theorist, who decried the complacency of bourgeoisie theatre, and proposed that theatre ought to be communicative like a plague, that the actor ought to be on fire for his art and that the drama communicate beyond the grasp of spoken language. I was enthralled with the possibilities of dramatic writing as I recognized the power of Artaud’s theory and chose to express myself through an art form that communicated beyond the grasp of spoken language—at the visceral, emotional level—through the use of the language of the stage. Artaud proposed that the language of the stage be comprised
of the combination of the following elements: sound, lighting, actor physicality (proxemics or placement on the stage, gestures and facial expression), and stage props. While these elements might be construed as concrete, when artistically combined, ideas, associations, and comparisons are communicated at the abstract level and when witnessed live by the audience—experienced at a visceral level.

In contrast to the western theatrical tradition that rests on the Aristotelian components of protagonist (possessing a fatal flaw or hamartia), antagonist, rising climax, and denouement (rapid unraveling), Kwakwa’kwa’wakw performance traditions rest on the spiritual traditions laid down by our numayam or first ancestors. While many in my generation, including myself, were deprived of acquiring the linguistic and cultural understanding (and hence spiritual self-understanding), I gravitated toward an academic study of the western dramatic tradition and in hindsight realize that my exposure to innumerable potlatches since childhood must have informed and influenced at some subterranean level, my own creative expression in English, such that I resisted deciding on a definitive protagonist and antagonist. It seemed to me that the fictional community formed the protagonist and the Indian Agent, symbolizing the colonial forces, was the antagonist. In order to explore my linguistic roots and realize (or make real) my understanding of my spiritual being, I attempted a self-study in learning Kwak’wala, my heritage language, for this dissertation.

In what follows I examine literature, discourses, and experiences relevant to Indigenous heritage language revitalization as these directly relate to my efforts to become more proficient in my understanding of Kwak’wala, the language to which I was first exposed in my infancy and
toddler years. In doing so, within the context of Indigenous Studies and drawing on various forms of qualitative research, including auto-ethnographic narrative and, to a lesser extent, linguistic analysis, I seek to address the following research questions:

1. What kinds of stories told in Kwak’wala will photo-elicitation, as a methodological tool of interviewing, yield from Kwakwaka’wakw Elders? What will these photo-assisted interviews reveal about the temporal, geographic, historical and cultural contexts for the photographs?

2. Further, what effects will my participation in this project have on my identity as an adult Kwak’wala language learner and as a member of my family and my community?

The connection between my therapy, my language revitalization efforts, and the ceremonial dismantling of St. Michael’s Residential School (described in my methods chapter) could not be clearer to me with respect to my maternal line. My second research question, “What effects will my participation in this project have on my identity as an adult Kwak’wala language learner, and as a member of my family and my community?”, opens up ground to accommodate the void that has, in innumerable ways, shaped my habitus, my ways of being in the world. While I acknowledge that I am both ’Namgis and Haida, I identify primarily as ’Namgis since I was raised in Alert Bay. While my maternal roots reside in the subterranean psychic parts of my identity—invisible and rarely recognized—but nevertheless there and forever present. Her story is inextricably entwined with my father’s story of their Saturday meetings as teenagers in the early fifties in front of St. Mike’s.

In their Report on the status of BC’s First Nations languages 2010, the First Peoples Heritage, Language and Cultural Council (FPHLCC) surveyed the status of Indigenous language
endangerment in BC and found that “fluent speakers make up only 5.1% [5,609] of the total population [109,588] and the vast majority of them are Elders” (p. 22). The First Peoples’ Council apply the criteria “Speakers, Usage and Language Resources” to measure the health of Indigenous languages in BC and conclude that “all of BC First Nations languages are critically endangered, if not sleeping already” (p. 22). Despite this statistic, the FPHLCC sounds a note of hope in their review of current (at the time: 2010) individual, family, and community efforts to revitalize heritage languages across the province. The report also highlights the importance of supporting the efforts of increasing fluency for semi-speakers. Casting forward, the 2010 FPHLCC Report asks what could be the next steps for BC First Nations languages. Their answer: “[to]...create new speakers and to increase the fluency of semi-speakers” (p. 37). In a subsequent report published four years later, the FPHLCC (now renamed First Peoples’ Cultural Council) optimistically note the increase of semi-speakers and learners: “Looking at the number of semi-fluent speakers, it appears that community efforts to create more speakers have met with some degree of success” since for all BC’s First Nations languages, semi-speakers now number “12,092” (2014, p. 19).

Bordered by the Nuu-chah-nulth along the western and south-western coast of Vancouver Island and the Central Coast Salish territory to the south, the Kwakwaka’wakw territories cover the northern tip and almost the entire eastern half of northern Vancouver Island reaching down and across the Johnstone Straits and up into Knight’s Inlet and the other inlets of the adjacent mainland as far north as Smith’s Inlet.
The above map (from the U’mista Cultural Center) shows the traditional Kwakwaka’wakw territories.

Within this vast territory, there are at least 17 culturally distinct sub-tribes that form the Kwakwaka’wakw nation. According to the 2014 First Peoples’ Cultural Council (formerly First Peoples Heritage, Language and Cultural Council), the total population is reported to be 7,309,
and of these, there are reported to be 165 fluent Kwak’wala speakers in their Language-Specific Measures of Speakers table—numbers slightly up from their 2010 report (2014, pp. 25, 54).

Although I am not, by any means, considered a ‘semi-speaker’ of Kwak’wala as the term is used in the previously cited 2010 FPHLCC report, I have chosen to engage in a self-study that focuses on my efforts to deepen my understanding of and proficiency in my heritage language—the language of my paternal family whose sounds, rhythms, and patterns I was first exposed to from infancy to age seven. The original impetus for my dissertation was a visual analysis of the photographic archive left by Agnes Cranmer (hereafter referred to as Gwanti’lakw) who was my paternal grandmother and who raised me when my father was away at work. In her youth and young adult years, Gwanti’lakw acquired a Brownie camera and took hundreds of black and white photos of her extended family and others, and upon her passing, left behind a massive photo archive.

The focus and direction of my research changed early in my PhD program upon enrolling in a Second Language Acquisition Theory course with Dr. Patsy Duff. I originally thought I could organize the photos into a visual narrative to produce a counter point to the settler narrative of the purported ‘vanishing Indian’ since the bulk of the photos convey the vitality and strength of the Kwakwaka’wakw during the era that Gwanti’lakw referred to as our long dark winter. However, shortly after starting Dr. Duff’s course, and upon reading autoethnographic and autobiographic accounts of second language learners, and after being exposed to theories of language acquisition, I became alive to the idea that, rather than studying the photos as a window to Gwanti’lakw’s worldview (as revealed in how she framed her world with her camera lens),
studying Kwak‘wala could become a doorway into my own self-understanding within the context of the larger socio-cultural forces that shaped my community, my family, and myself.

Understanding who we are in relationship with our families, our communities, and ourselves and in relationship with settler societies derives directly from Indigenous Studies in that the theoretical framework of this discipline validates and supports self-study by Indigenous peoples. Indigenous Studies also draws upon the theories of identity and relationality. In his text “Research as Ceremony,” Wilson (2008) asks, “How can these aspects of an Indigenous research paradigm be put into practice to support other Indigenous people in their own research?” (p. 21). The aspects Wilson refers to are the comparisons and contrasts he makes between the epistemologies of Indigenous scholars conducting research in Australia and Canada (p. 21). In his literature review chapter titled “Can a ceremony include a literature review?” Wilson (2008) asserts, “One of the main points I am trying to get across through this book is the importance of relationships, that everything needs to be seen within the context of the relationships it represents” (p. 43). Today, Indigenous theoretical and methodological frameworks form the basis for renewal and strengthening of relationships. While Indigenous Studies (also known as First Nations Studies or Aboriginal Studies or Native Studies) forms my theoretical framework, of necessity I draw from the fields and disciplines congruent with the direction, focus and tenor of my life writing. These disciplines include narrative inquiry, autoethnography, sociocultural theory, and identity theory, which when combined with Indigenous Studies result in a narrative that counters the settler colonial narrative. My own life experience, the interviews prompted by Gwanti’lakw’s photos, and engagement with learning Kwak’wala should be of interest to
scholars and inquirers working in the fields of Indigenous Studies, narrative inquiry, autoethnography, and Indigenous language revitalization.

In Chapter 2, therefore, I review the field of Indigenous Studies and other relevant theoretical approaches to understanding personal language revitalization. I begin with a discussion of seminal works by Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Kulchyski (2000) as the basis for my discussion while citing works by other Indigenous Studies scholars. Subsequent theoretical frameworks include a survey of second language acquisition (SLA) theories and sociocultural theory (SCT). Deeply relevant to both SLA and SCT is the development of identity theory as a framework by which to analyze power dynamics in social exchanges between language learners and their target language groups. I found that the identity theories explained by Norton and Toohey (2011), when applied to my own Indigenous language-learning context, provided great explanatory power to make sense of the profound internal tension between how I identified myself as a writer in English and as a learner of Kwak’wala. Further, I apply an Indigenous Studies critique of settler projections of the Indian as constructed by the colonial imagination and projected onto popular culture. Lastly, I explore the binary between oral and print literacy tension that exists between the proponents of Indigenous language reclamation by means of traditional intergenerational transmission and those proponents of the augmentative means of print literacy.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the research methods that guided this study, such as narrative inquiry and autoethnography, and offer a brief survey of what is an emergent genre of Indigenous autoethnography by those scholars who report on their own language reclamation processes. Additionally, I discuss photo-elicitation as an interview method and offer transcript exemplars
that show the spontaneous conversational Kwak’wala speech elicited by responses to 
Gwanti’lakw’s photographs. I also share a somewhat formulaic process of the linguistic detective 
work involved in the morphemic breakdown of Kwak’wala sentence construction as shown in 
the tables containing excerpts from the speech by the Elders I interviewed. Originally, I 
anticipated that through repeated listening to the interviews in Kwak’wala, transcription from the 
recordings to the page, and transliteration between U’mista and NAPA orthographies, I would 
increase my Kwak’wala proficiency with the application of my literacy skills. While these skills 
proved to be useful, working (for the most part) in isolation is not optimally conducive to 
Kwak’wala language reclamation. I consider print literacy, in my case, augmentative to language 
learning in social situations.

Norton and Toohey (2011) closely analyze the self-reports by bilingual immigrant speakers 
acclimating to their adopted societies by means of learning to write in English, and liken these 
journeys of acculturation to border crossings in terms of identity. As ’Namgis, growing up in the 
50s and 60s, I liken my learning to write in English as a gradual coming to consciousness which 
might also be characterized as a border crossing. By means of creative writing (in the creative 
non-fiction genre), letters, poems, journal excerpts, government documents—in short—narrative 
inquiry, I provide witness to my formative years in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 5 I reflect on aspects of Indigenous language research for future considerations 
particularly for adult learners from my demographic. As I mentioned in my Preface, I regard my 
demographic as a psychic landscape, a time and place out of which Indigenous peoples emerged 
in all of our great diversity with shared memories and histories (although the cultures, Indian
hospitals, and residential schools may be different), a shared consciousness of peoples with whom I express solidarity and a celebration of our survival.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks

In this chapter, I consider several distinct theoretical frameworks that have guided my study beginning with Indigenous Studies and examine how the theories and methods propounded by scholars in this field aligns with other fields such as Second Language Acquisition along with its emergent and now burgeoning Identity theories growing out of SLA. These theoretical frameworks assist in framing and holding my research questions and the methods by which I proceed to answer my questions.

2.1 Indigenous Studies

The field of Indigenous Studies proceeds from an acknowledgement and analysis of how imperial movements carried with them the capacity to sever Indigenous lands, resources, and cultural treasures from Indigenous peoples and concomitantly our heritage languages. It might be safe to say that any literary production by contemporary Indigenous writers writes against the inscription of colonial history. In her seminal text, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) critiques the western academy, and her theories influence my methodological choices. As Tuhiwai Smith contends, the western academy (particularly in colonial times) drew a grid pattern over Indigenous peoples, cultures, and languages to analyze, dissect, and work up into texts with which to build careers and fill libraries. She also draws a connection between western imperial expansion, academic research, and knowledge production. Suggesting that the colonies were treated as experimental labs, providing Western scholars with new knowledge, Tuhiwai Smith further argues that while imperialist expansion proceeded on the ground through appropriation and absorption of lands and resources, it also proceeded in the academic world by appropriation and absorption of Indigenous knowledge (writ large). Thus, her conception of the western archive is apt. Contemporary Indigenous scholars work within this western archive to retrieve,
repatriate, and reconstruct Indigenous knowledge systems and, in my case, to strengthen my understanding of Kwak’wala, my heritage language. In doing so, I commit to an arduous transformational process in which I, not surprisingly, have discovered multiple layers of resistance owing to my own colonially informed consciousness.

While there is now innumerable excellent Indigenous Studies scholars whose scholarly productions challenge their reading audiences from a direct anti-colonial (or decolonizing) stance, the earlier and seminal works by Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Kulchyski (2000) comprise the basis of this section. Where Tuhiwai Smith analyzes and deconstructs western hegemonic research practices, Kulchyski offers a useful codification of the principles that comprise the field. Kulchyski (2000) answers the question posed by the title of his chapter, What is Native Studies? with a concise 14 point manifesto that philosophically aligns with Tuhiwai Smith’s theories. Some of his main points include the following: “an ethical attitude” (p. 14); “the creation, recognition, or legitimization of new knowledge and new forms of knowledge” (p. 20); and the “working through of historical trauma” (p. 20). Additionally, Kulchyski argues,

Native Studies is a turn in social science towards the qualitative.... The most useful social science-oriented research follows the protocols of Native Studies. As a social science, Native Studies pays greater attention to qualitative research than does inquiry in most social sciences; it does not dispense with quantitative data but rarely is solely led by that form of research and argument. (pp. 21-22) (Kulchyski’s emphasis)

Oral tradition is another key feature of the field identified by Kulchyski. He places this feature squarely within an “interpretive practice” (p. 23). Whether the creation of new knowledge or the uncovering of ancient Indigenous knowledge, the multi-faceted and multi-level meanings of
stories told by Elders, and the importance of oral literacy that derives from oral tradition, become clear.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) challenged the presumed legitimacy of Eurocentric intellectual imperialism by deconstructing the establishment of academic disciplines premised upon the founding precepts of the Enlightenment. “Academic knowledges are organized around the idea of disciplines and fields of knowledge. These are deeply implicated in each other and share genealogical foundations in various classical and Enlightenment philosophies” (p. 65). Tuhiwai Smith’s reference to the genealogical roots of the western academe is relevant to this discussion because it implies a common source of early academic (mis-) representations of Indigenous peoples and necessitates the reframing of Indigenous issues from the old anthropological salvage paradigm to a life-affirming perspective which celebrates the resiliency and survival of Indigenous peoples. Salvage ethnography refers to the spirit of the colonial times where old paradigm anthropology zealously collected samples of Indigenous cultures based on the settler notion that the Indians of the day were dead or dying, and where colonial governments zealously worked to bring this settler notion to fruition. Tuhiwai Smith’s intention is to show the connection between knowledge, research, and imperialism. Just as feminists argue that the patriarchal system benefits materially from the unrecognized and unpaid work of women, so too, according to Tuhiwai Smith, does western knowledge in the form of its various academic disciplines, benefits from the commodification of Indigenous knowledge systems. Thus Indigenous cultures came under the scrutiny of the academic eye and Indigenous people came under the scrutiny of the eye of the state. In his book, *Liberalism, surveillance, and resistance: Indigenous communities in Western Canada, 1877-1927*, Smith (2009) analyzes colonial
expansion and Indigenous land alienation practices by the Canadian government and applies Foucault’s notion of the panoptic eye with which the state exercised its power to divvy up and dispense plots of lands from Indigenous traditional territories to settler newcomers (p. 135).

The settler imagination built up and projected through western literary and visual arts the most unsavoury characterizations of Indigenous peoples and life-ways. In her seminal chapter, “The Construction of the Imaginary Indian,” Crosby (2002) deconstructs and peels back the tissue that constitutes Canada’s deeply held yet erroneous notions of what it means to be Indigenous in this country. The objectifying colonial gaze that actually projected the settler imaginary Indian onto popular culture is challenged in its myriad misrepresentations by Indigenous Studies scholars such as Mihesuah and Wilson (2004), Alfred (2004), Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Kulchyski (2000), McLeod (2000), and Cajete (2000), to name just a few.

Given that she conceives of western academia as an archive containing Indigenous knowledge systems compiled by old paradigm salvage ethnographers, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) dispels the pall over a moribund representation by mainstream social science with her affirmation of Indigenous survival. And further, she observes, “Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodologies and Indigenous practices” (p. 143). Along with Indigenous methods and practices, researchers in the area of Indigenous language revitalization, including linguists and language activists alike collaborate to design and implement Indigenous language education programs to support and grow revitalization efforts. In her survey of three Indigenous language immersion programs, McCarty (2003) concludes by asking the question: “Can Indigenous cultural and linguistic distinctiveness be maintained in the face of these homogenizing yet
stratifying forces?” and her answer is “a qualified but optimistic ‘yes’” as long as Indigenous communities can launch and promote persistent and sustained consciousness-raising about the importance of language revitalization as revealed in the immersion programs she surveyed (p. 160).

Kulchyski (2000) addresses the traditional historian in the western academy, and suggests that those among them who work within an Indigenous Studies framework need to reconcile their academic training with the requirements of relationship built on reciprocity, respect, care and compassion. Wilson (2008) provides numerous specific examples of how Indigenous Studies scholars are explicitly reshaping the academy by adhering to principles and protocols in the field, and cites Atkinson: “By incorporating these principles and functions into the research, the researcher honours the worldviews of Indigenous peoples and does so with ethical responsibility and sensitivity” (Atkinson, as cited in Wilson, p. 59).

One example of how Indigenous Studies protocols influence disciplinary engagement with Indigenous communities can be found in Miejer Drees’s (2013) Healing histories: Stories from Canada’s Indian hospitals. Meijer Drees intended to study Indigenous nurse training history on the Pacific Northwest including British Columbia, Alaska, and Alberta. However, the more she heard stories about the tuberculosis epidemic in Indigenous communities, her perspective, attitude, and approach to her research changed to foreground the voices and stories of the former patients of such institutions (including myself). Rather than delivering a study rendered through the singular voice of the expert, Meijer Drees reports, “My approach to my work evolved gradually. Most important to my work were valuable lessons passed to me by Maria Campbell,
Métis storyteller, writer and Elder, and Ellen White (Kwul’a’sul’wut), Snuneymuxw First Nation Elder, storyteller, and teacher” (p. xxi). Both of Meijer Drees’s teachers encouraged her to exercise awareness of her role as listener, and to “remember [that] stories are teaching moments” (p. xxiii). Thus, Meijer Drees embodies and expresses Kulchyski’s observation, “The historian in Native Studies has stepped across a chasm and must question her or his own narrative practices, sources of evidence, reasons for pursuing a particular topic, and techniques of inquiry with as much rigour as the material itself is questioned” (p. 21). Perhaps in this way, we now see how academia accommodates narrative research that combines both Indigenous research protocols and narrative inquiry conducted with respect and sensitivity.

2.2 Indigenous Stories and Ways of Knowing

With the call for the scholarly exploration and formalizing of Indigenous epistemological paradigms (Archibald, 2008; Atleo, 2004; Battiste, 2000; Kulchyski, 2000; McLeod, 2000; Meyer, 2001; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Smith Hingangaroa, 2000; Wilson, 2008), I offer the following narrative-based inquiry into my processes as an adult Kwak’wala language learner. Each of the previously cited authors rooted in and speaking from diverse nations are unified by the universal practice of oral tradition within a distinct linguistic heritage. Oral traditions, oral literacies, and oral genres rely on custom, ritual, and ceremony to reinforce cultural identities developed within community. But for the continued impact of colonial history, the diaspora of Indigenous populations from home territories to urban centres, and, more importantly, the severance of Indigenous women from our homelands and languages through federal legislation, the time honoured ceremonies, rituals, and customs would continue in much the same way as practiced by our ancestors.
Alfred and Corntassel (2005) tackle the on-going assault on Indigenous identity in contemporary times and ask, “how can we resist further dispossession and disconnection when the effects of colonial assaults on our own existence are so pronounced and still so present in the lives of all Indigenous peoples?” (p. 599). They then proceed to outline how one might consider actions and directions to take in order to disrupt and dismantle an internalized settler consciousness. The authors challenge their reading audience to confront our fears, instilled by colonial powers, with actions bolstered by spiritual traditions, to reclaim our heritage languages to promote regeneration of a traditional worldview, to return to our home territories so we may draw strength from the land, and to reclaim (as much as possible) a traditional diet to strengthen our bodies (p. 613). Given my childhood institutionalization in the Nanaimo Indian Hospital and St. Michael’s Residential School, Alfred and Corntassel’s prescription for regenerating Indigeneity has force and resonance for me.

Part of the dominant inquiry of the academy is comprised of the singular, unquestioning acceptance of academic expertise, and is naturalized owing to a lack of self-reflection on the socially constructed positions inherited with class, race and gender. Indigenous peoples and cultures are still living with the impact of colonial outcomes. The dominant inquiry in the academy, formerly a patriarchal bastion of white privilege, created the notion of ‘other’ through its study, absorption and representation of the cultural or ethnic other. The concept of other is first attributed to the original study of other peoples and cultures by anthropology and sociology, and is now redefined as a critical term to reflect the critique of the subjects of historically marginalized groups. As a critical term, the ‘other’ is, in part, explained by Schwandt (2001): “….contemporary studies further revealed how this kind of racism has not only been an
academic disposition but also institutionalized in a variety of agencies and endeavors (*sic*) that promote Western education and economic and political growth and development to help the ‘underdeveloped’ other” (p. 181). One example of how contemporary Indigenous Studies challenges and interrogates typical dominant inquiry representations of Indigenous peoples and cultures can be found in Calliou’s (2004) argument for an oral history methodology. Calliou (2004) cites Stevenson’s critique of mainstream historians who “fear what they don’t understand and so they ‘other’ Indigenous voices right out of their own histories” (Stevenson, as cited in Calliou p. 76).

Kulchyski (2000) also argues that Indigenous scholars are more likely to be involved in working with and in our communities, that the reliance on externally defined categories or boundaries of culture will of necessity shift to categories that are internally defined (within the communities). In this way, contemporary relationship building between Indigenous and academic communities is reshaped with the acknowledgement, accommodation, and validation of Indigenous languages, philosophies, and cultures. As a graduate of Vancouver Island University with a BA in English and of the University of Victoria with an MA in Curriculum Studies and now a PhD candidate attending the University of British Columbia, I have witnessed the gradual emergence of the public protocols in graduation ceremonies of major post-secondary institutions that first and foremost begin with the public acknowledgement that these academic communities are located on the unceded traditional territories of their respective First Nations neighbours and hosts. Continued public acknowledgements, in their graduation ceremonies, by post-secondary institutions of their residence on unceded traditional First Nations territories in BC express Indigenous protocols of introduction as visiting guests, but also symbolically, underscore the
(historical and contemporary) asymmetrical power imbalance between BC First Nations and settler governments.

Relationships comprise the nexus of Indigenous languages, philosophies, and cultures, so during the Canadian cultural suppression years, relationships were strategically targeted by federal legislation. In the opening statement to his chapter *What is Native Studies?* Kulchyski (2000) approaches the reparation of relationships with his call for the “righting of names” (p. 13) — that is, the identification of previously anonymous and objectified Indigenous interviewees for a start. From an Indigenous cultural frame generally and from a Kwakw̱aka’wakw cultural frame specifically, names are inherited or given and accompany a range of cultural expressions, be they artistic, tangible, or intangible treasures.

Kulchyski also argues that a primary value and practice of Indigenous Studies is the restoration, reclamation, and valuing of Indigenous relationships within and between families, clans, and communities. Similarly, Gregory Cajete (2000) writes, “Indigenous education is, in its truest form, about learning relationships in context. This context begins with family” (p. 183). However, for the generation of Indigenous people born in the fifties such as myself, the decade when cultural suppression began to ease for Canadian Indigenous peoples, the learning of relationships (in context) often was and continues to be a difficult, challenging journey since many were marginalized and rendered vulnerable by pervasive social anomie within home territories and communities. And as expressed in the opening pages to my dissertation, relationship to self must be addressed in an on-going process of decolonizing efforts which may include, in part, or in whole, repatriation of language, healing through cultural traditions,
challenging self doubt through therapy, and general self-care strategies. Recognizing habitual
defensive patterns that serve only to constrain and constrict lead to dis/ease, and disrupting these
patterns by cultivating an openness and curiousness, while challenging, leads to greater capacity
for self-acceptance and empathy.

The field of Indigenous Studies is charged with a sense of injustice stemming from historical
state oppression, historical cultural and linguistic suppression and, perhaps most importantly, a
sense of responsibility to contribute to knowledge and language revitalization. Despite the
disruption of the colonial era and the tumultuous cultural and societal changes that these
interruptions brought, stories told both in the domestic and public domains serve to instruct,
entertain and enliven vis-à-vis Cruikshank’s (2000) characterization of oral histories and stories
as ‘equipment for living’ (p. 41). I believe that it is important for those who, subject to the
disruption of the colonial era, did not have the opportunity to learn and subsequently transmit all
that they may have otherwise, to reclaim these names and experiences, these stories. That is the
‘setting it right.’

For oral-based Indigenous societies, stories told in the language of the territory situate one’s
place in the family, the community, and the cosmos, and that shapes one’s values, cultural
norms, and customs. In explaining the symbolic significance of Kwakwaka’wakw masks, Chief
Robert Joseph (1998) observes, “Because of our strong oral history, these matters of kinship in
the immediate and broadest sense are told over and over again” (p. 20). The sturdy strand of oral
transmission of cultural obligation and duty (via ceremony in sacred space) is perhaps the one
remaining public domain where Kwak’wala is consistently heard in the spoken and song form.
Devastation from disease and dislocation from traditional territories, since early colonial times, combined with federal legislation, greatly constricted not only the intergenerational life flow of stories told in Kwak’wala, but also the intergenerational life flow of the language such that it is now considered critically endangered. Thus my use of Gwanti’lakw’s photos in this dissertation research as prompts in interviews with fluent speakers of Kwak’wala provided the opportunity to not only hear Kwak’wala spontaneous speech, but also to hear stories told in Kwak’wala that revealed the relationship between land, memory, and language.

From an Indigenous Studies perspective, and more specifically, a Nuu-chah-nulth perspective, Richard Atleo (2004) offers this observation: “Nevertheless, Nuu-chah-nulth origin stories upon which the theory of tsawalk is based, clearly show that the physical and spiritual domains are intimately related” (p. 119). In cohesive, homogeneous oral-based societies, stories reveal origins, reflect life’s choices, and emanate from a moral and spiritual force expressed in one’s language and in Atleo’s case, his Nuu-chah-nulth language.

In the tradition and method of Indigenous storytelling, I recognize, as ’Namgis, the universal principles of oral traditions across the great diversity of Indigenous societies. In her Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body and spirit, Archibald (2008) builds a theoretical framework from her Sto:lo roots, through which to examine the process of Indigenous storytelling, as well as the process of Indigenous representation of oral tradition in literary productions. Flexible in frame, sturdy in foundation, the principles that comprise Archibald’s Indigenous storywork are rooted in her unique Sto:lo cultural perspective and align with values reported by Atleo (2004) in his text Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth worldview (as previously
Atleo speaks of the experiences of the typical Nuu-chah-nulth listening audience in connection with the storyteller, the principles of respect, and generosity within their society and cultural traditions (p. 14).

Indigenous Studies scholars who research and write about contemporary Indigenous issues, concerns, and living conditions invariably situate their work on some point of the spectrum of colonial history—in order to explain, justify or argue for the validity of decolonizing strategies. Tuhiwai Smith’s analysis of imperial expansion solidly establishes the rationale for the myriad Indigenous research projects repositioned as celebratory rather than moribund vis-a-vis an old anthropology paradigm. Her analysis re-frames the perspective of salvaging tired detritus from history, to repatriating, reclaiming and revitalizing cultural treasures.

McLeod (2000) argues that “Indigenous experience should be the foundation of Indigenous Studies” and further, he argues that “Indigenous Studies should seek to heal and transform through the telling of stories” (p. 36). Rather than framing my methodological choices from a perspective of loss—typically associated with the dead or dying Indian trope in the West—I want to celebrate our survival with this project. By “our” I mean my Indigenous compatriots of consciousness who survived dangerous colonial times and have gone on to continue living, thriving and moving forward. Tuhiwai Smith’s survey of Indigenous research projects includes, among others, story-telling, language revitalization, and strengthened connections between contemporary Indigenous peoples and our cultural traditions.
Academic disciplines using the narrative inquiry method are as diverse and numerous as there are ways of telling stories—these include anthropology, history, feminist studies, applied linguistics and sociology. Indigenous Studies scholars like McLeod (2000) argue that stories are essential as a vehicle to counteract the displacement or marginalizing of local stories. McLeod asserts, “Ideally, Indigenous Studies should seek to articulate Indigenous stories through academic channels and not the other way around” (p. 35). Reversing the flow of articulation from (my interpretation of McLeod’s statement) old paradigm anthropological representations (read misrepresentations) through Indigenous Studies would open worlds of perception, recalibrate settler informed misrepresentations, showing how amenable or resistant academic gate-keepers are to Indigenous expressions of epistemologies and methodologies.

There is still much to build on in terms of methodology informed by Indigenously focused protocols and practices. Archibald (2008) retells a coyote story as a lens for reframing the distorted perceptions resultant from colonial experience. Briefly, (with apologies to Tafoya in Archibald), Coyote, through spiritual transgression, loses his eyeballs, so Mouse and Buffalo each give up one of their eyes to help Coyote see. The two mismatched eyes distort Coyote’s perception and Archibald’s interpretation of this imbalance assists her reading audience to understand more fully an underlying principle of the Indigenous philosophy of holism (p. 10). In her depiction of Indigenous holism Archibald shows a series of nested ovals and at the core rests “Oneself” (sic) emanating out through family, community, nation and bounded externally at four points—intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical—all of which are interrelated and create the context and frame for Indigenous storywork (p. 11). With balance in all things the seemingly unattainable ideal, shifting one’s perspective requires the rebalancing of distorted perceptions,
particularly with how colonial history has shaped our Indigenous self-perceptions. Archibald’s metaphor works on multiple levels as I continue to reflect on my life experience as a ’Namgis woman learning about stories told in Kwak’wala.

Acknowledging the wide diversity of Indigenous philosophical and storytelling traditions, Archibald explains how this framework illustrates a prime Sto:lo value of balance and harmony: “Stories have the power to make our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits work together. When we lose a part of ourselves, we lose balance and harmony, and we may feel like Coyote with the mismatched eyes” (p. 12). Archibald contrasts Western storytelling traditions with Indigenous traditions and subsequent audience expectation and reception. Challenged to recover a balanced perspective, in a neat turn from Coyote’s story to her own, Archibald returns to her Sto:lo roots to locate the philosophical guidelines that allow her to weave “a Sto:lo and Coast Salish storytelling basket based on the storywork teachings of respect, reverence, responsibility, holism, interrelatedness and synergy” (p. 2). Archibald’s text is a response to the call for expansion of Indigenous discursive space in the academy. In Chapter 3, I return to the theme of storywork in terms of narrative research methods and the other approaches to knowing that guided this study.

2.3 Disrupting the Colonial Gaze: Gwanti’lakw’s Photos

Archibald’s storywork frame is sturdily woven and supports my method of both telling and gathering stories in both English and Kwak’wala. There are many stories about my grandmother’s apparent obsession with her camera when she took pictures as a young teenage girl at a time when modern colonial tools were largely unavailable. Just as Coyote attempted to see through Mouse’s small eye, for a brief time in her younger years, Gwanti’lakw narrowed her
peripheral field to focus very intensely on specific people in front of her. Her subjects sometimes posed, sometimes candid, always strong.

Thomas (1981) reviewed the work of prominent photographers on the Pacific Northwest Coast of Canada since the time of contact between the European settlers and local Indigenous peoples. Apart from appealing to the carte de visites commercial trade and settler appetite for the new and the novel (from the home countries of the newcomers), other purposes for photographing Indigenous peoples were to document traditional settlements, or scenes from seasonal rounds (p.65). One photograph that has surfaced in Gwanti’lakw’s collection (the original black and white paper copy), is one of my ancestor George Hunt, and on the back of this photo the only notation is the typed description: “Neg. # 11854-George Hunt. Right Quarter face.” This cryptic description leads me to ask what was the purpose for this photo and what did the photographer intend to do with the photo with its description? Did the colonial authorities compile a database of facial measurements of those born of Indigenous mothers and settler fathers?

In their overview of the photo archive from the Jessup Expedition of 1897, Miller and Mathe (1997) assert that the over three thousand photographs taken during this time were not only meant to document tribal cyclical rounds, but also: “Subjects were shown from various angles—usually front, side profile, and three-quarter views—in order to illustrate facial and bodily features found in the tribal populations at large” (p. 19). So other purposes, especially during colonial times, included the documentation of racial phenotypes. In his critique of scientific racism, Deloria (2004) summarizes the work of Stephen Jay Gould, “Gould outlines the history of the study of human skulls and demonstrates that where data was not deliberately faked to
conform to pre-existing doctrines, scholars showed obvious bias and were oblivious to their own racist assumptions. The idea that measuring the shape of the human skull could determine intellectual and cultural potential and accomplishments and even identify race was absurd from the beginning” (p. 19).

Figure 2.1 George Hunt: Right quarter face

The above photo is of George Hunt, Gwanti’lakw’s grandfather and my great great grandfather.
Gwani’lakw’s images represent a visual counter-narrative to the myth of the vanishing Indian construct projected by nineteenth century photographers, most notably Curtis. The photographic documentation/representation left by Curtis contributed much to the pattern of highly aestheticized and abstracted representations of North American Indians. In 1912, Curtis visited the Kwakwaka’wakw territory to produce his film “In the Land of the Head-Hunters,” and specifically visited Tsaxis where Gwani’lakw was born and raised. Gwani’lakw’s sister Grace was hired, along with their first cousin Nunu, to play extras, as little girls in traditional garb, on the beach. One of the many stories from that time relayed to me by Yotu includes a particularly funny scene involving Aunty Grace and Nunu. In the beach scene the girls were to act afraid and scream when they saw the canoe load of warriors land on the beach. However, when the girls saw that the men were their uncles, they started to giggle. Apparently Curtis became angry, as he had to set up the scene again for a second take. In keeping with the reconstructive notion of capturing the Kwaguitl in their ‘authentic’ native garb, Curtis hired a cedar weaver to weave traditional capes and made everyone wear wigs of black hair when in fact trade had been on-going between the Europeans and the Kwakwaka’wakw since the mid-1800s. Also, he refused to hire those in the village with fairer complexions even though they were full members of the community and just as linguistically and culturally fluent as everyone else in the village. He wanted an “authentic” representation of Kwaguitls whereas there had been inter-marriage since the time of contact. One further example relayed by Yotu is that Curtis’ script included a whaling scene when the Kwakwaka’wakw were never whaling people, but he insisted on this by renting a dead whale to film as part of his story. This settler binary expressed in terms of authenticity and inauthenticity apparently left no room for cultural adaptation and it is this sort of calcified settler thinking that I surmise has led to the factions within our home territories between the so-called...
traditional groups who rail against the so-called outsiders. How much of my assumptions, thinking and attitudes about authenticity are influenced and shaped by these settler binaries from so long ago?

While colonial era photographers composed the elements within the frame, they framed Indigenous peoples that projected settler fantasies of what Indigenous peoples were. In her documentary “Coming to Light: Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indians,” Makepeace (2001) informs us that Curtis was influenced by a school of photography called the pictorial movement in which there was an emphasis on the strong play between light and dark, formal placement of elements within the frame, expressionistic isolation of the subject, and nostalgia for by-gone days. The conscious construction of elements within the frame was meant to be a purportedly accurate and objective photographic representation of truth but was patently informed by a settler artistic sensibility where Curtis also applied principles of artistic design used by the pictorial school of photography—thereby magnifying the impact of the notion of the vanishing Indian.

While the idea of the vanishing Indian proliferated out into popular culture via conscious misrepresentation by photographers like Curtis, concrete colonial practices advanced via legal means. In a recent email communication with Yotu where I asked her about stories from the time Curtis came to the North Island to film, she responded with the following:

All this happened during the years of potlatch prohibition. None of the old people I talked to for Anne Makepeace’s film on Curtis said this, but that’s when I began to think what a blast that must have been for our old people – here was this crazy white guy
paying them to do what other white guys would put them in gaol for. It was a glorious opportunity for our old people to thumb their noses at the Indian Agent and missionaries. Makepeace (2001) interviewed Yotu for the documentary on Curtis. If the numerous funny stories about that event are any indication, it seems that the Kwak’wa’wa’kwa seized on this chance to play and to satirize the curious filmmaker with his settler notions.

Photographs by, for and about Indigenous peoples, at least in Kwak’wa’wa’kwa territory, were few and far between. While there is now considerable discourse about the production, use and dissemination of historical photographs, in Gwants’lakw’s time, Indigenous responses were not actively solicited to inquire into the response to the photographic process. In her survey of early nineteenth century photographers of the Haida in northern British Columbia, Blackman (1981) observes that, “[h]ow natives viewed the photography process and the expectations they held of imaging must be pursued largely through the documented history of native/photographer contact, a history in which the native seldom speaks for himself” (p. 87). Given that the era was colonial, where the ‘native seldom speaks for himself,’ where settler attitudes were rife with assumptions about the native (writ large) who purportedly had no voice, no vision, no history and no culture, it is no surprise that Blackman would make such an observation. Although Gwants’lakw was never formally interviewed about her specific views on photography (to the best of my understanding), she has left as her legacy a massive photo archive that would constitute a visual narrative of the life of her community covering the twenties and thirties—the time she often referred to as our long dark winter. Her archive illuminates this period of time and reveals loved ones with light and laughter. This archive offers, in Blackman’s (1981) words, “a history in which the native [will] speak(s) for [her]self” (p. 87).
All of Gwanti’lakw’s photographs are black and white, candid shots of family members taken outside. I have scanned only three hundred of her photographs into my laptop. After repeated viewings I note some unidentified people (whose photos trace their aging from their youth to Elders) who feel like they are old friends, others who play to the camera pulling faces, still others who are caught sitting inside galvanized steel tubs—hiding their faces behind towels in one frame—and in the next frame their faces are tipped up to the sun laughing. As Tsinhnahjinnie (2003) observes and comments:

Photographs by a Native woman photographing Native women at the end of the nineteenth century: images Curtis, Vroman, Hillers, and the many others could not even begin to emulate, when the eye of the beholder possesses love for the beheld. (p. 49) Gwanti’lakw’s compositions illustrate Tsinhnahjinnie’s argument that colonial era photographers could never touch, in visual tenor, the tenderness of the photographer’s love for the beheld, and the subject of the frame. And while the primary goal of this study is to elicit spontaneous Kwak’wala speech in response to a selection of Gwanti’lakw’s photographs, her work will one day be the subject of a much more comprehensive study. Tempting as it is for me to analyze the photos solely as visual artefacts, the real work involved eliciting Kwak’wala responses to her photos. Gwanti’lakw, through her photography, left a visual narrative that will one day swim up into public view. She was the photographer/creator/framer of her vision and her world. If her archive is any indication, she took hold of an early colonial instrument of visual documentation and used it to frame her loved ones in light and laughter.
In keeping with protocols for introduction for the speaker/writer to describe herself at the beginning of subjective research projects (as well as in Indigenous discursive space), I introduce Gwanti’lakw (whose name is commonly translated as ‘heavy with wealth’) behind the camera, the person whose perspective in the photographs triggered the Kwak’wala responses from the Elders. Gwanti’lakw took on the role of mother for me from my infancy years until I was sent away to the Nanaimo Indian Hospital at the age of seven, and I returned four years later at age of eleven. Patient, loving, good humoured, hard working and generous are adjectives that come to mind to describe my memories of her. The title of my dissertation *Reclaiming Kwak’wala through Co-constructing Gwanti’lakw’s Vision*, refers to how I interpret her vision as an artist. In terms of creative expression, she used multiple media to produce images of our clan crests through silk screen printing, pottery making, button blanket making, crocheting, knitting, quilting, but her first means of creative expression seems to have been through her photography, stored away in the suitcases in her bedroom. Beyond raising nine children, she also took on foster children and myself. I conclude this section with an early photograph of Gwanti’lakw in a small skiff with a baby seal followed by a brief visual analysis.
Figure 2.1 Gwanti’lakw with seal

The glossiness of the seal is reflected in a number of elements in the frame. From the largest element of water, to her hair, and to her black leather shoes that mirror the ripples of the seal’s coat, Gwanti’lakw reflects the shine of the seal. It is as if Gwanti’lakw just emerged from the Undersea world and managed to slip off her own seal coat but did not have time to shed clues to her previous life as a seal. The angle of the shot makes me feel unsteady. Why hasn’t the skiff overturned with the seal struggling to get out? There must have been an element of trust between the seal and Gwanti’lakw to stay so steady in the small skiff. Since Uncle Tommy Hunt and Gwanti’lakw had running arguments about who could use her camera, I imagine that it was her brother who took this photograph.

In his elegiac meditation on photography, *Camera lucida: Reflections on photography*, Barthes (2010) muses,
And if Photography belonged to a world with some residual sensitivity to myth, we should exult over the richness of the symbol: the loved body is immortalized by the mediation of precious metal, silver (monument and luxury); to which we might add the notion that this metal, like all the metals of Alchemy, is alive. (p. 81)

According to Dyer (2010) (author of the Foreword to Barthes’ text), the second half of the text is suffused with poignancy and mourning for the loss of his mother (p. ix). Grief for the loved one flows like rivers and streams to the ocean, finds myriad meaningful expressions in all cultures.

For Gwanti’lakw, rather than being “immortalized by the mediation of precious metal,” she is immortalized in our Kwak’wala traditions where each potlatch begins with the sā’la, the mourning songs where she is remembered along with all those for whom other families mourn their own previous losses. As a young girl I had attended many potlatches with Gwanti’lakw, but I had only a minimal understanding of Kwak’wala. I think the reference to her vision in my title has more to do with trying to understand her worldview by a close study of Kwak’wala than through the photos she took as a young woman. Since academia provided me the structured learning space to conduct this self study I now turn to theories of language learning to help me deepen my understanding of my own learning processes.

2.4 Socioculturally-oriented Second Language Acquisition Theories

In the following, I explore theories and concepts relevant to my language learning experiences. Of all the texts I have read by second language acquisition (SLA) researchers, I have asked the question, “how might this translate or apply to my Kwak’wala learning?”
As with any discipline, SLA has its own terminology and numerous acronyms to learn and also has different theoretical camps (some more psycholinguistic, for example, and others more sociocultural). It might be useful to first consider a very traditional definition offered by linguists Gass and Selinker (2008) in their text *Second language acquisition: An introductory course*. They define SLA, in a nutshell, as “refer[ring] to the process of learning another language after the native language has been learned” (p. 7). This definition of language learning clearly does not apply well to my own experience or to that of many other contemporary First Nations language learners. Kwak’wala was in fact my first language, and English my second; however, I had not learned Kwak’wala completely before being immersed in an alien English-speaking world; and then, many decades later, fully proficient in English, now my dominant language, I have been attempting to relearn my own mother tongue, which is the language of my heritage (referred to as “heritage language” in some SLA literature). At my age, I struggle with deepening my Kwak’wala proficiency as many adult language learners do. In deepening and expanding my capacity for Kwak’wala expression, I must disrupt previously stabilized or incompletely learned linguistic forms and correct previous mistaken notions of Kwak’wala.

One emerging approach to SLA sees language learning as a lifelong process of socialization and experience in our primary languages and often others, concurrently, sequentially, and even intermittently. In her chapter on language socialization, Duff (2010) provides an overview of three decades of language socialization (LS) research informed by linguistic anthropology and sociocultural SLA. This approach studies the initiation of language speakers into new discourse communities, whether from home into primary school (in the same language or an additional language), or from high school to post-secondary education, or an academic generalist entering
into a specific discipline such as law or medicine (p. 428). Drawing on the work of Ochs, Shieffelin and others, Duff (2010) offers this definition of language socialization: “…. the lifelong process by which individuals—typically novices—are inducted into specific domains of knowledge, beliefs, affect, roles, identities, and social representations, which they access and construct through language practices and social interaction….”; this process is linguistically mediated and language proficiency is one of the main intended outcomes (p. 427). As a cultural, cognitive, and social process, however, and one very much tied to the negotiation of learners’ identities, membership, and legitimacy in various communities, this socialization is often very complicated and the outcomes can be very unpredictable. This negotiation of learners’ identities in an Indigenous context has revealed itself to be as equally fraught as it is unpredictable vis-à-vis language learning success as we shall see in the Indigenous autoethnographies section.

My early childhood experience of language socialization between infancy and toddler years consisted largely of listening to Kwak’wala spoken by the old people in my grandmother’s social world. Gwanti’lakw told me that when she would order me (when I was a toddler) to do something in Kwak’wala, I would shake my head at her with the response, “oh no, I know you’re mad at me mom,” and refuse to do whatever it was she was telling me. Perhaps I was responding to the sound of the language or the tone that she used. So, despite my exposure to Kwak’wala at such a young age, I probably felt more comfortable learning English language and literacy in primary school. My Uncle Roy would help me with my primary school work learning the English alphabet.
Sociocultural theories, such as language socialization, have become increasingly prominent in SLA, in part to explore the social, historical, contextual, and communal aspects of language learning and socialization that are obviously so crucial, as my own story illustrates (Duff, 2007). Furthermore, they do not aim to represent the learning process in terms of deficiencies, errors, or failures (which earlier theories often tended to do, holding up the norm of the “native speaker” as the ultimate achievement), but rather in terms of mediation, meaning making, repertoires, and lived experience. One aspect of this research is a focus on identity, a theme addressed in the next section. As a Kwak’wala language learner, these socially oriented theories of learning language and culture accommodate my life experience and serve as a theoretical window to help me deepen my capacity for understanding the relationship between linguistic development and culture learning (in my case Kwakwaka’wakw) and the historical and institutional setting (the colonial impact of the Nanaimo Indian Hospital and St. Michael’s Residential School institutional settings). Moreover, the notion of mediation and translation described by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) helps me to understand the at times bewildering internal tension that I feel between writing in English about learning and speaking Kwak’wala—a paradox that in hindsight had a paralyzing effect on both my writing and learning Kwak’wala.

2.5 Identity

A major strand in more socially and socioculturally oriented SLA deals primarily with language learners’ evolving and multiple, sometimes contradictory, identities. Here I explain how research in identity theory has helped me to understand the baffling state of paralysis I described above. How did my childhood institutionalization influence my development as an English language learner, and how did my cultural and historical settings compel me to grow from the arid soil of colonial laws? My early life experience continues to impact my relationship to self, and others,
and to the communities I belong to including my home territory as well as my academic community.

In their article, “Identity, language learning, and social change,” Norton and Toohey (2011) provide a comprehensive theoretical overview of the emergence and now burgeoning scholarship on identity theory vis-à-vis language learning with a specific focus on how language learners both position themselves or are ascribed positions by people in their (new) speech communities. While the authors focus on the learning of English as an additional language, one of their conclusions is the need in SLA for research in other languages such as Indigenous heritage speech communities with respect to identity theory. With this in mind, a similar examination of the positioning of Indigenous heritage languages learners, either by our speech communities or how we position ourselves, could offer valuable insights that might lead to a more flexible and compassionate approach to supporting Indigenous adult language learners. The authors open their chapter with a story of an adult (“immigrant”) learner of English, Martina, that illustrates the internal state of the language learner working below her educational attainment who is subjected to verbal abuse by teens (local native speakers of English) at her place of work. In order to resist the various oppressive situations she encounters, “Martina reframed her relationship with her co-workers as domestic rather than professional, and from the identity position ‘mother’ rather than ‘immigrant’…. (p. 413). In order to equalize positioning imposed on her by the teens’ bad behaviour, Martina asserts her identity appropriate to her age and experience. Briefly, the central arguments identified by Norton and Toohey’s (2011) examination of the relationship between identity and language learning are as follows: that identity is multiple, dynamic, and the site of struggle, and thus identity is also influenced by the
activity of language learning. Since language learning influences identity, how is the target language group accessed, and how does the language learner negotiate relationships with speakers of that target language, particularly within existing power structures and assumptions about the learner’s legitimacy in the community?

This point is pertinent to Indigenous identities, which are judged, graded and assessed based on how ‘traditional’ one is to the point where one can ultimately be excluded based on insider perceptions. Realizing a new perspective that transcends essentialized binaries such as “outsider,” “insider,” “traditionalist,” “colonized,” etc., just might loosen and dislodge the calcified thinking and entrenched bias in those working, either individually or collectively, to revitalize our Indigenous languages. With my demographic ever shrinking, one would think that those who are working in Indigenous language revitalization could strategize ways and means of harnessing the talents of latent speakers who have grown up immersed in heritage languages but who have moved away either owing to Department of Indian Affairs marriage laws, or owing to economic circumstance, and who continue to be marginalized in our home communities. The ongoing tensions between the purported traditional folks back on home territories and those they deem to be outsiders would provide no end of examples for the kind of analysis of social power dynamic that Norton and Toohey apply to the identities of second language learners.

Norton and Toohey (2011) note that,

language learning theory and research needs to address how power in the social world affects learners’ access to the target language community, and thus to opportunities to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing, widely acknowledged as central to the
SLA process. Identity theorists are therefore concerned about the ways in which power is distributed in both formal and informal sites of language learning…. (p. 414)

The identity theories they describe clarify socio-cultural conditions for Indigenous language learners like me seeking to make sense of the myriad perplexing social, linguistic, and cultural interactions on visits back home to my traditional territory. For example, on one occasion I was ascribed the label of “outsider” by one of my younger first cousins and constructed as someone who didn’t really know anything—culturally speaking—coming from someone who publicly touts her value of respect and the necessity for sobriety and healing. At another time, during a family visit with one of my aunts, when we were being entertained by the witty repartee (in English) of one of my male cousins, I had interjected with a paraphrase of what he had shared; another family member said “it’s funny when he says it, but not funny when you say it.” While these anecdotes do not have anything to do with being denied access to my Kwak’wala speech community, they do reveal the family power plays that for inscrutable reasons (and maybe reason has nothing to do with such behaviour) serve to simultaneously elevate one speaker and devalue another. These anecdotes also illustrate how Norton and Toohey’s analysis of the production, expression and enactment of power in social relations might be applied to Indigenous contexts. If identity is “multiple, changing and the site of struggle,” then I need to anticipate these sorts of encounters with creative identity positions that I can take up to resist these sorts of micro-aggressions that might also mitigate against (or hinder) my desire to learn or use Kwak’wala.

Some years ago, I had occasion to sit in (as a guest student) on a lecture given by Dr. Lorna Williams in one of UBC’s First Nations Languages Program courses. In speaking of the
differential treatment of marginalized family members by (and in) prominent families on the west coast where cultural status is stratified, Dr. Williams observed that these families needed to recalibrate attitudes and behaviours toward those in their families who had distinguished themselves in the wider society, who would otherwise be dismissed and discounted. I cannot help but think that my earliest beginnings, in a powerfully subconscious way, inform, underwrite and highlight how I am positioned in my boisterous and fractious Cranmer clan. I would argue that language learner identity theories of the sort developed by Norton, Toohey, and other applied linguists are requisite in Indigenous heritage language communities to assist adult language learners in expanding capacities and repertoires to navigate the social dynamics of our language communities.

Another article by scholars engaging with identity theory that can be usefully applied to the Indigenous heritage language learner situation is Pavlenko and Lantolf’s (2000) “Second language learning as participation and the (re)construction of selves.” Again, even though the focus of their research is on the acculturation process of second language learners with English as the target language, the broad themes raised by the authors can certainly be drawn from to assist in deepening the self-understanding of Indigenous heritage language learners. Of particular interest here is their argument in defense of the use of first person narratives as valid data for the study of language learning and identity theory, published by second language learners who document their language learning struggles. Not only do the authors observe that narratives written in the first person are, by and large, written by those who already represent marginalized groups, but also that the genre of first person accounts is considered weak by those researchers working in the hard social sciences (p. 157). Be that as it may, first person narratives for
Indigenous Studies scholars (generally speaking) are requisite. Beyond academic positioning which signals the writers’ constructed selves, writing in the first person signals the Indigenous writers’ cultural selves.

Moreover, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) offer a new metaphor to complement the acquisition metaphor in SLA, which is ‘participation.’ Rather than “language as a commodity, the mind as a repository, and the learner hoarding the commodity [where] rules and facts [are] to be acquired” (p. 156), “learning [is] a process of becoming a member of a certain community, [where one can] communicate and act according to its norms” (p. 156), with the objectives of affiliation and belonging. On the matter of gaining acceptance by the target language community Duff (2007) observes of second language socialization (SLS), “SLS participants, for a variety of reasons, may not experience the same degree of access, acceptance, or accommodation within the new discourse communities as their L1 counterparts do” or they might be rejected by the target language community, or “they may feel conflicted or ambivalent about becoming fuller members of the new [second language/L2]-mediated social worlds” (p. 310). Although written to illustrate the SLS perspective, the notion of ambivalence certainly applies to my situation as a Kwak’wala language learner. From an Indigenous heritage language learner’s perspective, returning to home territories can also bring about responses from people on the spectrum from warm acceptance to open scorn and rejection to polite indifference since there are such conflicting attitudes and beliefs about Indigenous language revitalization and its importance for future generations based on colonial impacts and internalized colonial thinking. Fortunately, the Elders I engaged with during the recording sessions were fully accepting of me, and as patient as they were good-humoured.
In their survey of published works by bilinguals who report on their second language learning processes, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) found that as these (mostly immigrant) authors learn an additional language, they gradually lose their first language. As a result, connection to their inner worlds is lost due to inner speech loss (their first language, or L1, is gone but their second language, L2, is not yet developed enough), affecting their mental life and ultimately consciousness, making integration unattainable and causing dispossession of self. Pavlenko and Lantolf’s use of the phrase “dispossession of the self” reminds me of the psychological term of disassociation where there is an energetic split from the core self, something that I continue to struggle with. It might be safe in this discursive context to make a case for the consideration for the unique and specific learning needs for adult Indigenous heritage language learners in my age group who have experienced residential schools in childhood. Language learning environments supporting the productive speech of our heritage languages must make space (within reason) to accommodate the full range of human emotion.

Where Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) assert adult second language learners acquire a new voice and a new self through a process of appropriation, mimicry, writing, and friendship—their theory of “translation therapy” (p. 168)—my own “translation therapy,” in hindsight, refers to my process of acquisition of English writing skills combined with my therapy, my mentors, teachers—all of whom allied themselves with me in friendship and who supported my struggle to appropriate English so that my own original voice and self could emerge. This transformation process may be as relentless and unremitting as it is demanding. From an Indigenous heritage language acquisition perspective, however, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) develop a concept of
inner speech that is deeply relevant in that while I did not possess the capacity to conduct conversations with myself in Kwak’wala some years ago, I certainly gained it in English. But now, when in the company of more fluent Kwak’wala speakers, phrases and words will spontaneously occur to me (and I would check for correctness of pronunciation and grammatical construction), adding support to the notion that language learning is advanced and strengthened in connection and in direct face to face relationship with one’s interlocutors—in social situations. Pavlenko and Lantolf’s (2000) translation therapy metaphor supports the notion of the re-learning of Indigenous heritage languages for adult language learners, particularly for adult Indigenous heritage language learners who live in urban centers. The main challenge seems to be locating interlocutors willing to enter into a sustained engagement (such as the FPCC’s Master-Apprenticeship program) to provide the much-needed supportive environment for re-appropriating our heritage languages. The concept of translation therapy is deeply relevant for Indigenous heritage language learners attempting to participate in language revitalization efforts, whether individually or collectively, and supports the definition of language socialization previously cited. The further challenge for Indigenous heritage language learners would be to develop and internalize sufficient vocabulary and other aspects of their linguistic repertoire to effect the inner speech (and identities) that Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) reference. In the case of Indigenous heritage language learners, this process might begin reversing the translation therapy from a colonized consciousness to one’s ancestral consciousness.

Although not in the field of SLA, Thomas (2011), in her study on Indigenous female leadership, cites the work of Nishnaabeg scholar Simpson, who advises Indigenous people to “undergo a re-traditionalization of thinking and of living based on our individual Indigenous cultural and
intellectual traditions” (Simpson, as cited in Thomas, 2011, p. 55). Thus, Corntassel’s (2012) call for an Indigenous resurgence against contemporary colonization is supported. In contrast to Norton and Toohey’s (2011) emphasis on multiple and shifting identities, Thomas continues, “In other words, we must live what we claim to believe. If I claim to be Indigenous, can I then oscillate in and out of this identity? I think not. I am Qwul’sih’yah’maht—now and always” (p. 55). I greatly admire Thomas’s certainty about her identity, mainly because I feel I am in a permanent state of oscillation about my own identity, and it is not my character style to make such categorical statements. This project has been, for me, a tentative, halting, and humbling process of learning to retranslate myself back to my linguistic heritage. It just may be that Thomas’s certainty arises from what I interpret as her ontological stance with respect to the power of traditional names inherited from one’s lineage.

Understanding that the identity of the adult language learner (however we align or position ourselves relationally, ethnically, politically and linguistically), just like language learning itself, is the site of struggle, is dynamic and mutually constructed with one’s interlocutor, allows me space and time to open to Kwak’wala with compassion and acceptance. I recall that each social exchange can be interpreted a number of ways, and one of the primary ways is to remember the flexibility of identity positions one can invoke when confronted with shaming behaviour exhibited by people from home territories or even from within one’s own family clan.

Further into her discourse, Thomas cautions those who would judge Indigenous people on how ‘cultural’ they are and traces the roots of this kind of authenticity grading system to the Indian Act. I am the first to admit that at my age I have been infected by a colonized consciousness for
most of my life (perhaps in a pre-emptive attempt that anticipates those who would similarly judge me). Identity theorist Stuart Hall reminds us that cultural identity is always “in process, ‘becoming,’ and stresses that identity is ‘not an essence,’ but a positioning” (Hall, cited in Norton & Toohey, p. 418). If I can permit myself one grand claim it would be this: Indigenous conceptions of identity (when in sacred ceremonial and communal space) will be reported as essentially all essence, as something one can viscerally experience as a powerful spiritual confirmation that attests to the Kwak’wala phrase namwayut which in English loosely translates to “we are all one.”

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) also theorize “cultural border crossings” as a way to understand the challenges and difficulties experienced by bilingual individuals or adult immigrants. However, beyond a border crossing in the physical world (although there is that too), the term describes the changing consciousness that language acquisition offers. It seems that for Indigenous language learners, the metaphor of a border crossing is particularly fitting for similar reasons of physical and often psychological and social displacement from one’s traditional territory. Whether the displacement is voluntary or forced, whether the purpose was to comply with federal laws when a woman ‘married out,’ these geographic movements outward require new skills, to use the border crossing metaphor, to meet new challenges for survival. Moving out of our communities also has subsequent identity implications for the children of the women who had to move out. Many Indigenous peoples, for example, attending first year university need time to acclimate to the academic culture with its assignment deadlines, byzantine administration to navigate from registering to course selection, and so on. There is culture shock: a new academic language to learn, a culture of strict timelines, and expectations of many kinds. Academia’s emphasis on
competition, individual effort and merit is at odds with Indigenous ways of teaching and learning. In her insightful contribution to a panel titled “Coming to an Understanding: A Panel Presentation, What is Indigenous Research,” Weber-Pillwax (2001) invites her audience to consider the differences in discourses used by academic and the Indigenous communities. Delineating the features of academic and Indigenous discourses, Weber-Pillwax cites various theories that, in part, comprise academic discourse (post-structuralism and post-modernism, for instance). She acknowledges that while these theories certainly have their place in academia, Indigenous scholars must avoid being trapped by such if their research does not lead to action, change, or concrete improvement of quality of life for the communities in which they have grown up. Further, eschewing deconstruction, Weber-Pillwax writes:

Many Indigenous scholars are pushing the deconstruction approach to analysis, suggesting we need to deconstruct all or most systems that affect our lives, and ultimately to deconstruct a particular way of looking at the world…. As Indigenous scholars, we want to end up in and stay in synthesis. (p. 169)

What seems central to Weber-Pillwax’s argument is that students “turn their knowledge into action” (p. 169) while maintaining diverse Indigenous epistemologies, worldviews, and ways of being. Of course, theory and practice are not mutually exclusive concepts; where the former may drive the latter, each will almost certainly have mutually constitutive influences. As Weber-Pillwax argues, Indigenous scholars entering (or returning to) Indigenous communities ought not to allow their academic training to subsume their Indigenous identities.

While I do not consciously hold my academic and ’Namgis identities as mutually exclusive, I certainly have experienced moments of cognitive dissonance in academia when I was not
behaving as professionally as I was expected to. In his analysis of the role contemporary Indigenous scholars play in the academy, Alfred (2004) cites the work of Deloria who claims that “Indigenous scholars have for the most part proven unprepared mentally, emotionally, and physically to take on the struggles of their nations” (Deloria as cited in Alfred p. 92), and are thus seen as lacking in integrity to engage in research work that supports our home communities and judged to have “rushed headlong into the enemy’s camp” (p. 92). The implication is that disempowered Indigenous scholars have sold out to the corporate controlled academic climate.

As one Indigenous Studies scholar who is also ’Namgis, I have shared a part of my personal familial history that likely can be interpreted as proving Deloria’s statement to be true. While sharing my deeply personal story might be interpreted as indulging in victimry, I argue that my transformational learning journey provides a case study of victory over victimization with concerted and consistent therapy and education. My resilience, intergenerational strengths, and healing journey have prepared me on all levels to work with Indigenous students at the post-secondary level. Having worked as an instructor at Vancouver Island University’s First Nations Studies Department since 2000, I have found my epistemological and disciplinary home in the largely Indigenous community comprised of members of Indigenous nations across Canada. One of the values expressed in our department mission statement is the value of long-term relationships with the three major First Nations groups on Vancouver Island, the Nuu Chah Nulth, the Kwak'waka'wakw, the Coast Salish including our esteemed host Snuneymuxw community. In fact it was the historical and ground breaking collaboration between Snuneymuxw First Nation, the Cowichan Tribes, Sna Naw As First Nation, the Nuu Chah Nulth and the Kwak'waka'wakw that guided the development of the First Nations Studies Department
that now attracts Indigenous students from across Canada. Fellow faculty members, including Elders-in-Residence from the host and adjacent traditional territories, have created a nurturing and instructive environment in that our core degree program relies on teaching teams, promotes a cooperative learning environment for students and which has produced graduates who have gone on to further study in a wide variety of fields. Through our engagement the First Nations communities and the students who come from these communities, First Nations Studies faculty provide culturally sensitive, culturally relevant curricula that also challenge students to think critically, to become active contributing citizens to our larger campus community.

2.6 Heritage Language Learning, Indigenous Languages, and Identity

Heritage language communities other than Indigenous language communities are also concerned with language contraction and endangerment, and so they may share similar collective experiences with Indigenous heritage languages. Indigenous heritage language research can be enhanced, expanded, and supported by learning from parallel experiences in other heritage language communities. Lynch (2003) makes an observation wholly salient to Indigenous heritage language learners but from the perspective of those from Spanish backgrounds:

> English has become the dominant language for most [Spanish-speaking immigrant newcomers in the United States] in social interactions with peers and siblings, and it is the language in which they have been conditioned to think and learn in school. Thus, heritage speakers who arrive to secondary and postsecondary classrooms seem not entirely L1 speakers or L2 speakers of the language in question. (p. 1)

Although Lynch here refers to Spanish heritage language learners, his observation may also fully reflect a kind of linguistic liminal space for Indigenous language learners entering high school or
even at the first year post-secondary level. He certainly describes my own experience in my early
efforts to write academic essays (and in my adult experiences as a latent learner and speaker of
my own heritage language).

Fishman (2001) distinguishes categories of heritage language learning: Indigenous, colonial, and
immigrant (p. 81). This classification clearly delineates heritage languages such as Spanish or
English, which are also colonial languages, from Indigenous heritage languages. While some
languages may have an unbroken line of language speakers and a flourishing community of
speakers (e.g., Spanish), Indigenous language speakers, more often than not, have very few
fluent speakers, most of whom are Elders. Indeed, contemporary Indigenous language efforts
arise from the lack of fluent speakers. Duff and Li (2009) cite census-based statistics of
Indigenous people in Canada, reporting that the group makes up about 4% of the population (p.
3) and that fewer than 30% can reportedly speak or understand an Indigenous language. Part of
the driving force for the language shift from Indigenous languages to colonial ones is the
pressure of assimilation, urbanization, and colonization. My direct maternal lineage, among
others, was particularly vulnerable to such pressures beginning with the colonial legislation that
imposed a Euro-centric patriarchal blueprint over Indigenous societies that valued Indigenous
men with a concomitant devaluing of Indigenous women.

In his book, *The social turn in second language acquisition*, Block (2003) examines the concept
of appropriation or internalization in second language acquisition (SLA). Citing the work of
scholars such as Wertsch (1998), Bakhtin (1981), and Bhabha (1994), Block finds that in
internalizing new knowledge, the novice might be pictured at the doorstep of another world of
knowledge, occupying what Bhabha (1994) refers to as the ‘third place,’ which is the convergence of the new and prior knowledge which leads to a hybrid or new “space.”

“Appropriation is thus not just the passing of the external to the internal; it is the meeting of the external and the internal to form a synthesized new state” (p. 103). While the historical colonial experience compelled generations of Indigenous students to acquire English (in English Canada), descendants of residential school survivors now attempt to (re-) internalize heritage linguistic patterns and structures. It might be safe to say that, in striving to gain access to our fluent speakers, we are now caught in the midst of the metaphorical ‘third place’ between worlds of knowledge without easy access to our heritage language communities. The notion of occupying this third space (also vaguely liminal) between new and prior knowledge accurately captures the ambiguousness that I feel at times learning and writing about Kwak’wala such that I have alternated between paralysis and depression. However, new knowledge in my case involved uncovering old knowledge or memories of the phonology, sounds, and rhythms of Kwak’wala while continuing to experience frustration and feelings of failure in my attempt to deepen my proficiency. Perhaps my attempts to revitalize my Kwak’wala language capabilities in my late adulthood mirrors what I experienced in my childhood institutional years—primarily the lack of consistent daily social interaction (dialogic relationships) with interlocutors with the capacity to induct me fully into the English speech community (in the former) and into the Kwak’wala speech community (in the latter) in adulthood. My linguistic constructions would usually follow English grammatical structures with the noun followed by a verb (subject, verb, object) whereas for Kwak’wala the basic structure is different (verb, subject, object).
Wertsch (1998), in his extended discussion on appropriation and mastery of a cultural tool, or “mediational means” as he terms it, offers more insight to the topic of appropriation and the occupation of the third place. The mediational means can be any cultural tool by which one can acquire knowledge through practice and eventual mastery. For example, a soccer ball can be a mediational means by which one can carve out a place to excel, and gain recognition in the sport; in my case my writing became my mediational means by which I wrote and published essays and play excerpts. Any skill or tool, culturally constructed, is considered by Wertsch (1998) to be a mediational means. Further, once mastery of any cultural tool is achieved, he contrasts constraints with affordances that resulted from the acquisition of the mediational means.

Altogether, Wertsch’s (1998) analysis of the dynamism (or changeability) of mediational means as the constraints and/or affordances works when applied to my own deep ambiguities about many aspects of my personal and professional life. The relevant example here is the debilitating paralysis that resulted from what was formerly an empowering activity (affordance) as a writer in English, and now as a Kwak’wala language learner (constraint) in my late adulthood. Additionally, changes in the mediational means will cause subsequent changes in affordances and constraints. For example, using a keyboard has largely replaced handwriting thus producing (ideally) quicker results in production, if not quality. For the ambiguous agent (such as myself) who has mastered a mediational means such as English literacy, Wertsch (1998) observes that mastery of and appropriation of a cultural tool such as writing can release adverse or negative reactions in the agent:

some very interesting forms of mediated action are characterized by the mastery,
but not by the appropriation of, a cultural tool. In such instances of mediated action,
the agent may use the cultural tool but does so with a feeling of conflict or resistance. In such instances, we might say that agents do not view that cultural tool as belonging to them. (p. 56)

Reading Wertsch’s (1998) analysis helped me to make sense of my ambivalence toward my writing this dissertation, toward transcribing and transliterating my Kwak’wala interviews, and toward sharing my process of conducting this work. His analysis also helped me to understand why a talented artist, whose work I had always admired, could turn his back on his art at such a young age as I surmise that he may have felt that he had no cultural right to produce such art. Likewise for me, I had this nagging sense of having turned my back on an institution that had nurtured my intellectual growth, which had brought moments of great tension and also great healing, growth and joy in my relationships with students and faculty. The productions of the academic always seemed to me to go hand in hand with self-preening about how many publications one is published in, the quality of the journals, how many prizes won. For the production of this dissertation, I feel I have engaged in an academic performance that Wertsch (1998) characterizes as “clear forms of resistance such as dissimulation” (p. 57). Dissimulation means concealment, pretence or camouflage. Even up to the time of this writing, I continually break my own self-proclaimed deadlines with continual assurances that the work is being done or another draft is on its way. The sense of being caught between two worlds with their conflicting norms, values and worldviews is, in part, the foundation for my deeply rooted ambivalence. In sharing part of my Kwak’wala language learning responses in this section, I now turn to considerations of heritage language learning in connection with Second Language Acquisition theories.
In our unpublished paper titled “Reformation and reclamation in Indigenous heritage language learning: A review of the literature” (L. Cranmer & J. Smith 2008), we discuss White’s (2006) critique of SLA. By comparing the features between SLA and heritage language acquisition (HLA), he proposes a new model of analysis that accounts for variables missing in SLA and develops a new theoretical formulation relevant to Indigenous HLA language learners. White (2006) finds variables (salient to traditional SLA in second language contexts) such as length of residence in the target-language community (and age) of the language learner, interaction, social distance (from speakers of the language to be learned), similarities of cultures, enclosure, language of wider communication, instrumental/integrative motivation, and communicative need largely irrelevant to Indigenous HLAs because Indigenous HLAs (at least in my own context) are not immigrants. However, the social distance variable as well as age and interactions could and would be very relevant for on-reserve and urban Indigenous speech communities. Depending on motivation (typically more integrative than instrumental) of Indigenous heritage language learners, and the language of wider communication (whether on traditional territory in day to day exchanges in the Indigenous language or in urban settings where exposure to the Indigenous language is much more limited), would also necessitate the consideration of communicative need. In other words, depending on one’s locale, whether in an urban setting or on home territory, the language of choice will be dictated by the language learner trying to gain access and acceptance into the community of fluent speakers. There, much more than constituting useful “interaction” or language “input” (key constructs in traditional SLA), the Indigenous language “triggers a re-discovery, the Indigenous knowledge [language] once suppressed to a dying ember is re-ignited with the motivated breath; knowledge is drawn out of the learner rather than
knowledge being poured in” (Cranmer & Smith, 2008, p. 6). White (2006) proposes a model of analysis that recognizes a shared historical experience for Indigenous heritage language learners:

He [White] notes, however, that distinctly absent from the SLA acculturation model are colonial processes of linguistic erasure, namely the psychological and physical punishment that was historically used as a tool of enforced assimilation…. White accordingly calls for a new model of study that will account for variables missing in SLA when applied to an Indigenous context. (Cranmer & Smith, 2008, p. 6)

The SLA acculturation model he referred to, stemming from work now several decades old, and as defined by Gass and Selinker (2008), suggests that the learners must “adapt to the target language culture in order for successful acquisition to take place” (p. 514). Without social interaction and emotional engagement, the model postulates, successful acquisition would indeed be limited. However, acculturation in the Indigenous language-learning context, at first, has an entirely different meaning, indexing the wholesale colonial movements to divest Indigenous peoples of our lands and languages and cultures.

The residential school experience writ large is identified as the singular unifying theme in a two-year study on adult heritage language learners in Athabaskan speech communities by Basham and Fathman (2008): “One common factor affecting all groups, as well as most Native American communities, is the educational policy which forcibly excluded use of the indigenous languages in schools” (p. 582). Citing the precarious situation of the Athabaskan languages, and the apparent failure of the public education system to produce speakers (old or new), the authors observe: “The approach to teaching was grammar-based, focusing on literacy and verb paradigms,” and language education focused mainly on children rather than adults (p. 583).
However, the authors mention that infrastructural support has recently coalesced to nurture adult learners of Athabaskan languages (p. 583).

Until very recently, at least since Basham and Fathman’s (2008) study, the primary vehicle for Indigenous language revitalization efforts became lessons in local schools either on-reserve or in close proximity to traditional territories or in urban centers with large Indigenous populations. Building on the seminal work of Basham and Fathman (2008), studies focusing on Indigenous language learning in a Canadian context are urgently needed to help support both community-based and school-based language revitalization efforts, particularly for adult learners. Adult Indigenous language learners, either in middle age who came through local language immersion programs or those who survived residential school, could comprise the focus of study as modeled in Basham and Fathman’s (2008) research. Such learners are not typically the focus of non-Indigenous heritage language learning studies, which focus more on children and young adults.

Basham and Fathman (2008) ask, “What effect does hearing the language as a child have on language learning as an adult?” and “What factors contribute to successful language learning by latent speakers?” (p. 581). They define speaker latency as “an adult raised in an environment where a heritage language is spoken who did not become a fluent speaker” (p. 578). Beyond the residential school survivor demographic, there is also the middle-aged demographic who grew up through on-reserve school systems and presumably have had at least school-based exposure to formal instruction of their heritage languages, however limited in hours or years of immersion.

With the assistance of fluent elder speakers (from seven related but distinct language branches of
the Athabaskan language family tree) and semi-speakers in the community, Basham and Fathman (2008) set out to answer the above questions in a two-phase study that traced the process of language re-acquisition by two participants who gained sufficient proficiency to teach their language to younger latent speakers in the first phase. Fifteen heritage language learners participated in the second phase of the study. The Elders of the communities were closely consulted in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the questionnaires. A variety of data gathering instruments were used, from learning profiles, language use surveys, language autobiographies, individual interviews, and self-reports, to assessment of receptive and productive skills. In answer to their research question, “What effect does hearing the language as a child have on language learning as an adult?,” the study found that “latent speakers tend to have understanding of basic vocabulary and expressions in the ancestral language; familiarity with pronunciation, intonation and rhythm; low estimation of their speaking ability;….an implicit awareness of language” (p. 592). Further, in answer to their second question, “What factors contribute to successful language learning by latent speakers?,” the study found the following: “positive attitudes towards learning/speaking; motivation to learn; opportunities for use in various contexts; encouragement from others to speak; opportunities to practice and receive feedback; learning rules and patterns; and opportunity to teach others” (p. 593).

Although Basham and Fathman’s (2008) study centers on seven of the Alaska Athabaskan languages represented by the study participants, as an adult language learner of Kwak’wala, the characteristics used to describe the study participants may very well apply to myself as well as the wide diversity of adult Indigenous heritage language learners. I am familiar with the sounds and rhythms of Kwak’wala, have childhood memories of my grandmother’s oft-repeated phrases,
and I also minimize my understanding of Kwak’wala. Likewise, the elements that support Kwak’wala learning and increased proficiency cohere with those identified in the study: positive attitudes, and increased opportunities to practice and receive feedback, learning rules, and patterns. Based on survey responses and language profiles, Basham and Fathman (2008) also conclude that hearing one’s heritage language in childhood contributes to inhibition owing to the fact that “latent speakers are used to passively listening and not producing the language” (p. 592). Adding to the characteristics of latent speakers identified by Basham and Fathman, I would also say that through my own self-study and from therapy came the requisite courage to continue opening oneself energetically (as ephemeral as this notion is) in order to dissolve multiple layers of resistance. I fear the messages I embody from my childhood experiences continue to impede or impair my motivation. I have nevertheless drawn on childhood memories of the sounds of Kwak’wala in conjunction with my literacy knowledge to further my current efforts to increase my proficiency.

2.7 Ways Forward (and Back)

Autoethnographical writing (which I discuss in greater length in Chapter 3) offers a serviceable vehicle with which to navigate one’s scholarly explorations and is taken up by scholars across the disciplines. My early institutional experiences made an imprint on my character and affect how I present myself to the world. In other words, I am aware that I am deeply ambivalent and hesitant in any relationship arising out of a deep-seated sense of inadequacy. Springing from a powerful and gifted spiritual lineage, of which I am one small facet, the journey back to my ancestral connections requires an ephemeral faith to transcend embodied childhood wounds and grievances and takes consistent concerted effort, courage, and determination. One of the theories that I resonate with is Bourdieu’s theory of habitus discussed at length in my Survivor Statement, as well as in Chapter 1. In his introduction to Language and symbolic power (2003), John B.
Thompson explains Bourdieu’s theory of *habitus*: “Dispositions are acquired through a gradual process of *inculcation* in which early childhood experiences are particularly important.... the individual acquires a set of dispositions which literally mould [*sic*] the body and become second nature” (2003, p. 12). Thompson’s explanation of Bourdieu’s application of *habitus* aligns with my life experience, in that I possess a set of durably installed perceptions, understandings, and attitudes from a childhood full of disruptions (i.e., being sent away) either owing to illness or colonial law. Physiologically, psychologically, and psychically, my entire being continues to feel the impact from the years I was institutionalized. Thompson (2003) also asserts that the *habitus* is “pre-conscious and hence not readily amenable to conscious reflection and modification” (p. 13). Be that as it may, I have dedicated the last three decades of my life to a psychic archaeological dig in order to become conscious of my own embodied behavioural patterns and attempting to make sense of my responses to life through writing and through therapy. Although Thompson (2003, as cited in Bourdieu) does not clarify what he means by pre-conscious (literally *before* consciousness), the term may be interchangeable with subconscious, meaning *below* consciousness; both are outside of awareness. In his own words, Bourdieu (2003) attributes a more comprehensive definition of institution vis-à-vis *habitus* in a parenthetical aside: 

[I]t may be useful to suggest that one has only to assemble the different sense of *instituere* and *institutio* to form an idea of an inaugural act of constitution, of foundation, indeed of the invention which, through education, leads to durable dispositions, habits and usages. (p. 123)

Applying Bourdieu’s definition of institution to my early childhood institutional experiences makes complete sense to me—that being objectified as an anonymous number processed in the Nanaimo Indian Hospital and then in St. Michael’s Residential School would render my self-
image invisible and silent. In establishing my “Personal Context” for the “Author’s Afterword” for my MA thesis, I concluded with a meditation on invisibility:

Could I continue writing and developing my voice in the ‘face’ of my own erasure? I wanted to be ‘seen’ through my writing, yet I was writing in the discourse of western hegemony, which assumes the invisibility of women and women of color…. A striking image or non-image in my case—emerged in one of my dreams in response…. I dreamt I was physically in front of a mirror but could not see my reflection. My soul had spoken back to me with a disturbingly empty frame. Perhaps my soul was telling me that the only way I could satisfy the requirements of the hegemonic structure was to become invisible. Either that or I no longer needed to be reflected to affirm my own existence. I knew I stood in front of that mirror whether it reflected me or not. (p. 77)

Prior to the point of writing the above quotation, I had graduated with my BA in English (with Distinction), taken innumerable healing workshops as well as attended the Booming Ground Creative Writing week-long workshops offered at UBC, studied rhetoric, and maintained my journaling practice. Dr. Antoinette Oberg, my MA thesis supervisor, observed at one point in my process that I was writing myself into the world. The quotation is also an accurate reflection of my habitus—an internal state of being that is either pre-conscious or beyond my awareness, a way for my internal witness to convey messages through my dream world. Being subjected to rules and regulations in the medical system and then the residential school taught me the very survival skills (staying quiet, complying, and being malleable) that became constraining and limiting in my adulthood. The characteristics that allowed me to survive my early childhood experiences formed my habitus. However, Bourdieu (1991) goes on:
The work of inculcation through which the lasting imposition of the arbitrary limit is achieved can seek to naturalize the precise breaks that constitute an arbitrary cultural limit—expressed in fundamental oppositions like masculine/feminine, etc.—in the form of a sense of limits, which inclines some people to maintain their rank and distance and others to know their place and be happy with what they are, to be what they have to be, thus depriving them of the very sense of deprivation. (p. 123)

Bourdieu’s insight here applies to my identity formation on multiple levels. As a ’Namgis woman raised on the hinge between the colonial and modern eras, my ‘arbitrary limit’ was naturalized by the inculcation of my own unworthiness and inadequacy as so much colonial flotsam caught in the currents between colonial institutions—the Indian hospital and the residential school. The ‘precise breaks’ occurred in my maternal lineage between my birth mother and myself—she who lacked the wherewithal to take me into her care. In her absence, my paternal grandmother stepped in to provide care for me after raising her nine children. My perceived (and indeed prescribed) horizon included marriage and children bearing, and for a time I was completely happy with what I was, what I had to be, and as Bourdieu observes, completely unaware of any sense of deprivation. Indeed, my ex-husband was a high-liner fisherman, meaning that his income was sufficient to support and reflect the trappings of an upper class family. Bartlett (2007) summarizes Bourdieu’s theory of habitus supported by the foundational pillars of his analytic framework, “field, capital and habitus” that when applied to literacy studies from a sociocultural perspective that frames any social situation that can be read and interpreted according to the field (organized social space), from which one can move based on one’s capital (economic, cultural or symbolic), and habitus (embodied habitual responses to the field). Bartlett (2007) describes habitus this way, “Habitus, therefore is a socialized subjectivity” (p. 549).
Cultural capital resources may be considered as embodied by one who is invested with institutional authority (through certificates or degrees), or who might be invested with linguistic authority leading to the notion of the legitimate speaker. Applying these concepts to my own life experience, I obtained cultural capital (through my post-secondary degrees) and mobilized this capital to gain economic capital to eventually move from my traditional role as a mom to a university instructor. Habitus, far from being static, is dynamic and subject to change.

When my eldest girl Joanna turned five years old, I in turn became quite punitive, scornful and derisive of my precious girl. It was only later in my therapy that I learned a triggering event (for an overwhelming reactive psychological response) will usually involve one of your children (and gender can be key as it was in my case) reaching the age the parent was who experienced a traumatic event and can unleash extreme and extremely traumatic reactions which are usually subconscious or in Bourdieu’s terms, my habitus. In fact, all four of my children suffered because of my own subconscious behaviours owing to my own lack of maternal bonding. As a result of my own alarming behaviour toward my children, I sought therapy to make sense of my experience. After a decade of so-called “talking head” therapy, I discovered Integrative Body Psychotherapy, the model of therapy I chose to bring my unconscious self-beliefs to my consciousness. This therapeutic model emphasizes energetic containment within personal boundaries and with breath release techniques reconnected me to my embodied emotions that were frozen due to trauma experienced as a child. As painful and uncomfortable such deep sharing might cause for my reading audience, my story is not only my story, but also my children’s story and that of my grandchildren. Only after a conscious commitment to my sobriety
in concert with my therapy could I reflect on and attempt to repair and improve my relationship to my children and to a certain degree change my habitus.

Keeping in mind that my underlying purpose in this dissertation project is to seek understanding for my own ability to gain and sustain access to Kwak’wala fluent speakers, with my habitus of hesitancy and ambivalence and keeping in mind the challenges of relationship dynamics within and between members of the Kwak’wala speech community, unequal power relations are readily apparent. I once asked Yotu to break down a Kwak’wala phrase so I could understand the grammatical construction better and her exasperated response was “You’re killing the language!,” albeit in good humour, as she then proceeded to answer my question. Perhaps this exchange only reveals the good-natured familial rancour that may arise from time to time, and ultimately, for me anyway, it reveals that Yotu feels comfortable in addressing me in such a manner. But I am positioned as someone who does more harm than good as a Kwak’wala language learner, and Yotu, of course, is the fluent speaker to whom I owe a great deal given our loving relationship and her stalwart support of all of my educational efforts.

2.8 Oracy and Print Literacy

As an adult language learner of my heritage language Kwak’wala, I offer a short introduction in Kwak’wala to open my inquiry into the relationship between orality and print literacy in language acquisition, especially the acquisition of latent heritage languages.

“Greetings to all you with whom I am one. Greetings loved ones. My name is kix̣tala. I come from Alert Bay. On my mother’s face side I am Haida and on my father’s face side I am ’Namgis.” I learned this traditional introduction from Chief (and Dr.) Robert Joseph, fluent Kwak’wala Elder who co-instructed with Dr. Patricia Shaw, under the auspices of the First Nations Languages Program at the University of British Columbia, the first university level Kwak’wala language course (FNLG 141K). This course was previously offered in Alert Bay and co-instructed between Dr. Pat Shaw and fluent Kwak’wala speaker and Elder, Bev Lagis at the U’mista Cultural Center, but taught for the first time in 2008 on UBC’s Vancouver campus.

For critically endangered Indigenous languages, historical print resources may assist in efforts to revitalize the use of those languages. For Kwak’wala, early historical print literacy efforts, beginning with Rev. Hall (1888) who published a grammar monograph, and then later Boas and Hunt (1902) (who compiled many more similar publications in Kwak’wala over a thirty year period), have built a Kwak’wala language foundation on which subsequent generations could build. Although an apparent binary may exist between language purists (or staunch traditionalists) who argue that Indigenous languages can only be taught orally, and language pragmatists who believe print literacy can assist in Indigenous language reclamation, I suggest that, despite some risk of linguistic changes (if we allow that language is alive and dynamic), print literacy may very well play a significant role in attempts by latent language learners to reclaim their heritage languages. As previously mentioned, Basham and Fathman (2008) define the latent speaker as “an individual raised in an environment where the heritage language was spoken but who did not become a speaker of that language” (p. 580). A small but growing number of scholars report on the language reclamation processes undertaken by some members
of generations of Indigenous adult language learners who experienced residential school, and I hope my work here will add to those articles. It is readily apparent that the specific issues affecting latent speakers within Indigenous heritage language revitalization need further inquiry.

Along with the growing field of Indigenous heritage language research, major universities now offer courses in a variety of Indigenous languages. One of the tensions between oral and print literacy traditions is the concern that oral skills will be subsumed by print literacy skills. For example, Patricia Shaw’s (2000) observations about the process of teaching an endangered language include three potential concerns arising from the use of literacy:

1. potential de-emphasis of oral proficiency and rhetorical styles;
2. potential diminution of auditory memory skills;
3. potential shift in cognitive perception, comprehension, processing (p. 1)

It is likely safe to assert that Shaw’s specific points about the potential de-emphasis of oral engagement in the context of a language no longer commonly spoken in family or community contexts similarly apply to the lack of any fluent speakers of Kwak’wala emerging from the local school system. However, given the foundation of Kwak’wala print literacy established by the early local missionaries and anthropologists such as Boas working collaboratively with local fluent speakers such as George Hunt, there is yet much to be brought forward from these historical efforts.

In her MA Thesis (2005) titled, *Moving forward while looking back: A Kwakw̱ala’wakw concept of time as expressed in language and culture*, Marianne Nicholson contextualizes her inquiry with the connections she (and others) make between the capacity to speak Kwak’wala and the
capacity to authentically express and bring forward the rich cultural traditions and practices of the Kwakwaka’wakw:

For many years, older Kwakwaka’wakw members have stated that without the Kwak’wala language Kwakwaka’wakw culture is endangered. What is the reality of this statement? How much influence does language actually have on cultural practice? (p. 2)

Her questions become the springboard from which her thesis is launched, which I interpret as a brilliantly drawn portrait of contrasts revealing a linguistically and hence ontologically shaped concept of time, a singularly significant concept that would be lost if the language is lost. Since Kwak’wala is endangered, it must follow then that the culture itself is endangered in terms of its linguistic concepts that shape world-view, values, and human behaviour. Daniels-Fiss (2008) expresses the same idea: “The loss of a language results in the loss of cultural literacy” (p. 237).

The concerns and observations reported by Shaw (2000) point to the larger problem of a lack of intergenerational language transmission which leads to the disconnect between Indigenous language programs taught in on-reserve schools or public schools located in close proximity to Indigenous communities. In her opening comments, Nicolson (2005) observes that even with almost three decades of on-reserve school programs, not one fluent speaker has emerged from these curriculum-based efforts at teaching Kwak’wala. These students would fit Basham and Fathman’s (2008) definition of latent speakers who have attained at least junior high school levels of literacy in both English and Kwak’wala and would now be adults in their mid-thirties to mid-forties. As cited in the previous chapter, Lynch (2003) observes in his study of Spanish heritage language learners that students who arrive at secondary school seem to be fluent in
neither their L1 nor their L2. Lynch’s observation is also relevant to Indigenous language learners entering secondary school.

Just as Nicholson observed of the local Kwak’wala revitalization efforts through the local school program, so too Sarkar and Metallic (2009) (writing about Metallic’s language community) note, most relevant for our discussion here is the inarguable fact that three decades of efforts to revive Mig’maq⁴ as a community language by introducing it to the regular school curriculum have failed to produce fluent speakers who will pass the language on to the next generation. (p. 55)

From the Atlantic to the Pacific, these reports combine to sound the alarming note of the ever-decreasing numbers of fluent speakers from their respective speech communities. Other scholars assert that focusing only on Indigenous language literacy will hamper the holistic effort needed by the language community in question, and if the experience and efforts of the Mig’maq and Kwak’wala speech communities are any indication, this observation is well supported. For example, Henze and Davis (1999) cite the work of both Fishman (1991) and Littlebear (1996) who argue that fragmented, ad hoc efforts combined with the reliance on minimal hours of school-based efforts only serve to divert attention away from the primary importance of “intergenerational transmission of the language in the home and community” (p. 8). The observations by Nicholson (2005), and Sarkar and Metallic (2009) also underscore these concerns. While acknowledging the dire need to implement concrete strategies for language learning activities in domestic and public domains as part of a comprehensive and cohesive

⁴ Variantly spelled elsewhere as Mi’kmaq.
response to revitalization efforts, the population segment identified by Basham and Fathman (2008) as latent speakers deserves focused study and research as potential future fluent speakers.

Literature written by, for, or about Indigenous adult language learners and their efforts to increase their understanding and proficiency of their heritage languages and the assistance print literacy may contribute to these efforts. As Basham and Fathman (2008) conclude from their two year study of Alaskan Athabaskan adult language learners, “It is very important for educators to learn about the life experiences of these adults, their attitudes and their abilities” (p. 593). I highlight three major themes that emerge from my survey of the literature that inform recent studies of Indigenous heritage language instruction: (1) the false binary of oral/literate cultures, (2) the emotion of shame, and (3) the pedagogical philosophy and praxis. In particular, Nancy Hornberger’s (2003) theory of a continuum of bi-literacy merits examination for its efficacy and relevance for Indigenous heritage language learners.

Today there are myriad literacies to consider in any communicative event and myriad Indigenous cultures that use various kinds of literacies. Today, print literacy is no longer assumed to be the singular domain of an official national language, but is included in a whole set of literacies designed to accommodate the technological and multicultural society we live in. In their introductory chapter to the text Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures, Kalantzis and Cope (2000) discuss,

‘Multiliteracies’—a word we chose because it describes two important arguments we might have with the emerging cultural, institutional and global order. The first argument engages with the multiplicity of communications channels and media; the second with the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity. (p. 5)
By reframing (and delimiting) print literacy as the formerly monolithic subject of language pedagogy (and for colonized countries, English literacy), other languages and literacies such as visual and digital are given equal consideration in Kalantzis’ and Cope (2000) framework.

Further, although French and English remain the official languages in Canada, the multicultural mosaic necessitates accommodation of the diverse immigrant and Indigenous languages and communities.

Narrowing the lens from multiliteracies to print literacy, Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, and Degener, (2004) define print literacy development as follows:

Print literacy development is the acquisition, improvement, elaboration, and extension of the abilities and strategies necessary to comprehend and produce written language for communicative purposes within sociocultural contexts. (p. 26)

Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, and Degener (2004) offer an integrative framework of analysis that accounts for literacy development as cognitive and socially constructed: “We attempt this theoretical move to better account for literacy development, on the individual as well as the community levels, than either theoretical lens currently does alone” (p. 72). Where formal print literacy research takes place within the confines of the classroom, cognitive based researchers bracket or leave aside literacy practices outside the classroom (p. 27). In other words, a holistic study that takes into account literacy practices of both home and school will yield a more complete picture of print literacy development that accounts for the features of “socioculturally constructed literacy practices” which links the social world with the cognitive world (pp. 97-98). Combining the two lenses (of social and cognitive) facilitates a greater depth of field by which to consider literacy development for Purcell-Gates, et al. (2004). The observations made by
Nicholson (2005) and Sarkar and Metallic (2009) about the apparent disconnect between school-based and home-based efforts in Indigenous language reclamation suggests that future research applying Purcell-Gates, Jacobson and Degener’s (2004) lens of analysis that encompasses both home and school based literacy practices might yield data that would better support home-based efforts, particularly within an Indigenous language revitalization context. More often than not, the parents themselves are English speakers who are also learning their heritage language.

Given that Indigenous language speakers in the age range between fifty and seventy will have experienced suppression of their languages owing to enforced attendance in residential schools, this generation will more likely than not have painful memories of their early childhood treatment. Patricia Duff (2010), in her work on language socialization, asserts that,

> Much early language socialization research with young children, in particular, examined how fear, anger, desire, shame, pride, excitement, or humility are socialized through language and how, for instance, young children in a particular culture might be taught to say certain things to avoid shame or, conversely, might be taught to shame others who have acted unbecomingly. (p. 432)

Language socialization studies might lend insight into the literacy development and language socialization of young Indigenous students, both at home and at school. Such insight might be especially useful in order to untangle the intertwined roots of socio-cultural and historical events of endangered Indigenous language families. Although the subject for this part of the discussion is centered on Indigenous children, their parents (including language histories combined with contemporary immersive efforts) would need to be engaged as latent speakers. Pasqual Sims (2004) notes the challenges for the community of Acoma speakers where the young parents and
their children were in need of language instruction. Particularly challenging is that the parents are usually away at work during the day and could not attend classes with their children. It seems that Indigenous heritage languages for younger generations become increasingly like a second or even “foreign” language (the standard distinction between these two descriptors being whether the language is dominant locally in the wider community). This would be especially so for generations of Indigenous youth raised away from their ancestral lands.

2.9 Oral/Literate Binary Theme

Another theoretical consideration that affected my Kwak’wala language learning is the rather artificial distinction separating oral and literate languages. In my case, printed versions of Kwak’wala have been very useful in accessing the language, so the oral/literate binary has become blurred—I found myself pursuing a kind of literate orality. Although the scholarship on the definitions for oral tradition or oral literacy has become exhaustive, I offer only a few representative samples of the discourse. While it may seem a contradiction in terms to consider oral literacy, Webster (2006) sheds light on this matter with his examination of the relationship between orality and literacy. Webster begins with Ong’s (1982) theory of what constitutes oral literatures and finds Ong’s conceptualization problematic. Although Webster reports that while Ong derides the phrase oral literature, Ong allows that the term literature has been expanded to include oral narratives, yet maintains that there is a problem with applying literature to oral narratives since “many originally specific terms have been so generalized in this way. But concepts have a way of carrying their etymologies forever” (Ong, as cited in Webster 2006, p. 296). Webster observes that etymology points to a Euro-derived linguistic ideology. Offering various Indigenous ideologies that assert an ontological stance about the power that the word, once spoken, will enact, compel or cause something to come into being, Webster dismisses
Ong’s theory of oral literatures. Furthermore, Webster challenges Ong’s argument of the shift in consciousness that occur when oral cultures acquire print literacy. According to Webster, etymologies are origin stories that elevate and valorize Euro-derived knowledge systems in contrast to non-Indigenous cultures. Where Ong begins with the etymological root of literature, Webster sees the pronouncement by Ong as arbitrary for two reasons. Webster asserts, first, that a word (in English) cannot be traced to its original source and second, is that words cannot be assumed to have begun with a singular meaning, but that words are subject to permeable boundaries whose meanings change over time. He therefore pronounces Ong’s theory of orality to be weak given that the term’s universal application effaces the wide variety of distinctive and specific oral cultures. Instead, in his survey of the often contradictory opinions and attitudes between and within distinct Indigenous societies such as the Navaho, the Hopi, and the Tohono O’odham, Webster (2006) finds that “literacy and orality have much more internal variation than Walter Ong seems to suggest” (p. 311).

Webster (2006) further cites the work of other scholars such as Finnegan (1977) and Kiparksy (1976) who hold that orality is an umbrella term enfolding a spectrum of practices and domains (p. 298). Citing Bahr’s conceptualization of categories of oral literatures, Webster (2006) reveals a pragmatic model in which to embed types of oral expressions and finds Bahr’s division of three levels of fixities relevant to Indigenous oral literatures in the following order: 1. the song form, 2. the prayer form, and 3. longer narrations recited within ceremonial gathering places (p. 299). For sacred ceremony or ritual, the song form in which lyrics are kept or maintained in content and structure (meaning each textual line coheres to the melodic line from time immemorial)
comprises the first level of fixity. The fidelity to the accurate intergenerational transmission of sound for sound provides for the greater level of fixity.

For example, on one of her visits to the U’mista Cultural Center, Dr. Patricia Shaw brought recordings of traditional Kwak’wala songs originally recorded on the earliest wax cylinders brought to our territory in the late 1800s, recordings that were recently recovered and digitized. Talented Kwakwaka’wakw singer, William Wasden (Wa) recognized almost all of these traditional songs. In a recent email communication, Wa confirmed recognizing many of these songs recorded so long ago, “There was one song that was sung by an old Blunden Harbour man named Ḵwágwanu (Long Harry?) and it is still being sung the same way today. It is a “medicine man song” and Wa credits his singing teacher and mentor “Chief Tom Willie who was the last song keeper and composer of all of our tribes, who along with Elsie Williams nee Wamiss, were great teachers and their legacy is still enhancing our Kwakwaka’wakw singing and song composing today!” (W. Wasden, email communication, July 16, 2015). Wa’s recognition of these long ago recorded songs support Bahr’s previously cited categorization of oral literature genres in that traditional song forms comprise the highest level of fixity. Another traditional singer, Chief Jim King, would sing around the house when he stayed with Gwants’lakw and me. One day, standing at the kitchen back door, he began singing a cradle song and when finished he looked over at me with a cheeky smile and asked “how do you like that song? It’s a five thousand year old song!” This anecdote also reflects the accuracy of intergenerational transmission of traditional songs and thus supports Bahr’s (1997) theory of three levels of fixity for oral literatures, as Webster (2006) observes”: “Indeed, Bahr argues that
exact replication of sound over time is a by-product of the song structure—a structure that cements sounds to a repeatable/memorable form (literature)” (p. 297).

Recitations used repeatedly over time, which are comprised of “chants, prayers, spells, and orations,” comprise the second level of fixity, as mentioned above. This second level of fixity ensures a word for word fidelity rather than a sound for sound fidelity. Also, as mentioned above, the third level of fixity involves long narratives in which the essential form is maintained but which might, and typically will, change from teller to teller. Webster (2006) discerns the complexities (in oral compositions) apparently lacking in Ong’s theorizing about oral literatures. As a term, orality itself is a high level of generalization under which many categories can be specified. Orality, Webster (2006) has shown, is not to be seen as a singular definition that effaces the complexities of the distinct features that comprise the wide diversity of Indigenous oral cultures. Webster notes that just as literacy can be formulaic, so too can orality, if Bahr’s theory of levels of fixity are any indication. For example, where there are distinct genres of poetry such as (for example) free verse, sonnet, or haiku, there are also distinct genres of orality such as song form, prayer or origin stories.

Also investigating oral tradition, David Cohen (1989) surveys works by scholars and contrasts the early definitions that characterized the tradition as “taken as having specialized characteristics and its own separate processual and cultural life” (p. 9). In his review of the scholarly articles given to defining oral tradition, Cohen first finds strict pronouncements by authoritative scholars (in early scholarly productions) who chastise others who confuse the issue. As with Webster (2006), Cohen (1989) finds much to take issue with in early scholarly
interpretations of what constitutes oral tradition or oral literacies. For example, where Cohen sees the reification of categories of oral tradition as narrow and confining, he finds the work of Price (1983) liberating and insightful:

For Price, the key to understanding the interior production of the Saramak past is not the study of testimonies as oral traditions but rather understanding the rather idiosyncratic ways in which expert knowledge of the past is continuously assembled in numerous settings. (p. 11)

Understanding the ‘interior production’ of anything much less an entire cultural past (that one is not part of) would be a feat of imagination. Cohen argues for a much more supple approach to studying oral tradition. His survey of the works by Price and others leads Cohen to conclude, “They may force us to question the widely held notion that history in oral societies is encapsulated and sustained principally within special texts” (p. 16). Encapsulating connotes a closing off and a kind of encasement that according to Cohen limits the understanding of oral tradition.

When placed alongside print literacy, Indigenous forms of literacy are considered expressions of the purported primitive mind. Romero-Little (2006) cites Hopa vis-à-vis devaluing of Indigenous literacies: “because Indigenous literacies are framed within oral societies, they are often neglected or viewed as inferior versions of literacy unsuited for modern life and society” (Hopa as cited in Romero-Little, p. 399). Amongst the great diversity of Indigenous peoples, oral literacy traditions use narratives, songs, and dances which artistically and spiritually express ancestral origins, events in the mythic or human times, through visual symbols that are composed of elements from the natural environment to carry forward an embodied understanding through
re-enactment or performance. For example, Wahlberg (1997) reviews numerous such literacy practices of her Yu’pik culture:

The term “literacy forms” refers to the ways the Yup’iit illustrated and transmitted their oral narratives and history. These forms reveal much about how they educated each other, in relation so to their immediate and universal environment, through their distinctive narrative arts and styles. (p. 23)

Wahlberg relates so much more than this quote in terms of traditional Yup’iit literacy strategies and weaves together a complex tapestry of her cultural milieu that centers on and revolves around traditional learning, oral stories and the adaptation of her people to the changing times. Similarly, Indigenous peoples and cultures throughout the Pacific Northwest used crests both on regalia and in sculptures of cedar and other woods to bring into being the visual representation of ancestral beings and mythic beings and to continually re-enact origin stories through dance, song and ritual. In Boas and Hunt, (1902) k’ata’makwi gildas is referred to in one of the stories as a painted box, and the root ḳadaḍzu refers to paint or drawing on a flat surface (p. 389). In contemporary times the word ḳadaḍzu also denotes writing. Their imaginations stirred by images of totemic idolatry, settler authorities were driven to construct laws to suppress traditional practices such as cultural ceremonies and the production of carved masks, and totems poles. In doing so, the government, aided by the missionaries, also suppressed expressions of cultural and linguistic literacy.

Hopa and Romero-Little highlight a particularly contentious point between Indigenous and settler societies: the reification of print literacy and the marginalization of oral literacy rooted in settler notions of superior and inferior peoples. For example, Probst (1993) surveys the historical

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print literacy development of the Yoruba (in Nigeria) and builds on the previous work of Goody (1986) who devoted his career to investigating the consequences of literacy for oral societies. Probst (1993) relays an important question for Goody, “In what way he [Goody] asks, do simple societies differ from complex ones and what is the process of transition from one to the other?” (p. 198). The process for social change from a simple to a complex society is assumed to follow the print literacy road. Probst (1993) is more interested in how the Yoruba embraced print literacy as an expression for their religious beliefs and practices, rather than pursuing the purported evolution of oral societies through literacy as researched by Goody (1986). Beyond the military, political and economic repression of oral societies, notions of Darwinian social evolution would naturally be contentious for contemporary Indigenous peoples. Contemporary Indigenous Studies scholars now challenge the academic misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples during the colonial era and as such reveal the common settler assumptions or attitudes of superiority. By challenging these outmoded misrepresentations, contemporary Indigenous Studies scholars make space in academia for wider acceptance by the academy of Indigenous language revitalization, wider acceptance of Indigenous epistemologies and deeper understanding and accommodation for Indigenous language revitalization efforts.

2.10 Shame Theme

As a reflection on the impact of Canada’s colonial history vis-à-vis cultural and linguistic repression, contained within the literature I have reviewed, the theme of shame runs as an undercurrent in the discourse as expressed by Indigenous scholars who report on their linguistic reclamation. In their study on Athabaskan languages, which focused on the latent speaker segment of the population, Basham and Fathman (2008) state that, “in most cases, one of the languages in these multilingual environments is privileged and spoken in wider contexts while
the ancestral language may be a source of shame or embarrassment” (p. 580). Further, they report that latent speakers are characterized as either being shy or passive learners who had been raised in a heritage language environment. Daniels-Fiss (2008) attributes the shame she felt when she made mistakes in Cree (in her childhood) to the laughter of the adults in her midst: “What stopped me from speaking Cree as a child was that, when I tried, my family laughed at me. This was a direct transference of the ridicule and punishment that they had experienced in residential schools” (p. 236). I recall attempting to speak Kwak’wala after returning home from St. Michael’s and the old people laughing as well, and in hindsight I think it was more from being seen as entertaining rather than being ridiculed. Although my memories of any negative responses are, thankfully, few and far between, the one that remains with me has gradually lost its emotional charge.

The linguistic shame experienced by Daniels-Fiss (2008) is only part of a complex portrait of subsequent and cascading intergenerational effects that seep through even the best intentions of parents who have experienced such trauma. Daniels-Fiss cites the work of Sotero (2006) who refers to the colonial experience as the “disease of time” which is characterized as a collective experience of amorphous psychic pain (Sotero, cited in Daniels-Fiss, p. 236, 2008). When combined with the diaspora of Indigenous peoples away from traditional territories out into the urban centres (either by force or choice), the loss is both of land and language. In her moving testimonio, (her life-writing) Whattam (2003) recounts the pain of growing up in an urban setting away from her extended family and away from her tribal territories. “My mom refused to teach us our language. And she refused to take us home to be with our relatives” (p. 436). Whattam’s testimonio to her life experience, in its content and tenor, supports Sotero’s notion of the ‘disease
of time’ inasmuch as she lost decades of her life to addiction. As vague a phrase as “the disease of time” is, (akin to the phrase often heard but never explained or specified as “the teachings”), whenever I hear disease, I am reminded of dis/ease or unease. In English, time is represented as linear but in Kwak’wala the Western concept of time is irrelevant when we are engaged in our ceremonies in our big houses. I elaborate on my experience of time-in-ritual-space in my last chapter.

As mentioned in my introduction, Daniels-Fiss (2008), in her explanation of her own Cree language reclamation, argues that English subsumed her original cognitive map. The parents who experienced punitive residential school practices in linguistic repression in turn raised children who were denied their linguistic heritage. Such is the power of intergenerational transmission of trauma. However, as Daniels-Fiss (2008) has shown, peeling back the cognitive map of the state-imposed language to reveal the repressed original does not necessarily mean that the two languages, the former active and the latter latent, are mutually exclusive. The pernicious and pervasive effect of a history of cultural and linguistic repression needs to be worked through in order to allow the original understandings and learning to surface. Where the intent of colonial linguistic repression was to replace the Indigenous cognitive map with English (racist legislation resulting in a negative identity outcome), other non-Indigenous second language learners were—and are—encouraged to view their second language as (resulting in a positive identity outcome) existing within a more inclusive and at least superficially celebratory multi-cultural mosaic.

In her research on language loss in Canadian communities, Kouritzin (1999) invited Richard, (a pseudonym) a fluent Cree speaker whose Cree became “sleepy,” to tell his story. Richard said
that the Cree language is like a living person who does other things when they get bored, they go to sleep. In other words, Richard personifies his Cree language, attributing human characteristics and an animated consciousness to it. After spending most of his adult years living away from his home territory, Richard returns home and engages in sustained effort to reclaim his language along with mentorship by his Elders who are fluent Cree speakers. Recalling his residential school experiences, Richard states, “You shame people away from their language, you shame them into speaking yours you know?” (p. 67) After spending 17 years at home, Richard again moves away in order to pursue a career as a creative writer and actor. Kouritzin comments, “With the English language came a host of ambitions and expectations. He writes in English, he acts in English, he conducts his business in English” (p. 61). The socio-cultural production of power relationships in Canada requires any creative writer and actor to write (and publish), act, and manage business in either official language or even a dominant minority language.

Both Richard and Kouritzin (1999) attest to the fact that he later regained his Cree fluency. Richard’s story in many ways echoes Whattam’s (2003) story in the detailed reconstruction of their lives lived after the residential school era and both reference the shame they felt about their original Indigenous languages. However long latent speakers’ languages have been ‘asleep’ (Richard’s word), Basham and Fathman (2008) report,

By reactivating their knowledge and working with fluent speakers to develop their own speaking skills, they play a vital role in transmitting the ancestral language and culture to the children in their homes, schools and communities. (p. 581)

It is clear that Indigenous literacies were repressed in these and other cases in order to acquire English literacy. If the foregoing stories are any indication, then the resistance strategies to state
imposed literacy (from the residential school era) requires returning to and reclaiming the languages and literacies of inheritance. One student in Basham and Fathman’s (2008) study reported that although she does not understand what the Elders say in her language, “My motivation now is to learn Denaakk’e so I can converse with speakers from all villages and so I can teach students our language” (p. 587). Her response supports the participation metaphor posited by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) in my previous section on identity and language learning. The participation metaphor, again, refers to the learning process of the second language learner or, in this instance, an Indigenous heritage language learner, to fully reintegrate into their speech community of affiliation as we learned from Kouritzin’s (1999) “Richard’s Story”. Further, the detailed stories by Indigenous authors who share their learning processes would contribute to a rich data base that may be studied for significant commonalities of experience in order to build a theoretical framework with the adult Indigenous heritage language learner at its center, following the model of analysis established by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000).

It is evident from the articles about Indigenous language reclamation efforts that for latent speakers reclamation is possible not just through literacy (although that may be just as important), but through sustained, consistent face to face mentoring and use with fluent speakers. One distinct by-product and indeed intended outcome of years of colonial rule was the corresponding repression of familial and cultural memory as the foregoing stories reveal. In their seminal text *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*, Freire and Macedo (1987) argue for a more supple application of the concept of literacy. For adult literacy learners who share a colonial history, it is important, according to Freire and Macedo (1987), that the students become literate about “their histories, experiences, and the culture of their immediate environments” (p. 

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And they further highlight the necessity of a national reconstruction, a rebuilding project that proliferates through all levels of society from the farmer working the field to the politician working the crowd. For colonized Indigenous people this national reconstruction also involves sustained effort in personal reconstruction—not to deny or repress history but to accommodate it. Canadian post-secondary institutions that house Indigenous Studies programs might be seen as consciousness raising environments that contribute to the national reconstruction Freire and Macedo (1987) refer to since we learn about our colonial histories (and subsequent impact) through such programs of study. With the Canadian colonial experience in mind, the theories advanced by Freire and Macedo (1987) have relevance and currency. In his reflection on his own literacy, Freire (1987) recounts his natural environment where,

Deciphering the word flowed naturally from reading my particular world; it was not something superimposed on it. I learned to read and write on the ground of the backyard of my house, in the shade of the mango trees, with the words from my world rather than the wider world of my parents. (p. 32)

Decoding the word by decoding one’s immediate environment as described by Freire encourages his reading audience to reflect on the method by which one engages in literacy. By extension, the parents are the first books the infant learns to decode. Where Freire recalls reading his world as a toddler, we really begin our literacy of survival by reading the faces, tone, and sound of our first loves—our parents (normally). Further, Freire (1987) argues, “reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world” (p. 35). Freire sees a dynamic loop effect between the word and the world. For adult Indigenous language learners this dynamic loop requires reparation and consistent revisitation in order to allow earliest memories to rise to the surface, in order to make connections between those memories
and contemporary lessons, and in order to expand one’s energetic container (heart and mind) to hold these new lessons.

Remembering the shame she felt when making mistakes in attempting to speak Cree (in her childhood), Daniels-Fiss (2008) emphasizes the primacy of the cultural value of respect in order to establish a low-anxiety language-learning environment. Daniels-Fiss’ work illuminates the call for Indigenous-centered language programs such as the two summer Cree immersion camps she attended as part of her MA program as well as a call for an attunement to the self-esteem of Indigenous adult language learners similarly attempting to reclaim their original cognitive maps (and knowledge) as heritage language learners. Further, based on the experiential mode of learning within the context of traditional Cree activities undertaken in the seasonal round, she illustrates the successful outcome of the “natural approach” to language learning within the myriad domains of life (p. 243). She found that experiential learning, face to face with fluent Cree speakers, advanced her language proficiency.

In commenting on her two summers of Cree experiential language camps, beyond facilitating a deeper linguistic understanding, Daniels-Fiss (2008) reports, “For both myself and other participants, this camp helped build an understanding of Cree pedagogy and epistemology, and I came to understand the connection between philosophy, language and nature” (p. 243). While acknowledging the importance of inquiring into second language acquisition theory and classroom language pedagogy, she prefers the experiential mode of learning her Cree from Cree speakers. Daniels-Fiss (2008) observes, “For those learning to speak Cree, this syllabary system will help in the pronunciation of Cree words” (p. 239) after she, as Freire advocates, returned to
the beginning—her place of origin. The issue of language shyness might be attributed to the personal shame experienced in childhood (among other factors such as social/cultural contexts) as Daniels-Fiss (2008) calls for a nurturing approach to language instruction in routine life domains rather than in the classroom:

> the literature on second-language acquisition tends to be highly theoretical when addressing topics such as how one learns a language. That approach fails to address the fundamental contexts of First Nations’ language—namely, thought reclamation and meaningful living through nature, in a simple existence, and with appreciation for kisemanitow *(sic)* has created for all living creatures. (p. 242)

Thought reclamation seems to relate to the original cognitive map Daniels-Fiss (2008) speaks about. When activated with conscious instruction, consistent and sustained face to face interaction with fluent speakers willing to take on the role of mentor or teacher would help to bring to the surface (or consciousness) latent language memories. Summer language camps or other similar programs would offer opportunities for sustained interaction between adult language learners and our fluent speakers.

Daniels-Fiss (2008) argues that SLA approaches tend to be highly theoretical and, when contrasted with what follows in the rest of the above quotation, she implies that theory building or theoretical frameworks are of little consequence to the concrete lived experience of the Indigenous heritage language learners. While I understand her point about the theoretical approach to Indigenous heritage language learning, I also think that the daily minutia of the lived realities and struggles of latent or semi-speakers gathered and analyzed to be worked into a general theoretical framework would also be extremely fruitful to those working in the field of
Indigenous heritage language revitalization. The work of Basham and Fathman (2008) and the now growing number of autoethnographies published by Indigenous scholars reporting on their language reclamation efforts hint at or suggest that commonalities of experience might be drawn into broad themes that are ultimately helpful for educators as well as Indigenous heritage language learner.

Although not concerning Indigenous populations yet focusing on the shame that may accompany revelations of limited oral or literate proficiency in one’s primary language, Bartlett (2007) conducted a two-year ethnographic study examining the relationship between literacy, shame, and social relationships along socio-economic class lines in Brazil. She observed in her interviews a strong pattern of the emotion of shame in her interviewees who share their experiences when they were forced to acknowledge their illiteracy to those who were literate. These experiences and stories of shaming were deeply internalized such that they proved to be powerful behavioural regulators when it came to speech interactions with those who were literate, better educated and in a higher economic class. Bartlett (2007) also made the link between socio-economic class and race or skin color in that context, observing: “Though shaming was connected to larger social forces like the raced, classed and regional distribution of literacy and educational opportunities, it was expressed as individual and embodied” (p. 558). Adult Indigenous language learners in my age group would likely have experienced some form of residential school trauma and resulting shame. Bartlett’s study, which attributes the practice of social shaming to a wider sociological phenomenon, finds the resulting expression of shame as deeply personal. Her observation is certainly congruent with my own life experience, manifest in physiological symptoms (embodied) and which represents another subconscious layer of emotion.
and resistance that I continue to work through. For adult Indigenous heritage language learners, the issue of language shyness or shame in attempting to speak can be a difficult but not impossible obstacle to overcome as a few of the foregoing stories illustrate.

2.11 Continua of Biliteracy Frame

Hornberger’s (2003) theory of the continua of biliteracy disrupts the false binary between oral and literate societies. Applying the metaphor of the environment, she conceives of language as a living entity, subject to environmental effects, climate change, erosion, death and rebirth in response to other surrounding living languages. Her model accounts for the historic socio-political power imbalance between settler and Indigenous societies, and cultural and linguistic suppression, and can also be applied to any cultural context. Hornberger uses ecology as a metaphorical framework organized into a biological cycle comprised of three primary benchmarks: language evolution, environment and endangerment, along a continuum of the health indicators of a language. Hornberger (2003) defines the ‘continua of biliteracy’ as an all-encompassing social phenomenon—the nexus of “educational research, policy and practice” in a diversity of settings around the globe (p. 281). Proliferating outward from a specific communicative event, all these points on the continua meet to facilitate study. Biliteracy, according to Hornberger (2003), includes any communication involving two or more languages ‘in and around writing’ negotiated between two linguistic structures, similar or distinct. It is further conceived within a framework of four nested groups of three continua (denoting spectrums of communicative relationships; i.e., oral/literate or reception/production and others). Despite the tendency to think and write in English, despite all the tired old arguments (not our way, we’ve always been an oral society, not Indian enough, etc.) held by those entrenched in opposing the advancement of Kwak’wala revitalization efforts via literacy, the Kwakwaka’wakw
people have had the benefit of print literacy for over a century. Given the urgent necessity of documenting Kwak’wala via audio and print, Hornberger’s continua of biliteracy transcends these false oppositions.

In the Kwak’wala language community there is an on-going discussion where the position is taken by staunch traditionalists who adamantly hold that print has no place in learning Kwak’wala while others say that print literacy has its place. Out of necessity and because of my own environmental context where I live in an urban center away from my Kwak’wala language community, and probably out of inclination (as a highly literate adult), I have had to rely on my print literacy. Rather than thinking of print and oral learning as oppositional, Hornberger’s continua of biliteracy is also helpful in transcending and ultimately reconciling these two positions. Here I include an edited email excerpt written to Yotu highlighting the concerns about the oral/print binary, and especially that I prefer written scaffolds, whereas others reject them:

Yotu? You have to know how embarrassing this is for me to share with you our [cousin Carrie’s and my] paltry, funny and maddening attempts at putting phrases together….I guess all of this writing proves Robin’s (pseudonym) point about how written Kwak’wala hampers the oral learning. We can't take history back and say okay that's it. I’m not doing this at all because it doesn't meet someone's standards for authenticity or whatever. I am and remain blissfully unaware of whatever shades-of-gray-identity slot I would be pegged in by Robin’s scale of Indian/ness. (Cranmer, email communication, Sept. 8, 2009)

The email quotation refers to my discussion with cousin Carrie about a question I had for the translation of Gwanti’lakw’s phrases.
Hornberger (1997) examined the social inequalities perpetuated by the accompanying belief that literacy is a value-neutral skill that springs forth whole from a purported advanced society when in fact there are myriad factors contributing to literacy development. While literacy models might operate competitively, or collaboratively, Hornberger observes that, particularly for western nations, literacy is typically promoted as a monolithic practice that effectively suppresses other kinds of literacies such as mother tongue or local or biliteracies. Thus these alternative literacies are perceived as competing for scant resources ordinarily reserved for the national literacy.

Hornberger’s (2003) model of the continua of biliteracy has been applied in one study that may be similarly used in future studies in contexts such as those experiencing Indigenous language endangerment. In her study of how “the role of print literacy [can] support family intergenerational use of Maori language in homes,” Hohepa (2006) applies the continua of biliteracy model to a group of five Maori families learning their heritage language. Of the many scholarly articles written about Indigenous heritage language learning, the one distinguishing feature or commonality of experience amongst widely diverse cultural contexts is that children are surpassing their parents in terms of their heritage language understanding and proficiency. With her study, Hohepa (2006) brings together both parents (learning Maori as a second language) and their children who had two years of Maori-medium instruction—meaning the children were taught exclusively in Maori. Providing a set of Maori children’s books, the parents were asked to audiotape reading sessions with their children who were being taught in a Maori-medium instructional setting. In her two-stage study, Hohepa established a baseline by
distributing primers for the parents and their children to read and audiotapes to record their interactions. Hohepa (2006) elaborates:

The data collected during baseline sessions were also analysed and discussed with the parents, particularly the relationships between different parent-child interaction patterns during book reading and how these corresponded to different levels of Maori language used by the parents and children. (p. 296)

The parents in this study would presumably fall into Basham and Fathman’s (2008) definition of latent speaker and would be calling forth their own memories and experience of their store of Maori knowledge. Hohepa (2006) reveals that upon data collection and study, the parents were coached on how best to support their children’s literacy development. Studies such as these also represent an opportunity to consider the integration of the theories of Purcell Gates et al. (2004), particularly with what they identify as “Emergent Literacy and Intergenerational Literacy Practice,” where the authors suggest, “adult literacy instruction that includes more authentic literacy activities will have a positive effect on children of adults who seek help for their reading and writing skills” (p. 165).

In her description of how the parent-child interactions shifted fluidly from child-teacher to parent-learner and back to parent-teacher and child-learner, Hohepa (2006) explains that the children were able to supply vocabulary for their parents as the children were being taught in a Maori immersion environment. Further, she attributes this fluid role reversal to the Maori specific concept and value of “Ako [which] expresses and reflects through the addition of various prefixes and suffixes preferred Maori processes of learning and teaching” (p. 299). This study illuminates what can be accomplished when perspective widens beyond the confines of the
false binary of orality and literacy and when the continua of biliteracy is applied to a specific cultural context fraught with colonial history (the impact of which continues within living memory) that parallels that of North American Indigenous contexts. Hohepa (2006) states, “Reading Maori language books together provided second language learning parents opportunities to interact with their Maori speaking children as Maori language speakers themselves” (p. 299). These parents would be drawing on their latent knowledge of Maori and reactivating their learning. In fact, Hohepa (2006) concludes that the parents show “marked increases in Maori language use by parents” (p. 299). Hohepa’s (2006) study holds great promise in that the parents of her study who showed increased Maori language use supports—at least implicitly—Basham and Fathman’s (2008) two year study of the latent speaker.

I have discussed the themes of the false orality/literacy binary, the theme of shame and the continua of biliteracy in relationship to the latent speaker segment of a diversity of Indigenous heritage language learning contexts. The latent speaker segment of Indigenous populations constitutes a pool of untapped potential that requires sustained study as illustrated above. Being mindful of the psychological affects of intergenerational shame and loss (Daniels-Fiss, 2008; Whattam, 2003; Kouritzin, 1999), these studies might guide the construction of future studies in order to better support the language educational needs of adult latent speakers. Hohepa’s (2006) study, through Hornberger’s (2003) continua of biliteracy framework, reveals the intergenerational transmission of Maori from child to parent (implicitly a latent speaker), and widens the lens to reveal what can be accomplished through similar studies conducted within similarly endangered language families globally. Her study also exemplifies the conclusion of Sarkar and Metallic (2009) who, after administering a study of an alternative (to grammar based
instruction) pedagogical approach to Mi’gmaq language teaching, conclude that “The classroom is built around mutual negotiation of course content and constant coming to consensus on what is most important or what should come next—a traditional Indigenous cultural practice somewhat in contrast to many Western-style classrooms” (p. 65). Sarkar and Metallic’s (2009) approach is reinforced by Daniels-Fiss’s (2008) articulation of how the summer Cree language camps advanced her language reclamation in keeping with their Cree cultural protocols. These alternative approaches have been shown to be most helpful when designing, implementing and evaluating the language learning strategies for Indigenous latent speakers vis-a-vis literacy development in Indigenous languages.

In this chapter I reviewed theoretical frameworks of several major fields of study to examine how each of these might support my autoethnographical engagement with Kwak’wala. Beginning with a discussion of the field of Indigenous Studies, and theories developed by the early works of Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Kulchyski (2000), and McLeod (2000), and how their works support the call for a close analysis of colonial divestment of lands and languages, Indigenous Studies scholars now work to reclaim languages and to support community or home territory efforts in this aspect of our tribal life. I also reviewed key theories and definitions in Second Language Acquisition theory, as well the growing field of identity theory within SLA. There are many aspects and issues covered by both SLA and identity theory (when applied to my own life experience and language learning) that provide tremendous explanatory power to help me make sense of my perplexing, bewildering and oftentimes frustrating responses to my own Kwak’wala learning efforts.
The binary oppositions one encounters within family situations (insider/outsider), or encounters within Indigenous heritage language revitalization (fluent/beginner or latent), or encounters within the print literacy camp or the oral instruction only camp seem to perpetuate unconscious divisions between camps that hobble Indigenous language revitalization efforts. The common denominator of historical linguistic suppression in generations of residential school survivors identified by Basham and Fathman (2008) connects directly to the embodied lived experience of survivors struggling to reintegrate back into our diverse speech communities amidst entrenched attitudes toward those who moved away and yet who might be considered or identified as latent learners of Indigenous heritage languages and might have much to contribute. Such experiences become part of my complicated story and analysis of my Indigenous language (re)learning, my identity, my positioning as a latent adult learner in relation to those who are more proficient. In the following chapter, I describe the methods I used to document this story and journey, these feelings and tensions, as well as ways of examining the beautiful complexity of the language itself.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

My methodology draws on three distinct but inter-related fields, some of which were introduced in the previous chapter: narrative inquiry, Indigenous Studies, and autoethnography, as situated on the continuum of qualitative research studies. Using Gwanti’lakw’s photos as conversational prompts proved to be an especially useful method of stimulating conversation in Kwak’wala. I also include a detailed explanation of conducting a linguistic analysis of my language production and interactions, drawing on the tools of linguistics. Although discussion of these fields is separated by sub-headings here, of necessity I draw connections between each field within each section since they are interconnected.

Connecting directly with educational studies (in the classroom or any site in which learning occurs), Eisner (1998) states that qualitative study is an approach where the researcher must be aware of himself or herself as the research instrument and be willing to surface and foreground his or her own subjectivity. Qualitative study as defined by Eisner, from an educational researcher’s perspective, is relevant to and supportive of my using photo-elicitation interviews in Kwak’wala.

Eisner identifies six features of qualitative research, four of which are relevant to this discussion. One feature describes the “interpretative character” of the research, in which the researchers attempt to “give an account for what they have given an account of” (p. 35). Another salient feature of qualitative research is that of the presence of voice in the subsequent account, report, thesis, or study. Eisner highlights the necessity of expressive language in qualitative research that includes writing with compassion and empathy. A research account that is empty of emotion and
heart might be neutral or objective, both traditional academic ideals to strive for in research, but as those who work in Indigenous communities know, these ideals may be received on the spectrum of polite indifference to open incredulity. Objectivity in academic writing (with Indigenous peoples and cultures as the subjects of study) has become suspect at best and disingenuous at worst. Two of Eisner’s other features include “attention to particulars” and the criteria for evaluation of the qualitative study (p. 38). By attending to particulars, a depth of characterization can be developed, and rendered through accurate description. Eisner continues:

When reading a finely honed case study using educational criticism, readers gain a feeling for the distinctive characteristics of the case. The classroom, the school, the teacher are not lost to abstraction…. In the particular is located a general theme. (p. 39)

For Indigenous peoples, being caught in academic webs of abstraction (when informed by a settler consciousness) has been something of a hazard owing to inaccurate representation. As for evaluative criteria, Eisner contrasts typical studies relying on objectivity with features that typify qualitative research such as “coherence, insight, and instrumental utility” and asserts, “[t]he entire character of the enterprise has a strong rational and often aesthetic spirit. It is an approach to the social world that accepts its dynamic and living quality” (p. 39). Eisner’s acknowledgement and support of research that allows for life-affirming dynamism is eminently compatible with the stance promulgated by contemporary Indigenous scholars who critique the dominant discourse. Eisner’s defining characteristics of qualitative research have deep relevance for narrative inquiry. Given the fit between my artistic sensibility, autoethnographic writing, and the requisite attention to the patterns and themes arising from the stories elicited in narrative inquiry, I frame my exploration and writing within the field of Indigenous Studies.
Clandinin and Connelly (2000), proponents of narrative inquiry (see following section), surveyed the previous work of educational researchers who influenced their own research journeys.Attributing their central idea of “experience” arising from years of constant societal and educational change to John Dewey, for whom “experience is both personal and social,” the authors assert, “For us, Dewey transforms a commonplace term, experience, in our educators’ language into an inquiry term” and establishes the educational fields in which narrative inquiry was originally cultivated and nurtured (p. 2). I interpret their definition of ‘experience’ (now an inquiry term) as an academic critical term, much like the use of the critical term ‘other’ when cited to call into question issues of ethnicity, gender and class. Citing five pre-eminent scholars from anthropology to psychology to education, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to Geertz who reflects on anthropology with the observation that anthropologists, by and large, (re)produce studies that lack sufficient theorizing. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) set the stage to offer their own evolving ideas of how narrative inquiry might stand in as mortar to fill in the gaps found in the “grand contraptions” of theory building as characterized by Geertz (p. 6).

In contrast to Geertz’s critique of anthropology in 1995, Cruikshank (2000) observes that the ethnographic work of contemporary anthropologists should “begin as conversations between anthropologists and our hosts, who are also in conversation with each other” (p. 24). Further, she does not assign fixed meaning to oral tradition, and encourages the reader/researcher to think of oral tradition as “a social activity rather than as some reified product” (p. 41). Cruikshank further asserts that “we come to view it as part of equipment for living rather than a set of meanings embedded within texts waiting to be discovered” (p. 41). Recall that for the generations for whom time honoured cultural traditions were broken by enforced familial separation this
‘equipment for living’ essentially transformed into equipment for dying—the end goal of the assimilationist agenda.

Writing in 2000, Kulchyski predicted that as Indigenous Studies gains wider recognition and legitimacy as a discipline, the field becomes not only greater than the sum of all the disciplines that contribute to it, but also more widely understood as and characterized by “a storytelling practice and comes to resemble forms of narrative knowledge” (p. 23). Narrative inquiry and autoethnography told from Indigenous perspectives and within Indigenous Studies frameworks are eminently compatible companions. If these fields were union workers, they would refer to each other as brother and sister so closely allied in sensibility and solidarity are they, in contrast to the dominant forms of inquiry—although representative scholars of the individual disciplines may disagree with my characterization of the natural congruence of these disciplines. At the heart of their congruence are the stories, “the stories of sorts” which Leggo (2004) describes as “effort[s] of meaning-making” (p. 106). My references to my own life experiences herein are my way of making meaning within the frameworks of Indigenous Studies, narrative inquiry and autoethnography.

Corntassel (2012) argues that, “Being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one’s relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonialism” (p. 88) and offers pragmatic suggestions and possibilities for small everyday actions that facilitate a greater sense Indigenous reclamation—whether individually in an urban setting or communally within one’s traditional territory. Kwak’wala language reclamation is one concrete example of Corntassel’s challenge to reconstruct or regrow a sense of Indigeneity by
reclaiming Kwak’wala, which is currently occurring in many quarters in and outside of traditional Kwakwaka’wakw territories.

3.1 Narrative Inquiry

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identify four key tensions for the narrative inquirer: “the place of theory, the balance of theory, people and the place of the researcher” (p. 35), each of which comes up against what the authors call the “grand narrative,” which is defined as instrumental reason or “technical rationalism” (p. 36). Conflated with ideas of universal categories, and reified as monolithic truth, the grand narrative is defined in the *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (2001) as largely emanating from the Enlightenment period that presumed “the narrative of human progress through the advancement of scientific knowledge….[with the]….turn to the acceptance of all knowledge as incomplete, tentative, local, perspectival and resistant to all forms of unification,” the grand narrative is challenged (p. 109). As we see here from the first part of the quotation, western knowledge as totalized, legitimized and elevated over Indigenous forms of knowledge is now challenged by research taken up by anti-colonial or decolonizing scholars. For example, in their chapter, “Indigenous Knowledges in Education: Complexities, Dangers and Profound Benefits,” Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) make the following point about Indigenous knowledges:

> Such ways of knowing and acting could contribute so much to the educational experiences of all students, but because of the rules of evidence and the dominant epistemologies of Western knowledge production, such understandings are deemed irrelevant by the academic gatekeepers. (p. 136)

Toward reconciling the tensions outlined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) within my own work, I invoke a metaphor, an image. I imagine a canoe as the place of theory, and ‘the balance
of theory, people, and the place of the researcher’ as the travelers with the representative of the people taking the steering position at the stern while the researcher, along with the interviewees, are paddling, or pulling together. In this case, the person steering the canoe is one of my family Elders, Yotu, who is bilingual in English and Kwak’wala and is highly respected for her contribution to academia, Kwakwaka’wakw people, and to Kwak’wala. Metaphor and image are indispensible devices to the creative writer and as we shall see in its translation into English, Kwak’wala is deeply imagistic and poetic.

Creative expression is requisite in narrative inquiry, and so too is the ability to construct strong arguments with close reasoning in order to be considered persuasive. Similar to Eisner (1998) who asserts that qualitative research can express logical reasoning as well as express a strong aesthetic, Polkinghorne (2007) focuses on narrative research in the reformist social sciences community that employs qualitative inquiry to expand the scope of its research to personal and social realms not available to numerical and statistical inquiry. Locating himself within this community (but not opposing the community using conventional research techniques), Polkinghorne (2007) provides a useful history of how the kinds of acceptable evidence have grown—or conversely how the acceptance of evidence provided by narrative research has grown.

Polkinghorne (2007) examines validity as a concept, and finds that the validity of a knowledge claim is “a function of intersubjective judgement” and rests on a consensus within a receiving community (p. 474). The term intersubjective is defined as “Literally, this means occurring between or among (or accessible to) two or more separate subjects or conscious minds…. Our
interpretative schemes, our ways of making meaning of experience, are essentially intersubjective, socially constituted through symbolic interaction” (Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry, 2001, p. 134). Polkinghorne’s (2007) claim here coheres with what Wilson (2008) reports from his dialogue excerpts with other Indigenous scholars:

“Ya, so studies conducted by some researcher on an Indigenous topic may successfully meet the criteria by which the dominant system research is judged, such as validity and reliability, or the research may accurately describe a “fact.” But if the researcher is separated from the research and it is taken away from its relationships, it will not be accepted within an Indigenous paradigm.” (p. 101)

As a ’Namgis scholar I have learned the difference between writing that takes me out of myself (with my BA in English training) and the writing that reconnects me to myself and my family and community. Where writing for my MA in Curriculum Studies connected me to my core self, writing for this dissertation connects me to Kwak’wala, and to my cultural history with the colonial volume turned down. The above excerpt of Wilson’s (2008) dialogue demonstrates intersubjectivity at work since there is agreement or consensus between his peers about what constitutes validation of work judged to be within an Indigenous paradigm. Whether my work is judged to exhibit criteria sufficient for entry into an Indigenous paradigm is for my reading audience to assess. Polkinghorne (2007) further argues that validity relies at least as much on sound reasoning and persuasive argument as it does on legitimating evidence. Further, validity is a sliding scale (more or less valid) rather than a defining quality (valid or invalid). While the conventional social sciences community seeks valid claims about relationships among variables and causal effects among groups, the reformist community must validate understanding of human experience through personally reflective descriptions in ordinary language. Generally
researchers gather storied texts for the meanings they express, especially regarding life events. Polkinghorne further asserts that threats to the validity of narrated evidence arise from the limits of language, the limits of recollection, the resistance of the participant to the researcher, and the extent to which the interviewer co-creates the text. Interpretations of the narrative evidence must also be persuasive in convincingly justifiable ways such as deepening the reader’s understanding or contextualizing.

Accessing the language learning processes of language learners is requisite to deepening context and subsequent understanding. These processes are often found in self-reports, diary keeping, and language learning journals. As with Polkinghorne’s (2007) survey of narrative research, Pavlenko (2007) traces—the historical development of acceptance and validation of narrative research and identifies three valuable contributions this methodology makes to the study of linguistics (and language learning especially). In addition to the modes of life writing such as journal keeping and diary maintenance, she identifies linguistic biographies as well as autobiographies and makes further distinctions between the European and American traditions of narrative and autobiographic research. Autobiographic narratives, according to Pavlenko (2007), allow access to the inner world or consciousness of the language learner, foreground the connections between the learning process and social phenomena, and provide a source of valid sociolinguistic information in lieu of gaps left by other forms or research methodologies. In a move that dissects three overlapping and intertwined domains of the language learner, Pavlenko divides language learner narratives into the following: subject reality, life reality, and text reality. She cautions the researcher against confusing thematization (compiling a laundry list of themes) with bona fide analysis and attributes this temptation to the
lack of a theoretical framework which fails to provide a frame by which to view the phenomena or results and will in all likelihood lead to questionable conclusions. Given the preponderance of narrative and autobiographical production by, for and about Indigenous experience, her insights provided both theoretical and pragmatic guidance in my study.

Given the centrality of personal narratives in Indigenous Studies (Atleo, 2004; Archibald 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Thomas, 2011; Wilson, 2008; Rosborough, 2012; McIvor, 2010) as well as language learning, there appears to be a natural alliance between this approach to research and autoethnography (Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2000; Pavlenko, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2007; Denzin, Lincoln & Tuhiwai Smith, 2008; and Ellis, 2004) in that both fields explore and express ways of disrupting the dominant discourse through personal accounts of experience and reflection. I discuss this alliance between Indigenous Studies and autoethnography more fully in the following section.

3.2 Autoethnography

Indigenous Studies validates and affirms personal experiences written from the first person perspectives while acknowledging the continuing impact of colonialism and present endeavours of Indigenous scholars to regain, revive, and revitalize cultural connections that will strengthen Indigenous identities, relational bonds, and a familial sense of belonging. Because autoethnography is used in many academic disciplines, it offers a useful vehicle for my scholarly explorations in Indigenous Studies. Qualitative researchers offer myriad definitions. As contributors to the Handbook of critical and Indigenous methodologies, Adams and Holman Jones (2008) assert in their chapter “Autoethnography is queer”:
Our attempts to locate, to tie up, to define autoethnography are “as diverse as our perspectives on what autoethnography is and what we want it to do (authors’ emphasis) … And so, autoethnography looks to “extract meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived” (Bochner, as cited in Adams & Holman Jones, p. 374).

Holman Jones’ (2005) further defines autoethnography as:

A balancing act . . . autoethnography works to hold self and culture together, albeit not in equilibrium or stasis. Autoethnography writes a world in a state of flux and movement—between story and context, writer and reader, crisis and denouement. It creates charged moments of clarity, connection and change. (p. 764)

Working to hold ‘self’ together, vis-à-vis writing autoethnographically, from my therapeutic experience, has meant coming apart. During the most intense times of my creative writing, I knew I was bringing to consciousness internalized voices and energies that I embodied and struggled to release as I was deconstructing my identity as a Kwakwaka’wakw woman possessed of (and by) a colonized mentality. If indeed emotions such as shame and fear are embodied, my becoming physically ill (the healing crisis) after completing major sections of writing yielded both valuable insights and subsequent deepening of self-acceptance. The early drafts of the play I wrote for my MA in Curriculum Studies contained misogynistic and racist rants in my monologues—shocking to read and even more alarming to realize that I embodied such feelings, attitudes, and thoughts. Again, inhabited by my habitus, I was challenging the internalized beliefs and assumptions about who I was and what I was, and the combination of my writing and therapy served as a kind of pressure valve to release these energies that I embodied in my flesh, or my ‘pre-conscious’ to use Thompson’s (1991) phrase and to push against and break through
the ‘arbitrary limit’ assigned to me by the powerful sociocultural wheels grinding against Indigenous cultures through Canadian federal legislation.

Holman Jones’ (2005) assertion that to write autoethnographically is to write in a dynamic state that moves “between story and context, writer and reader, crisis and denouement” rings true for me (p. 764). My writing springs from remembrance, infused and suffused with imagination to stitch together what cannot be recalled. Her use of crisis and denouement appeals to my theatrical sensibility. And writing autoethnographically certainly has created “charged moments of clarity, connection and change” (p. 764).

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) assert that narrative is a retrospective process of understanding, clarifying, and reconstructing past events often produced on the margins—a creative process where the conclusion is emergent. In retrospect, more than any conclusions I could construct in my writing, my own consciousness was emergent. In his opening comments to Barone’s (2000) Aesthetics, politics and educational Inquiry: Essays and examples, Pinar interprets Barone’s vision of the features of an ideal public education system in America and the idea of the ideal student as a ‘strong poet’:

To that end, Tom asks “what educational moves could we make toward realizing our hopes for students who have style?.... [suggesting] two phases of the educational act, each of which must, to be successful, exhibit certain aesthetic attributes.” In the first of these the teacher “reads” those narratives of the life-text of the student that s/he has composed and lived through. In the second the teacher invites the student to explore aesthetic
experiences that, the teacher hopes, will provide “wondrous” avenues toward the future.

(p. xi)

My marginal note next to this portion of Pinar’s text reads, “What AO did for me!!” My note refers to the life writing Dr. Antoinette Oberg used to encourage her students in my first course for my MA in Curriculum Studies at the University of Victoria in 1998. I used creative writing devices to write an autobiographically informed play in two acts that has since “provided ‘wondrous’ avenues toward the future” (as described by Pinar, in Barone’s book, in the above quote). I combined my creative writing process with my therapeutic process and the resultant effect was to expand my container of awareness of my internalized settler consciousness. In hindsight, although my BA in English was intended to acquire writing skills with which to articulate my internal experience in a cogent and logical way, my BA also contributed to my colonized consciousness. On reflection, one of my reasons for choosing to express my MA in a creative act is a manifestation of Kulchyski’s idea of “an exploded concept of text” as I applied interpretive inquiry to a therapeutic journey of writing from my body. It is my profound wish and fondest hope that expunging an internalized colonial mind-set (an on-going process) is to make psychic (and cellular) room for increased proficiency in my heritage language, Kwak’wala.

In describing her pedagogical practice, Dr. Antoinette Oberg (2003) reflects on her pattern of responses to the life writing of her students: “In these narratives I am interested in the moment when I became aware of a congruence between topic and the method of inquiry” (p. 127). And despite student angst about how to proceed, her incredible presence and mirroring of student patterns brought into sharp focus something that was already within the student. Life writing, autobiography, autoethnography, and storying are many labels for literate expressions of one’s
life as shaped by invisible social and cultural forces from even before conception and birth. For many graduate students who are the first in their families to traverse this territory, and especially if they come from complicated backgrounds and express themselves creatively, autoethnography will be as much a revelation for them (as a methodological choice) as it was (and continues to be) for me. Using the creative writing devices to construct a play that symbolized a dialogue between the colonial and contemporary eras happened to be my way of applying narrative inquiry.

In his survey of the origins and moments in autoethnographic writing, Anderson (2006) opens his chapter with an acknowledgment of the recent “impressive growth of research that has been variously referred to as auto-anthropology, autobiographical ethnography or sociology, personal or self-narrative research and writing, and perhaps most commonly, autoethnography” (p. 373). Anderson attributes the origins of the genre to the University of Chicago in 1923:

Robert Park’s interest in the biographical backgrounds of his University of Chicago graduate students encouraged many of his students to pursue sociological involvement in settings close to their personal lives, arenas with which they had a significant degree of self-identification. (p. 375)

He distinguishes between two schools of autoethnographic writing; the first is evocative and the second analytical. Anderson (2006) identified three key features essential for one’s autoethnography to be considered analytical autoethnography. The first is that the research writer is a full member of the research group or setting, and s/he must be a visible member through publications, and finally, the researcher must be committed to “improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena” (p. 375). Beyond my own personal story and
struggles with attempting to re-ignite my Kwak’wala in late adulthood, surely there must be sufficient criteria discernable within the innumerable stories told by my demographic indexing the broader social phenomena of the Indian Residential School system that would support theory building to strengthen and advance Indigenous language revitalization efforts for latent learners or semi-speakers. When contrasted with analytical autoethnography, the evocative category in Anderson’s estimation is lacking owing to the almost exclusive focus on eliciting emotional responses in the reading audience to the detriment of analysis. However, my inclination in my work is to combine both analytical and evocative autoethnography, as was the method I used for my MA in Curriculum Studies.

3.3 Indigenous Autoethnographies

Indigenous heritage language research brings together the disciplines of Indigenous Studies, narrative inquiry and autoethnography in the emergent literature by, for, and about Indigenous heritage language learners working to reclaim their heritage languages. As extensively discussed, Daniels-Fiss’s (2008) autoethnographic account of her Cree language reclamation efforts might be considered an early exemplar of an emergent genre of Indigenous autoethnographies written by Indigenous scholars’ reclamation of their heritage languages. She demonstrated (in her discussion of her Cree language summer camp experience) that consistent and sustained communication with fluent interlocutors might yield positive outcomes in increased proficiency. Daniels-Fiss’ (2008) study anticipates the call by Corntassel (2012) in his chapter, “Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination.” Corntassel offers practical concrete steps toward decolonizing efforts and links the relationship to self, language and land to point the way forward: “Being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one’s relational place-based existence by challenging
other ongoing, destructive forces of colonialism” (p. 88). The struggle for me always has been to repair my relational life first to myself, to my children, and to those in my extended boisterous and fractious Cranmer clan. Embodying contradictory feelings and attitudes toward those who I first knew and loved as sisters and brothers (first cousins) in childhood, now distant in adulthood, is also a painful paradox. Further, for Indigenous heritage language learners who find ourselves physically, and more often than not psychically, distant from home territories (if not alienated by family dynamics or politics), we also more often than not live in isolated urban pockets without the daily social interaction conducive to the work of strengthening reclamation efforts.

One of the challenges of autoethnographic research within an Indigenous Studies framework arises when one comes upon published work by another researcher from the same community or, in my case, from the same extended family system. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) offers valuable insights into Indigenous community based research in her chapter titled “Insider/ Outsider Research” in which she cautions: “One of the difficult risks insider researchers take is to ‘test’ their own taken-for-granted views about their community. It is a risk because it can unsettle beliefs, values, relationships and the knowledge of different histories” (p. 139). So to the best of my ability, I make my writing as “ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research” (p. 139) but with the proviso that my primary allegiance is to my voice giving witness to my life experience.

Another example of a self-report by an Indigenous heritage language learner can be found in Rosborough’s (2012) “K’angextola Sewn on Top: Kwak’wala Revitalization and Being Indigenous.” However, beyond self-reporting on her Kwak’wala language learning process,
Rosborough’s PhD thesis in Educational Leadership and Policy examines the barriers and supports to Kwak’wala language learning on the level of public education policy. One of the barriers identified by Rosborough can be found in her extended discourse on the difficult familial dynamics within our large family clans: “In the context of the constant assault on Indigenous identities and languages, what might otherwise be taken as normal banter and teasing instead cuts deep and paralyzes” (p. 88). Her observation reflects the concerns expressed in both the Basham and Fathman (2008) study (the necessity of a positive attitude in heritage language learning) and the Daniels-Fiss (2008) article which calls for a low-anxiety learning environment. The same shame theme comes up in other (non-Indigenous) adult language learning studies as well, where speakers who are not yet fully proficient may be teased, scorned, and humiliated (as in the experience of Martina discussed in Chapter 2, from Norton & Toohey, 2011). While I agree with Rosborough’s larger point about social shaming, her historical citation of such compels critique.

Rosborough traces this social silencing behaviour back to 1931 in a personal letter by Franz Boas (and later published) to his children in which he complains of having to correct the errors of someone he was working with at the time. Jane Cook (Mrs. Stephen Cook), a staunchly Christian woman, is the subject of a lengthy quotation by Rosborough that concludes with the sentence “According to Agnes Cranmer and others, ‘She talked our language just like a baby’ ” (Codere as cited in Rosborough, 2012, p. 87). This exchange is conveyed by Rosborough (2012) to support the larger point made earlier in her discussion; in Rosborough’s words, “Through a process of internalized oppression, our own people have taken on the role of the oppressor, which has resulted in patterns of behaviour that are destructive to the well-being of our
community (Freire cited in Rosborough, 2012, p. 86) and to our languages” (p. 86). The supposed implication is that this social shaming behaviour is nothing new, if the “comment” by Agnes Cranmer is offered as a historical benchmark. However, Rosborough ignores the context for Agnes’s remark and omits the history associated with Jane Cook and her controversial role as translator in the potlatch trials of 1921. Many people in the community at the time suspected that Jane’s role as translator in court and her apparent mistranslations might have contributed to the convictions of the potlatch participants. Agnes Cranmer (my grandmother Gwanti’lakw’s English name) is the grandparent who raised me from infancy. To me, Gwanti’lakw’s comment seems to express her dissatisfaction with Jane, who claimed to be a proficient speaker, not the social shaming of a novice speaker making amusing mistakes.

My response to Rosborough’s use of Gwanti’lakw as an example of social shaming behaviour offers an opportunity to reflect on the links between lived experience and Tuihiwai Smith’s caution that insider research can disrupt previous assumptions about historical events or persons involved in these events. Upon reading Rosborough’s choice to use Gwanti’lakw’s opinion about Jane Cook, I was at first dismayed, since Gwanti’lakw is the last one who springs to my mind as a model for exhibiting internalized colonial behaviours of shaming as she herself did not experience residential school nor was exposed to the western model of public education. Gwanti’lakw modeled a deep-seated gentleness towards me while in her charge. Further, without her nurturing role as mother to me in my earliest years, it is difficult for me to say where I would have landed, but I am certain I would not be writing this dissertation. Leggo (2004) asserts that there are multiple perspectives, and ways of telling stories: “By telling one story, I might preclude many others…. One story can render other stories invisible or silenced” (p. 110).
Leggo’s observation here signals the reality of on-going competing narratives within Indigenous clans and our wider communities. However, these competing narratives retold to cement positions and perpetuate historical grudges might also be engaged in to serve a different purpose, as Leggo (2004) further observes: “A story can sustain a position of domination or privilege, instead of opening up possibilities for dialogue” (p. 110). By conveying my experience with Gwanti’lakw, I submit a counter-point to her characterization in Rosborough’s (2012) thesis, both to reveal the depth of the current of historical memory, and to open up the potential for dialogue about competing family or community narratives.

Another example of a self-report of personal Indigenous heritage language reclamation can be found in McIvor’s (2010), “I am my subject: Blending indigenous research methodology and autoethnography through integrity-based, spirit-based research,” which documents her quest to reclaim her Cree language. Her title immediately places her work on the Indigenous research spectrum—indexing all that may raise the hackles of any academic with rigid notions of certainty of knowledge, and value-free objectivity. In her (Dis) Claimer (sic) McIvor offers a story to illustrate her struggle to frame and name her work as Indigenous research and attributes the following quotation to her external examiner in what is presumably her MA thesis defense: “Next time, do it in the way you know it needs to be done and name it what it is, Indigenous research. Do not believe that you have to hold up a Western research methodology or hide behind a big name to legitimize your work” (unknown author cited in McIvor, p. 138). This exchange indexes the academic power structure that grants permission to the inductee waiting in the academic wings to freely affirm Indigenous methodology while disavowing a presumed big name to validate one’s work (or perhaps aligning one’s self with a prominent scholar with a big
name?). Regardless, this exchange also invokes the power to name and in Indigenous Studies, the collective interest is in examining the colonial agenda of supplanting diverse Indigenous languages with English and the subsequent continuing recollection of collective cultural and social memory.

What Daniels-Fiss (2008) reports on an individual level—recovering her original Cree cognitive map (described earlier in this chapter)—Indigenous Studies scholars attempt on a collective level to recover the myriad diverse Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies expressed through Indigenous heritage languages. McIvor (2010), in a journal entry reports, “I travel north to ‘my homeland’ yet feel more like a foreigner than anywhere I’ve ever been before” (p. 142). McIvor’s sharing supports the metaphor of border crossing discussed in Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) where they assert:

An analysis of these unique stories of language learning to the ‘point of no return’ in their sociohistoric context has important implications for reconceptualizing notions of agency, success, competence, and fluency in a second language and also provides insights into the consequences of border crossings for the relationship between language and identity. (p. 162)

For the Indigenous heritage language learner, of course, the border crossing is in the reverse direction, back to our traditional territories, back to our rightful speech communities—back from the ‘point of no return’ as Indigenous heritage language re-learners enact agency, demonstrate success, achieve competency and improve fluency.
In his chapter, “Warrior Scholarship: Seeing the University as a Ground of Contention,” Alfred (2004) decries the insularity and assimilation of Indigenous scholars who he sees as having abdicated their tribal responsibilities and who suffer confusion and spiritual bankruptcy as a result. He calls on Indigenous scholars to enact the Indigenous ideals of collectivity in the service of our communities; with solidarity and organization we may empower ourselves to move off the path of assimilation: “We need to rebel against who we’ve become and start remembering and acting on who are (sic) ancestors were, what they were like, and the things they believed in. This is the spiritual revolution that will ensure our survival” (p. 97). Similarly, Weber-Pillwax (2008) exhorts Indigenous scholars to consider that “they are destroying themselves and they are being destroyed because they have not integrated their knowledge that they acquired from the western systems and ways of being and thinking, they have not integrated them within their own ways of thinking and being” (p. 102). Perhaps my paralysis (regarding my work) previously mentioned in the subsection titled “Identity” is precisely an expression of Weber-Pillwax’s (2008) idea that I haven’t integrated my western trained capabilities with my own Kwak’wak’wakw identity. My current inquiry could be described as a process of rebelling against who I have become (vis-à-vis colonized or assimilated consciousness). As I have also mentioned elsewhere, my therapy combined with my writing applied to my Kwak’wala language learning process consists of the painful but necessary separation of tangled psychic tissue built up on the foundation of shifting sands of childhood institutionalization. While both Alfred (2004) and Weber-Pillwax (2008) do not mention any exemplars of such scholars by name, so much of my personal history and professional work life as an academic working in First Nations Studies supports their call to action and signals the contradictions and complexities for contemporary Indigenous academics working to support ourselves, our families and our communities.
Dr. Ellen White (aka Aunty Ellen), inaugural Elder-in-Residence at Vancouver Island University, always reminded First Nations Studies faculty and students that we walk within and between two worlds and we learn how to have each hand full from each world. Her metaphor is evocative of a peaceful heart. But more often than not, as we have learned from the previous discussion of Indigenous language revitalization, learning to walk with both hands full from the skills, gifts and talents each world brings us can be as fraught and confounding as it is rewarding.

The recent emergence in Indigenous heritage language scholarship produced by Indigenous scholars struggling to reignite our heritage languages could be seen as evidence of this spiritual revolution that Alfred (2004) encourages. Further, Indigenous heritage language revitalization calls us back to ourselves, and for me it is a call that challenges me on every level of my being. Reclaiming Indigenous languages necessitates the reclaiming of psychic space with the return to home territories. Indeed, returning on both the physical and psychic planes—in the concrete, abstract, and metaphoric sense—is requisite for the work of reclamation, the work of border crossings of return.

Narrative representations of experience often have gaps of various kinds, either or both, intended and unintended, conscious and unconscious. Some of these gaps come from traumatic experiences, absences, ruptures, and misremembering. The work of healing for me continues to be the on-going work of returning to the self in a psychic and energetic sense. The gaps in my beginnings are filled in with the mortar of imagination. In fact, there were many gaps not only in my own understanding of my earliest beginnings, but also, at times, in my immediate familial
care. For example, in preparing for my twelfth birthday party, there was some discussion between Gwanti’lakw and various relatives about precisely which day I was born in November; was it the twentieth or the twenty-fifth which is my father’s date of birth. Maybe the daily demands of running Cranmer’s Café, combined with her Anglican Women’s Auxiliary activities, her own artistic pursuits in conjunction with my four year absence from home, caused Gwanti’lakw to temporarily forget my actual date of birth—entirely understandable given that she had already raised nine children and had already fostered a number of children of relatives who needed a stable home. One of the big lessons of my healing journey is that my embodied understanding of my life trajectory can at times be expressed in ways beyond either my conscious awareness or rational understanding. My stomach has always been my emotional barometer, and that I would throw up immediately prior to the arrival of my school chums to celebrate my birthday, would indicate, on reflection, my lack of early childhood socialization into the family birthday observances and celebrations. Moreover, this anecdote indexes a larger sociocultural phenomenon that I share with my demographic of residential school survivors.

One of the characteristics of the institutionalization of children is that in adulthood, there is a tendency to forget or confuse important dates such as birthdays and anniversaries. As mentioned in my Residential School Survivor Statement in the beginning, I not only continually confuse my age, but also other important anniversary dates. As previously cited in the literacy section of my theory chapter, Kouritzin (1999) reports on the effects of first language loss and interviews a Cree speaker assigned the pseudonym Richard who is also a residential school survivor. She observes, “Now 48 years old, an age of which he seems sometimes unsure,” and then further reports that while he had came from a large family, he could not precisely recall the number of
siblings. Kouritzin also reports that, “Three of his brothers died before he was born, he thinks, because he can’t remember them at all” (p. 55). Using my own life experience as an example for the First Nations Studies elective I developed, titled FNAT 380: Indigenous Languages & Identities, I make a connection between the collective early life experience of residential school survivors and the importance of sharing our stories while journeying back to our languages:

At the Truth and Reconciliation Forum in Vancouver, there was a birthday party held for all the residential school survivors. In this way we recognize that the annual affirmation of close family bonds that facilitated socialization into our kinship systems were missing all those years ago, are now celebrated with a crowd of strangers, who for that moment, became family. (L. Cranmer, FNAT 380 lecture, Jan. 17, 2014)

My class, which was comprised of a majority of Indigenous students representing SENCOTEN, Hul’q’umi’num, Nuucaanul, Kwak’wala, and Hailhzaqvla (as well as second-generation immigrant students taking this class as an education elective), deeply resonated with that day’s lecture. The students whose parents also went to residential school recognized similar challenges in their own family systems where parents or grandparents had trouble with annual observances such as anniversaries and birthdays. For those who express impatience with and judgement on (usually from our own communities) adult Indigenous learners from my demographic, please remember that childhood trauma has concrete life-long physiological impacts that severely and deleteriously affect learning.

The previous discussion of narrative inquiry and (Indigenous) autoethnography reveals the intersecting worlds of knowledge, memory, and production of stories. For Indigenous autoethnographers coming from the same community, reports and opinions might lead to
consternation, but this is not unexpected given the various lived experiences between
generations. If I can maintain my openness and recognize my own defensiveness that leads only
to a knee jerk reaction, the possibilities for further discourse remain open. These qualitative
approaches, collectively, encourage the personal voice, the author, to tell the individual story of
Indigenous heritage language reclamation as shaped by the larger sociocultural forces that
influenced our communities, our families and ourselves.

3.4 Ethical Research in Indigenous Communities

I discussed ethical aspects of narrative accounts in the previous section and return to it here
because of its critical importance in Indigenous research. Calliou (2004) advises his reading
audience to clarify the goals of the research when working with Indigenous community members
by asking the following question, “What are the objectives for documenting oral histories?” (p.
82). As mentioned in my introduction, I intended to use Gw’ant’ilakw’s photographs as interview
prompts for Kwakw’ala’wakw Elders willing to have their Kwak’wala stories recorded for the
purposes of my research. Photographs in and of themselves tell their own stories, and are open to
analysis and interpretation for the kinds of stories they tell. These were used as conversational
prompts to encourage spontaneous Kwak’wala speech. Perhaps in a fit of optimism, I thought
that with repeated listening to the interviews, transliterating Kwak’wala speech into two different
orthographies, I could learn more about how Kwak’wala works as a language.

In this autoethnographic study into my learning processes as an adult learner of Kwak’wala, in
addition to adhering to the University of British Columbia’s ethical requirements (BREB) I also
followed Calliou’s (2004) suggestion to “make a commitment to full disclosure, full consultation
with, and participation of, community members, full access to information, and ideally, return a
copy of the finished report to the community” (p. 85). In light of the historical relationship between academia and Indigenous communities, modern First Nations governments have formulated strict guidelines for anyone interested in conducting research in any domain of life, and the Kwakwaka’wakw First Nation governments further demand strict adherence to their guidelines for academic research. These guidelines signal the change in the historical relationship between Indigenous and academic communities. Calliou (2004) concretizes what Wilson (2008) theorizes as an Indigenous research paradigm, which consists of relational accountability to the community. My process consists of exploring and reconnecting with living history from Kwakwaka’wakw voices and perspectives, recording the responses to Gwanti’lakw’s photographs (in both Kwak’wala and English), and transcribing the responses.

Once my dissertation proposal was accepted, I wrote letters to the ’Namgis First Nation (NFN), the Kwakiutl First Nation (KFN), and the Whe-La-La-U Area Council (WAC), to inform them of my project as well as to request permission to approach Elders who might be interested in being interviewed using Gwantili’lakw’s photos. Calliou (2004) outlines the process for all researchers—whether from inside or outside the community—to contact local government to request permission to conduct research work with community members. Just as post-secondary institutions have their own guidelines for research with Indigenous communities, so too do local First Nations governments. Following the research guidelines of the NFN, I submitted my thesis research proposal, curriculum vitae, and signed a contract between myself and the band agreeing to meet the criteria for conducting research within the territory and with the ’Namgis people. I also followed a similar process with the KFN and WAC. The ethical research processes established by First Nations local governance structures are to protect community members from
academics whose only interest would seem to be career building without relationship building with the long view of contributing back to the community.

3.5 Methodological Process

In keeping with protocols of introduction, I introduce my cousin Carrie Mortimer who is a little older than me, and who is a brilliant student of the Kwak’wala language itself. The second daughter of David Martin, Carrie grew up away from our territory but returned to the coast in 2002. Also known as Nagega (lady mountain), one of the names of her paternal great grandmother, Sarah Nina Martin, over the years Carrie became interested in and adept at kyota, also known as cat’s cradle, for which our culture has numerous figures/images and accompanying songs in Kwak’wala. Given the distances to be traveled and the accompanying tasks involved in recording sessions, given her prodigious memory and gift for languages, Carrie became my research assistant to help with all aspects of the interviewing sessions.

Over the summer months of 2012, Carrie and I lived intermittently with Yotu from April to July. Carrie and I visited the communities, attended Elders’ luncheons and set up recording sessions. In order to introduce my work to the community, I had assembled a sampling of Gwanti’lakw’s photos in three narrow binders and brought these to one of the ‘Namgis Elders’ luncheons held every Tuesday at the ‘Namgis Elders’ Center. Nestled between the local medical clinic, the dentist office, and the ‘Namgis Treatment Center, with the small community hospital and the now famous U’mista Cultural Center directly across the road, this small cluster of buildings dedicated to physical and psychological healing and recovery create a rough semi-circle around the vast void where St. Michael’s Residential School used to be.
Recall that one of the main aspects that constitute Indigenous Studies, according to Kulchyski (2000), is the painstaking work of working through historical trauma:

The history of Canada for its aboriginal inhabitants is a history of struggle.

If different nations are characterized by specific historically traumatic events, which the nation then attempts to find ways of forgetting, repressing, ignoring, or working through, in Canada’s case the history of its First Nations in conflict with European colonial powers would be the most important historical “moment.” For many years this aspect of Canadian history was largely ignored and sometimes deliberately suppressed, but in the last few years it has returned to command attention of historians. (p.20)

This historical moment Kulchyski (2000) refers to ripples down through decades and seeps into the collective and individual psyche. This is the moment that is implicitly referred to in the following description of the first day of the concrete dismantling of St. Michael’s Residential School, and this is the moment that is explicitly referred to in the purpose of this dissertation, the revitalization of Kwak’wala which the authorities worked so hard to suppress.

Early in 2015 the ’Namgis First Nation sent out invitations to all survivors (and their descendants) of St. Michaels to attend the ceremonial dismantling of the structure on Feb. 19. Since my birth mother was raised at St. Michael’s Residential School and I also attended for one year, I as well as hundreds of others attended that historic event to honour our history and collective memory and to participate in our collective healing and recovery. After the speeches by the dignitaries to the assembled crowd, we were invited to the gukwdzi (big house) where the hosts welcomed the guests with a series of traditional mourning songs followed by a feast and a
subsequent healing ceremony for all the survivors present. Where the massive brick structure of St. Michael’s Residential School stood is now an exceptionally large void in the ground, bounded by a steel construction fence, where dump trucks take out the contaminated soil. All that seems to be missing is yellow crime-scene tape ribboning the fence.

This process of organizing and hosting the day of healing for all survivors of St. Michael’s Residential School, is a prime example of Kulchyski’s “working through historical trauma” as one of the features of the field of Indigenous Studies (p. 20). Just as the entire community gathered to collectively recognize this historical injustice, I continue to work through historical trauma on a personal level. The Elder’s Center is located across the road from the former site of St. Michael’s, but in future will be home to a memorial for its former students.

Centrally located in the ’Namgis Elders’ Center is the kitchen/dining space where people come in and take a seat at the long rectangular table that can seat up to twenty. When we first arrived, I left my bags of binders in the car in order to focus on reconnecting and catching up with news over our meal of turkey soup and sandwiches served with tea or coffee followed by dessert. After our meal I retrieved the binders from the car and Yotu stood up to introduce us to the crowd (although everyone knew us already) and to explain my work with Gwanti’lakw’s photos. I thanked the cooks for the lunch and added to Yotu’s introduction by explaining that I was doing my PhD in Language and Literacy Education at UBC and (with the permission of ’Namgis band council) that Gwanti’lakw’s photos were part of the process of the recordings of Kwak’wala conversation that I planned to audio record. I printed out the photos on inexpensive photo paper and inserted them into sleeve protector sheets that are easily removed from the binders. The
photos were then spread all along the table with Elders holding them close and consulting with their tablemates about the people they could identify. The energy and buzz generated by the Elders’ excitement was palpable in their encounters with the faces and places fixed by Gwanti’lakw’s camera lens. “Sunny!! That’s me!!” yelled out one of the Elders who recognized his much younger self, standing tall and smiling at Gwanti’lakw. Three Elders volunteered to be interviewed at the end of this luncheon including “Sunny” in the photo below. After arranging for subsequent meetings with the volunteers at the Elder’s center for formal recording sessions, we (Carrie and I) received permission to use the craft room to set up the equipment. Together, each interviewee and I carefully reviewed my one page script summary (describing my research) as well as the consent form. In gratitude, we gave each volunteer speaker a modest cash honorarium to acknowledge their time and expertise as Kwak’wala speakers.

Figure 3.1 Sunny!
Norman Glendale (called Sunny in his childhood), pictured above on the right, is the maternal nephew of my beloved great-grandfather Adatsa (a singer of great renown who also enjoyed Kwak’wala word play) and also Gwant’lakw’s nephew. Adatsa is featured in one of the narrative vignettes in the following chapter.

The distance of time between forming my research questions and actual on-the-ground organizing the interviews had a salutary effect in that all of my pre-conceived notions about how things might turn out actually did not manifest. The experiential nature of interviewing was, by turns, frustrating (with technical glitches with the digital tape recorder and sound files transfer to computer), thrilling (with the enthusiastic support and validation of the Elders), and ultimately rewarding (with the new lessons from the stories shared by the Elders). This project, in more ways than one, demonstrates one of the features of qualitative work identified by Eisner (1998): “It is an approach to the social world that accepts its dynamic and living quality” (p. 39).

3.5 Photo-Elicitation as Method

Being with the Elders who responded so enthusiastically to the binders of photos taken by Gwant’lakw certainly captured the Kwakwa’wakw social world vivid with memory and history as her camera frame caught moments of dynamism and vitality. Photographs used as interview prompts for academic study were originally used by Collier (1957), and here I rely on the following study to support the use of Gwant’lakw’s photographs in my interviews with Elders who could respond to the photographs in Kwak’wala and consented to being recorded.
Harper (2002) traces the historical roots of photo-elicitation to anthropology and sociology. Citing Collier (1957), one of the earliest photo-elicitation studies, Harper reports how a particular interview problem was solved with the introduction of this method. The problem was how to identify an environmental basis for psychological stressors as experienced by immigrant families living amongst a diverse ethnic group on Canada’s eastern seaboard. The researchers found they were unsuccessful in their first attempts to elicit information in their first interviews, so after going back to the drawing board to consider other ways of drawing out conversation, they decided to introduce photographs of the old world left behind and contrasted these with photos of the new world. The photos elicited a deeper, sustained and animated engagement between the interviewers and the participants. Citing Collier’s study, Harper reports that “[t]he material obtained with photographs was precise and at times even encyclopaedic; the control interviews were less structured, rambling and freer in association” (p. 14). Harper also suggests that if historical ethnography (facilitated with photo-elicitation) is to be effective, the photographs cannot be more than 60 to 70 years old.

Historical ethnography can be considered the memory of community. For photo elicitation to create historical ethnography, photographs must represent the earlier experience of people interviewed. In practical terms, this means that the photos cannot be more than sixty or perhaps seventy years old. (p. 17)

Although the scope of my research did not intentionally include the kind of work that Harper describes as historical ethnography, certainly Gwanti’lakw’s archive represents deep potential to contribute to a much larger Kwak’wala language research project that involves similar photo-elicitation methods. The age of the Elders who were recorded speaking in Kwak’wala fit within
Harper’s suggested timeframe. The main goal for my project, however, was to prompt conversations in response to the photos in Kwak’wala.

The photo-elicitation interview method was also employed in a large-scale and long-term collaborative repatriation project reported by A. Fineup-Riordan (1999) in her article “Collaboration on Display: A Yup’ik Eskimo Exhibit at Three National Museums.” Fineup-Riordan’s analysis of the collaborative relationships that formed between the Yup’ik descendants of creators (of the historical) artefacts and the museums that display these artefacts include a description of the data gathering process. As a guest at a potlatch, she and her project were introduced to the community along with Marie Meade, a fluent speaker who subsequently traveled to many small communities to interview Elders based on historical photos of the cultural materials made by ancestors of the Elders. Fineup-Riordan reports:

Elders’ willingness to share information was unprecedented…. This active interest in remembering accounts for both the quantity and quality of information Elders shared. Sitting with her Sony tape recorder at their kitchen tables, Marie rarely interrupted with questions. She showed pictures and let them talk, and she learned what they wanted to say. (p. 342)

Fineup-Riordan (1999) suggests that several factors might have contributed to the Elders’ active interest in participating in the project. The primary factor happened to be the years of state cultural suppression of shamanism which most of the community members were previously reluctant to discuss. Given the centrality of cultural and linguistic suppression wielded by the operational arm of colonial education systems across the border between Canada and the United States, photo-elicitation as an interview method working with Indigenous Elders to elicit
spontaneous speech. For Indigenous language families that have survived decades of linguistic suppression, according to the cited accounts, would prove to be invaluable for future generations of Indigenous heritage language learners.

Similar to active Elder interest and enthusiasm reported by Fineup-Riordan (1999), I experienced those same responses at the various Elders’ luncheons Carrie and I attended. Another change that occurred between my abstract formulations and on-the-ground-experience in the community was the number of Elders I thought I would interview. Where I thought I would interview three Kwak’wala Elders (to keep the project manageable), the number of Elders who volunteered to be interviewed greatly exceeded the number I had first anticipated. Not wanting to leave anyone out, I interviewed all who volunteered, and thus amassed an audio database far larger than required for the purpose of this thesis. In fact, I refer only to two interview excerpts in the following chapter to show the process of identifying what linguists term roots and stems as part of my close linguistic analysis of the data. I found myself in the midst of introducing and discussing my work on-the-ground, organizing the interviews, setting up the equipment and finally organizing the digital sound files with Carrie’s assistance, who found efficient ways to archive and retrieve the sound files.

Beyond recording spontaneous Kwak’wala speech, I also wanted to learn more about my extended family through Gwanti’lakw. Since Gwanti’lakw’s familial roots extended, through her mother Sarah Martin and her father David Hunt to Turnour Island and Fort Rupert (or ɬawi’tsis and kwagu’t respectively), her travels took her far and wide throughout the Kwakwaka’wakw territory. Invariably, then, when I was a child, our house in Alert Bay was the first house people
from the more distant villages came to and invariably our house was the house where they stayed. For example, Norman Glendale who identified himself as Sunny (recall his photograph in Figure 3.1) is Gwanti’lakw’s younger brother (in Kwakwa’ka’wakw kinship terms, in English terms first cousins), as Abaya’a and Norman’s mom, Margaret Cook, were sisters. The photo was taken at Turnour Island. Although he is ɬawitsis, guests and relatives are and have always been welcome to the ’Namgis Elder’s luncheons. So it is not surprising that our relations would walk down from the Whe-La-La-U to have a meal at the ’Namgis Elders’ Center and vice versa. I’ve always known Norman as Norman, without fully realizing just how closely he is related to the Cranmer clan through Gwanti’lakw and hence to me.

I followed the same process of introducing Gwanti’lakw’s photos at another Elders’ luncheon held on the Whe-La-La-U Area Council reserve, a small parcel of land set within the ’Namgis reserve and which houses the amalgamated populations of those who hail from the more far flung villages within Kwakwa’ka’wakw territory. For example, Billy Peters, renowned traditional singer, from Da’naxda’xw (New Vancouver), currently lives on the Whe-La-La-U. It was his conversation with Norman Glendale and Yotu in response to the photographs that illuminated the profound connection between Kwak’wala, our traditional territories, and oral history.

The settings for each of the interviews during the summer of 2012 varied from the Craft Room in the ’Namgis Elders’ Center to the homes of various interviewees. Setting up for optimal recording conditions to reduce ambient noise required covering hard surfaces with either quilts or blankets. The U’mista Cultural Center allowed me the use of large quilted pads that we could drape over walls. I used a Marantz digital recorder, which required tech support for the first
session with Norman, since only 12 minutes of this 40-minute interview was captured by the recording. Yotu’s dining room became the site of four separate recording sessions. The subsequent recording session involved a conversation in Kwak’wala between Billy Peters, Norman Glendale, and Gloria Cranmer Webster (Yotu) in response to Gwanti’lakw’s photos.

While engaging with the Elders in the interview sessions, I was very much aware of the internal sensation of being cautious and I probably defaulted to “little Laura” very much congruent with the passive Kwak’wala language listener/learner role and being embarrassed about the small amount of Kwak’wala I know. Regardless, by virtue of their presence and willingness to engage with the interview process, the Elders, including Yotu, made us all feel very much at home (appropriate since it was Yotu’s home). The photographs occupied our collective attention and discussion centered on those except when daily family interactions intruded, then we’d all take a break. I must admit to a sense of deference to Yotu’s Kwak’wala fluency, authority, and ease with which she prompted discussion, posed questions and responded to the other Elders. Although I had a series of generic questions written in Kwak’wala, I ultimately felt that the Elders’ observations and Kwak’wala responses to the photos would be sufficient without a contrived script that would break up the energy and flow of natural conversation.

Wilson (2008) cites the work of J. Atkinson (2001) who asserts that the researcher should demonstrate the following characteristics (among others): “A non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching; a deep listening and hearing with more than ears” (Atkinson, cited in Wilson, p. 59). This ‘deep listening and hearing with more than ears’ that Atkinson outlines as criteria that must be present in Indigenous research, for me, describes by and large, the way that
Elders from home are with each other and with our relations. The silence between the words seems to communicate so much more when one is attuned, or listening with presence, patience and good humour. The communication styles in the interviews were notable in the distinct lack of leaping into the conversation, interrupting, or talking simply to fill the air with noise. Recall that Marie Meade, as an interviewer in Fineup-Riordan’s (1999) study, simply allowed the conversations to unfold with little intrusion in recording the speech of the Yup’ik Elders.

As for my interviews, similar to the interview process described by Fineup-Riordan’s (1999) report, the Elders responded to the photos and commented in Kwak’wala on the scenes or settings with the people in each. In short, I ran the recording machine without continually asking questions, as I was comfortable with the long pauses. Conversational turn taking between the Elders was polite without interruption and established a congenial and relaxed atmosphere. At 14 minutes of the first recording session, after some conversation in Kwak’wala between Billy, Norman, and Yotu, I suggested that even if the people or settings could not be identified, if the Elders could say what were they reminded of in each—that would be fine too. After a short break we resumed a second recording session and we came across the photograph below.
This photo was taken in Dzawadi or Knight’s Inlet where the delicacy of ɬtina (or oolichan oil) is rendered from a fermentation process. The little boy in the photo is my cousin Carrie’s father, David Martin. Behind him is Abaya’a who, in her second marriage to Mungo Martin, adopted David as her own after David’s own mother passed away. Abaya’a was also Gwanti’lakw’s mother and my great-grandmother who features in one of the narrative vignettes in the next
chapter. In the second recording session, Billy Peters had asked me in Kwak’wala, “What is your Indian name?” I responded with K’walkes.

My encouragement to the Elders that they could discuss what they were reminded of by the setting in the above photo seemed to launch Billy into an extended conversation centring on his memories of both the name of K’walkes that originated from his early years living in the territory of the Da’naxda’xw as well as his memories of his experiences of rowing up the inlet to Dzawadi from New Vancouver. Billy described the large caves at Glendale Cove, recited the origin story of the Da’naxda’xw, and gave a detailed description of the landscape of the territory. In response to the photos, three other Elders (in other interviews) also gave lengthy descriptions of the territories they were raised in, in addition to detailed descriptions of their lineages both in Kwak’wala and in English. In Billy’s narrative it was not just Kwak’wala that I was learning about, but the kinship relationships indexed by the names as attached to the territories, learning the history of my name, who originally bore that name, where she came from and how I was tied by that name through my paternal connection to Gwånti’lakw and Abaya’a.

Gwånti’lakw had attended a potlatch in Cape Mudge and brought me with her when I was three years old and there I was given the name K’walkes. Billy then shared his memory of the familial connections between the original K’walkes and her husband Sebañ who was a Da’naxda’xw Chief and K’walkes herself came from the Ligwiłda’xw (or Cape Mudge located across from Campbell River). Gwånti’lakw was very close friends with Mabel Stanley from Cape Mudge whose brother was Charlie Peterson and it was their family’s potlatch we attended in 1956. Beyond her brief description of where I was given the name, Gwånti’lakw did not offer any
further explanation about the name K’walkes and so Billy’s sharing in this interview was a complete revelation to me. The following tables contain the type of detailed linguistic analysis that I had planned to do with much of the narrative data I collected as part of my language learning. Instead, I have selected just a few key excerpts to demonstrate the approach, one of which comes from this particular segment of the conversation. It is an even further revelation to me to discover my name’s meaning, “to be alive to assist in the world.”

Figure 3.3 Girlfriends

Above is a photograph of Gwanti’lakw (on the left) and Mabel Stanley (on the right) in their much younger years.

I think that Billy Peters wanted to get a better sense of where I fit in the world as Kwak’wala names are attached to lineage and place. However, since I had not understood my paternal connections, I was certain and indeed adamant that I was not Da’naxda’xw, yet the name K’walkes comes from there. What the dialogue revealed to me, though, was that owing to my
paternal descent down from Abaya’a whose mother was Dḵ’naxda’xw and whose father was ɭawiʔsis was even more surprising. I thought that Abaya’a was connected to the Dḵ’naxda’xw only through her sister’s marriage into the tribe, when in fact their mother and my great great grandmother came from there. In fact, Gwanti’lakw sent me to stay with Ada and Queenie in New Vancouver for two weeks one summer during berry picking season. So my original disavowal of any direct familial connection to Dḵ’naxda’xw was wrong. Through conversation, we (Yotu, Carrie and myself) all learned of the connection of the original holder of the name to the traditional territory of the Dḵ’naxda’xw.

As mentioned, the discussion about my name K’walḵes in combination with my encouragement (prior to our tea break) to discuss what the Elders were reminded of by the setting in the above photo seemed to launch Billy into an extended narrative centering on his memories of both the name of K’walḵes that originated from his village of Dḵ’naxda’xw as well as his memories of familial relationships. While I have rough transcriptions of the entire conversation between Billy Peters, Norman Glendale, and Gloria Cranmer Webster below, I share only a few examples of the finished tables of Kwak’wala transliterations and transcriptions. The following dialogue excerpt is between Norman (NG), Yotu (GCW) and myself (LC) about his childhood nickname “Sunny” with the Kwak’wala utterance first, and the free English translation (shown as ENG) immediately following it. The following is written in First Nations Unicode font.

GCW: Welis naxus malgwaɬa wi’yuɬas katamɬsu dɬu Sam?
ENG: Everything you remember when you were photographed with Sam a long time ago?

NG: Lax lax Dzewadi
ENG: In Dzewadi

GCW: Ah!
ENG: yah

GCW: mmm ɬaŋwis wi’wa’okw’wałə?
ENG: Who were the people you were with a long time ago?

NG: hemołən Umbote ɗəłən abəmp ɗulu Adatsa ɗulu Du’də
ENG: My father and mother, and Adatsa and Du’də long ago.

NG: ɬanənam wołən nonaxwołi ɗulu lax Dzawadi
ENG: I was a kid when I would go to Dzawadi

GCW: E.
ENG: yah

NG: K’isən Malkwala xa aww…d’ilgamasa ɬanənam
ENG: I don’t remember the name of that kid.

Long silence.

LC: Sunny was your nickname?
NG: Ah?
LC: Sunny was your nickname?
NG: e yu’wałux sun d’ilixa gaxən sa sun
ENG: Yes, he a long time ago named me sun here comes the sun

GCW: Awww!
NG: e yu’am
ENG: yes the one.

This short dialogue shows the compactness anddenseness of meaning through Kwak’wala

suffixation compared to the English. I return to this linguistic complexity below, which poses

challenges for language learners and linguists alike. But even more so, this conversation revealed

the closeness of the relationship between Norman’s parents and Adatsa and Du’də who I recall

with such love and affection. Again, we see how the traditional territory and Kwak’wala are

tightly bound from Norman’s response to seeing the photo of himself taken by Gwants’lakw so
long ago. On reflection, my question in English, “Sunny was your nickname?” could have been asked in Kwak’wala like so, “d总理mas Sunny?”

In the late spring of 2008 I was invited to participate in the Kan’s k’wak’walala xan’s yak’an’das (Let’s keep our language alive!) at the InField Institute on Field Linguistics and Language Documentation. Our group formed as a SSHRC-funded collaboration project between ‘Namgis First Nation, U’mista Cultural Center and the First Nations Languages Program at UBC. A team of Kwakwa’wakw language activists including Pewi Alfred, Deanna Nicolson, Mike Willie and two fluent Elder speakers, Bev Lagis and Daisy Sewid Smith, and I attended the six-week Infield Linguistic Institute, held bi-annually at various North American universities. With the Kwak’wala team, I learned how to break down Kwak’wala into its constituent roots and suffixes. Before explaining the following tables, I need to point out a personal dynamic that occurred at Infield.

Although I found participation in such an active group exciting, I was also aware of a sense of discomfort that was difficult to put my finger on until I realized that one of our fluent speakers (who I do not wish to name) has always been actively opposed to the Cranmer family within our traditional community. By traditional I mean those who are active in the potlatch system. However, owing to my childhood memories of this fluent Elder’s voice that hadn’t changed in forty years, I focused on the good feelings that opened up upon hearing this familiar voice. Also, Gwanti’lakw taught me that we are to maintain a friendly comportment to all, even those we might disagree with (outside our ceremonial house), knowing that any cultural disagreements or conflicts will eventually be addressed at a future potlatch. I note this situation
because it reveals clan or tribal rivalries that can potentially impact revitalization efforts. Yet at the same time, this situation also shows how individual issues can be set aside in order to contribute to the higher, more urgent collective purpose of language revitalization efforts.

With the ever decreasing numbers of our Kwak’wala fluent speakers, recording the sounds of Kwak’wala in spontaneous speech will be important for future generations of Kwak’wala language learners. Additionally, I have found that close repeated listening to the recordings, combined with the transcription process (with each session), continues to teach me new ways of how the language works. Regrettably, although I have innumerable class notes and questions, I did not maintain a journal during my transcription process to document any questions or connections I made between hearing and writing. On reflection, I believe my lack of attention to note making when listening to the recordings is a combination of a number of factors. First, I am filling in the tables by writing out the Kwak’wala words as I hear them from the recordings. Second, I am puzzling out roots from suffixes with the help of the Boas Hunt texts. Third, I cannot help but wonder how much of this aspect of my experience is an example of Wertsch’s (1998) theory of mediational means whereby the frustratingly paradoxical and contradictory internal tension between being a writer of English and an adult learner of Kwak’wala created a debilitating stasis. In other words, how much of my previous mastery of English diminishes my Kwak’wala learning and more importantly, even writing about my Kwak’wala learning experience?

A brief explanation of the following tables will help in understanding how the Kwak’wala words work together, break apart, and then reconfigure in completely different ways that still make
sense. Moving from English, which tends to be an analytic language, to Kwak’wala, a polysynthetic language, constitutes one of the most challenging issues for an adult learner. Trask (2007) defines polysynthetic as:

The phenomenon in which a single word consists of more than one morpheme. Languages which tend towards a 1:1 word to morpheme ratio (such as Thai, Vietnamese and Bulgarian) are known by contrast as **analytic** languages. The term **polysynthetic** is usually reserved for those languages at the other extreme end of the scale, which employ many more morphemes (over 5:1) in word formation. (p. 224)

For a simple example, the single Kwak’wala word Mi’idaga contains two morphemes (root + suffix) that translates into the English expression “go to sleep” (three single word morphemes) (U’mista Workbook Series, Book 7, 1981, p. 31). Single Kwak’wala words can translate as whole English sentences: galsan = I’m painting. Trask (2007) also defines morphemes (in part) as “The smallest identifiable grammatical unit” which forms different functions (and labels) depending on where the morpheme is placed in the word. So, the morphological structure of Kwak’wala differs significantly from English. Syntactic differences pose another challenge for the adult learner, who needs to mentally reverse the subject-verb-object word order of English to the morphemic root and suffix order of Kwak’wala.

Where narrative inquiry gives the reader a sense of the big picture in Indigenous heritage language research and a very personal account of the learner’s engagement with the language and its speakers, the linguistic analysis provides a magnified view of how the language works grammatically. Repeated listening to the interviews affords me the time and space to make the
connection between morphemes and meanings and also between Kwak’wala phonology and its orthographic symbols. Even so, I still make mistakes in catching the glottal stops and distinguishing between what people at home call the back and front x sounds represented by an x and plain x respectively. Another problem for me is distinguishing between resonants and non-resonants represented with an apostrophe in front of a resonant ‘m and a regular m sound. Adding to this list is my habit of mixing up the orthographies between NAPA and U’mista that must be frustrating to read for those more skilled in writing Kwak’wala. So my initial rough drafts of the transcription amount to a clumsy rendering of the sounds and with subsequent assistance of my beloved relatives, I have been able to fine-tune the fine points of the phonology.

My textual resources for this purpose consist of the *Umista Learning Kwak‘wala Series* (1981), F. Boas (1947) *Kwakiutl Grammar with a Glossary of Suffixes*, F. Boas (1948) *Kwakiutl Dictionary*, and *Kwakiutl Texts III Vol. 5 List of Stems*. Searching out parts of speech in the Boas texts and other print sources such as the *Umista Workbook Series* continues to be very helpful for deepening my understanding (if not actually productive of Kwak’wala speech) of the mechanics of Kwak’wala. Like the decolonizing work of healing or coming back to the self, this kind of linguistic analysis is slow, recursive, and at times frustrating, yet ultimately rewarding and at times even fun.

To help with understanding the following tables, I will explain the codes and acronyms that readers may not be familiar with. Inside the rows of the tables the suffixes will have either an = sign or a – on the left to indicate whether they are attached to the root or the preceding stem. M x M Gl means the morpheme by morpheme gloss (a small notation of what grammatical or lexical
function is served—i.e., 3rd P for third person pronoun). NAPA is an acronym for the North American Phonetic Alphabet while U’mista is the official community orthography developed by the U’mista Cultural Center. ID refers to the identification code that gives the date of the interview and the speaker’s name in initials. The following Kwak’wala examples (Figure 3.4 to 3.6) show how each utterance in the interactions in my study could be coded and explained linguistically. Each utterance appears here in its own separate table to represent such meanings as “What is your Indian name?” (That is the English translation for the question posed in Figure 3.4, which is represented as just two words in the U’mista orthography; note that the English translations are found on the bottom line of each table.) The corresponding morpheme-by-morpheme breakdown of that utterance, in English, is rendered as: who-on.top.of.head/name you Indian/man.real (see the fifth row of the first table in Figure 3.4 below). My response, in the table below that, is ƙwâlkes. Lastly, the tables were saved in PDF prior to being imported to this document and represent a work in progress only, thus the rough notes and yellow highlighted sections.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID thesis_2012_06_12_001_BP</th>
<th>BP: ʔəngʷaχƛəs baḵʷəm?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U’mista</td>
<td>angwaxťas baḵwam?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPA</td>
<td>ʔəngʷaχƛə baḵʷəm?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>ʔəngʷa-χƛə-as  baḵʷ-[']əm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-by-M gl</td>
<td>who.on.top.of.head/name-you Indian/man-real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref</td>
<td>BD:10; B47:230; KWS Book 8:4; BD:112; B47:231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Hardening suffix -'əm changes stem from bəkʷ- to baḵʷ  I guessed the Elder’s question as I did not hear the word for ‘name’ in Kwak’wala, which turned out to be a correct response to his question as clearly I am not a baḵʷəm (Indian man).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans</td>
<td>What’s your Indian name?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID thesis_2012_06_12_002_LC</th>
<th>LC reply to question: What is your Indian name?  qʷəłʔəs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U’mista</td>
<td>K’wəłʔəs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPA</td>
<td>qʷəłʔəs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>qʷəł-ka=is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-by-M gl</td>
<td>to.be.alive-to.assist-in.the.world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref</td>
<td>BD:366; B47:358; B47:328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>B47:328 definition of =is includes “…more generally, in the world...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans</td>
<td>Brings to life in the world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID thesis_2012_06_12_003_LC</th>
<th>LC: ʔiqxƛəla</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U’mista</td>
<td>K’ixtłala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPA</td>
<td>ʔiqxƛəla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>ʔəy-xƛə-ala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-by-M gl</td>
<td>many-in.the.flames-continuative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref</td>
<td>BD:345; B47:372; B47:306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>The name is in the BD on page 346 meaning Many on Fire.  In this table and in the next are my other names, but the next one is a nickname one of my grandfathers used to call me as a child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans</td>
<td>Many on Fire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.4 What is your name?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID thesis_2012_06_12_004_LC</th>
<th>LC: ʔawənd'is ʔʃupənd'is</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U’mista</td>
<td>Lə’wəndzis t’uəpəndzis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPA</td>
<td>lawənd'is ʃupənd'is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>law-əns=is ʃup-əns=is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-by-M gl</td>
<td>sky=under/at.bottom.of.water=on.beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>root=under/at.bottom.of.water=on.beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref</td>
<td>BD:392; B47:304; B47:328; BD:449; B47:304; B47:328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Weakening suffix =is changes preceding /s/ to [d']</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The word for “sky” in this case is poetical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My grandfather ʔaʔat’sa was a traditional singer, and also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>renowned for his playful poetic way with Kwak’wala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans</td>
<td>Water monster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID thesis_2012_06_12_005 BP</th>
<th>BP: e. ʔugʷaqətə ʔıλəqəm ʔugʷaqətə ʔıλəqəm wəʔukʷa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U’mista</td>
<td>E. ugwaɬa δỷₕɬaɬa ugwaɬa δỷₕɬaɬa wə’ukwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPA</td>
<td>e. ʔugʷaqətə ʔıλəqəm ʔugʷaqətə ʔıλəqəm wəʔukʷa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>e. ʔugʷəq-aɬə ʔı-λəq-əm ʔugʷaqə+əɬə ʔı-λəq-əm əm wəʔukw-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-by-M gl</td>
<td>yes. different-continuative Reduplicant-to.name=nom.suf also-continuative to.name=nom.suf others-suf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref</td>
<td>BD:26; BD:35(2 poss meanings); B47:323; BD:423+B47:301; BD:35+B47:323; BD:63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>ʔiq- is reduplicated, pluralizing “name”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nominal suffix, which makes a noun of “to name”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weakening suffix =əm weakens the preceding /q/ to [g] in stem ʔiq-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans</td>
<td>Yes. Different names (are) also names (of?) others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.5 Different names
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>BP: K’walkes ... (then English: yah ...) 2:45 gayuḷ laxa ligwiłda’xw</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U’mista</td>
<td>K’walkes ... gayuḷ laxa ligwiłda’xw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPA</td>
<td>ṣ“əłkes ... g’ayuḷ laxa lići’ltəʔχʷ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>ṣ“əl-ka=is ... g’ayuḷ laxa lići’ltəʔχʷ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-by-M gl</td>
<td>to.be.alive-to.assist=in.the.world come.from be.from name.of.tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref</td>
<td>BD:366; B47:358; BD:252; BD:394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>The lići’ltəʔχʷ tribe is located in Cape Mudge (Campbell River)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans</td>
<td><em>(The name)</em> ṣ“əłkes comes from the lići’ltəʔχʷ [in Cape Mudge, where Gwənt’lakw took me to a potlatch when I was three years old]*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>BP: gigama’yas “New Van” Seban mas Seban “and his brother Tom Duncan”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U’mista</td>
<td>gigama’yas “New Van” Seban mas Seban “and his brother Tom Duncan”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPA</td>
<td>giq-(g)əm-a’yas New Van Seban mas Seban and his brother Tom Duncan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>be.in.front-face-to.act New Van Seban -mas Seban and his brother Tom Duncan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-by-M gl</td>
<td>BD:258; B47:360; B47:224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>B47:360 ‘(g’iq-) literally “being in front (face)” ’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans</td>
<td>Seban was Chief of New Vancouver ... [Da’łaxda’xw / dəłənxda’xʷ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>BP: 3:20 “yah I just remember” he’əm ’nəm bagwanəm Tupa tlə Seban he’ Kwalkesis wa’uks ga’yuł tlə laxa ligwiłda’xw Seban Bob Harris</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U’mista</td>
<td>he’əm ’nəm bagwanəm Tupa tlə Seban he’ Kwalkesis wa’uks ga’yuł tlə laxa ligwiłda’xw Seban Bob Harris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPA</td>
<td>he’əm ɬəm bagwanəm tupa tlə Seban he’ Kwalkesis wa’uks ga’yuł tlə laxa ligwiłda’xw Seban Bob Harris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpheme</td>
<td>he’əm ɬəm bagwanəm tupa tlə Seban he’ Kwalkesis wa’uks ga’yuł tlə laxa ligwiłda’xw Seban Bob Harris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-by-M gl</td>
<td>That is one man Tupa and Seban that ṣ“əłkes with him (?) relative of them coming from one group and Cape Mudge Seban Bob Harris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref</td>
<td>B47:258; B47:276; B24:532; BD:112; BD:63; BD:252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>In BD:63 the first translation of wa’ukw is “some, others” while wa’waxtus is “relation”. Bob Harris was Seban’s brother?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.6 Names, memory and the land
Given my reliance on print literacy to deepen my Kwak’wala learning, a strategy commonly used by literate adult language learners, I have been taught the process by which to study the changes that occur in the language—how the roots and lexical suffixes change according to the context. To puzzle out the parts of speech, cousin Carrie showed me how to use the Boas Dictionary (Yampolsky, 1948) to search for the root words. For example, angwaxt̓tas in the first line of the first table, the root is angwa and is found on page ten of the Boas Dictionary and is defined as “who.” This dictionary contains the Boasian index of sounds that roots begin with, such as a (or what is known in linguistic terms as the schwa), a more lengthened sound of the schwa which follows is a with a line under the a, e, (the i sound in pizza), and so on. The middle morpheme xt̓le is found in a separate document titled “Kwak’wala Grammar with a Glossary of Suffixes” (Boas, Yampolsky & Harris, 1947) as part of a list of suffixes for which the definition is “on top of head” (p. 230). The definition source for the “-as” reference in the morpheme line of the first table can be found on page four of the Kwak’wala Workbook Series (U’mista Cultural Society, 1981) and translates to the second person pronoun for “you” (p. 4).

The two Boas sources are digitized and the 1947 publication contains (in PDF) the handy finder feature where you type the reference in the finder field to highlight every reference to the search term in the entire text. For each and every root and stem, the above cited process for searching out the translation and meaning for roots and stems is the same. At any rate, the credit for the detective work on the topic of angwaxt̓tas goes to Carrie who suggested (in an email discussion on April 13, 2011) that a loose translation or inference could be: on whose head do you stand, or more literally, who are your ancestors? Thus engaging in conversation with Billy about my name
revealed to me a part of my lineage I was not privy to owing to my lack of understanding of both Kwak’wala as well as my limited understanding of my paternal lineage.

Names handed down through ancestral lines index (or point to) the source of names and indicate on whose head one stands. While this realization may not be news to Kwakwa’kw Elders fluent in Kwak’wala, for subsequent heritage language learners this realization could open doors to self-understanding, self-perception and self-regard. For the countless Indigenous residential school survivors and their descendants, even for their children and grandchildren of powerful lineage, without the wherewithal to obtain such important lessons that viscerally, intellectually and spiritually connect us to our ancestors through our heritage languages—these lessons might have made such a difference in important life choices and direction and more fundamentally, the choice to live.

Although I am certainly not a linguist, I have found that learning about some of the linguistic terms is helpful in facilitating a deeper understanding of how Kwak’wala works. Each discipline or field of study, including linguistics, has its own specialized lexicon of terms. In addition, I found myself confronting the most confounding, puzzling mysteries of the shape-shifting nature of Kwak’wala. For example, the complex pronominal system requires knowledge of pronoun suffixes that precisely indicate if the second and third person reference (he, she, or they) is either in close proximity (right next to you) or across the room, or out of sight as well as first person suffixes; if the second person being addressed is included or excluded from the collective pronoun (we but not you or they but not me). The most elusive aspect of Kwak’wala (for me at
any rate) is the seemingly mercurial changeability where roots and suffixes are concerned and the rules that govern the phoneme attachments between the roots and suffixes.

The second table, Figure 3.5 contains the nickname Laʔandzis tɬupandzis I was called by Adatsa, who was brother to my great grandmother Abaya’a and to Margaret Cook. Thus he was Gwânti’lakw’s maternal uncle. Adatsa is the one referred to in one of my narrative vignettes in the following chapter. It was only much later in life that I learned of the meaning of Adatsa’s nickname for me. Standing at Yotu’s kitchen sink looking out at the ocean, I happened to muse out loud, “I wonder what my nickname means?” while Uncle Doug was visiting. Yotu asked Doug, “Well? What can you tell us about that?” Laughingly, Uncle Doug said “It means dead head in the water” but he then elaborated with a clarification, “the modern meaning is dead head in the water, but its more older meaning is water monster that eats people” and rather than thinking of myself as a dead head I much prefer the latter definition more for its playful poetic imagery (not to mention fierceness—which is so not my habitus or character style) and much more fitting with my deep sense of submergence slowly rising up out of the water to peek about me. And I am sure he must have made up the last phrase, “that eats people” to be more dramatic as there is no Kwak’wala reference to eating contained in the deconstruction of the name.

3.7 Reflections

The first parameter in Kulchyski’s (2000) location of the field of Indigenous Studies occurs with “Native Studies is the setting right of names, the righting of names as much as the writing of names” (Kulchyski’s emphasis, p. 13). Our ancestors’ names live on through our bodies, our breath and our spirit—regardless of whether or not we are aware or conscious of this. Some of the Elders were able to name some of the people in Gwânti’lakw’s photographs. Where the
government (provincial or federal) arbitrarily assigned names (usually the names of notable settler persons) to geographical landmarks, contemporary First Nations reject these in favour of their original names in our languages. Pointing to an example of historical revisionism, the government imposed names and categories of peoples, with the contemporary rejection by First Nations in reclaiming their original Indigenous names (i.e., from the state imposed name of Kwaguitl to Kwak̓wala’wakw). Kulchyski claims that the role of the discipline may be nothing more than the exercise of “righting names,” when in fact the exercise magnifies and amplifies a unique perspective and unique call to all Indigenous Studies scholars to engage in purposeful and methodical disruption of colonial ways of thinking and seeing through heritage language reclamation.

The tenor of Kulchyski’s chapter conveys the field as one that reclaims, renames and revitalizes Indigenous traditions and languages, thus celebrating Indigenous survival as Tuhiwai Smith (1999) encourages, and participating in and advancing Corntassel’s (2012) notion of resurgence in small everyday Indigenous practices such as language work and prayer (or both together). Reframing research questions from the perspective of ‘salvage ethnography’ (i.e., the vanishing Indian) to the perspective of celebrating the enduring traditions, allows room to develop a capacity to express cultural values as part of daily life according to Kulchyski. In the main, my method of choice for this study, according to Kulchyski’s ‘the writing of names,’ was to write Kwak’wala in the U’mista and NAPA orthographies. The photo-elicitation method involves identification of (and by) Kwaguitl and ‘Namgis relatives, the subjects of Gwanti’lakw’s photographic archive.
For endangered languages such as Kwak’wala, Hinton (2001) advises that in lieu of any writing systems, communities consider audio and video recording stories and conversations told and spoken in the language. For the Kwakwaka’wakw, Kwak’wala has had the benefit of the intensive systematic study by Hunt and Boas (1897), who collaborated on its original orthography now known as Boasian. In addition to Boas’s orthography, there are four other distinct orthographies all of which were developed at different times for different purposes: Hall (1888), Grubb (1977), U’mista (1981), and School District 72 (1992). While the primary goal of this project was to record spontaneous Kwak’wala speech via audio, there were two other secondary goals. As an adult language learner of Kwak’wala, I have engaged in an intensive study of the language primarily through means of literacy as I recognize the orthographic symbols and relate these to my phonological memory. This practice becomes strengthened as a result of sustained attention and practice. Through the recording and transcription process I have been able to learn more about the grammatical structures by drawing from the historical work left by Hunt and Boas (1902), as well as contributing to the considerable store of amassed Kwak’wala language resources for future Kwak’wala language learners. This mode of working required the assistance of Yotu, a fluent speaker who is bilingual and engaged in the recorded Kwak’wala conversations. Yotu, in collaboration with University of British Columbia linguist Jay Powell, and under the direction of a group of fluent Elders, developed the U’mista orthography. In short, the methodology I weave together utilizes the visual and linguistic aspects of my Kwakwaka’wakw heritage in order to hear, see and feel stories told in Kwak’wala.
Chapter 4: Dax’idzu nuyam dťu a’eda’aka nuyam
Abduction Stories and Reclamation Stories

One of the main goals and research questions guiding this study was to consider how learning Kwak’wala through my grandmother’s treasure trove of photos related to my identity, my self. Other research on this theme in Indigenous Studies and applied linguistics was reviewed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I emphasized the importance of narrative, autoethnographic writing in Indigenous research. In this chapter, I reveal, through the writing genre known as creative non-fiction, key moments in the trajectory of my life as seemingly dictated by colonial forces and particularly as I reflect on difficult milestones of my journey thus far.

The title of this chapter in Kwak’wala references the multiple meanings of abduction stories and reclamation stories. Just as Yotu’s epigraph in my introductory chapter suggests, returning to ourselves requires collective and sustained effort. While she was speaking from a collective perspective about the repatriation of cultural treasures, I have long used therapeutic writing as my individual effort to overcome a lifetime of dissociative patterns developed during my institutionalized childhood—to return to myself.

The following narrative is divided into three sections, each beginning with a subtitle in Kwak’wala both to honour the language and to honour the voices and energetic entities I embody, as well as to give myself full permission to write, unapologetically, without self-censoring in all aspects of my life experience. The subtitles enable uncensored freedom of expression owing to the various creative voices I adopt. My dreams have played a role in my writing process, both therapeutically and symbolically, and have sent me warnings about
imminent danger to either my loved ones or myself and so I also honour my dreams: “Our dreams are the delicate ribbons that tie us to our psychic lives, keeping us in touch with our images or our ancestors” (Cranmer, 2002). These sections are cast as a dream net to give expression to the universally mysterious forces that at first nurtured and comforted me, then cast me into bewildering traumatic childhood experiences of prolonged institutionalization and my long journey back to my paternal linguistic roots. My way of telling allows me to adopt by turns, the persona of the little girl, of the writer, and the speaker. The stories flow from oft-repeated anecdotes told by my paternal relatives, and childhood memories, and, as with any creative construct, the stories are paradoxically informed by both fact and fiction. Additionally, I include other documents such as government letters and poems. The letters in the section sub-titled “Mixalaxdan legan olak’ala k’ałinuxw” were written to Yotu (in the letters “Glo” and Uncle John Webster) who took me in as a boarding student during my high school years. My beloved relative Emily Aitken assisted me with formulating the subtitles of each of these narrative sections.

My way of telling also facilitates a certain distance from painful life experiences and facilitates art through the artful telling of my life experience—in the genre known as creative non-fiction (emphasis mine). As one facet of narrative inquiry, creative non-fiction itself is an umbrella term encompassing the forms of narrative that contains truth dressed up in all manner of finery, stepping into magical conveyances, the lines blurred between truth and fiction or constructed truth and constructed fiction. Storying one’s life is a process of identity formation.
I have selected quotations from academic studies on intergenerational trauma and placed these at the top of each page that interrupt the narrative vignettes in all the sub-sections to create an indirect commentary on my narrative voice. Additionally, a few of the narrative vignettes are surrounded by a large amount of white space on the page, as a way to let each story breathe and occupy its own space. As the receding tide of my memory draws back, my early life experiences are framed through the texture and color of starfishes and rock crabs in shallow tidal pools. It is not my intention to establish a cohesive lengthy narrative. Indigenous lives and landscapes seem always and everywhere to be the subject of such intensive study which can be a double-edged sword. The academic quotations I chose speak to the collective life experience of my demographic as well as to my direct life experience. I invite you, kind reader, to draw your own inferences, form your own associations, and arrive at your own insights with respect to the implied messages formed by the juxtaposition between the narrative voice and the academic voice.
In addition to the negative effects on well-being that have been documented among descendants of Indian Residential Schools (IRS) Survivors, research has begun to identify some of the potential mechanisms by which IRSs exert intergenerational effects (although only some of these have undergone explicit tests of mediation). (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014, p. 325)

4.1 **Mixalaxdan legan ḥsaḥsadagama / I Dreamt I Was Again a Little Girl**

I dreamt I arrived home from St. George’s Hospital snugly wrapped in warm flannelette receiving blankets—from the warm amniotic waters of my mother’s womb to the warm quiet kitchen of Gwanti’lakw’s house. Aunty Bunt burst into the front door of the living room, flung her books and lunch bucket on the kitchen table so loud I am startled awake and begin to stretch against the snugness of my receiving blankets. Bunt then saw me—the new baby bundled up in the wicker laundry basket under the kitchen table. Who is that baby? Gwanti’lakw says, “Oh she is our new baby, Pearl’s and David’s baby.” Bunt comes to pick me up but Gwanti’lakw tells her to go play outside.

After spending some months away, Pearl returns to Gwanti’lakw’s house—to take me on a seine boat that was to leave for the north the next day. Pearl assures the babysitter that it was okay with Grandpa Dan and Gwanti’lakw and after packing most of my diapers and clothes, she runs with me in her arms down the road to the dock. She squeezes me so tight and I can hear her pray, “Please god let this work, let this work.” I begin to kick and cry. Once in the galley, she gives me a bottle of warm milk and, lulled by the rocking of the boat, I fall asleep. Suddenly I wake up in the middle of a great dark hold—the fish hatch. I smell very strong fish smells and because of the
gentle rocking motion I keep still and quiet for a long, long time. Grandpa Dan is shouting something—I recognize his voice. But I can’t see anything or anyone so I begin to cry. Feeling the sudden dip of the boat accompanied by panicked shouts, my uncle Bill and uncle Rupert lift and slide the heavy hatch lid across the top. The deep grumble of the sliding hatch lid along with the brightness of daylight above throwing bright light down to where I am snuggled in a small cradle and all of this sudden change frightens me even more. Uncle Bill jumps into the hatch to scoop me up and passes me to Uncle Rupert who quickly carries me up the ladder to pass me to Gwanti’lakw. I’m crying but more from relief that I am again in Gwanti’lakw’s arms.

Gwanti’lakw, Grandpa Dan and I are back at the house. They pull the blinds, lock the doors, and are very quiet. Pearl arrives back to retrieve me, this time with an RCMP officer who knocks so loudly I am startled awake and I begin to fuss. Gwanti’lakw is trying to hush me to keep me quiet. No one goes to the door for the longest time. The loud knocking continues and I begin to cry. Grandpa Dan finally opens the door to find Pearl standing slightly behind the RCMP officer who begins to talk quietly with Grandpa Dan. They begin to speak more loudly and Pearl, seeing that she is on the losing side of the argument, broken-hearted, slowly walks with the RCMP officer to his car. She leaves on the northbound seine boat without me, staring at the widening wake behind her.
By means of mirroring and intentional attunement, “others” become persons rather than simply illustrations modeling behaviour. A direct experiential link is created between the observer and the observed, according to pioneering neurologist Vittorio Gallese, which enables the observer to use his/her own resources to experientially penetrate the world of the other by means of a direct, automatic and unconscious process of simulation…. The other’s emotion is constituted, experienced and therefore directly understood by means of an embodied simulation enabled by a shared body state.” The embodied simulation enabled by mirror neurons acts as an emotional scaffold upon which all further conceptual reasoning is based. (Gallese, as cited in Barry, 2009, p. 85)

I dreamt I was again in Gwanti’lakw’s living room. This time I’m in diapers sitting on her yellow linoleum floor. Abaya’a entertains me with her reedy voice singing, string figuring and laughing at me every time I make a face at the changing string shapes. I dreamt I sing along with her to make her laugh. Time passes and I now am aware that I have wet my diaper because the floor is now making my bum very cold. Despite my discomfort, I am only focused on Abaya’a’s powerful loving presence because she is focused only on me.
These stories created good memories of feeling loved by the Elders and started an appreciation of the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical teachings that were embedded in the stories. (Archibald & Qum Qum Xiie, 2008, p. 4)

Adatsa and Du’da are at the kitchen table seated among many Elders all speaking Kwak’wala, eating gigantic mussels that someone said came from Hakai Pass up north. Seal meat and seal fat in a pot on the table along with seaweed soup and halibut soup. Gwanti’lakw fixes a plate for me and slips in some seal meat and a bit of fat. I love the meat but skip the fat. The atmosphere is one of complete ease, comfort, humour, and laughter. After supper, Adatsa catches me walking by, stops me to ask if I am full. Looking up at his kind face I nod yes. He lifts up his hand straight against my neck and says up to here? And I am convinced I must be full up to at least my throat and continue to nod—chin hitting his hand. He and everyone else laughs.

I am a toddler again, and I tumble down the long narrow flight of stairs in Gwanti’lakw’s house. Next thing I know I am in Gwanti’lakw’s bed for a very long time where she took care of me. Her bed piled with quilts and heavy blankets kept me very warm and the chest of drawers with its tall oval mirror stood against the window keeps the room very dark. When stroked with my left hand, the right side of my face felt like what I imagined to be a fish head, flat, hard, cold, and slippery. I dreamt I was a fish caught on a hook with its one eye staring up at the ceiling laid out on Gwanti’lakw’s bed unable to move—unable to speak with my fish face—my mouth opens and closes without any sound.

I begin Kindergarten and my Uncle Roy walks me to school and I hang on to his back pocket to keep up—it is a long way. After supper he helps me with my coloring and practicing my printing
and learning my alphabet. He is very patient with my learning all these new things and the solidity of his presence comforts me.

I dream about that same stairway again—this time I am six. Gwanti’lakw calls and calls for me to get ready for school from the bottom of the stairs. I am very slow getting down the stairs; when I finally make it to the second from the last stair at the bottom I just fall into her arms as my limbs turn to noodles. Next thing I know is that I am being dragged into the front doors of the Nanaimo Indian Hospital. Despite my weakness I kick and scream because no one explained to me what is happening, where I am going, what is going to happen to me.

In Ward C of my dreams the kids are installed on high hospital beds framed with white enamel tubing. The beds are made up with white sheets and the bottom sheet covered a brown rubberized pad where your bum went to protect the mattress from accidents in the night. The beds were so high we need guardrails to protect us from falling off. One time, I am feverish with measles, which makes me so hot that when I am lowered into a tub of cool water I see smoke rising from the water like I am on fire and the heat from my body hitting the cool water creates curtains of steam rising slowly as I lay back in the tub with my head supported in the crook of a nurse’s arm.

The nurses march into the ward holding white enamel bedpans to slip under all of the kids so we had to pee and poop in the bedpans every morning after breakfast. The janitor swishes down the wide aisle between the rows of beds, with the grey mop looking like long thick hair of Elders swaying in large lazy arcs back and forth on sparkle floors. I peed the bed and the nurse rolls me
over to one half of the bed to strip the sheets, first one half, then she rolls me to the stripped half to take off the wet bottom sheet and the mattress rubberized protector cover underneath. She is quiet and I am too scared to say anything. For lunch I had brown beans and a hot dog and then threw up all over my bed—seems as if my throw up covers half the bed, making quite a mess for the second time.
It has been proposed that chronic or repeated adversities in childhood may lead to an inferential process in which the child attempts to understand why such abusive experiences are happening to them . . . . Over time, children may internalize the belief that these adverse events are stable, have negative consequences and are attributable to aspects of themselves. (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2009, p. 10)

The nurse who cleans up my mess is really mean to me with her looks and her tone, and I can’t stop crying I just can’t stop. Another nurse comes along after the mean one and tries to comfort me but her efforts make things even worse for me.

Shivering, I see myself standing barefoot on a small square platform, in a pale green hospital gown with ties at the back. The cold black rectangular x-ray plates are connected to the platform by a kind of post. I am told to take a deep breath at the same time as pressing into the black x-ray plate with my chin pressed into the silver rimmed top of the plate. Feels like a long time to hold my breath as the nurse dashes into this little room where she gives the order to BE STILL! The click of the machine is loud and I exhale with relief. I dreamt my x-rays showed tiny little trees blooming in white against the dark black background. I guessed this must be the tuberculosis. Black glass plates with little white trees hang on the walls with light behind so you can see through the plates to the light.

One time I got a letter in the mail that had my Uncle Roy’s wedding photo, with his handsome baby face and his wife who looks so young in her light blue wedding dress like froth from ocean waves. I puzzle and puzzle over that photo wondering who are these people and why did they
send me this photo? I can’t help but feel I’m missing something terribly important here that something is wrong with me, or that I can no longer recognize nor remember the warmth and security of my extended family, but instead cut adrift to be poked and prodded within these cold white walls. In the dream I am sad.
For example, stress proliferation which refers to an initial challenge or adverse experience gives rise to additional stressors (Pearlin, Aneshensel, & LeBlanc, 1997), appears to be a significant pathway leading to increased vulnerability to poor well-being. This can occur when difficulties in one domain of life seep into other aspects or when childhood adversities favour the occurrence of other behaviours or circumstances (e.g., elevated risk taking, poor socioeconomic status) that foster later stressor encounters. (Thoits, in Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014, p. 325)

The four walls of the hospital transform into the four walls of St. Michael’s Residential School where I drop into a tall narrow room filled with steam coming out of needles of hot water hitting me with great force—water jetting out of a spout from high on the wall. After the shower I am dried and clothed in the uniform of the school—navy blue tunic with saddle oxford shoes, but not before being sat down for a quick hair cut—snip snip snip close to my ears the cutting making me tickle and I jerk my head just a little and am almost skewered with the scissors. Given a sharp rap on my shoulders I am yelled at, BE STILL!

I gave my hairbrush to someone and one of the supervisors or monitors grabs the brush from my friend’s hand and hits my own hand with it with “don’t you dare give your hairbrush to anyone!” and then she flings it into the round green metal can with a ringing sound. Sweeping the dorm floor was my punishment and I count the number of times I sweep until I am released from my duty—seventeen. Heart in my throat I find myself running and running along the beach trying to stay out of sight of who I don’t know but I am crouched over running as if someone is gaining on me—the beach is rocky and full of drift wood which I navigate in a blur—suddenly sitting in the
small alcove that serves as the cooking space and dining spot (for the workers) to Cranmer’s Café where Gwanti’lakw was busy behind the counter. I am crying and scared and yell “I’m NOT going back!” She prepares a bowl of soup for me and answers the phone. Her voice becomes so sweet you could drizzle it on a pancake breakfast—all hmmms and yesses ending with “yes I’m just feeding her lunch right now.” The Indian Agent heard from the residential school that I’d run away and called Gwanti’lakw to order me back.
It has been suggested that some of these comorbidities might reflect the illnesses having similar underlying processes or etiologies (Anisman et al., 2008). For instance, cortisol (a hormone released from the adrenal gland in response to stressors) is elevated in many cases of depression. If this elevation is sustained, the hormone may instigate neuronal damage within particular brain regions, such as the hippocampus (McEwen, 1994; Sapolsky, Romero & Munck, 2000), which may inhibit new cell growth that occurs in some brain regions (i.e., neurogenesis) (Montraron et al., 2006) thereby contributing to illness comorbidity. (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2009, p. 10)

The hospital routine replaced by the residential school routine—I am now a number marching like an automaton across the page serving my time in line-ups for meals, for hard tack snacks, for cod liver oil, and fire drills. Linoleum floors freshly scented with Johnson’s Paste Wax permeates the long halls where we would run and slide whenever we could without getting into trouble. Mrs. Powell, our supervisor, takes a shine to me and takes me to her apartment where she offers me cigarettes. I dreamt that she singled me out to receive a book prize at the end of the school year before moving back home with Gwanti’lakw. It is a large picture book on different fish species of the ocean with brightly coloured fishes swimming in the dark blue background on each page. I am in wonder at such a prize.
A Tear of the Moon

Surrounded by the white walls of a hospital room
Star daughter who, cut off from moon mother
Cried in consolable, bereft and bewildered
Who is there?
A nameless nurse rode in on her muddy white horse
Dismounted and alighted on that high hospital bed
That bore
The weight of bright fears and the weight of bright tears

Of star daughter. The nurse's warm hand stroked an icy temple
Persistent in her faith to offer comfort to star daughter
Who ignored it, the nurse remained until
Star daughter fell into the night of sleep.
The nameless nurse made an offering
Of deep velvet comfort
To the mechanical heart of star daughter
Who could pump out obsidian tears
Beaded and strung from the Sea of Tranquility
In the inky blue of her deepest sleep.

Cold spawn born of moon mother walked through
Life with fear etched in her flesh
Followed moon dust tracings for clues to
Who is there?
The memory of the nurse is now deep velvet
Wrapped around the rasp of star daughter's heart
While the bloat face of moon mother floats
With her mouth full of night, and the mountain river
Streams down from moon mother's eye.

Figure 4.1 A tear of the moon
Figure 4.1 expresses the ineffable feelings of seemingly utter abandonment—such that the poem is imparted with mythological qualities with references to celestial beings in the Upper world. This photo is the only one I have from my time at the Nanaimo Indian Hospital.
Figure 4.2 Letter from the government

The above letter from the government to Gwanti’lakw emerged decades later, along with a collection of an assortment of papers belonging to my father, in his battered yellow vinyl suitcase. Up until then, no one could really pin-point exactly when I was sent to the Nanaimo
Indian Hospital, but with the date cited in the letter, I can now say with certainty I was seven years old rather than what I had guessed (six years old).
Macedo: Let’s talk about literacy as “the language of possibility,” enabling learners to recognize and understand their voices within a multitude of discourses in which they must deal. How can an emancipatory literacy guarantee the legitimation of one’s own discourse, which may be in a relationship of tension with other discourses? (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 54)

4.2 **Mixalaxdan legan oləkala kəfínuxw / I Dreamt I Was a Really Good Writer**

At Cranmer’s Café, as a little girl I copy what Gwənt’ilakw does all the time—writing cheques. I sit on a high counter stool with its vinyl top, the seat edge bound by a wide band of frilled aluminum in front of the arborite counter with beige and yellow swirl patterns. I use lined scribbler paper to pretend I can write the names of the old people in the café, ‘Nalasgam, K’agoł, and Axu, and I carefully cut the slips of paper and hand each to the beneficiary of my imagined largesse, with “here is your cheque!” Warmed by their laughter and emboldened, I keep writing cheques now to customers who come in to order fries or ice cream. When the grown ups come in with their frilly skirts, bobby sox and saddle oxfords, they order fries and then drop coins into the Rockola Juke Box with its black row of records standing upright that suddenly flip down to start playing music. I dream I am twirling and twirling between the dancers in the very lively dances they call the jive.

I dreamt I was given a prize for progress in my printing and alphabet memory at the school ceremony at the end of my Kindergarten year. I wear a black robe and cap and Gwənt’ilakw stands me in front of the fireplace, and on top of the mantle sits Yotu’s framed grad photo wearing the same black robe and cap. I smile at Gwənt’ilakw proudly holding my graduation
certificate flat in front of me, knees pressed together one sock pulled up the other slightly squished down.

Figure 4.3 Kindergarten prize

I am certain Gwanti’lakw composed the above photo with her artistic eye seeing the visual echo between my formal wear with my little cap and the photo of Yotu’s UBC’s BA grad photo proudly displayed on the mantel behind me. Decades later, my friend Carrie Reid helped me to photo shop my own BA grad photo on the wall behind.
This question involves a dream that goes beyond the expectation of just learning to read the word…. Your question reminds me of my dream of a different society, one in which saying the word is a fundamental right to become a part of the decision to transform the world. (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 54)

Summer, 1973

Dear John,

Hello again from beautiful downtown Itsikan. Finally got the funds to set up the summer camp for kids from T’salgwadi and St. Michael’s. All we have to do now is set up tents, the two outhouses built, and a trail blazed up to the lake. There are a few bears around. They had to shoot six big black bears over at Hadley’s Cove in the past two weeks. That’s what I mean about all I need is my 32 gun. Talk Menzies into bringing your sailboat up here. Just look us up in the phone book (ha ha). Well I better go now before I find some more stuff in my head to jot down.
Give my love to Glo and the kids. See you whenever. Love Lo

Dear Glo,

Decided to drop you a line or two. Hope you and the kids are in good health. As for me I couldn’t be healthier. We went for a hike up behind the cabin and walked through some incredible weirdly changing terrain like many skinny trees that grew so thick you could hardly walk through them. The landscape transforms suddenly to huge pine and fir trees that stand ten feet apart with the ground carpeted with a thick mat of pine needles. Then we got into an area
that is covered with nothing but salmon berry bushes and small trees that you have to get down on all fours and crawl your way through or just crash your way through. I miss you, your smile and the way you laugh, everything about you. I’m glad I know you or a part of you anyway. I’m still trying to figure me out and Itsikan is a good place to do it. I’ve written a couple of letters to John—he still hasn’t answered them. Give my love to the kids.

Dear John,

Since the last letter I have been through the most extra-ordinary situations with Reen on our mountain hike. Stopped for a rest on this huge bluff overlooking a ravine. The sound was like a baby’s cry, human or four legged we couldn’t make out. It cried out a couple of times. Suddenly Reen lifted the 32 and loaded it. I thought it was a bear but she described it as something like a dark human form that ran from one spot to another with incredible speed. It must have been the bakwas or the man of the woods. After a few hours of looking for the creek we found it, below this huge cliff with a steep drop off. We sat down for a rest, started talking when we heard another noise that we dismissed as a tree creaking in the wind. So we kept talking and then it happened. A definite deep throaty growl of a bear about twenty feet off and he had us cornered. John, the bear stayed with us about three hours! We couldn’t pass him because he followed our every move and the only direction we could go was up hill along the edge of the cliff and all the time he was never any more than twenty feet from us. We could never get a clear view of him for all the salmon berry bushes. I got a few feet in front of Reen to get a good clear view of him. His head, I swear must have been as big as your stomach or almost. His body was enormous, and I bent way over staring intently at him and he was on all fours staring at us. It’s amazing what fear can make your body do. Even though I was very afraid, I managed to control my fear so I
didn’t do anything rash or stupid to get us even into more trouble. We slowly found a way down to the creek, dropped our packs and ran down hill all the way.

Dear Glo,

Happy Birthday! Decided to part with my two red beads I found on the beach—hope you like them. The first group of kids are leaving today. Last night we had a clam-bake with the clams they dug that morning. We had a huge “pj” party where the kids did plays, sang songs, story-telling by Basil and then the kids told stories. One of the West kids told a story about how this little boy was teased by this witch because he had no parents. The story ended with the witch being killed since the boy had all of his family on earth to back him up. The tone of voice she used, her expressions all communicated one thing to me. We have no parents yet we’ll make it somehow, there’s still hope. I did cry a little bit, and pretended I was tired and rubbed my eyes to hide my weeping. Reen picked up also, the thing that Lillian was really saying with her story. I love you Glo, and sure as hell am grateful that you are in my life. The funny thing is I’ve begun to really think about my relationships with people and realize how unappreciative I am of some people. Thanks a lot for that beautiful scarf and I will be putting that to good use. Couldn’t you tell me your trip to Holland all in one letter? I’m grateful you wrote to let me know what is going in the world. Love Lo

Casting back, my reliance on writing at different points in my life contributed to my own slender sense of continuity from my toddler to my early adult years, and writing in mid-adulthood became an integral part of my therapeutic and academic process. Although Kwak’wala was the language that predominated in my toddler years, from the age of seven until eleven my
institutionalization had (on a psychological level) eviscerated any sense of familial bonding. Childhood resilience cannot be overlooked here, in the face of a protracted period of institutionalization.

The letters document an important part of my life experience between ages 18 and 20 when I lived at the remote village of Itsikān (traditional territory of the Ma’āmťágila) with my childhood friends and school chums Renee Taylor, Geri and Fah Ambers, Diane Bell and her partner Basil Ambers, Honey Cook and Angela Matilpi. Members of the Ma’āmťágila included Basil and his son Fah and Angela. The original members of the core group had a long-term vision to return to the traditional ways to regain skills to survive on the land and other members of the group (which included me) came and went at different stages of this vision. According to Geri Ambers, the core group was politically engaged and could see the impending funding cuts by the Department of Indian Affairs. So, as a political action, the summer camps were a way to return to the land to acquire skills to survive with the rich marine resources on the territory (Geri Ambers, phone communication, June 13, 2015).

The core group had moved to Itsikān prior to my arrival in order to clear the land to set up summer camps for Kwakwā’wakw children who arrived from St. Michael’s Residential School and from other villages to have the experience of camping on Kwakwā’wakw traditional territory. Freire’s (1987) comments on the possibility of dreaming of a different society in which one has the right to decide to transform the world points to the concrete living conditions for the youth of our villages, where social anomie was (and continues to be) rife, and illuminates the importance of returning to Indigenous traditional territories. At the time,
however, our little group was dismissed as either hippies, radicals or generally confused, and viewed somewhat suspiciously, and we were met with bewildered responses by our extended families.

The letters also show that I held deep affection for my Uncle John who provided a surrogate father figure for me in the absence of my father who was away working as a logger for long periods of time during my childhood and adolescent years. I lived with Yotu and Uncle John and my three cousins, Kelly, John and Daniel in Deep Cove, North Vancouver for four years between grade nine and grade twelve. In hindsight, although my time at Deep Cove with Yotu and my cousins was probably the most stable period of my young life, my profound sense of alienation deeply informs my habitus which clearly grew out of my institutional years between the ages of seven and eleven. Regarding the concept of habitus, I have, with further reading and study, learned how the dynamic nature of habitus changes with different life experiences at key moments over a lifetime. In this way, I think my Itsikan experience taught me that it was okay to question and be critical not only of our community, but also of the wider sociological phenomenon of federal laws and planted the idea of a “dream of a different society” in Macedo’s words—in my case a dream of making meaning of myself and my familial history. The more I reflect on this period of time, the more I am convinced that our little group had a deeply formative influence on my later choices in life and my subsequent healing journey. My writing became my mediational means although at the time I felt I was writing myself into my awareness, a journey that has taken years.
One of the strongest forms of evidence for the existence and vital importance of everyday resistance are the determined efforts made by the perpetrators of violence and oppression to conceal or suppress it....Adults who sexually assault children attempt to circumvent the child’s natural proclivity to avoid such acts through threats or a process of trickery and coercion known, unfortunately, as grooming. (Wade, 1997, p. 37)

Figure 4.4 Healing the inner child letter

I attended a “Healing the Inner Child” workshop facilitated by J. Bradshaw in Seattle in June 1990 where participants engaged in a series of letter writing exercises: the first letter written in
our dominant hand from the adult self, the second letter (shown above) written in our non-dominant hand from our inner child self. Thus through the combination of writing and therapy, I have been able to expand my energetic container, raise my consciousness about the colonial machinery at work to squelch my humanity, and transcend embodied social inscription and prescription. More than the seeming inability of my parents to guide me, the above letter indexes the colonial machinery at work on the anonymous and objectified bodies of Indigenous children.

4.3 Mixalaxdan legan olakala la kan yakantale / I Dreamt I Was a Good Speaker

It is one thing to dream of being a good speaker in English, and quite another to dream of being a good speaker in Kwak’wala! Before realizing my speaking voice in English, I first developed my writing voice, and then found that moving between the two means of expression requires time, practice and attunement. How does one become open to the qualitative difference between reading and speaking? Of course, in oral societies oral traditions involve life long spiritually based training within families who inherit the role and responsibility for casting the net of connection and inclusivity when addressing everyone assembled in the social or ceremonial space. But for Indigenous peoples growing up away from cultural traditions, there are many ways to swim back through stormy waters to our rivers of origin. In another of my FNAT 380 courses, titled Studies in Indigenous Theatre, I developed a curriculum that explores image-based theatre from an Indigenous Studies framework. In his article “The Artificial Tree,” Floyd Favel Starr characterizes contemporary Indigenous theatre as a journey not unlike our west coast salmon: “Native Performance Culture is not a synthesis or fusion of the ‘traditional and the contemporary.’ It is an upstream journey to the source of the river of our culture, country, and ourselves” (Favel Starr in Cranmer, 2010 p. 85). Image-based theatre provided the freedom to
explore the great diversity of oral traditions represented by the diversity of the students in the classroom and facilitated the process of experiencing the difference between the written and spoken word. The students learned, kinaesthetically, through image-based theatre exercises the difference between reading from the page and speaking extemporaneously through a recursive process of following a learning spiral that becomes successively wider. My reliance on Kwak’wala print literacy (my default method of learning particularly living in isolation of daily fluent speakers) continues today. Along with my study of Kwak’wala, I also continue my therapy to expand my energetic container to accommodate my Kwak’wala language learning without negative self-judgements.

Negative self-judgements have plagued me since I was a child. The all-important mirroring provided by the love of parents was supplanted by the faceless punitive treatment during my institutional years in addition to other traumatic experiences that may typify the life chances, choices and trajectories of residential school survivors. So for much of my life I believed I was intellectually weak, especially when it came to speaking Kwak’wala. For example, during my adolescent years while attending summer camp in Quatsino (a remote Northern Vancouver Island reserve), I recall practicing Kwak’wala, aware that I was speaking ‘broken Kwak’wala’ as I could articulate phrases but not whole sentences. I do recall having a lot of fun with it because I was making so many mistakes and my attempts were often comical and elicited a lot of laughs. And practicing Kwak’wala in front of the old people got laughs as well. But after these attempts, I stopped. In any event I received no encouragement to continue.

Combining childhood memories of hearing Kwak’wala with contemporary lessons in Kwak’wala
literacy has been very helpful in deepening my understanding of the language. The following Kwak’wala words and phrases are a few examples of Gwânti’lakw’s oft-repeated sayings that I recall from everyday instructions or requests: such as “ňľaxwstuda” (close the door), “gilaga hâmx’id” (come and eat!), “hâga mixîda” (go to sleep), “gwas ñwas” (don’t cry), or “kêt” (for “indeed” when she was talking to Adawis on the phone), “nînas’anawis” (I wonder where), “wistadzi” (where is it), “tłumuxw omiş wistas” (really you are funny), tłumuxw xâkâxst (really you are a skinny ass [indicating physical weakness]), wâlas didâ’tâla (really big laughs). Remembering Alice Peters whose everyday Kwak’wala name was ’Nalasgâm, I asked my aunty Bunt if Alice’s name really meant ‘dayface’ when I realized that ‘nala means day and the suffix -am means face. Aunty Bunt agreed, saying that Uncle Danny would call Alice “Daylasgâm,” blending the English translation with Kwak’wala. ’Nalasgâm helped Gwânti’lakw with cooking meals at Cranmer’s Café when I was a child. Akin to a psychic archaeological dig, peeling back the layers of negative self-messages reveals layers of language memories and gains definition in outline and content once I apply sustained and concerted effort.

As an active member of the Anglican Church choir, Gwânti’lakw would take me to weekly services where we, at times, would recite the Lord’s Prayer in Kwak’wala, and sing from the Kwak’wala hymnbook. During my time with Gwânti’lakw between my infancy years to seven years old and then between twelve (when I returned from hospital and St. Michael’s) and when I moved away to complete high school in Grade Nine in Deep Cove, my experience of Kwak’wala was mostly a passive listening rather than an attempt to participate in an active role as a speaker of Kwak’wala. In fact at that time (age 12 to 15) I didn’t have an active role as a
speaker in any language. My institutional years had taught me that I got into the least trouble by remaining silent. One of the underlying motivations for my choice of dissertation was my assumption that if I could finally understand and speak Kwak’wala a little better, I would understand Gwânti’lakw’s unique worldview a little better, which is our Kwakwâkan’wakw worldview. More than any gratuitous nod to a grand cultural abstraction, my direction in this dissertation is very personal in that I had always felt that my beloved Gwânti’lakw was a mystery to me owing to my poor grasp of Kwak’wala. At times my past and my silence astonishes me and I find myself agreeing with Leggo (2003) that “….astonishment is a good place to begin and a good place to linger. In sharing the following poems and ruminations about backyards, autobiography, poetry and the heart, I am not seeking to silence astonishment. I hope instead to astonish silence” (p. 133). I too wish to astonish my own silence and thereby disrupt the noise of the master narrative that I have internalized.

On reflection, I now realize that my life patterns of new beginnings (especially with respect to language learning) are taken up with great enthusiasm only to eventually fizzle out to new distractions. It wasn’t until I reached my thirties (by then I had married and settled on the Qualicum reserve) that I attempted to learn about Kwak’wala literacy. In Alert Bay, community-wide efforts to revitalize Kwak’wala began in earnest in the eighties with the establishment of the U’mista Cultural Centre, which became home for all cultural events as well as the central residence for language revitalization efforts out of which grew the Kwak’wala Language Workbook Series (U’mista Cultural Society, 1980), a series written in the U’mista orthography. Under the guidance of local Elders, Yotu (aka Dr. Cranmer Webster) and a team of Kwak’wala language activists with the assistance of Dr. J. Powell developed both the U’mista orthography and the foundational Kwak’wala workbook series. During these intensive efforts in the
community, I undertook independent study, bought the Kwak’wala language series and poster of the Kwak’wala alphabet, took these home to Qualicum and proceeded to memorize the symbols and sounds of Kwak’wala. However, without the benefit of sustained close instruction, my efforts did not result in any outstanding outcome. My efforts in this respect though, now give me a boost when it comes to reading Kwak’wala texts or singing hymns in Kwak’wala, as it is much easier for me to read than to engage in spontaneous speech.

One of my expectations, prior to participating in the 2008 Infield Institute, was that I would discover and learn the prepositions in Kwak’wala that roughly corresponded with English prepositions. On May 19th, 2008 I made the following note: “I would like to learn the prepositions, the joiner words such as “with,” “through,” “by,” and “to.” My assumption might be forgiven since English was my only frame of reference. What I found out of course is that prepositional morphemes are embedded with stem and root morphemes in Kwak’wala and do not exist separately.

However, new speakers of Kwak’wala have been modifying how it is spoken. In her book *Talking in Context*, Goodfellow (2005) investigates changes that are taking place in Kwak’wala among current speakers spanning three generations (older, middle-aged, and young), by comparing their productions to various features of the language recorded by Franz Boas. Her evidence suggests that Kwak’wala is losing some of its poly-synthetic lexical and grammatical features, some phonological distinctions involving glottal stops, uvulars, and velars, and some vocabulary in favour of analytic constructions, sound blends, and terms that are characteristic of English. Goodfellow argues that these changes are taking place largely as a result of pressure
from the use of English, long the dominant language of the community and now the first language of the latest generations, and that the changes have been taking place over time—the younger the speaker, the less use and awareness there is of the traditional features of Kwak’wala. My note about wanting to learn the Kwak’wala prepositions, although misguided, corresponds with what Goodfellow has found in her study—I too have been deeply influenced by English constructions. Thus my dream of becoming a good speaker (in Kwak’wala) continues to be very much a work in progress, and a work that continues to part of reclaiming and strengthening my cultural identity.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

Writing autoethnographically poses unique challenges specific, naturally, to each writer. My way of working combined both writing and therapy as I pursued research for my MA program. For my dissertation I have continued the same process to help me get through multiple layers of my own resistance to the most difficult parts. The greatest resistance I have is to actually begin writing my reflections chapter. Nevertheless, sifting and sorting through the theory and methodology supporting my work, the data gathered, the struggle with learning Kwak’wala, the deep introspection of my investigation into identity, and the rich experiences with Elders and relatives, all give me much to reflect on. To begin let me return to the initial research questions and consider the answers I can now provide.

1. What kinds of stories told in Kwak’wala will photo-elicitation, as a methodological tool of interviewing, yield from Kwakwaka’wakw Elders? What will these photo-assisted interviews reveal about the temporal, geographic, historical and cultural contexts for the photographs?

As mentioned, so many Elders wished to participate in my project that I ended up interviewing and recording many more than I had planned, and their warm generous reception affirmed in many imperceptible but deeply felt ways my earliest memories of Adatsa, Abaya’a, and Du’da, and Nunu, all of who created an atmosphere of complete warmth, ease and safety. I now have a deeper sense of the kinds of stories that old photos will elicit, especially if the Elders feel free to express those stories in Kwak’wala. For example, most Elders recited their lineages, traditional
territories, and clan connections across tribes, and four Elders focused exclusively on these matters both in Kwak’wala and English. Three other Elders focused on their life experiences and interests in string games (or kyota) as well as magic or ghost stories, also in Kwak’wala and English. The stories told by Elders that focused on their memories of their early life experiences seemed to point directly to the connection between their experiences on their lands and the language. In other words, the kinds of stories told in Kwak’wala revealed the temporal, geographic, cultural and historical contexts from which each had sprung. Kwak’wala might be, in this case, understood as the headwaters, the source out of which flows the worldview that confirms and affirms one’s place in the cosmos. There is still much more transcription work to do that will invariably yield not only rich linguistic data, Kwak’wala used in context, but also the contextual information for each tribe represented. Whether or not the photos directly pertained to each individual Elder, the landscapes and the people in these landscapes reminded the Elders of their own personal life experiences. Thus, as in the studies cited in the Method chapter, my use of the photo-elicitation technique also proved very successful. Requesting the Elders to use Kwak’wala also seemed to encourage references to their lineages and their connection to their lands. The corpus of recorded material, while not all pertinent to the purposes of this dissertation, should prove useful as curricular materials in schools and in community Kwak’wala language classes.

2. Further, what effects will my participation in this project have on my identity as a Kwak’wala language learner in adulthood and as member of my family and my community?
Despite my life-long ambiguity about my place in the Cranmer family clan, my participation in this project has strengthened my sense of identity. My institutional experiences during my childhood left me with a profound sense of alienation from my larger Cranmer clan through my teens and in my early adulthood. However, my movement (begun in early 90s) beyond destructive life patterns through consistent therapy, combined with my writing, has propelled me, like the salmon, back to the river of my origins. My earliest memories, so filled with the original love and warmth of the Elders who surrounded, protected and nurtured me, coincided with this project’s timeline. If not for the constants in my life, Yotu and other beloved relatives, if not for the writings of courageous Indigenous scholars reporting on their own language reclamation processes, if not for the compassionate theorists working in the fields of Indigenous Studies, narrative inquiry, and second language acquisition, I would not and could not have begun this work, much less see it through to this point in my learning journey.

Using my print literacy skills, I attempt to transfer familiarity with symbol/sound connections, but have experienced only limited success with increased Kwak’wala proficiency. However, with repeated listening to the interviews in Kwak’wala to transcribe in both Kwak’wala and English, Carrie noted a distinct improvement in my reading fluency or fluidity during our Friday night Skype nights where we would practice reading Kwak’wala stories to each other. Carrie noticed that when I relaxed, my ability to articulate the complex sounds from the Boas texts greatly improved, but I when I was nervous, I was prone to second guessing my pronunciation—looking to Emily our expert speaker for correction—which gets in the way of fluent reading. Thus reading Kwak’wala out loud with my interlocuters (expert listeners such as Emily and fellow adult learners such as Carrie) also became my method of learning Kwak’wala.
I have long maintained that through my post-secondary degree program choices, I expected to learn how to make sense of my family history. I now realize that behind that assumption lives the idea that I wanted to make sense of myself, feeling like a misshapen lump formed by a social engineering experiment forced on the lives and bodies of generations of Indigenous peoples of Canada, those who I consider my compatriots of conscience. The academic passages accompanying my narrative vignettes are deliberately placed to suggest not only the connection between the personae (different creative voices in the narrative vignettes) and the academic voices, but also that the personae are of the subjects of the studies on intergenerational transmission of trauma. In short, I wish to validate, affirm and support the necessity of the time-honoured cultural practice (in many of the diverse First Nations and other Indigenous cultures) of introspection by which we might become aware of old wounds and how these shape current behaviours, and how to become alive to the idea of choice and change for a healthier future. I also wish to validate, affirm and support the work of the authors, whose quotations provided a counter-point academic voice to my narrative voice, cited in the narrative vignette section.

Reflection on where we have come from, what forces have shaped our identities, and who we are becoming is the work of returning to ourselves. From an Indigenous Studies perspective, Indigenous heritage language revitalization forms the foundation and the frame for the expansion of discursive, epistemological and pedagogical space within the academy.

5.2 Future Considerations for Indigenous Heritage Language Research

For future consideration in Indigenous heritage language research, a number of the features specific to the Indigenous experience in Canada that I have discussed in this dissertation appear
to be useful in building a theoretical framework to advance development of the urgently needed educational resources for Indigenous adult heritage language learners (latent or semi-speakers). These features include residential school influence, theories of identity in speech communities, intergenerational transmission of trauma, and autoethnography. Anderson (2006) argued that researchers build theoretical frameworks by which to examine and ideally deepen our understanding of wider social phenomena. The literature and data by, for and about adult Indigenous language learners (while small but growing) can be studied in order to begin to build a theory about either latent or semi-speakers of Indigenous languages. Even if those working in Indigenous language revitalization might be impatient or otherwise dismissive of theory building in favour of more pragmatic approaches to language learning, there is much to be gained from such attempts. As a minor example, Indigenous heritage language learners, particularly from my generation, may recognize and resonate with the identity theories discussed by Norton and Toohey (2011) when it comes to analyzing social dynamics that result in exclusion of certain learners who attempt to access their heritage speech communities.

More broadly, a theory of adult Indigenous language learning should account for such issues as the integrative rather than the instrumental motivation for learning, the diaspora of Indigenous populations and the difficulty of finding and sustaining speech communities, the lingering residential school influence, and the large linguistic differences (phonological and syntactical as well as lexical) between European and Indigenous languages—all of which differ significantly from issues considered in SLA theories. The issues, concerns and characteristics of latent speakers revealed in Basham and Fathman’s (2008) study are confirmed, both in implicit and explicit ways, in published Indigenous autoethnographies, and in my own stories of learning.
Kwak’wala. In answering their research question, “What effect does hearing the language as a child have on language learning as an adult?,” with a variety of data gathering instruments, the authors found that while classroom instruction did not increase productive skills, formal instruction for adult latent learners can be enlightening and augmentative to sustained interaction with speech communities. Further, Basham and Fathman (2008) found that while latent speakers possess phonological familiarity, elementary vocabulary, and knowledge of contextual usage, they also underestimate their productive capacities (p. 592). As a Kwak’wala language learner, I identified with the first person reports of the participants of Basham and Fathman’s (2008) study, and I think this study could be modified and built on with application to the First Nations languages in Canada. For instance, the scholars identified the residential school as the singular experience that establishes the commonalities shared between survivors and descendants, a particularly useful and transferable insight.

Given the shared singular commonality of experience for Indigenous students (both in Canada and the United States), the residential school survivors and our descendants continue to express the psychological and emotional impacts of this aspect of our history. But there are those who dismiss the idea of transmission of intergenerational trauma, even those my age who have lived through the residential school experience. If these views or beliefs were true, then why and how do these patterns of addiction, relationship challenges, and feelings of anger, hostility, and grief persist and fall to the subsequent generations who seem to be equally challenged to make positive life choices and to strive to be the best we can be? If we can accept the causal link between this historical experience and the subsequent social anomie along with Indigenous
heritage language contraction, how might those working in Indigenous language revitalization design a study that captures my ever shrinking demographic?

The study of identity and language learning by Norton and Toohey (2011) offers great pragmatic value in identifying and analyzing oppressive social situations. How might an arts-based research approach (centering on theatre or the visual arts or traditional tribal arts) facilitate Indigenous language revitalization? Creating and facilitating scenarios centering on the enactment of unequal social power dynamics that serve to exclude certain learners based on how they are perceived and positioned within the larger family socio-cultural systems could establish a safe forum in which to explore and express tender feelings that would naturally surface in such work. In fact, role-playing these scenarios in the Indigenous heritage languages could add levity to what might otherwise be emotionally fraught exercises. I am a ’Namgis mother, a grandmother, a university instructor, a writer, a Kwak’wala language learner, a daughter, a niece, an auntie, and a sister. Realizing the creative responses needed to meet micro-aggressions (usually expressed subconsciously) affords one greater flexibility and deeper understanding of the social dynamic in play.

With the recent emergence of Indigenous autoethnographies by, for and about Indigenous heritage language reclamation, there will be sufficient published self-studies to draw on that will make possible the kind of narrative study of language conducted by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000). Just as Hall (in Norton and Toohey, 2001, p. 418) asserts that identity is a process of becoming rather than a destination arrived at, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) similarly observe, with their “participation metaphor,” that “learning [is] a process of becoming a member of a
certain community [where one can] communicate and act according to its norms” (p. 156). For adult Indigenous heritage language learners, the participation metaphor is requisite as we’ve seen by the success of the increase in numbers for semi-speakers (i.e., those only partially fluent in an Indigenous language) reported by the 2014 First Peoples’ Cultural Council: “This is an increase of 3144 speakers over the 2010 numbers” (p. 19). For my demographic though, this process of becoming a member of one’s rightful speech community can take a lifetime. Nevertheless, the border crossing from a colonized consciousness to one’s ancestral consciousness through language, while fraught, ultimately brings great healing through the connection to our ancestors that our Indigenous heritage languages provide.

Attributing the success in the increase in numbers of speakers to the Mentor-Apprentice Learning program where a language learner is paired with one fluent speaker to engage in immersive language learning, the writers of the report show how Pavlenko and Lantolf’s (2000) theory regarding the participation metaphor works on the ground and in communities. Finally, the 2014 FPCC report acknowledges the demographic of latent speakers in BC: “While we do not have any estimate of the number of latent speakers in the province, latent speakers are an important category of speakers to acknowledge” (p. 12). Future language needs assessments could include this category in the FPCC survey instruments to obtain a snap shot of the current numbers of latent speakers to include this group in future language projects. Once this snapshot is obtained, further questionnaires can be developed to assess the learning needs of latent learners. While I resist referring to the social phenomenon of intergenerational trauma from residential school as a ‘variable,’ this aspect of our colonial history cannot be omitted, and, given
the intergenerational transmission of language shame or shyness amongst residential school survivors, great sensitivity is required when developing questionnaires.

Following Basham and Fathman’s (2008) model, as well as the model established by U’mista Cultural Center in the production of their Kwak’wala Learning Series (1981), such work requires the guidance of community Elders who might be semi or fluent speakers. Beyond filling out surveys, needs assessments and questionnaires, what emotional supports might be built into the model when considering a theoretical framework that supports understanding semi-fluent speakers or latent learners who are also residential school survivors attempting to relearn their Indigenous heritage languages? The healing movement in BC’s Indigenous communities consists of myriad ways and means of achieving health and wellness, including the many different Indigenous-only treatment centers, men’s groups, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, women’s support groups, men’s support groups, and healing and cultural workshops hosted by urban Indigenous Friendship Centers. Sobriety is the first step of a life-long healing journey, and the next step might be post-secondary education or getting a job or getting one’s children back from the Ministry of Families and Children or getting out of jail. Another step could also be in the area of Indigenous language reclamation. The Tsow Tun Le Lum Treatment Center bases their addictions program (like all other BC Indigenous treatment centers) on cultural practices and customs based on the idea that culture is treatment. We can also support one another by attending to the life supporting memories that connect us to our truest deepest selves, our ancestral languages.
Within the field of Indigenous Studies, writing from the first person is culturally requisite in order to honour, maintain and support relationships within and among the wider traditional territories of writers’ home communities. Another unique tenet in the First Nations Studies Department is the promotion of place-based learning not only develop an appreciation of local Indigenous knowledges, but also for Indigenous students to strengthen their connections to their home communities through research projects that are politically and culturally relevant. There is profound connection between Kwakwaka’wakw identity, the land and Kwak’wala. The temporality, historicity, and cultural aspects of the responses are readily revealed in the memories shared by the Elders, and are specifically and uniquely anchored within the traditional territories of the Elders who were interviewed.

Despite the lack of success experienced by our local on-reserve schools to produce bilingual students, there is a deep potential for nurturing productive Kwak’wala speakers who may be considered either latent or semi-speakers based on their years of exposure to the language either in the limited immersive experience (K-Gr. 3) or with attendance and participation in potlatch and feasting ceremonies. I surmise that based on our now heavy reliance on print (and now digital) literacy, the audio data base I have gathered will help—at the very least—the future generations of Kwak’wala language learners given the phonological complexities in the articulation of Kwak’wala. Certainly for those interested in the technical linguistic deconstructive aspects of Kwak’wala, the audio database contains much that can be worked up into curriculum course outlines, as there is so much more to transcribe and transliterate for the benefit of the Kwakwaka’wakw. While it is difficult to gauge, evaluate or measure my progress as an adult Kwak’wala language learner, with repeated readings of stories in Kwak’wala with
fluent speakers, I am slowly becoming a more fluid reader. And more recently, I have noticed the energetic sense of grasping the whole sense of the sentences if I refrain from attempting to deconstruct the parts of speech.

Identity is an abstract concept that is experienced in relationship, in stories about relationships, in silence and in song. Identity is also, as theorized by Norton and Toohey (2011) and many others, the site of struggle. Since this inquiry included not only my personal story, but also that of my beloved relatives, and since I delved deeply and courageously into the depths of my earliest beginnings, I feel like the supernatural one who can heal through song, through story, a profound embodiment and expression of the names given to me. The epigraph I chose to open this thesis, in Yotu’s words, “It’s as if we’re coming back to ourselves,” refers to the repatriation of the cultural treasures stolen from the Kwakw’akawakw during the cultural suppression years, but in my case, it’s as if I am coming back to myself on a profoundly personal level. Treasures of material culture can be remade, but my life needs to be repaired and restored through language, song and dance—that which brings me back to myself.

Poststructural theories of identity (as a range of identity positions) facilitate a sense of expansiveness and flexibility to adopt a self-compassionate stance with respect to my own progress as a Kwak’wala language learner. Expanding the focus outward to other adult Indigenous heritage language learners who may encounter challenging situations in their attempts to access their speech communities or become more proficient in their language, there is much to learn from both the Indigenous Studies and SLA literature. More specifically, learning about the negotiation of identities would greatly alleviate the tensions embodied in navigating in
and out of different speech communities, particularly for learners confronted with the enactment of social power dynamics within our communities that simultaneously serve cultural power brokers while at the same time exclude learners attempting to access our language communities and block the path to revitalization of our critically endangered languages.

For Indigenous heritage language learners who dedicate their lives, energies and efforts to awakening their heritage languages, I would say in solidarity, we must, despite or because of childhood experiences, be the *bricoleur*—the jack of all trades—to pick and choose techniques, methods, or strategies to reclaim the languages of our birth. Along the way you might discover and experience (as I have) immanent, and numinous, even spiritual self-understanding.

I wish to conclude this thesis, this journey, with at least a hint of its spiritual dimension for me. While my Kwak’wala language-learning journey has been fraught with all sorts of tensions (both internal and external) it has ultimately been, and continues to be a transformative experience. While I acknowledge that speaking of the spiritual is taboo in many Indigenous cultures, I take my cue from Dr. Ellen White, who always validated all dimensions of the human experience if told from the personal rather than reporting from a second or third person perspective. I opened my dissertation with the Ancestor Story of the ’Namgis and referenced Namxwalagyu, another of our ancestors. Elsewhere I published this story about my experience with Namxwalagyu and quote it in part here:

> I have viscerally experienced my ancestor when he showed up in the most unexpected place—at the end of a ten-minute mini-lesson on shape recognition in Kwaguilt art.…

> Bringing the print in a brown paper bag to class, I take it out and in the very midst of that
action, a sense of powerful energy, somewhere between a roaring wind and electricity, infused my total being….The juxtaposition between the cold classroom walls and the intense internal experience of energetic expansion, compliments of Namxxalagayu, was as liberating as it was exhilarating. It was in his name that my forefathers and my foremothers experienced the storm of our long dark winter and it is in his name that the ’Namgis continue to prevail. (Cranmer, 2007).

I did not consciously or intentionally invoke the presence of Namxxalagayu during that moment, but he made his presence felt on all levels of my being. I take the ontological stance that our ancestors exist and exist all around us, through us and through our heritage languages. By simply reading the Lord’s Prayer in Kwak’wala, I have experienced, through the reverent and respectful invocation of the spirit, the visceral quickening that immediately signals a felt sense of the expansion of energy united with the greater spirit, the Gigami’ laxa iki—I become greater than the sum of my human parts. I have also experienced the same internal sensations (unquantifiable, untouchable, immeasurable) when dancing in ceremonial space, bare feet following the endless dance steps of my ancestors. I become viscerally and cognitively aware that I am not only accompanied by my ancestors—their steps are also imprinted on the dance floor surrounding me as I dance, their Kwak’wala songs sing alive my spirit, transcending old wounds, grievances and resentments that fall away in the face of namwayut, that we are all one.
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