HAQ WIL LA HLO IS SIM:
WALK SLOWLY ON THE BREATH OF YOUR ANCESTORS
AN EXAMINATION OF GIFT GIVING WITHIN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the values and traditions embedded in the Indigenous practice of gift giving to understand how this tradition can inform the work of Indigenization in post-secondary education. Seven Gitxsan Chiefs and seven Elders from Vancouver Island University were contributors to this study, sharing their perspectives in relation to how this practice connects to Indigenous epistemology and ontology. The Gitxsan feast system and crest pole framed the theoretical inquiry and methodology for this study. In addition, I drew on Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (1991) 4 R’s of respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility as an ethical framework for quality Indigenous education and provided a reinterpretation of the 4 R’s, identifying the 4 A’s of accommodation, acquiescence, affiliation and acceptance, as part of my personal analysis informing this study. I also utilized Kuokkanen’s (2007) concept of gift logic.

Numerous findings were identified in this study. Primary among them was the understanding that Indigenous research, grounded in protocol and traditional practices, can be a catalyst for cultural reaffirmation leading to a deeper understanding of Indigenous philosophy. Second, the articulation of a Gitxsan Gift Giving Model identifying the values and principles consistent with Gitxsan philosophy. Third, an Indigenous research paradigm that is uniquely Gitxsan and indicative of a decolonizing approach to doing research. Fourth, the development of a Discursive Tool rooted in Indigenous philosophy as a method of inquiry to explore the distinctions and tensions related to the Indigenization process. Fifth, Goodness
Theory: An Ethical Approach to Indigenization that centers Indigenous knowledge and emphasizes balancing a good heart and mind. The approach identifies specific Indigenous characteristics and principles that surround a way of knowing that can be a portal for dialogue in post-secondary education, a site of engagement for speaking our truths informed by our values.
Preface

This work was approved by The University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board, Certificate number H14-00077, and by Vancouver Island University’s Research Ethics Board on June 18th, 2014. This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, S. Hobenshield.
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¹ Photos in this dissertation are property of Sharon Hobenshield
Gitxsan Language Glossary

Adawaak – oral traditions/history

Ant’aadit – welcoming delegation at feast

Ayookxw - law

Ayuuks – crests of the Wilp depicted on Git’mgan

Bats’aa – gift-giving by host

Ent’im nak - spouses of the Wilp

Giskhaast – fireweed

Git’mgan – carved crest pole

Gitxsanimxw – official language of the Gitxsan people

Hawaal – contribution of money to one Wilp

Huwilp – plural of Wilp - Houses

Li’ligit – feast system

Limx’oy – grieving song

Lax Ganeda – frog clan

Lax Gibuu – wolf clan

Lax Skiik – eagle clan

Lax’yip – traditional land or territory of a Wilp

Mixk’aax – gift from Chief
Nidn’t-deed –

Nidinsxw – witness at a feast

Sigidimhaanak’ – Chiefteness or Matriarchs

Simgigyet – Chiefs (plural of Simogyet)

Simogyet – Chief, head of the Wilp

So’o – food given out at feast

Tets – Invitation party

Wilp – ‘House’ the primary social, political, and economic unit in Gitxsan society.

Wilksi’witxw - father clan

Xsisxw – system of compensation

Zeim-tsek – total contribution
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Lastly, to my grandparents, Fred and Maggie Johnson, thank you for leaving such a legacy of love and knowledge to the Wilp Malii. You are forever in my heart.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to future generations who are seeking inspiration for what it means to think and be good. I encourage you to look to your Elders and to what lies within your hearts.
CHAPTER 1: Introduction, \textit{Tets}

It is a well-established argument that the gift functions mainly as a system of social relations, for forming alliances, communities, and solidarity. It is often ignored that in indigenous worldviews, the gift extends beyond interpersonal relationships to “all my relations.” It is a key aspect of the environment-based worldviews of many indigenous peoples, for whom giving entails an active relationship between the human and natural worlds, one characterized by reciprocity, a sense of collective responsibility, and reverence toward the gift of the land. (Kuokkanen, 2007, p. 23)

In \textit{Gitxsanimx}, the language of the Gitxsan people, the \textit{tets} \textsuperscript{2} is the invitation party that sets out on behalf of the house group, \textit{wilp}, to formally invite people in person to an important event, \textit{li’ligit}, a feast, that is going to take place. While it is not possible for me to enact this protocol in its entirety for the purposes of this research study, I do wish to extend an invitation to all that might be interested to participate in what I describe as a personal inquiry and journey into a Gitxsan worldview.

One of the main cultural ceremonies of the Gitxsan people is the \textit{li’ligit}, feast system. Embedded in this ceremony is a very structured practice of gift giving. As a child growing up I eagerly participated in this event, dutifully handing out food such as fruit, crackers, bread and giving gifts of blankets and other household items under the watchful eye and direction of my mother and other family members. At that time

\textsuperscript{2} Gitxsan language is used throughout this thesis.

it was incomprehensible to me that I was enacting one of our ancestral practices that seeks to renew kinship relationships within our community and Gitxsan worldview. As an adult, the profundities of the li’ligit remain to some extent indefinable with its embedded principles of continual reciprocity and holistic interdependent application to all things within the spiritual and physical realms. I have come to experience it as an organic and fluid process and as such its meaning can never be fully comprehended through the English language. However, as a Gitxsan person and educator, it is my responsibility to pursue and honor Gitxsan ways of perceiving and interpreting the world through advocacy for the recognition and inclusion of our worldview into mainstream education.

As the Director of Aboriginal Education and Engagement at Vancouver Island University (VIU), one of my primary duties is to provide leadership in the area of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Within an academic environment and Eurocentric institution where Western knowledge dominates and other knowledges are silent, speaking from an Indigenous perspective about the complexities of Indigenous knowledge systems has been a challenge. Many academics misunderstand its complexity. Kuokkanen’s quote at the beginning of this chapter was intended to assist readers to begin to understand the complexities of Indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews expressed through the practices of gift giving. Similar to Kuokkanen’s (2007) work in *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift*, I am particularly concerned with

3 Indigenous, First Nations and Indigenous are used interchangeably throughout the thesis.
how the intricacies and uniqueness of Indigenous worldviews largely go ignored to
the continued detriment of Indigenous learners. Kuokkanen’s notion of gift logic as a
new paradigm as it is understood by Indigenous people to counter the epistemic
ignorance of the academy is drawn on extensively in this study. To further
contextualize these inherent challenges, I will provide a brief review of the
developing trends in post-secondary education.

1.1 Provincial And National Trends In Post-Secondary Education

The lack of recognition of Indigenous ways of knowing and being and the
resulting isolation of Indigenous learners in education is not a new phenomenon. A
hundred plus years of forced assimilation and segregation of Aboriginal children in
Indian residential schools across Canada has left a legacy of intergenerational
trauma. The 1972-policy paper on Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE) noted
the transition from the closing of residential schools to public schools and lack of
preparedness for integrating racial and cultural differences. The ICIE reinforced
First Nation leaders’ position advocating recognition of Indigenous children, identity
and culture in the public education system. However, in western educational
institutions there is a lack of movement on these important issues and lack of
recognition symbolizes colonial representations of uncontested white privilege.

Theorists of critical pedagogy (Friere, 1998; Giroux, 1993) have illuminated
the subtle but pervasive manner in which educational institutions uphold power and
privilege over marginalized groups. In this context, racism is paraphrased by
This form of veiled racism becomes established in the hegemonic structures of educational environments and tightly controlled by those who continue to benefit from these practices. Systemic oppression is not particular to education but rather indicative of the larger societal and political context in which First Nations people are still considered and treated as a subjugated population within Canada.

The sovereign rights of First Nations people and related jurisdictional issue over education are fundamentally related. Failure to address this issue has resulted in an education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children that has become a commonplace predicament and a national disgrace. Regardless of legislation (Constitution Act of 1982), government reports' (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People), or global assertion (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) education as a right and source of liberation is not authenticated beyond a public moral language. The Canadian government and Crown have not upheld their responsibility to the First Peoples of this land. From my tenure in the educational system, I am acutely aware of the complexities and tensions around the notion of ‘integration’ of Aboriginal people in education. Regan (2010) positions this tension as, “Intercultural conflicts between Indigenous people and settlers are rooted in political, socio-economic, and legal structures that the two groups understand from very different historical and cultural perspectives” (p. 65). Nonetheless, in B.C. there has been considerable government policy and funding for post-secondary institutions to “close the gap” between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners and achieve comparable outcomes (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2008, p.1).
In 1995, the provincial government developed the *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework* to address systemic barriers and improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal learners. This policy and the ensuing 2007 *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan* has supported many initiatives across the province such as Aboriginal targeted seats for Aboriginal learners, scholarships and awards and Gathering Places to provide cultural spaces for Aboriginal students attending post-secondary institutions (p.5). Alongside this work, national education groups such as the Association of Canada Deans of Education (ADCE) and the Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) are working to ensure that the practice of Indigenous education is articulated in their respective documents such as The 2010 *Accord on Indigenous Education* and the 2014 *Indigenous Education Protocol for Colleges and Institutes*.

In many respects it is a favourable time to be working in Aboriginal education and I am grateful and humbled when I think of the educators, residential school survivors, scholars and community leaders who have brought attention to these inequalities and advocated for improved resources for Aboriginal learners and communities. I consider myself among a privileged generation of Indigenous educators who have benefited from this resiliency. I recognize the contribution of past generations; people who created spaces in education to exert Indigenous values and ways of knowing with minimal resources, policies or public documents to support their efforts. It is through their perseverance that we are progressing out of the colonial shadows. However, equity is still not a reality for Indigenous learners among their non-Indigenous counterparts and as the gap persists, so must the work
of decolonization. As an Indigenous educator, I believe I have a responsibility to continue to chip away at the dominant structures providing a critical interpretation of contemporary developments in education.

1.2 Indigenization At Vancouver Island University

VIU, similar to other post-secondary institutions across B.C, is actively engaging with Aboriginal people and identifying Aboriginal education as a priority, a process some describe as Indigenization. In a keynote speech, David Newhouse, Indigenous scholar from Six Nations, identifies the development of Indigenizing the academy:

Indigenization is the process whereby the institution begins to adjust to the presence of our knowledge, our knowledge systems and structures and our truth tests. Indigenization in my mind is about creating a site within the university for the exploration of our own ideas first for ourselves and then for all of humanity. It is the site in my mind, of enormous complexity and potential. It can also be a site of considerable tension and promise (D. Newhouse, personal communication, SFU-UBC Indigenous Graduate Student Symposium, Vancouver B.C., March 7, 2015)

He goes on to describe three phases of Indigenization: phase one; we brought our bodies to the institution; phase two; we brought our culture, and the third phase is currently underway - where we bring our knowledge.

This definition and phased approach could be applied to VIU's Indigenization efforts. For example, the high number of Aboriginal students attending VIU reflects representation of phase one. In 2013/14, VIU reported 917 full time equivalent
(FTE) Aboriginal students with a five-year trend of approximately 11% of total VIU student FTE’s from 2009-10 to 2013-14 (VIU Aboriginal Service Plan 2013/14 – 2015/16). Phase two is demonstrated through VIU’s commitments to; match government funding to build a 2500 square foot Gathering Place for Aboriginal learners, provide university signage that includes words of welcome in the traditional language of the local First Nations communities, recognize Elders as faculty members under the Vancouver Island Faculty Association Collective Agreement, and implement institutional learning outcomes that identify, “An awareness of Aboriginal perspectives includes the different ways of knowing by which these perspectives enrich university life. Indigenous Perspective relates not only to the objective of exploring what Indigenous knowledge is but also to devising ways of integrating such knowledge into our learning” (VIU’s Learning Outcomes, January 15, 2015).

When I started in the Director position at VIU in 2006, I was a half time employee with minimal resources. Six months later, the 2007 Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy and Action Plan was announced and my office has been responding to provincial government calls ever since. Today I am working full time with twelve employees and have an active department within VIU partnering with different Aboriginal communities on a wide-range of projects and programs involving faculty across the institution. Despite this transition, I am hesitant to suggest that we are fully engaged in a phase three process of Indigenization to which we are exploring our “own ideas” as described by Newhouse, as much of this development has been initiated by government grants with prescribed objectives and
outcomes. However, I am grateful for this progression and believe as a result of this funding, VIU has had to adjust to the presence of our bodies, culture and knowledge. As an Indigenous academic, my role is to critically assess the extent to which corporate and government agendas for economic development restrict significant gains during phase three of the Indigenization process at VIU. I question whether we are working toward self-determination of Indigenous education or against it. Perhaps this paradox is connected to Newhouse’s (2015) identified sites of complexity and potential, tension and promise. Kuokkanen’s (2007) gift logic would argue that the current capitalistic system is based purely on economic exchange that is “built on the exploitation of cultural traditions and knowledge” (p. 30) to which land and labour are further implicated.

The 2014 B.C.’s Skills for Jobs Blueprint: Re-engineering Education and Training makes its intentions explicit in regard to Aboriginal youth as the fastest growing demographic in the province identifying them as a “huge pool of new talent” (p. 14). The push by government for job training to support the Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) industry as well as the extraction and disruption of other natural resources in First Nations communities is a contentious topic. The push-pull factors between First Nations communities, government and industry against the backdrop of the unresolved land and title issues are problematic to say the least. Implicitly connected to this conflict is the reality of shrinking resources in post-secondary education, declining enrolments and the move to be more entrepreneurial in our engagement with communities and industry. The amalgamation of these
contributing factors is indicative of my apprehension of the current context of Aboriginal education in BC and how we interpret the work of Indigenization.

In Chapter 2, the literature review, I return once again to Newhouse’s (2015) three phases of Indigenization and his notion of ‘complex understandings’ to describe his vision for how those in the academy can come together to share various perspectives with the goal of looking for the relationship among these perspectives rather than be concerned with seeking “the Truth” or oneness of thought. His vision aligns with the objectives identified in this study: to create conversations among the different learning paradigms in the hopes of advancing understandings and deepening the level of engagement of Indigenous knowledge in the academy.

1.3 Decolonizing Dialogues

A critical component of Indigenization is decolonization and adhering to a capitalist agenda leaves little room for decolonizing dialogues. As stated earlier, the plea for the integration of Indigenous history, culture and ways of knowing leading to educational reform is not new. Indigenous scholars (Alfred, 2005; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Deloria, 1969; Kirkness, 1981) have tirelessly advocated for Aboriginal student values and knowledge systems to be recognized and authenticated through their robust contributions toward a body of intellectual scholarship. Battiste (2000) argues that while progress has been made, the reforms have not gone far enough. She connects cultural racism with what she terms ‘cognitive imperialism’, “the imposition of one worldview on a people who have an alternative worldview, with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior to
the alternative worldview” (p. 193). Battiste and others (Little Bear, 2000; Hampton, 1995) suggest an environment of mutual learning in which Aboriginal people’s language and culture are integral aspects of public educational experiences. It is a similar appeal made back in 1972 with the ICIE paper, “Indian children will continue to be strangers in Canadian classrooms until the curriculum recognize Indian customs and values, Indian languages, and the contributions which the Indian people have made to Canadian history” (ICIE, p.26). Grande (2004) also contends that this issue will persist “unless educational reform happens concurrently with the analyses of the forces of colonialism” (p. 19).

Decolonization requires listening, being willing to be uncomfortable and to critically reflect on one’s own socialization process. It is what Regan (2010) refers to as a discourse of ‘true telling’ where Settlers’ peacekeeping myths of Aboriginal people are confronted as is their foundations that present as one truth when in reality there are “multiple, subjective, and power-differentiated” forms of truths (p. 62). The challenge for Canadians in this process is the transition from moral supporter to active participant in which established idyllic images of Canada as a land ‘strong and free’ are disrupted. Regan further contends that “We must work in respectful and humble partnerships with Indigenous people to generate critical hope – vision that is neither cynical nor utopian but rooted in truth as an ethical quality in the struggle for human freedom” Regan, Paulette. Transforming the Dialogue: Essential Conversations for building Indigenous Cultural Competencies in Health and Education. Richmond, BC. March 27, 2012.
In the current educational context, there is a need to address the ongoing systemic issues and make space for essential decolonizing dialogues which have us question our response to hurried government funding calls that privilege efficiency over process and tangible outcomes versus building reciprocal relationships. What are the implications for this practice as an institution and for Indigenous learners and communities? Are we to any extent addressing the cognitive imperialism to which Battiste (2000) refers? Or are Institutions in fact becoming shallow representations or misrepresentations of what constitutes authentic engagement with Aboriginal communities and recognition for Indigenous ways of knowing and being? Further reflection and analysis as to how we might begin to address these pertinent issues amidst competing societal and political influences are explored in this dissertation.

1.4 Purpose Of My Research

As identified at onset of this chapter, my research process and presentation involved a personal inquiry and journey into Gitxsan worldview, a way of knowing and being that included conversations with Gitxsan Chiefs, VIU Elders, faculty, and students to identify similarities and differences between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge’s systems that can inform a deeper level of discussion and engagement for Indigenous students in higher education.

The purpose of this research is to:

• Critic, decolonize and Indigenize Western forms of education

• Create a Gitxsan theoretical framework through the articulation of Gitxsan’s feast ceremony and gift-giving beliefs and practices
• Expand on the developments of Indigenous ethics and methodologies

• Center Gitxsan worldviews and ways of knowing in educational discussions on educational and institutional transformations

• Identify how Gitxsan gift-giving practices and ways of knowing can enhance VIU’s understanding of the relevance of Indigenous worldviews for Indigenous and all learners.

The wider goal of this research project is demonstrate how Gitxsan methodologies and application of situated Indigenous knowledge systems can move VIU’s Indigenization processes beyond phase two; the cultural recognition of Indigenous student, content and community. By centering and privileging Gitxsan knowledge and theory, I will respectfully reciprocate with family, community and culture by contributing to the recognition and revitalization of Gitxsan knowledge and worldview.

1.5 Research Questions

My main research question for this dissertation is “How does Gitxsan knowledge contribute to the Indigenization efforts of academia?” This question is supported by four guiding questions:

1. How do Gitxsan Elders and Community Leaders describe gift-giving practices and protocols in relationships to ways of knowing and being?

2. How can Gitxsan knowledge and meaning be situated relative to non-Gitxsan knowledge systems?
3. How can VIU appropriately recognize and receive the gift of Indigenous perspectives within the diverse cultural and political landscape of the academy?

4. How can VIU enact gift-giving protocols with Indigenous ethics such as: reciprocity, responsibility and hospitality?

The research design undertaken for this study is further described in Chapter 4.

1.6 Locating Myself

I am the great granddaughter of Fred and Maggie Johnson and belong to the wilp (House of) Malii on my mother’s side and my family is part of the Lax Gibuu (Wolf) clan. My Gitxsan name is Ha-Youly (Fishing Man). My father’s family heritage originated from Austria and Germany. To this end, I have a blended ancestry and while I have always self-identified as Gitxsan, growing up under the influence of my grandparents and participating in Gitxsan ceremony and culture, I am cognizant that the color of my skin has me present as ‘white’. At times in my life, this dual identity has been a source of imposed contradiction as certain societal constructs have had me believe that I should choose and that I cannot inhabit both cultural locations. This has played out in subtle but significant ways such as the second looks I get when I self-identify or when people insist that I do not look First Nations and guess my heritage to be Italian or Spanish. Locating myself in this research is important as similar to other Indigenous dissertations (Absolon, 2008; Ormiston, 2012, & Rosborough, 2012) I am unable to separate my identity and experiences from my research.
Growing up exposed to different worldviews (Indigenous and European) has provided me with firsthand experience of living in a colonial context. Identifying and navigating the dynamics across culturally diverse groups is something that has become familiar. I have been provided a unique vantage point in which I can analyze cultural and social constructs. I can distinguish between the struggle and benefits that I am privy to at the intersection of my insider and outsider location. I will speak more about my role as both insider outsider and my location in this research process in Chapter 3.

My maternal grandfather was one of the wisest people I have known. He was a hereditary chief and spent his whole life living in his traditional Gitxsan territory. He spoke very little English and I spoke very little Gitxsanimx but one of the key teachings he was fond of repeating was, “to be good is to do good”. As a child, the meaning and rhythmic intonation behind these words were lost on me. It was not until I was older that I began to see my grandfather’s words, wisdom, and influence as a gift. “To be good is to do good”, is a belief that my grandfather lived by; today I understand it as being consistent with Gitxsan philosophy and teaching in which the values of harmony, balance, and interconnectedness are at the centre (Smith, 2004). My grandfather was one of my first teachers of Gitxsan worldview. He led by example of what it means to be Gitxsan and he upheld the traditional laws. It is his legacy that inspires me personally, professionally and in undertaking Indigenous research.
1.7 The Gift Of Indigenous Knowledge - Logic Of The Gift

Today, I live on Vancouver Island among on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people. I have always worked on Coast Salish territory, first as a social worker and now in education. Prior to coming to VIU, I worked solely for Aboriginal communities and organizations. Working in these different locations has continued to shape and guide my Indigenous framework. The Elders, community leaders and colleagues, particularly from the Coast Salish region, that I have had the privilege to work with have been great teachers and in this learning, I have come to recognize commonly held Indigenous perspectives such as: intergenerational learning, collective decision-making, interrelatedness, and oral transmission of knowledge and laws. Indigenous philosophical concepts of holism and the connection between the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional to form a healthy person and community are what I have come to know as Indigenous knowledge. Archibald (2008) makes the claim that “only when all of these entities are working together do we truly have Indigenous education” (p. 12).

I am grateful for my Gitxsan and Indigenous understandings of knowledge paradigms. I consider the teachings that have been provided to me as gifts. There is much beauty and depth within these philosophies that encourage me to learn more. As such, in this study I offer Gitxsan and Indigenous knowledges as gifts for the academy to gain further insight and find relevance into a complex and ever-changing world. To reiterate, Kuokkanen’s (2007) gift logic is a major contributor to this study with her claim that the gift of Indigenous epistemies is something to be considered in the academy while ensuring the principles of responsibility, hospitality
and human relationships informed by reciprocity are safeguarded (p. 127).

Kuokkanen’s work is further articulated in the succeeding chapter containing the literature review and again in Chapter 4 and 5 as it aligns with Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (1991) 4 R’s: respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility, both of which are central contributors to my methodology and therefore utilized to interpret and analyze the data.

1.8 Gitxsan Peoples, Communities And Land

Gitxsan First Nation traditional lands occupy 33,000 square kilometers in Central Northwest British Columbia (http://www.gitxsan.com/about/our-land/ retrieved on May 18, 2015) along the Skeena River and the current population is approximately 13,000 members with 70% living in the traditional territory (http://maps.fphlcc.ca/gitsenimx/ retrieved on July 4, 2015). Traditionally there are six communities of the Gitxsan Nation: Gitwangak, Gitanyow, Gitsegukla, Gitanmaax, Kispiox and Glen Vowell (see Figure 1). However, the Gitanyow today are independent from the centralized tribal group (Sterritt, Marsden, Galois, Grant & Overstall, 1998) and have developed their own constitution, The Gitanyow Ayookwx. The Gitxsan people are matriarchal with family groups belonging to huwilp (House groups) and each wilp belongs to one of four Gitxsan clans: Lax Gibuu (Wolf); Lax Ganeda (Frog); Giskhaast (Fireweed); and Lax Skiik (Eagle). Gitxsan translates to “people of the river mist”. The Gitxsan have occupied this land since time immemorial, living off the land in accordance with their law and have a long tradition of defending their land tenure. The book Tribal Boundaries in the Nass Watershed
specific purpose is to demonstrate this resistance that has occurred over time against colonialist invasion as well as among First Nations neighbours, the Nisga’a, Tsimshian, and the Athabasca Nations of the Tahltan and Tsetsaut, despite the similarities among cultural practices (Sterritt et al, p. 4).

The book identifies four historical migration periods that start with the post-glacial period and end with the 1800s fur trade where the movement among the different Nations ceased to what exists today. During this time the movement among the Nations was fluid and tumultuous. Using the adawaak (oral history) from the different house groups (Sterritt et al., 1998) recount Gitxsan history that has been passed on through the generations to describe tribal wars over encroachment on traditional hunting grounds followed by a xsiiisxw (system of compensation) in which “one house relinquishes wealth, names, crests, or territory to repay a crime committed against another house” (p. 13). To be clear, there were also episodes of peaceful relations, especially in the fourth period when colonial contact was initiated and efforts to maintain alliances made through common clan identity and intermarriages were reinforced. However, Gitanyow’s claim to their territory in the Nass remains contested to this day.
1.9 Post – Colonial Resistance

To present the Gitxsan people’s post-colonial resistance, I have taken examples from the time line that was presented in Delgamuukw (2010) and reorganized into the Table format below. The following is not an exclusive account but showcases some of the more prominent and colorful events (Delgamuukw 2010, p. 135).
Table 1: Gitxsan Post-Contact Resistance Time Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872: Gitsegukla Chiefs Blockade</td>
<td>Chiefs Blockade the Skeena river to all trading and boat activity in response to the burning of twelve Gitxsan houses and six poles by a group of miners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884: Anti-Potlatch Law</td>
<td>Federal government bans feasts and potlatches. Chief Gyetim Galdo'o openly holds a feast in Hazelton and is arrested by the RCMP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906: Simon Gunanoot</td>
<td>Simon Gunanoot is accused of murdering a white man and goes back to the land, evading police for 13 years. He turned himself in and was acquitted on all accounts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909: Gitwangak Chiefs Stop Surveyors</td>
<td>Gitwangak people stop a group of surveyors at gunpoint and demand meetings over land grievances. At the meeting they quote from the Royal Proclamation of 1763 as a basis for their claims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910: Gitanyow and Gitwangak Post Notices</td>
<td>Chiefs pin notices of their land claims along trails in Hazelton district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959: Federal Fisheries blows up rocks in Hagwilget</td>
<td>The Fisheries Department blows up rocks used by Hagwilget and the Gitxsan to stop fishing. They are opposed by women throwing rocks from the bridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970: The Fishing Roundup</td>
<td>Federal officers crack down on Gitxsan Chiefs who are fishing for food in what became known as the “Fishing Roundup”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986: Marshmallow War at An Ki Iss</td>
<td>Department of Fisheries raided Gitxsan fishing camps claiming they needed permits to harvest fish. Gitxsan people unified and formed a human barricade and the RCMP was called in. When the RCMP and Fisheries attempted to cross the barricade, children starting to pelt them with marshmallows.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Delgamuukw case of 1987 in which the Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en Chiefs filed a claim for land title after the British Columba government refused to negotiate is undoubtedly what the Gitxsan people are most well-known.

Delgamuukw v. the Queen was a British Columbia Supreme Court case that lasted over a decade. In this case, the plaintiffs, the Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en Chiefs, drew upon their oral histories and the testimony of expert witnesses, including anthropologists to establish title to their traditional territories. On March 8, 1991, Chief Justice Allan McEachern dismissed the claim, essentially rejected this testimony as invalid as it did not conform to judicial definitions of evidence and accepted the position of governments that Aboriginal title was extinguished in British Columbia pre-confederation (Monet, 1992). The Chiefs appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada and in 1997 were successful with the Supreme Court ruling that Aboriginal title had not been extinguished in British Columbia and the province had no jurisdiction to suggest otherwise. Further exploration of the Delgamuukw case proceedings and outcomes will be examined in Chapter 2 of the Literature review.

Two major sources of evidence presented in the Delgamuukw case that confirmed Gitxsan tradition and existence were the li’iligit and the totem poles, more specifically the git’mgan, which is a crest pole particular to a family describing their oral history. The Gitxsan, along with other Northwest Coast Nations, are known for their elaborate construction of totem poles and gifting and feasting practices which have been well documented over the years (Adams, 1973; Anderson & Halpin, 2000; Barbeau, 1973; Daly, 2005; Mills, 1994; Sequin, 1984) with their own history of resolve. In 1884 the government made it illegal to hold potlatch feasts and to
carve and raise totems (Anderson & Halpin, 2000). Despite this colonial tyranny, these ceremonies and traditions remain steadfast among the Gitxsan people.

Feasting features the practice of gift giving that emphasises the value of relationships paramount in Gitxsan culture. Similarly, the representation of a *git’mgan*, acknowledges history and connections to land that is also of great importance. Both entities are intertwined and indicative of processes and ways of transmitting knowledge within the Gitxsan tradition. To further articulate their significance, I turn to Richard Daly, an anthropologist who was invited by the Gitxsan people as an expert witness to support their claim to land title. Daly (2005) describes the longevity and communal purpose of *li’ligit* as follows:

> Feasting is ontogenic. Its gifting relations enact the succession of generations with their corresponding rights and duties, actor by actor…Social relations are adjusted as people age and die…Reciprocal gift-giving between the bereaved maternal group and formally solicitous father side embody basic relations of kinship and affinity…Gift-giving associated with feasts may be viewed as a socially reckoned template for every day relations of credit and debt, and, ultimately, a demonstration of the appropriate management of family lands and fishing sites. (p. 58)

In Daly’s description, gift-giving as demonstrated in the feast system forms the basis for Gitxsan epistemology, which is then storied through the crest pole:

> The raising of a House crest pole is at once a memorial to a generation of House leaders and a periodic renewal of the dynamic relationship between the people and their land. Putting the elaborate carved pole into the ground renews the bond between the group and the land by focussing the will and desire, the labour and wealth, of a whole
generation of House chiefs when they see their *adawaak* written on their crest pole. (2005, p.67)

In this regard, the crest pole is the symbolic illustration of the living relationships that are central to Gitxsan culture: prominence being placed on the connection to land, kinship, ancestral knowledge and reciprocity. Just as the *li’ligit* and *git’mgan* were vital features in the *Delgamuukw* case, they in turn, are focal points in this dissertation to position Gitxsan worldview and methodology. Prior to establishing these features in the context of this study and in an effort to further personalize and advance Daly’s description above, I offer the following ceremonial story from the day my family raised a *git’mgan* and hosted a *li’ligit*.

### 1.10 Git’mgan And Li’ligit

In April of 1994, the *wilp Malii* stood together in front of other *Huwilp* chiefs and community members and recited our *adawaak* (oral history), sang the *limx’oy* (grieving song) and raised a *git’mgan* (figure 2) in the village of Gitanyow, our ancestral home. It was on this day that *wilp Malii* reaffirmed its existence and status as a *wilp* by telling their history and demonstrating their knowledge of the past events that took place on their territory. Prior to this event, the *tets* (invitation party) would have gone out and extended an invitation in person to each of the local villages, “The chief to whom the *tets* go first in each village is determined by which clan in that particular feast will have the task of providing the principle witness and acknowledger – called *‘nidinsxwit* – to all that is publically conducted by the hosts in the feast” (Daly, 2005, p. 75). The *tets* is the first point of protocol in hosting a *li’ligit* and reciprocity is enacted immediately with the visitors (who are also the hosts of the
upcoming event) inviting guests from other *huwilp*, who in turn respond with gifts and food to acknowledge the invitation and support for the upcoming event. The chief of the house groups will offer a *mixk’aaax* (gift) that will be returned at the event with interest (p.77).

Figure 2: *Wilp Malii Git’mgan* (Crest Pole) In The Village Of Gitanyow⁴.

![Crest Pole in Gitanyow](image)

The purpose of the *git’mgan* is to illustrate the *wilp*’s origin, history and connection to the territory. It records the *ayuusks* (Wilp crests), *adawaak* (oral

⁴ Photos in this dissertation are property of Sharon Hobenshield
history) and ayookxw (law) of the wilp. I begin with the telling of the wilp Malii’s adawaak, which involves two brothers, Galey and Ak-gwen-dasqu, who were out hunting:

They were at the place where the two rivers met, the Ks-wee-den and Ks-get-an gwalqu; watching for bear. A very large grizzly bear with two cubs appeared and entered the water. The cubs sat on her shoulders, one on each side of her head, and the mother bear swam across toward the men. In the middle of the river she got out into very swift waters. One of the cubs fell off her shoulders and was drowned. When she reached shore in front of the men with one cub, she turned and looked into the water and cried, almost like a human, for her drowned baby. After she cried she sang the death song…After the brothers learned the song, they shot the bear with their bows and arrows. After that they sang the funeral song. (Duff, 1959, p.26)

This wilp Malii story identifies the spiritual connection between the human and animal world expressed in Indigenous ontology. The funeral song, gifted by the bear, is the limx’oy described above, which continues to be sung at events, such as funerals and pole raisings. The picture below in Figure 3, features my mother, Marie Hobenshield singing the limx’oy in April of 1994. She is a matriarch in the wilp Malii and is standing alongside Simgigyet Malii, the head chief, along with children from the community who symbolize future generations. The person singing the limx’oy is said to be representing the voice or the breath of the ancestors (Gisday Wa and Delagam Uukw, 1992 & Smith, 2004). This ceremony is a demonstration of oral knowledge transmission. Through recounting, honoring and witnessing, we are
teaching subsequent generations about significant events in history that connect us to the spiritual world, the supernatural, and the land.

Figure 3: Members Of The Wilp Malii Singing The Limx’oy Over The Git’mgan Prior To It Being Raised.

Each generation is required to preserve this history by ensuring it is repeated and witnessed among the local chiefs and community members. At this event, adawaak was communicated once the pole was raised halfway in the air. It was a powerful and exciting moment seeing a 40-foot pole hovering in the air, attached to ropes and wooden cross braces with members of the community either pulling or pushing to keep it suspended as it creaked and groaned, swaying in the wind (see Figure 4 below).
After the pole is raised it is time for the *li’ligit*, time for the *wilp Malii* to feed their guests and conduct business. Common traditional rituals that unfold in the *li’ligit* which are essential to its process are: the *bats’aa*, gift-giving by the hosts; the *hawaal*, putting money in the pot to compensate for use of the *lax’yip* (land); the *zeim-tsek*, the total amount of money collected and distributed and the acknowledgements by witnesses (Daly, 2005). All of these protocols are described in further detail in Chapter 3. An example of a standing item at a feast is to ensure the names of the *wilp* are in order; names are given to people without or who may be in need of a modification. There is an advancement of traditional names within a *wilp* starting with a child’s name, adult name and a chief name. At this feast, it was decided by the *wilp* that I would transition from my child’s name to that of an adult. At the *li’ligit*, I received the name *Nee-loak*, which I had for eight years before I inherited the chief name, *Ha-Youly* at another *li’ligit*. 
The raising of a crest pole takes a considerable amount of resources and years of planning involving all members of the *wilp*, their *wilksi’witxw* (Father clan) and their *ent’im’nak* (spouse side). However, it is the responsibility of the *wilp*, as hosts of this ceremony to acknowledge all those that helped with the work leading up to this event as well as address any other outstanding business. Reciprocity is significant to the Indigenous gift-giving paradigm as described by Kuokkanen (2007) in the opening quotation as it appreciates the dynamic and spiritual relationship between all things as well as the mutual responsibility and respect of the land (p. 23). In Gitxsan tradition reciprocity is demonstrated through a process of gifting items such as blankets, clothing, food, dishes and other household objects as well as financial compensation. This demonstration and redistribution of wealth by the *wilp Malii* in conjunction with ensuring we host people according to the laws is our responsibility as Gitxsan people, as Daly states:

The Houses and clans demonstrate in their day-to-day lives the reciprocity at the core of their being and the ethic of paying back and giving. They feast together and break respective wealth, as the law demands, so that again, and again, now and in the future, *dim helda kw’adikswx*: it will come back many times over and over. (2005, p. 97)

This initial description is not intended to provide an inclusive overview of the *git’mgan* and *li’ligit* proceedings but rather an introduction to a Gitxsan worldview, which informs and guides this study. It is these experiences and relationships that connect me to who I am, provide me with a sense of belonging and a way of interpreting the world. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) identifies the association between Indigenous worldview and Indigenous knowledge:
While the manifestations can vary considerably from one group of people to another, some of the salient features of such knowledge are that its meaning, value and use are bound to the cultural context in which it is situated, it is thoroughly integrated into everyday life, and it is generally acquired through direct experience and participation in real world activities. If considered in its totality, such knowledge can be seen to constitute a particular worldview, a form of consciousness, or a reality set. (p. 7)

Outlining the cultural proceedings of this day and identifying the protocols that were enacted further describes the significance of the git’mgan and li’ligit as steadfast traditions of the Gitxsan people. It also allows me to further establish the values and principles associated with these traditions as a means to introduce my conceptual framework.

1.11 Theoretical Framework

In this study three theoretical frameworks are incorporated: Decolonizing theory, Indigenous theory and Gitxsan worldview. Incorporating multiple frameworks has not been an easy endeavour, however given my described personal and professional location and what led me to this search, I contend that all three of these theories are necessary. Moreover, the intersectionality of these entities supports a process in which location and associated experiences are authenticated and become a transparent and useful tool for analysis. Together they form a contextual triad that provides a lens to how I position myself in relation to my mixed racial identity while integrating the spiritual, political, personal and professional relationships I have within a variety of contemporary settings. It is what Absolon and
Willett (2005) refer to as representing our truths (p. 109) and Kovach (2009a) similarly describes as Tribal epistemologies that “cannot be dissociated from the subjective” (p 111).

In an effort to remain true to my tribal ontology as well as to the relational value of an Indigenous epistemology, I take the attributes of each of these three theories and contain them within the li’ligit. The li’ligit is the cultural ceremony where Gitxsan protocols are enacted and the practice of gift giving occurs. The li’ligit as a demonstration of Gitxsan existence and ways of knowing is therefore an appropriate representation of the integration of these three theories. Chapter 3 will further explore the integration of the three theories; identifying how this theoretical framework is utilized throughout this study; forming the foundation for how I engage, seek introspection and interpretation.

1.12 Methodology

The theoretical framework is closely tied with the methodological approach in this study. Wilson (2008) contends, “From an epistemology and ontology based upon relationships, an Indigenous methodology and axiology emerge” (p. 77). In my study, I assert that the relationships present in the li’ligit and recognized within the practice of gift-giving form my epistemological and ontological positioning. The li’ligit provides the foundational aspect for Gitxsan way of being and knowing. It is the ceremonial location to which the practice of gift giving is intended to acknowledge the various historical and present-day relationships existing within Gitxsan communities, including the metaphysical, spiritual, ecological and physical. These
relationships embedded in one Gitxsan tradition leads to the principles intrinsic in another, the *git’mgan*. The *git’mgan* features four associated components each representing a Gitxsan principle: *crests* signify the belief in oral tradition and history; *reaching up* denotes the spiritual connection to the ancestors and all things (all my relations); *planted in the ground* conveys the respect and value to land and *ceremony* speaks to the importance of witnessing in order to uphold Gitxsan tradition. The *git’mgan* therefore emerges as the symbol for Gitxsan axiology and methodology. In this research, these Gitxsan principles are considered alongside Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (1991) 4 R’s: respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility that offer an ethical framework for quality Indigenous education. Together they identify a uniquely Indigenous axiology for how VIU can engage in a deeper dialogue for Indigenization which is the goal of this study. I further incorporate Kuokkanen’s (2007) gift logic, which argues for a gifting paradigm to redefine how the academy can receive and be hospitable to Indigenous epistemes. Lastly, I provide a reinterpretation of the 4 R’s, identifying the 4 A’s of: accommodation, acquiescence, affiliation and acceptance, as part of my personal analysis informing this study and in doing so, put forth a critical Indigenous standpoint.

Phase one of the data collection process involved seven one-on-one interviews with Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs. Phase two involved seven interviews with VIU Elders-in-Residence and a learning circle with Elders, faculty and students who discussed the themes that emerged from the interviews as well as explored how Indigenous principles related to gift-giving can be considered in the academy.
1.13 Git’mgan And Li’ligit: Conceptual Framework To This Study

In this study, parallel to Parent’s (2014) dissertation work, I incorporated Northwest Coast First Nation traditions as the symbolic and visual representation for this research design. The structure and the ceremonial protocols associated with the li’ligit and the git’mgan, as described above, have multiple applications to support this study. First, the li’ligit represents the essence of Gitxsan worldview based upon reciprocal relationships to honor and balance the existence among all things. The git’mgan as a configuration of four interrelated components representing Gitxsan principles provides the axiology originating from the community. Incorporating it as a symbolic and animated representative of Gitxsan history and connection to land and identity ensures that I have relational accountability to my community. It is as Wii Elaast James Angus states explains, “If you look at the totem pole, it gives you a history of who we are. We look at them as being alive. They are at the heart of who we are: the totem pole, the crest, the adawaak. This makes us Gitxsan” (Wii Elaast James Angus cited in Delgamuukw, 2010, p. 99).

Engaging Indigenous visual and symbolic representation to explore the topic of gift giving also permits the opportunity, similar to Kuokkanen’s (2007) work, to challenge the Western concept of gift giving, identifying the numerous forms of relational interactions that involves the supernatural, spiritual and environmental. Lastly, incorporating these cultural entities that have persisted despite attempts of colonial banishment further supports a decolonizing philosophy. By presenting the different ideological perceptions and associated relational representation of gift giving, I am reclaiming authenticity of my cultural tradition.
The different protocols and tribal rituals connected to the feast are introduced at the beginning of each chapter of this study. Their inclusion is intended to ensure Gitxsan worldview is embedded throughout. The specific protocol implemented and associated functions are described in more detail in the dissertation overview at the end of this chapter. Similar to Rosborough’s (2012) dissertation, I suggest these rituals can also be considered principles that structure this dissertation. Further connection between the aforementioned principles and the process of this study are described at the conclusion of this chapter in the Dissertation overview.

1.14 The Importance Of This Study

The historical reality that many Indigenous students have not fared well in mainstream institutions and that this issue continues into the twenty first century grounds the importance of this study. Educational policies, processes and institutions have been complicit in subjugating Indigenous knowledges and problematizing Aboriginal students (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991), for example Indigenous scholars (Henderson, 2000; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Dion, 2009; Little Bear, 2009) continue to make the case that Aboriginal students do not see themselves reflected in educational institutions:

For most Aboriginal students, the realization of their invisibility is similar to looking into a still lake and not seeing their images. They become alien in their own eyes, unable to recognize themselves in the reflections and shadows of the world. As their grandparents and parents were stripped of their wealth and dignity, this realization strips Aboriginal students of their heritage and identity. It gives them an awareness of their annihilation (Henderson, 2000 p. 59).
This feeling of invisibility and annihilation was reflected by an Indigenous student at VIU who voiced this concern in a 2013 Aboriginal Student Retention Survey, “I think not being heard is the biggest frustration – I feel First Nations are totally excluded from all the programs – VIU needs to start implementing an Aboriginal focus in all the courses to make us feel integrated and a part of the school.” Alternatively, when the presence of Elders and First Nations content in programs was included, affirmation of identity was noted, “The Elders in the courses are extremely positive, and also having First Nations authors, as we need to be reflected in the course content and we need to be challenged” (Focus Group held March 4, 2013). This identified inequity and need for the continual pursuit for inclusion for Indigenous learners and Indigenous knowledge in the academy is why this study is important.

Dr. Ellen White, a Snuneymuxw storyteller, writer, and healer who was also one of VIU’s first Elders-in-Residence describes a teaching from Elders that originates from the core and expands out, “It is like a big tree, never mind the apples or if it flowers, we’re going to learn inside first and then out…Never from outside first (White and Archibald, 1992, p. 154). White’s words further express the concept of “inward knowing” which is another distinction between Indigenous and Western conceptions of attaining knowledge. Western epistemology tends to perceive the construction of knowledge as something that is found outside of oneself to be discovered and defined as a separate entity, whereas Indigenous knowledge sees the self -- the spirit -- as being connected to knowledge creation and to finding meaning and understanding (Atleo, 2004; Ermine, 1995; Kovach, 2009a).
Identifying these distinctions among knowledge constructs and applications for how we come to know are vital within the university setting to educate faculty and staff in the hopes of adjusting both pedagogy and policy to be more inclusive, which also speaks to the need for this study.

These narratives for inclusion from Aboriginal students at VIU are reflected back to the academy by Nakata (2007) who poses the question, “How are we to assist students so that their educational experiences is of intellectual engagement with the content and methods of the disciplines in the light of their own experiences of being Indigenous, rather than retreat in to intellectual separation and isolation?” (p. 218). This is a critical question for educational institutions committed to the process of Indigenization, as the response requires deliberate consideration of Indigenous students’ distinct identities and their associated knowledge paradigms. This question will be reflected upon in further detail in Chapter 7.

1.15 Dissertation Overview

The introductory chapter, the *tets*, the invitation party, is the first point of protocol that is invoked between the host and the guests to formally announce and describe the upcoming event. In this act, the hosts are making their intentions clear as to what business will take place and asking the guests to come and witness their work (Daly, 2005). The principle of reciprocity is engaged at the onset as the hosts extend the invitation and the guest responds with *a mixk’aax* (gift), which will later be returned with interest at the event. In this opening chapter, I extend the invitation to
the reader, setting the context and making my intentions clear as to what will transpire.

Chapter 2, the literature review, can be considered the bats’aa; the gift giving that takes place by the host. The literal translation is to “lift up, hold high’ (Daly, p. 84). The gift giving process demonstrates the principle of respect to acknowledge and express appreciation especially for those in high authority who have made a contribution to you in some way. The literature review is presented in three phases: Phase One, Emergence of Indigenous Knowledge in the Academy, provides an overview revealing the different approaches used by Indigenous scholars; Phase Two, Reconceptualising and Reclaiming Indigenous Voice, offers further distinction of the characteristics pertaining to Indigenous knowledge constructs. Lastly, Phase Three, Pursuing Complex Understandings rather than Expert Witnesses, outlines the outcome of Delgamuukw and considers the scholarly research and debate that ensued. All of the literature reviewed has proven invaluable and I am grateful for the scholarship that has informed and shaped this study. As the recipient of these gifts of wisdom, I endeavor to ‘lift up and hold high’ this work and in turn, make a contribution to Indigenous scholarship in this study.

Chapter 3 presents my theoretical framework, which incorporates three theories: Decolonizing theory, Indigenous theory and Gitxsan worldview. The hawaal is the economic contribution to one’s wilp that is paid out at the li’ligit to compensate for the use of the lax’yip (The Gitanyow Ayookxw, 2007). To make the connection between the theoretical framework and the hawaal, I draw on Maxwell’s (2005) interpretation of theory as “a set of concepts and the proposed relationships
among these, a structure that is intended to represent or model something about the world” (p. 42). In this sense, the hawaal, with its contributions from the wilp and other relative, clan and community members (Daly, 2005. p. 86) models the responsibility the community holds in adhering to a structure that solidifies a way of life. In this chapter, I outlined Graham Smith’s (2005) 10 characteristics related to Indigenous theory to describe the approach taken in this study to further conceptualize elements within a Gitxsan worldview. The section is structured as a narrative weaving my personal experiences, drawing on my ancestral teachings and linking the political ramifications of colonization to further position myself as a researcher. At the conclusion of this discussion, I present the git’mgan as the central figure to contain my methodological framework and to further model Gitxsan values and ethics.

The zeim-tsek identifies the total contribution of the wealth received and distributed back. All services and materials that were involved in a pole-raising or memorial li’ligit come out of zeim-tsek and the remaining sum is paid out to the guests for witnessing the event (Daly, 2005. p. 90). I associate Chapter 4, which explains my methodology with the zeim-tsek ritual as included in this section is an introduction of each participant interviewed. Just as the li’ligit would not be possible without the many contributors to the zeim-tsek, this dissertation would not have occurred without the support and input from its contributors, the Gitxsan leaders and VIU Elders. The zeim-tsek represents the principle of generosity embedded in Indigenous communities’ ceremonies and ontologies. In this chapter, I describe the methodological approach in detail including how Kuokkanen’s (2007) logic of the gift,
Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (1991) 4 R’s as well as my own 4 A’s (which provides a critical interpretation of the 4 R’s in a contemporary setting) informed the data analysis.

In Chapter 5, I present my analysis and findings based on the interviews by the Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs associating the Gitxsan word, *nidn’t-deed*. In his commissioned evidence in the *Delgamuukw* case, my grandfather used this term repeatedly to confirm that what he was saying was true because it had been witnessed (Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw, 1992). For my grandfather the facts were “acknowledged by a succession of witnesses” who as high chiefs with special training “are qualified specialists” (p.40). At the conclusion of the *li’ligit*, the chiefs from the different house groups are invited to provide the *nidinsxw*, acknowledgements by witnesses (Daly, 2005). The hosts listen to the witnesses seeking validation that the business that was conducted was done in accordance with Gitxsan laws and therefore authenticated.

In Chapter 6, I present the findings from the interviews with the VIU Elders. *Mixk’aax* is the Gitxsan word for the gift that is offered by each of the Chiefs from the house groups to whom you visit during the *tets*. The *mixk’aax* indicates that the Chiefs have received your invitation and will support your event. This term seemed appropriate to identify this chapter and the contributions being offered by the VIU Elders for this study. Chapter 7 is identified as the *ant’aadit*, the Gitxsan word referring to the delegation that welcomes guests as they enter the *li’ligit*. This chapter hosts the analysis of the findings from the VIU Elders. The *ant’aadit* speaks
to the welcoming nature of the VIU Elders who despite inherent challenges working in the university consistently provide a welcoming environment to all visitors.

In my concluding Chapter, so’o, the Gitxsan word for the food that is taken home from the li’ligit, the significance and contribution of this research and further implications is identified.

Food is an expression of hospitality and gratitude in the li’ligit and it is important that the guests walk away with something in recognition for their support and attention. It is my hope that the readers of this study take away something that will nourish them into the future.
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review, Bats’aa

2.1 Introduction

_Bats’aa_, describes the Gitxsan gift-giving protocol whereby a host expresses their appreciation to the guests who have supported their work. In this chapter our bats’aa protocol represents how Indigenous scholars have acted as hospitable and generous hosts to my exploration into Indigenous scholarship in the academy. I am grateful for the opportunity to have examined this robust body of literature and reflect on the progression that has occurred. The scholars confirm my frustrations of working in the academy and offer composed articulations to the chaotic text that has monopolized my consciousness. They have also affirmed my belief that Indigenous knowledge with its dynamic and unique applications is a gift, has something to offer the Western world that cannot be measured in capitalist currency. Finally, they reassured and encouraged me that it is acceptable to feel more than I can intellectually clarify. Their dedication is inspiring and I move forward comforted by their words and actions, intent on making a contribution to this existing body of scholarship.

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the roots of Indigenous scholarship by examining the politically charged context, exploring the historical challenges encountered, and describing the post-secondary institution’s Indigenization of the academy. I use Newhouse’s three-phased approach to Indigenization as a background to review the literature pertinent to this study. I have, however taken liberties with the titles of each stage, expanding upon their initial descriptions to align
with the parameters of this study and to correlate with the overarching questions that I identified for my research.

Phase One: *Emergence of Indigenous Knowledge in the Academy* provides an overview revealing the different approaches used by Indigenous scholars to address the incongruences they experienced in their practice then and now. Phase Two: *Reconceptualising and Reclaiming Indigenous Voice* offers further distinction of the characteristics pertaining to Indigenous knowledge constructs. Literature providing insight into Indigenous pedagogy and methodology -- what it is and what it isn’t -- is reviewed. Lastly, Phase Three: *Pursuing Complex Understandings rather than Expert Witnesses* outlines the outcomes of *Delgamuukw*. While much information on Gitxsan history and tradition is included in the surrounding literature for this case, it will be further explored in Chapter 3. The focus of this section will be on exploring a judge’s decision to dismiss the expert witness testimony provided by anthropologist as well as the oral testimony of hereditary chiefs and the scholarly research and debate that followed. This landmark case in which Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en Chiefs sought jurisdictional title to land in their traditional territories provides an excellent example as to how knowledge and truth claims among academics and different cultures are authenticated in hegemonic structures such as the court system. In this regard, the resulting discussion had significance for extending the engagement of Indigenous knowledge in the academy.
2.2 Phase One: Emergence Of Indigenous Knowledge In The Academy

Since time immemorial, Indigenous people have upheld distinct ways of knowing and being that inform their interactions and experiences with the world around them. These unique epistemologies are not static, frozen in time ideologies but rather ongoing evolving interpretations that seek to create reciprocal and balanced relationships within a holistic framework. In this regard, Indigenous knowledge rejects categorization of theory and embraces fluidity among all things animate and inanimate -- a position that is often viewed as being antithetical to Western knowledge. In this section, a review of Indigenous knowledge in the academy is initiated. The progression is relatively brief considering that prior to 1951 the Indian Act dictated that any First Nations person opting for postsecondary education would lose their Indian status and connections to their community and culture (Stonechild, 2006). Nonetheless, Indigenous scholarship is quite extensive, describing the disputatious advance of Western knowledge hegemony over Indigenous peoples and their knowledge.

Given the global colonial context and marginalization of Indigenous people throughout the world, it should not be surprising that the literature taken up by Indigenous scholars is political and critical. Nowhere is this political element more apparent than in the works of Standing Rock Sioux scholar Vine Deloria Jr. Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto (1969) is a pivotal book in Indigenous literature identified by Indigenous scholars (Alfred, 1999; Grande, 2004; Kovach, 2009a & Wilson, 2004) who view its significance as leading the call for resistance -- to stand up and take political, intellectual action. Mohawk Taiaiake Alfred (1999)
credits Deloria for inspiring him as young boy to start on his own path of intellectual and political awareness as an Indigenous person. In his work *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* he builds on Deloria's notion of resistance and calls for a return to traditional forms of Indigenous governance and contends that as “intellects we have a responsibility to generate and sustain a social and political discourse that is respectful to the wisdom embedded with our traditions” (p. 143). Taiaiake and Deloria are somewhat unified in their approach as they reprimand all (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who support imperialism and conform to the intellectual servitude of dominant society, ideas, and theories. Taiaiake (2004) goes on in his later work to describe “Warrior Scholarship” in which Indigenous scholars are warriors of truth creating a new resistance, asserting that the “warrior scholar’s cause is freedom to exist as an Indigenous person within an Indigenous community in accord with the traditional natural philosophies” (p. 95-6).

In reflecting upon the impact Deloria has had on her own scholarship journey, Kovach (2009a) cites a passage from his text: “Ideological leverage is always superior to violence…The problems of Indians have always been ideological rather than social, political or economic…It is vitally important that the Indian people pick the intellectual arena as the one in which to wage war” (p. 93). Kovach takes heed of Deloria's words in reflection on her responsibility as an Indigenous scholar: “The purpose, then, is to push the edge of ideological certitude of what counts as knowledge and research in the academy” (p. 93). Oklahoma Choctaw Devon Abbott Mihesuah (2004) is comparable to Kovach’s determined stance in her work *Academic Gatekeepers*. She contends that taking Indigenous knowledge seriously
in the academy means pushing back against the gatekeepers who protect the status quo of the institution by ignoring Indigenous voices, hiring unqualified faculty, and devaluing Indigenous programs (p. 33). In this environment, Mihesuah suggests that Indigenous scholars serve as nothing more than “window dressing” (p. 44) to the academy.

At this point, it is important to pause and reflect on the described approaches to indigenous literature. What is notable is the difference in language. Deloria (2004) uses terms and phrases such as ‘new alliances’ and “an attack on one is an attack on all” (p. 26). In the case of Taiaiake (2004) the rhetoric emphasizes a combative element such as ‘battle field’, ‘end game’, and ‘front lines’ (p. 92). In contrast, Kovach (2009b) stresses a more relational approach grounded in persistence that invites the work of non-Indigenous scholars by suggesting “these relationships will demand a more organic, non-institutional approach to knowledge-seeking” (p. 59).

What is common among the literature presented in this section is the authors’ positioning of themselves and their location as Indigenous scholars. Each of them present their epistemological standpoint and effectively use Indigenous theory and pedagogy (which largely draws on traditional Indigenous teaching) and methodologies (which present as a mix of self-reflection, leading to critical analysis grounded in their own unique tradition). Kovach (2009b) describes this as the praxis of Indigenous scholarship:

Indigenous academics are being asked to subsume an overarching responsibility that coincided with the infusion of Indigenous knowledge
into academia, a task that demands skills in addition to those by decolonizing, anti-oppressive scholars. This involves a layered approach that begins with decolonization and moves to deeper waters to explore what it means to be in accord with tribal philosophy. (p. 59)

Another important theme in the discussion of political activism and the subsequent responsibility of Indigenous scholarship is the challenge to refute the misconceptions related to Indigenous people in modern day discourse. While Deloria considered himself to be among the first generation of Indian scholars to confront the academy and the public at large in their romanticized interpretations of the Indian experience (2004, p. 16), this confutation persists with present-day scholars (Dion, 2009; Donald, 2012). Donald (2012) establishes the fort as a metaphor to describe colonial frontier logic in Canada that perpetuates “a kind of cultural ditch separating Aboriginal from Canadian” (p. 93). Donald describes forts as reconstructed sites where civilizational myths are captured and held as truths about First Nation culture and Canadian history. Donald’s response to this issue is to work with the tension in a productive and creative manner through a process of ethical relationality, “an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (p. 103).

Métis scholar Susan Dion extends upon the notion of separation offered by Donald, suggesting that for non-Aboriginal educators, like many Canadians, fear and inability to challenge misunderstandings lead to a ‘perfect stranger’ approach whereby Aboriginal people are viewed as “romanticized, mythical, victimized, or militant Others that enable non-Aboriginal people to position themselves as
respectful admirers, moral helpers, or protectors of law and order” (2009, p. 179).

Dion’s *Braiding Histories* project attempts to disrupt this relationship by working with willing non-Aboriginal educators to integrate curriculum where Aboriginal stories become part of a pedagogical process. Final outcomes of the study demonstrate that despite having relevant curriculum and good intentions, educators’ propensity for teaching facts and skills and attending to children’s feelings superseded responding to questions leading to conversations of power and race relations.

In reviewing the work of Deloria (2004), Dion (2009), and Donald (2012), I believe a distinction can be made in which Deloria’s work is indeed rooted in what he describes as the ‘old guard’ mentality, “dedicated to recording an accurate account of the practices of the people” (p. 16). Dion and Donald, on the other hand, are intent on trying to make their practice public and accessible within a pluralistic society. However, I argue Dion and Donald are privileged to be in a position of offering their specific tradition and pedagogy as a result of Deloria’s contribution. He was instrumental in uncovering and making his ‘truth’ public despite its controversy, which ultimately will continue to serve and inspire emerging scholars such as myself.

In one of Deloria’s (2004) last publications, *Marginal and Submarginal*, published the year before he died in 2005, he laments that the current generation of scholars have a “distaste for politics and will not engage in it despite the world and everything in it being political” (p. 27). He goes on to suggest that the challenge then becomes whether you can “play the academic game” (p. 27). Dale Turner’s book, *This Is Not a Peace Pipe*, appears to take up Deloria’s challenge by identifying the need for Indigenous academics to become “word warriors” (2006). Turner,
building on James Tully’s (1995) notion of philosophers becoming mediators who demand Aboriginal participation, defines a word warrior as “an indigenous person who engages the imposed legal and political discourses of the state guided by the belief that the knowledge and skills to be gained by engaging in such discourses are necessary for the survival of all indigenous people” (p. 92). In this regard, Turner counters Alfred’s (1999) ‘Warrior Scholarship” who reject all forms of engagement with the colonial state, by suggesting that word warriors form a particular type of community responsible for bringing Indigenous knowledge into dominant discourses but ensuring they remain connected to their nation and work in collaboration with Indigenous philosophers (traditional knowledge keepers, Elders, etc.). He refers to this association as the division of labour of intellectual leaders necessary to uphold Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and nationhood (p. 119).

It appears that a continuum (and mounting body) of decolonizing scholarship is underway, giving voice to the daily contradictions and contentions of Indigenous people in the academy. This scholarship is a conundrum of Indigenous people’s lived experiences, rooted in traditional value and belief systems that play out within a colonial context. Graham Smith (cited in Kovach 2009a) articulates what he calls the ‘politics of truth’: “we are contesting colonization processes…This is the politics of truth, understanding the limits and capacities of what you can do at any site” (p. 85).

From this review of the emergence of Indigenous scholarship it is apparent that speaking our truth in the academy is a political undertaking. The freedom to exist means becoming intellectual warriors who push back, addressing historical
romanticized interpretations of what it means to be an 'Indian' within an Indigenous narrative that encompasses a decolonizing framework and tribal philosophy.

2.3 Phase Two: Reconceptualising And Reclaiming Indigenous Voice

As I attempt to transition and deepen my discussion on the emergence of Indigenous knowledge in the academy, I turn to Battiste and Barman’s (1995) First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds, a collection of essays by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal writers. Marie Battiste starts the introduction with the year 1969, which she identified “as a crucial turning point in the transformation of Indian education through Indian control” (p. viii). At this time the federal government tried to enact the White Paper Policy that would effectively eliminate the Indian Act as well as Indian Affairs and settle all outstanding treaties resulting in the widespread assimilation of Indian people (Stonechild, 2006). The response was an outcry from First Nations leaders across the country who were not consulted on the Paper’s development. This liberal national agenda was the impetus for the formation of the National Indian Brotherhood in 1970 and the policy paper referred to earlier, Indian Control of Indian Education (1972), which was adopted by the Federal government in 1973 (Stonechild, p. 45).

Jurisdictional rights and responsibility between federal, provincial, and First Nations governments and ensuing policy development continue to be a contentious issue in First Nations higher education with no clear way forward. The essays presented in First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds attempt to present a re-conceptual version of First Nations education addressing the
complexities that arise amidst this political context. Despite these inherent challenges, what begins to manifest are the distinctions between Indigenous and Western knowledge configurations. In one of the essays, Dr. Eber Hampton from the Chickasaw Nation provides an analysis of the “problematic practice of so-called ‘Indian education.’” (1995, p. 6). I have been fortunate to hear Dr. Hampton speak on a few occasions, and he is among the Indigenous academics for whom I have much respect and consideration. I find his approach, presented on the page and in person, to be very inclusive, as the following statement demonstrates:

This chapter is written for both Indian and white educators, and I request their patience as I belabor the obvious or drift into esoteric obscurity. I follow my impulse to interlace narrative vernacular with academic discourse…I use whatever tools I have to understand and communicate. My hope is that the reader will think along with me and will take what is useful and leave the rest. (p. 6)

Dr. Hampton provided me with the most useful definition of Indigenization, which he described quite simply as seeing the Aboriginal student as a whole person (Personal communication, Indigenizing the Academy: Teaching and Learning Together Conference, August 27 -28th, 2012, Chilliwack B.C.).

David Newhouse, whose definition of Indigenization and three-phased approach guided this review, is another scholar whose presence and published work resonates in his consideration of Indigenous and Western knowledge paradigms. Moreover, his article, Ganigonhi:ph The Good Mind Meets the Academy (2008), provides insight into my grandfather’s expression related to goodness. In this work, Newhouse contemplates his 30 years of experience at Trent University bringing
Indigenous knowledge into the academy. Newhouse, similar to other Indigenous scholars (Ahenakew, 2014; Kuokkanen, 2007) identifies Enlightenment as a Western contemporary ideology in academic settings that prioritizes reason over Indigenous related beliefs such as spirituality (p. 189). He argues that both are essential from a Haudenosaunee philosophy in order to have a good mind that is, “balanced of reason and passion, over negotiating the dance that the two undertake. A good mind is ever thinking of how to foster peace between peoples, the world, and all its inhabitants” (p. 188). Upon three decades of practice, Newhouse proposes that Indigenous peoples knowledge systems, grounded in spirituality, recognize the interconnectedness of all things and have something to offer and he, like Hampton, concludes his work in a reverent fashion, “And now that the words have been spoken and our business is concluded, we cover the fire and return to our homes and families. May you find them in good health and joyful at your return. May your journey end well” (p. 196). In this closing sentiment, Newhouse effectively models what he advocates – the ability to think rationally with expressions of passion.

I had the opportunity to hear Newhouse speak at the 13th Annual Indigenous Graduate Student Symposium in Vancouver B.C, sponsored by a University of British Columbia –Simon Fraser University partnership. In his keynote address he connected Indigenous scholarship to the restoration of Aboriginal governance, suggesting that Indigenous scholarship that is grounded in traditional Aboriginal thought can contribute to a modern Aboriginal society to which the central theme is stewardship (Speaking notes from keynote address, 2015, p. 6). He went on to
identify the notion of complex understandings linking it to a phenomenon to which multiple perspectives are considered:

Complex Understanding doesn’t seek to replace one view with another but to find a way of ensuring all views are given due consideration. It doesn’t work in an either-or fashion. A phenomenon is not one thing or another but all things at one time. Complex understanding allows for our understanding to change depending upon where we stand to see or upon the time we look or who is doing the looking. Complex understanding is grounded in a view of constantly changing reality that is capable of transformation at any time. (Speaking notes from keynote address, 2015, p. 6)

Newhouse’s work in this area will be revisited in the analysis section.

Many Indigenous scholars describe the holistic application of Indigenous knowledge systems (Archibald, 2008; Atleo, 2004; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Little Bear, 2000; Smith, 1999), but Ermine’s (1995) interpretation is one that I find to be most compelling and reminiscent of observing my grandparents and other community Elders. In his essay *Aboriginal Epistemology*, he describes this wholeness:

*Aboriginal epistemology is grounded in the self, the spirit, the unknown. Understanding of the universe must be grounded in the spirit… Ancestral explorers of the inner space encoded their findings in community praxis as a way of synthesizing knowledge derived from introspection. The Old Ones had experienced totality, a wholeness, inwardness, and effectively created a physical manifestation of the life force by creating community. In doing so, they empowered people to become the ‘culture’ of accumulated knowledge.* (p. 105)
Both Hampton and Ermine identify the contradictions that arise through such discussions and practices in a contemporary context. Hampton sees Aboriginal education as a bicultural enterprise where the goals of assimilation and self-determination compete; Ermine notes the juxtaposition of seeking knowledge from an inward spiritual exploration to that of seeking knowledge through outer exploration on the physical plane (p. 105). These contradictions and polarizations continue to be prominent in the literature at the start of the new millennium.

*Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Battiste, 2000) is another influential text featuring a collection of essays by Indigenous authors, academics, and visionaries from across the world. Once again Marie Battiste provides the introduction, and describes the contributors to this text as the “first generation of Indigenous scholars accomplished in both Eurocentric and Indigenous thought […] who seek to bring those voices, their analysis, and their dreams of a decolonized context further into the academic arena” (p. xxi). In her chapter on *Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society* (2000) she presents the term “cognitive imperialism” as a “form of cognitive manipulation used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values” (p. 198). No stranger to addressing colonial issues head-on, Battiste identifies modern educational theory as being in a predicament where justifying the status quo can no longer continue and making room for new thinking is necessary. From this position, she argues for space for “Aboriginal consciousness, language, and identity to flourish without ethnocentric or racist interpretation” (p. 197). Creating this space in my research and practice is what I hope to achieve through my research.
The formation of an Indigenous epistemological standpoint to establish a distinct theoretical framework is clearly demonstrated by Smith’s (1999) trail blazing book *Decolonizing Methodologies* and followed up by Kovach’s (2009a) *Indigenous Methodologies* which describe how Indigenous methodologies flow from tribal knowledges that can be derived with the assistance of employing a decolonizing lens. Kovach’s narrative weaves self-location, story, Indigenous perspectives through personal interviews, and cultural protocol into her work, while modeling her own journey as an Indigenous person, student, and scholar. Additionally, American Indian scholars Grande, Mihesuah and Wilson, take a strong stance on reclaiming Indigenous voice in the academy. In *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, Mihesuah and Wilson (2004) address the academy’s role in ongoing colonization and suggest the academy has much invested in maintaining control over who defines knowledge and who has access. They counter this with the concept of Indigenization in which the goal is “[t]o carve a space where Indigenous values and knowledge are respected; to create an environment that supports research and methodologies useful to Indigenous nation building; to support one another as institutional foundations are shaken; and to compel institutional responsiveness to Indigenous issues, concerns, and communities” (p. 2).

Grande (2004) advocates a parallel message to Kovach’s but within a matching directive to Mihesuah and Wilson, asserting that Indigenous scholars are compelled to focus their research on their own communities, recovering tribal knowledge that has been displaced by colonization. She advocates for an
interchange between critical educational theory and Indigenous knowledge and encourages Indigenous scholars to move beyond grand narratives. Not unlike our earlier review and rejection of the romanticized myths provided to Indigenous people, Grande’s Red pedagogy seeks to theorize the inherent complexity of Indian-ness:

Though the process is continual, the overarching goal of Red pedagogy is stable. It is, and will always remain, decolonization. ‘Decolonization’ (like democracy) is neither achievable nor definable, rendering it ephemeral as a goal, but perpetual as a process. [...] the degree to which Indigenous peoples are able to define and exercise political, intellectual, and spiritual sovereignty is an accurate measure of colonialist relations. The dream of sovereignty in all these realms, thus forms the foundation of Red pedagogy. (p. 166)

The 2014 Canadian Journal of Native Education, Indigenizing the International Academy, presents a range of Indigenous scholarship that assert similar principles related to Grande’s notion of Red pedagogy in that they stress the need for decolonization (Darlaston-Jones, D., Herbert, Ryan, Darlaston-Jones, W., Harris, & Dudgeon; Nelson & McGregor, 2014) and advocate for Indigenous led processes in the academy. Darlaston-Jones et al., argue the discipline of psychology can play a significant role in creating a “third space” for understanding to occur that shifts the discourse grounded in white supremacy to one that is more relative to the pluralistic identities that students occupy in universities (p. 88). Altamirano-Jimenez’s article, Neo-liberal Education, Indigenizing Universities?, supports my original suspicions expressed in Chapter 1 regarding government led initiatives by emphatically arguing that the government has provided just enough
funding to give the illusion of promoting independence when, in reality, Indigenization is “part of new processes of neo-liberal subjectivization” (p. 36). In both cases, the authors call for a critique of the hegemonic structures that require reflective analysis and a responsibility among educators to uncover systemic oppressive practices. To support her particular argument Altamirano-Jiménez references Kuokkanen’s (2007) work and identifies gift logic as a means to shift away from the idea of servicing the Other.

Many of the articles in the 2014 themed journal on Indigenization mention the ontological and epistemological association related to Indigenous knowledge construction. However, Ahenakew’s (2014) article on Indigenous epistemological pluralism provided the most in-depth exploration in this area. To further make this distinction, I return to Newhouse (2008) who makes the claim that academic literature on Indigenous knowledge is divided into two parts in which one focuses on the critical decolonizing discourses while the other, which is less popular, due to the fact it involves both reason and passion, focuses on the complexities in relation to how we conceptualize and teach the content dialogue of Indigenous knowledge (p. 195). I am not implying that Ahenakew’s work is devoid of analysis but rather through my exploration of Indigenous scholarship, I am recognizing what Newhouse is describing. Ahenakew’s explanation of the great mystery between a person’s inner space fused with the universe’s outer forces offers a level of perceptiveness into Indigenous Knowledge creation that I struggle to comprehend but yearn to experience.
The last scholar that I want to include in this phase is Kuokkanen (2007) whose concept of gift logic was first introduced in Chapter 1 and is featured at length in this dissertation. Her work provides a valuable contribution and to that end, it is necessary to describe her discussion on gift logic in more detail than others in this literature review. Kuokkanen contends that classic gift theorists have largely interpreted gift giving from a Western patriarchal framework that focuses on the exchange of gift giving, which does not recognize Indigenous expressions associated with this practice. Kuokkanen describes the logic of the gift related to Indigenous philosophies in which interdependent relationships among all things are paramount, “The gift is the manifestation of reciprocity with the natural environment; it reflects the bond of dependency and respect toward the natural world. In this system one does not give primarily in order to receive but rather in order to ensure the balance of the world on which the well-being of the entire social order is contingent” (p. 33). From here, she makes the point that this logic continues today among Indigenous peoples worldviews and consequently, the colonial mentality that first viewed this practice of gifting as a threat remains, and is propagated by the academy that fails to recognize Indigenous peoples gift of epistemes.

Kuokkanen (2007) deliberately employs the term epistemes in her work as she interprets the concept as being broader than ‘epistemology’ and not necessarily confirming to a body of knowledge or a way of knowing but rather as “pertaining to knowledge” (p.57). In this context, epistemes are the lens in which we see the world and therefore become the implicit and often-invisible component of the social constructs embedded in knowledge discourses. Moreover, in the colonial discourse
of the academy, homogeneity ignores Indigenous epistemes. By privileging this term, Kuokkanen is able to establish her position that the epistemic ignorance and inhospitality of the academy toward “others” keeps Indigenous people “in the margins instead of placing them at the centre of inquiries” (p.72). This notion of epistemic ignorance and inhospitality of the academy will be further addressed and applied to the context of VIU in Chapter 6 of the analysis of the findings.

Kuokkanen (2007) casts a critical lens at the academy as an institution of reason that has built a reputation on rational accounts of knowledge and that has, “created and continue to create epistemic and epistemological hierarchies that define forms of knowledge based on rationality, individualism, detachment and the mechanistic worldview as real and legitimate” (p. 86). Current attempts to recognize Indigenous epistemes are therefore minimal and distancing under this doctrine such as adding content to course syllabus and inviting ‘Native informants’ as guest speakers as it feeds what Kuokkanen refers to as a liberal multicultural discourse that does nothing more than tolerate diversity and does little to engage in necessary complex conversations to address epistemic ignorance (p. 110).

To address this prevailing ignorance Kuokkanen (2007) suggests the academy needs to consider a paradigm shift based on the notion of hospitality as an ongoing process that features two critical components, “a welcome of the “other” without conditions (such as translations or definitions) and openness to learning about the logic of the gift and indigenous epistemes” (p.132). Inclusive of this notion of unconditional hospitality involves the host letting go of control over what constitutes as knowledge and learning to listen to its guests as well as take
responsibility for how it limits these discourses based on their own predispositions. A critical component of this work is to engage in uncomfortable decolonizing dialogues in which the Indigenous principle of reciprocity based on giving back, sharing and circulation can influence relations among the different epistememes (p. 145). In my study I see my Indigenous episteme, informed and supported by my family and community, to be the host, and the guests to be that of “other” epistememes.

What I appreciate about Kuokkanen’s (2007) gift logic is that it provides a different interpretation and potential response for how we come to know the ‘other’. She is insistent that Indigenous epistememes must be recognized and received appropriately even if it may not be possible to fully grasp the logic of the gift. To further support the notion of hospitality in the academy she turns to Palmer who suggests that “[b]y offering hospitality, one participates in the endless reweaving of a social fabric on which all can depend – thus the gift of sustenance for the guest becomes a gift of hope for the host” (p. 127). Kuokkanen’s discussion on hospitality and human relationships informed by reciprocity has me return to Hampton (1995) who offers one of his introspective stories. He describes a seemingly inconsequential meeting with a man in a convenience store who asks Hampton if he “has a little time?” and proceeds to present him with an empty box and asks an ensuing question:

‘How many sides to you see?’ ‘One,’ I said. He pulled the box towards his chest and turned it so one corner faced me. ‘Now how many do you see?’ ‘Now I see three sides.’ He stepped back and extended the box, one corner towards him and one towards me. ‘You and I together can see six sides of this box,’ he told me. Standing on the earth with
an old white man I began to understand. I had thought he wanted me to carry his groceries but instead he gave me something that carries me, protects me, and comforts me. (p. 42)

The theme of gift giving embedded in the literature originally started to percolate while preparing my research proposal for this study. As I transition to the third phase to which I review the literature surrounding the Delgamuukw case, one of the contributing authors is Richard Daly (2005) whose work, Our Box was Full, is akin to Kuokkanen in that he too considers Indigenous peoples’ philosophies and practices as gifts.

The literature presented in this phase suggests a collective offering of Indigenous scholarship has emerged in which political, social, ethical, holistic, responsible, self-determining, and blended scholarship are among the characteristics. However, the dichotomy between Indigenous and Western knowledge and the political dimensions of this relationship remain strong themes and nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of Delgamuukw. The final section exploring the outcomes and surrounding literature of Delgamuukw is presented as a case study, illustrating how attempts to uphold a particular worldview, situated outside of the prevailing social structures was denied.

2.4 Phase Three: Pursuing Complex Understandings Rather Than Expert Witnesses

Delgamuukw v. the Queen was a BC Supreme Court case (1988-92) concerned with questions of Aboriginal rights and title. The case drew national and international attention for allowing Hereditary Chiefs as the plaintiffs to share their
oral histories as testimony. The judge ultimately rejected this testimony, along with anthropologists, as invalid, as it did not conform to judicial definitions of evidence.

Chief Justice McEachern’s final verdict describing the Gitxsan and Witsuwit’en people’s existence as “nasty, brutish and short” (*Delgamuukw*, 1991, p. 13) has become immortalized in the presenting literature, and similar to most literature and scholarly debate, there is no clear agreement supporting the decision as being either right or wrong given the context and evidence as submitted. What is apparent is that efforts to recognize Aboriginal rights and traditions are inherently incompatible with the rules and regulations identified in a Canadian judicial system that claims to be “just and true”. The following review of the case and supporting literature further establishes how the various canons of knowledge supported by academic traditions also struggle with bias (acknowledged and denied) and incongruences (imagined and real).

The literature on the *Delgamuukw* case is fairly extensive (Cassidy & Bish, 1989; Cruikshank, 1992; Daly, 2005; McEachern, 1991; Miller, 1992; Mills, 1994; Monet & Skanu’u, 1992). The two texts of particular interest are *Our Box Was Full* (Daly, 2005) and *Eagle Down Is Our Law* (Mills, 1994) as they contain evidence prepared by Daly and Mills, both anthropologists who were asked by the Gitxsan and Witsuwit’en Chiefs to be expert witnesses in the case. Daly and Mills lived in the communities of the Gitxsan and Witsuwit’en people for many years prior to the case commencing, preparing their testimony that was eventually dismissed. The judge in the case, Chief Justice Allan McEachern, cited Daly’s evidence as having bias (based on Daly citing the Statement of Ethics of the American Anthropological
Society on the stand – seen as reflecting a professional bias rather than a “neutral” stance) and being “exceedingly difficult to understand”). The judge also dismissed Mills’ testimony, accusing her of being too closely identified with the plaintiffs (Cruikshank, 1992). Together these two texts from Daly and Mills, with the authors’ distinct vantage points, provide critical reflection on the complexities and tensions between academic traditions, what and whose truth is considered valued and in what context, and how interpretations from different epistemological frameworks impact how we create meaning and understanding.

What stands out initially with Daly’s work is the fact that it comes nearly two decades after the 1991 trial judgement. This delayed response has one reviewer (Matson, 2006) questioning the significance of this evidence in the modern world. This is a relevant point that goes unaddressed by Daly. However for the most part, Daly’s contribution is viewed favourably (Culhane, 2005; Napoleon, 2005). The content and scope of his work describing the lived experiences of the Gitxsan and Witsuwit’en people is considered a “comprehensive anthropological account of their economies, systems of land ownership and stewardship, social and kinship relationships, laws, and political and social institutions” (Napoleon, p.159). Similarly, Culhane states, “Daly offers a detailed description and elegant analysis demonstrating a complex of interconnectedness between land and life in production, distribution and consumption organized through a dense interrelated network of reciprocal gift-giving, continually and complexly reproduced over generations” (p. 358). As a member of the Gitxsan nation, I am grateful for Daly’s work, as it has been an invaluable resource to me in this inquiry. However, Daly’s description of his
methodological approach: “As researcher, I strove to work with professional
dispassion, within the limits of the “facts” and the relevant documentation, and within
the discipline of my professional training” (p. xxiii) gives me pause. In contrast,
Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) contend that First Nations people require reciprocal
relationships with educators; they emphasize teaching and learning as a two-way
process, a give-and-take that opens up new levels of understanding. Kirkness and
Barnhart suggest that integral to this reciprocity is the deliberate effort of educators
to be more accessible and "vulnerable" (p. 9). Given this perspective, I question
Daly’s reserved approach and the ability to represent Gitxsan and Witsuwit’en ways
of being in the world as a set of documented “facts” detached from emotion and
spirituality. Nonetheless, Daly’s tone of austerity is purposeful, drawing on
Bourdieu’s (1992) concept of habitus to interpret the “field of power” present among
the legal actors and how the implicit rules of the judicial system obscure “other”
epistemologies. Daly points to the “symbolic violence” inherent in the hegemonic
rules and procedures of the courtroom that subjugate and dominate the “truth”. To
this end, he makes the case that in consideration of this context; he unconsciously
censored his testimony suggesting that discussing spiritual connections that are
foundational to traditional laws and behaviour “would have caused already deaf ears
to close completely” (p. 15). He further states that his publication based on his
testimony is an attempt to “redress some of the imbalances caused by his own
diplomatic stance towards a positivistic view of the bench” (p. 15). Daly therefore
offers the contents of Our Box Was Full as a gift which was first given to the court
and returned unopened, but hopes that it will be a contribution leading to a community of understanding (p. 47).

Despite Mills and Daly’s texts being alike in structure and stated methodology, this is where the similarities end. Whereas Daly’s writing style is one that I would describe as analytical, Mills, in contrast, is personable. Mills’ partiality to the subjects in her study was evident throughout with the use of personal names and emphasis on narratives to inform her evidence gathering. This close association was ultimately the impetus for Judge McEachern’s dismissal of Mills’ testimony.

Mills’ ardent rebuttal to the judge’s decision to reject the oral testimonies of the Chiefs in favour of written documents provided by a fur trader of 1822 and a commissioner of Indian affairs in 1890 (Mills, 1994, p. 28), and her equally fervent defence of her expert testimony as an anthropologist, are worthy of attention. In both cases, the ethnocentrism of the judge is distinguished as being the primary source of dismissal over both forms of evidence. My critique of both Mills and Daly and other anthropologists providing comment on this case (Asch, 1992; Cove, 1996; Culhane, 1998) is their lack of consideration for what I view to be a crucial issue in the Delgamuukw case: racism. I believe it is safe to assume that the fur trader of 1822 and the Indian Commissioners were both white men. However, the question of race and associated privilege never enters the discussion in the literature. Battiste (2000) observes the struggle of anthropologists as noted by critical theorists (Coombe, 1991; Ulin, 1991) to address the relationship of colonialism and racism. She cites her work in Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage (2000) to be an attempt to replace the anthropologists’ “canon” with a more realistic assessment.
of Indigenous knowledge (p. 34). Pidgeon (2008) also contends that in a continuing colonizing environment, decolonization will come when diverse students, faculty and community become more engaged in critical scholarship (p. 350).

Mills’ claim that anthropologists can become close with the people they study “without this clouding their reason and judgement” (p. 26) is also a subject for further debate. Marotta’s (2009) work titled *Intercultural Hermeneutics and the Cross-Cultural Subject* provides a thorough and critical review of contemporary theories of cross-cultural understandings and cross-cultural subjectivity drawing on Gadamerian hermeneutics, which acknowledges that we cannot escape the prejudices we hold as human beings. Gadamer, as described by Marotta, argues that bringing our prejudices and fore-meanings to the situation assists us to move “beyond our own particularity and that of the other” (p. 269). Marotta adds that interpreters in this case never hold one standpoint as the “Gadamerian hermeneutical practice adopts a particular epistemological stance that dialectically intertwines proximity/familiarity and distance/strangeness and arrives at a better and more genuine understanding of social reality” (p.70).

Marotta’s review of the expanding literature on cross-cultural subjects suggests a tendency to minimize or completely dismiss the role of prejudice and fore-meanings with the belief that the subject can reside in an “epistemological privileged third position” (2009, p. 282). He points out that this concept feeds the debate between standpoint epistemologies and advocates of cross-cultural subject who argue they have a complete perspective not available to “those immersed in their particular/local or global/universal frameworks” (p. 282).
To further contextualize standpoint epistemologies, we turn to feminist writer Sandra Harding (1995) and Indigenous scholar Martin Nakata (2007) for their interpretations. Harding claims that “standpoint theories, in contrast to empiricist epistemologies, begin from the recognition of social inequality; their models of society are conflict models, in contrast to the consensus model of liberal political philosophy assumed by empiricists” (p. 341). Harding’s argument is that understanding the everyday social realities requires political commitment and persistence on the part of marginalized populations and this epistemological interpretation should be viewed as holding more authority over those coming from the dominant group. To clarify, I do not believe Harding is suggesting the standpoint position of the marginalized is more privileged, but rather the ability to provide self-reflection and critical analysis on one’s lived experiences and the interactions within the rules and regulations of society can construct meaning that can benefit the larger public.

Nakata’s attempt to define Indigenous standpoint theory first establishes the concept of the cultural interface, “constituted in a complex nexus between “lived experience” and discursive constructions that play out in many shifting intersections that are never reducible to any one intersection” (p. 210). In this interpretation, there is no singular static Indigenous experience that can be held detached from others, as it is continually dependent on the interplay between contradictions that come from outside constructions and those that belong to the individual. From here Nakata interprets Indigenous standpoint theory as a distinct method of inquiry:
a process for making more intelligible ‘the corpus of objectified knowledge about us’ as it emerges and organizes understanding of our lived realities. I see this as theorizing knowledge from a particular and interested position – not to produce the ‘truth’ of the Indigenous position but to better reveal the workings of knowledge and how understandings of Indigenous people is caught up and implicated in its work (p. 215).

Standpoint theory as described by Harding and Nakata, are not part of my theoretical framework, however there is a utility to Decolonizing, Indigenous and Gitxsan theory that constitutes my framework in that the combined function of these theories also consider epistemology and lived experience as a tool for critical interpretation into the political and social paradoxes from a marginalized position. Studying the literature related to Delgamuukw and cross-cultural subjects and standpoint theory has assisted in contemplating the implications for how and where “knowledge” and “truth” are constructed and by whom.

In the exploration of Gitxsan worldview, as a representation of an Indigenous knowledge paradigm in this dissertation, I felt compelled to revisit the Delgamuukw case for a multitude of reasons. The first one being that it provides additional background and interpretation of Gitxsan worldview and its reliance on oral histories and relationship to the land. Another intention was to highlight the colonial edifices of the judicial system and make the association between this system and education, as having parallel structures to which power and authority is perpetuated through Western policies and practices. Judge McEachern’s final verdict rejected the notion
that Gitxsan title ever existed, stating his decision and reason for judgment as follows:

I am satisfied the lay witnesses honestly believed everything they said to me was true and accurate. It was obvious to me, however, that they were recounting matters of faith, which have become fact to them. If I do not accept their evidence it will seldom be because I think they are untruthful, but rather because I have a different view of what is fact and what is belief. (Monet & Wilson, 1992, p. 188)

In the Judge’s statement he makes the claim, with great condescension, that the anthropologists and Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs who provided testimony may, or may not, have been presenting their truth, but regardless his truth, based on his rules, power and authority, supersedes theirs. The Supreme Court of Canada eventually overturned Judge McEachern’s decision, arguing that Aboriginal title had not been extinguished in BC. Thirty years later, Louise Mandell, who was part of the legal team representing the Gitxsan Wet’suwet’en, provides poignant reflection and insight into the implications of these decisions:

Much Ink was spilled and words spoken here and abroad about Delgamuukw compelling change to the status quo. It is the ordinary state of existence that nothing is static. Everything – every tree, blade of grass, animal, insect, human being, building – the animate and inanimate – is changing moment to moment. Everything that is except government. It is in the DNA of government to avoid change when it comes to status quo and Indigenous peoples. The existing status quo holds wealth and power in place and, after Delgamuukw, nothing much changed on the ground. (Speaking notes prepared for Gitxsan
The most recent case to draw national attention is the 2014 *Tsilhqot’in Nation v British Columbia*, as it reiterates the obligation to recognize Indigenous title as being inclusive of its customs and traditions. In response to these shifting and contemporary realities, Chief Justice Lance Finch (2012) argues for “a duty to learn” to which we must enter new legal, ethical and cultural landscapes creating deeper understanding through shared experience (p. 17). Finch’s notion of a duty to learn resonates especially in consideration of the recommendations coming from Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) final report (2015) that identifies education as being foundational to the work of reconciliation. I will revisit “duty to learn” and the work of the TRC in chapter 6 as they offer a timely contribution to this dissertation’s stated purpose that includes engaging in a deeper level of discussion related to Indigenous ways of being and knowing.

Providing critical reflection on *Delgamuukw* and the associated literature under Newhouse’s (2015) third phase of Indigenization has been useful. It illuminates the various political and colonial contexts in which Indigenous people are required to assert their rights, the academy being one of them. In consideration of the goal of this study – to share Gitxsan knowledge to support VIU’s Indigenization efforts beyond cultural recognition - sharing the history of *Delgamuukw* is a powerful demonstration of an Indigenous tradition that has a methodological approach for learning. These methods include oral accounts of history and storytelling that come through an ongoing spiritual connection to the land, and while it is not necessary for
those in the academy to commit to this as their truth, they do need to accept it as ours if Indigenization is to progress. As Newhouse (2015) contends, the goal is not to be concerned with seeking the 'Truth' or oneness of thought but rather “accepts the notion of truths” (p. 8).

In closing, this discussion has reinvigorated me personally, professionally and most importantly as a researcher. Thirty years ago I was a teenager, and asserting my Indigenous right was not a priority, assimilating into the mainstream was. Revisiting the case at this stage of my life and in this capacity has been invaluable. I am motivated by the rejection and mockery present in McEachern’s closing statement and by the resilience and determination of Gitxsan people. I feel an ethical imperative to continue to foster a spiritual connection to the land and to learn from this relationship.

2.5 Discussion Summary

Structuring this literature review to follow Newhouse’s (2015) three-phased approach to Indigenization has been useful in that the advancement of ideas, what has progressed and what remains a challenge is apparent. I applaud the ability of the scholars to navigate the messy 'in-between' spaces of political and cultural thought and the tenacity required to chip away at the hegemonic structures that preside while preserving and occupying one’s Indigenous values and beliefs. I would like to suggest that through this enterprise we are moving away from the binary notions that separate ‘us and them’ toward a more inclusive relationship, however, I think we are far from this reality.
In this literature review, a multitude of themes emerged that I would classify as primary and secondary. I place the former to coincide alongside each of the phases reviewed. In the first phase I trace the roots of Indigenous scholarship, here, a strong theme comes out of the literature; that of resistance; giving voice to oppression by addressing stereotypes and asserting Indigenous identity and sovereignty. The second phase introduces the theme of interdependence to which the critique of the dominant structures of the academy is presented in collaboration with expressions of Indigenous ontological and epistemological frameworks that inform ways of knowing. Exploration of the third phase, clarifies what I consider to be the most prevailing theme – the pursuit of authenticity. Indigenization was born from colonial misrepresentation and ensuing resistance and this struggle for authentic recognition will remain, in my mind, until the land question is resolved. The interdependence between land, language, and life is essential to Indigenous people’s existence and epistemology.

The secondary themes that appeared were less pronounced but nonetheless important to identify as I note they’re persistent throughout each stage. Decolonization is a constant thread in the literature. Until equity is attained, and Indigenous people are no longer the subjugated Other, the purpose of Indigenization is ultimately tied to decolonization and self-determination. A subsequent theme would be the call for action that I note in more recent scholarship. It seems that Indigenous scholarship is feeling accomplished, albeit frustrated; in their continued critiques of the academy to the point they are asking (demanding in some cases) non-Indigenous scholars pick up the anticolonial discourse, to take responsibility for
their complacent behaviours and address their own subjectivity. In some cases we are seeing evidence of this work from non-Indigenous scholars such as Paulette Regan (2010) whose book *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* calls for non-Aboriginal Canadians to abandon their mythical roles as peacekeepers and admit their contribution to Canada’s colonial legacy by focusing on the Indian problem rather than the Settler problem (p. 11). However, examples of this work up to this point are minimal. Lastly, consistent in the literature is the desire expressed among Indigenous scholars to give back. Contributing to their Nations, communities, families and students’ well-being are a paramount consideration.

Patricia Rosborough (2012) suggests in her dissertation work, that Indigenous scholarship is a multifaceted endeavour in that our efforts to privilege local knowledge is interwoven with our familial relationships and responsibility to our communities. While I fully subscribe to this claim, I am challenged as to how, from this place, we demonstrate relationality and responsibility to our positions and people outside of our family and community? In my estimation, there appears to be two streams of expectation and ensuing existence that is indicative of this third phase of Indigenization. There is the call to action for the dominant group to take responsibility for their colonial representation by engaging in critical discourse with the ultimate goal to shift the mainstream paradigm to a more inclusive environment. Simultaneously, there is the continued pursuit of Indigenous scholarship to reclaim their traditions by privileging Indigenous knowledge in the academy and to give back to their own communities. I find this distinction somewhat paradoxical and leads to
what I perceive as a gap in the literature as well as a whole new set of questions related to this inquiry.

What is not being addressed in the literature to the full extent that I had hoped is how these two activities intersect. I concur that non-Indigenous people need to consider their own subjectivity in order to authentically engage with Indigenous epistememes but who determines when this transpires? What is the identifier for the conversion point from when we move from an anticolonial discourse to one that is more inclusive to which Indigenous worldviews are equivalently acknowledged? And are we as Indigenous people prepared, even willing, to share our situated knowledges outside of our tribal relationships? Has too much been taken to fully regain trust that leads to mutually inclusive acceptance, given our history and relationship within a Canadian context? And considering our liberation is tied to our land reclamation, what is our role and responsibility as educators within the academy to address the larger societal issue of continued denial of Indigenous land title?

I return to the point made earlier regarding the current status of phase three in which Indigenous people have brought their knowledge but appear to be at an impasse in terms of how we authentically recognize and accept each other into our respective communities of scholarship. To this end, I might suggest there is a fourth phase to consider to which we bring our trust. My dissertation will aim to bridge this stalemate, seek further insight into the questions posed above and consider how we might offer trust within a contemporary setting.
CHAPTER 3: Theoretical Framework, *Hawaal*

3.1 Introduction

*Hawaal* is the financial contribution to one’s *wilp* to compensate for the use of the *lax’yip* (land). The *hawaal*, as a gift, is similar to theory in that it represents the relationships that exist within the community. I draw on Maxwell’s (2005) interpretation of theory as “a set of concepts and the proposed relationships among these, a structure that is intended to represent or model something about the world (p. 42). In this sense, the *hawaal*, with its contributions from the *wilp* and other relative, clan and community members (Daly, 2005. p. 86) models the responsibility and kinship ties the community holds in adhering to a structure that solidifies a way of life.

This study incorporates three theoretical frameworks: Decolonizing theory, Indigenous theory and Gitxsan worldview. This chapter provides further details on the significance of each theory to this study. I outline Graham Smith’s (2005) 10 characteristics related to Indigenous theory to describe the approach taken in this study to further conceptualize elements within a Gitxsan worldview. I structured this section as a narrative that weaved my personal experiences, drawing on my ancestral teachings and linking the political ramifications of colonization to further position myself as a researcher. At the conclusion of this discussion, I present the *li’ligit* that hosts the traditional practice of gift giving as the Gitxsan representation of my theoretical framework.
3.2 Decolonizing Theory

I was first introduced to the concept of colonization as a theory and process that could be used to critically analyze Canadian history while obtaining my undergraduate degree in Social Work at the University of Victoria. For example, it makes apparent how Western laws and values were implemented across Turtle Island that destroyed Indigenous ways of knowing, governing and living with the lands. To counter this subjugation, a decolonizing way of being and a decolonizing approach to social work practice was presented. At the risk of sounding melodramatic, it was a perspective that changed my life. Decolonization is based on the theoretical premise that within society’s institutions there are power imbalances that privilege certain groups and marginalize others (Sinclair, 2004). Regan (2006) identifies this inequity as being influenced by symbolic violence that emerges from Western-based laws and bureaucratic policies and practices. A decolonization process involves three strategies: 1) critique Western institutes, policies, practices; 2) center Indigenous theories, epistemologies, identities, concerns; and 3) rearticulate them in contemporary terms, theories and understandings (Smith 2012). Decolonizing theory therefore offers a lens to analyze and disrupt, hegemonic discourses, systemic inequities and hierarchical power relationships.

As a person of mixed racial identity, who grew up navigating the inherent tensions between two different worlds, decolonizing theory helped inform my interpretations of my lived experiences, providing critical analysis which has assisted in unpacking and unlearning cognitive imperialism. From this analysis I gained greater insight into my insider- outsider association with my Gitxsan culture and
identity, tracing the origins of my uncertainties back to when my Gitxsan mother married my non-Gitxsan father. This is my first memory of how colonial law and bureaucratic practice had the power to symbolically alter and physically marginalize my family. At this time my mom received a letter from the government informing her that through this union and under the law of the Indian Act, she was no longer considered a status Indian. Although my mom continued to have a close relationship with her family and participate in Gitxsan culture, the colonial intrusion was well established by the time my brother and I came along.

Looking back into my family history, my mom never denied, nor encouraged my participation in Gitxsan culture and Gitxsanimxw language, even though she grew up immersed in both. If I employ decolonizing theory, I am able to analyze my mom’s passivity to consider that her decision to not impart cultural teachings was disrupted by government-enforced legislation and positioning of her as the subjugated Other. Moreover, a decolonization strategy requires me to critically evaluate as to how my lighter skin, as compared to my mother, has afforded me certain privileges not generally available to those Indigenous peoples with darker skin color.

I recall experiences of shopping in a store with my mom when suddenly she would indicate we were leaving despite the fact that our cart was full of items that were not yet paid for. Initially these experiences confused me and I was embarrassed by my mom’s reaction, but as I grew older, I realized that these incidents were a result of racism and demonstrations of my mom’s resistance. The fact that my mom, a woman of color, who still today is often closely watched while
browsing in a store, whereas I am given the luxury to roam freely without the watchful eyes of discrimination, is indicative of the pervasive colonial mindset and symbolic violence. It is these personal experiences as well as numerous others from my practice within the academy that has led me to this inquiry and to foreground decolonization as a tool for activism (Swadener & Mutua, 2008). This strategy provides me with the lens for continued reflective analysis and interpretation of the subtle but damaging ways in which colonialism manifests itself within societal structures and works to marginalize Indigenous peoples (Smith 1999 & Wilson, 2008).

Recent Indigenous scholarship however cautions to ensure that I move beyond the rhetoric of decolonization as merely a representation of social justice and speaking my truth in the age of modernity but to engage in a deeper dialectic of incommensurability (Tuck & Yang, 2012) and de-provincializing (Ahenakew, Andreotti, Cooper, & Hireme, 2014). In both cases, the authors make a similar case in which the emphasis is on retrieval of land and ancestral knowledge as being deeply connected to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. An ethic of incommensurability contests the work of reconciliation that looks to establish a new relationship between Settler and Indigenous populations and remains steadfast in its commitment to naming decolonization as an unsettling act in which the goal is Indigenous sovereignty (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 35). Additionally, the concept of de-provincializing asserts that Indigenous counter-hegemonic strategies of resistance, while valuable, need to be extended to include the kind of knowing connected to
ancestral metaphysics that is unique to Indigenous people’s ontologies (Ahenakew, Andreotti, Cooper, & Hireme, 2014, p. 222).

Contemplating the work of the above scholars challenges me to consider the ongoing violence and compromise that can become personified in the work of laying bare our identity, personal narratives and tribal knowledges and the need to continuously work toward uncovering the depths of suppression. It evokes a process that is both affirming and disquieting. Absolon (2008) in her thesis on “Indigenous Graduate Research in the Academy” appropriately identifies the process of decolonization in research as being contradictory and lists her inherent personal contradictions that I find familiar; being both Indigenous and English, doing the work of decolonization in a mainstream education system, and using the colonizer’s language (p.11). Regardless of its disputation, I still contend that decolonization is compulsory work in research as it engages our mind, heart, body and spirit (Absolon & Willett, 2005) creating a pathway for looking inward, seeking ways of knowing and understanding theory that lie somewhere deep within all of us (Ermine, 1995).

I therefore use decolonizing theory throughout this study as a tool to critically analyze and identify the ongoing power dynamics inherent in the colonial structures of the academy as well as within myself. While decolonizing theory is central to this study given my stated goal of deepening the Indigenization efforts of VIU beyond cultural recognition to recognising Indigenous knowledge systems, equally important is the inclusion of Indigenous theory, which moves beyond the identification of the inherent power dynamics to action that promotes and strengthens Indigenous identity and nationhood.
3.3 Indigenous Theory

Indigenous theory is not uniform. It is based on a holistic application and the never-ending circle and synergistic energy and responsibility toward the past, future, land and life as well as to the spirit world (Archibald, 2008). Leroy Little Bear (2000) further encapsulates the relationship between self and the environment:

Arising out of the Aboriginal philosophy of constant motion or flux is the value of wholeness or totality. The value of wholeness speaks to the totality of creation, the group as opposed to the individual, the forest as opposed to the individual trees. It focuses on the totality of the constant flux rather than on individual patterns (p. 79).

As I broaden my theoretical framework for the purposes of this study, I turn to Graham Smith who further conceptualizes the notion of ongoing transformation by centering Indigenous theory in research as a means to interpret and make sense of the world beyond colonization. Smith (2003) uses the term “conscientization” to summon a positive association that puts the focus on Indigenous people to critically “conscientize themselves about their needs, aspirations and preferences” (p. 3). To support this work, Smith offers a list of the following ten characteristics related to Indigenous theory:

1. Located within a culturally contextual site
2. Born of organic process involving community
3. The product of a theorist who has an understanding of the cultural epistemic foundations of an Indigenous worldview
4. Focussed on change
5. Although not universal, portable to other sites

6. Flexible

7. Engaged with other theoretical positioning (i.e., not an isolationist theory)

8. Critical

9. Workable for a variety of sites of struggle

10. User-friendly – people can understand what the theorist is talking about.

   (Smith, 2005, p. 10)

These ten Indigenous principles act as a guideline to assist me to position what counts as Indigenous theory. In the next section, I expand upon the descriptions of these principles, and apply them directly to my research process. It is from this Indigenous lens that I articulate a Gitxsan set of principles that frame a specific worldview that ultimately guided my research process and interpretation of the data.

3.3.1 Located Within A Culturally Contextual Site

Gitxsan culture is the predominant setting in which I locate myself and ground my Indigenous perspective. I initiated this study acknowledging my ancestry, where I come from and identifying the git‘mgan (Crest Pole) as the centrepiece to contextualize Gitxsan worldview. While I grew up in my community learning from my grandparents and participating in cultural events, I have also spent a significant part of my life living and working on Vancouver Island. Therefore, it was important to me from the inception of this study, to find a way to include, acknowledge and honor the
generous teachings that have been shared with me as a visitor on the traditional
territory of the Coast Salish people. Elders working at VIU also provided cultural
perspectives and knowledges that were incorporated into this study. Their
participation provided me with the opportunity to honor and show respect to people
that I admire and who have helped shaped my identity and practice as an
Indigenous leader working in a post-secondary system. It is the Elders who I turn to
first for guidance and direction and to whom I consider my ‘bosses’ at Vancouver
Island University. For me this relationship is experienced as an organic process that
continues to shape a community of practice.

3.3.2 Born Of Organic Process Involving Community

A motivating factor for me in pursuing a doctoral degree was to delve deeper
into my Indigenous heritage in an attempt to create deeper understanding of the
assumptions that I held based on my lived experience. Reading the work of
renowned Indigenous scholars such as Jo-ann Archibald (1995, 2008), Marie
Battiste (2000, 2002), and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) (to name a few) all of whom
advocate and demonstrate a community driven process and perspective in their
writing has inspired me to achieve a similar undertaking.

Going home and speaking to the leaders in my community as well as the
Elders at VIU has been a humbling and rewarding experience. These interactions,
despite following an established script of questioning, have been distinct
experiences. In some cases the participants have come to our meeting prepared
with written notes and we work through each question while others injected stories,
both cultural and personal. In one interview, I posed the first question and an hour later, the Elder stopped talking and asked if we were done to which I replied we were as he had touched on all thirteen question. In each circumstance, I left these meetings in awe of the individual’s unique abilities and full of gratitude to engage in a methodology that featured a community-based approach to organic conversations involving Indigenous epistemologies and worldviews.

### 3.3.3 The Product of A Theorist Who Has An Understanding Of The Cultural Epistemic Foundations Of An Indigenous Worldview

The development of my cultural epistemic understanding started under the influence of my grandparents and has continued through participation in cultural ceremonies, events and in the relationships with my family and community. I have had many teachers from my community as well as the people in the communities with whom I have worked closely. Some of the attributes I have gained along the way involve knowing the importance of listening, being respectful of process and protocols that are not mine to define, taking time to be present in community building relationships and learning the cultural nuances. I am comfortable suggesting that I have a foundation in which to engage in Indigenous theory but in upholding this worldview, it is vital that I recognize this development will be a lifelong endeavour.

Within the academy, both as a student and a professional, I have analyzed Indigenous literature, participated in community based research and written documents, as well as participated in groups and activities that involved issues
related to Indigenous epistemologies, and pedagogy. Incorporating an Indigenous worldview is a primary objective.

### 3.3.4 Focussed On Change

Once again I draw inspiration from Indigenous scholars who contend that Indigenous research be transformative and promote the self-determining rights of Indigenous peoples (Taiaiake Alfred, 1999; Grande, 2004; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). It is also Indigenous scholars who have assisted me in formulating the concern identified in this critical inquiry for what I perceive as the academy’s inability to recognize the breadth and depth of Indigenous knowledge systems (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Pidgeon, 2008) and the subsequent ongoing isolation of Indigenous students (Marker, 2004; Nakata, 2009). I therefore regard it is a professional impetive to offer a contribution toward disturbing the status quo that persists in post-secondary institutions. At the very least, my goal is to create change within myself to be a better advocate for facilitating conversations related to social justice, cultural revitalization and self-empowerment for Indigenous peoples and communities.

### 3.3.5 Although Not Universal, Portable To Other Sites

The contributions coming from the participants in this study, offer a variety of different Indigenous perspectives (Gitxsan, Coast Salish, Metis and Nuu-chah-nulth). Similarities and distinctions are revealed but most importantly, opportunity is provided in making these perspectives public to consider how these reflections may be transferable to other perspectives and locations, especially when those locations
have lost some of their cultural knowledge and pedagogy due to colonialism.
Additionally, dialogue generated from the Learning Circle with staff, students and
Elders at VIU offers another vantage point in which to consider the implications for
how we might better host Indigenous epistememes in the academy to better meet the
needs of Indigenous learners as well as to enhance the ways in which we consider
alternate knowledges and generate complex understandings for multiple ways of
knowing, being and witnessing in the academy.

3.3.6 Flexible

As a witness in the Delgamuukw case, part of my grandfather's oral testimony
was translated to provide the following understanding of Gitxsan philosophy, “It is
good to look back just to see where you came from, but you always have to look
ahead. But do not hurry. Go as far as you can see… and when you get there you
will always see more” (p.65). It is with these words of guidance that I understood my
learning in this study as a journey. A journey to be shared in which there is no
definitive destination to be concluded but rather an offering of a cumulative
perspective representing a time and place in history that can be considered, adapted
and renewed over time and in praxis, as well as theory.

3.3.7 Engaged With Other Theoretical Positioning (i.e., Not An Isolationist
Theory)

Kuokkanen (2007) challenges the assumption that all Indigenous scholarship
needs to be particular to one’s community context. She goes on to argue
“intellectual autonomy must mean that indigenous scholars are entitled to do theory,
engage with abstract ideas and other theories” (p. 9). As a beginning scholar, incorporating my community context is strategic as I am attempting to deepen my understanding and ground my perspective. I feel this is a necessary endeavour, however, an equally important strategy was to broaden my theoretical lens by incorporating three theoretical frameworks from which I was able to more thoroughly plan my research process and critically analyze and interpret my empirical data.

3.3.8 Critical

Indigenous researcher Julie Kaomea (2003) describes what she terms defamiliarizing (taken for granted perspectives) inquiry as a compatible response to decolonizing research methodologies, “to move beyond familiar tales of colonial villains and colonized victims or heroes. Using these new defamiliarizing tools, we can uncover more complicated, nuanced stories of (post) colonial complicity and entanglement” (p. 23). To reiterate, one of the objectives of this study is to provide a critical lens throughout to continue to unpack the layers of colonial influence but to also ensure movement away from this narrative toward action that could be considered for different indigenous sites of resistance.

3.3.9 Workable For A Variety Of Sites Of Struggle

Bringing the discussion related to gift giving practices from different Indigenous perspective into the academy is purposeful, a counter-hegemonic strategy to address the issue of isolation of Indigenous epistemes at VIU. The discussion in this study can be representative of a case study to be reflected upon in other post-secondary environments located within traditional territories. I contend
that sustained persistence of educational inequity for Indigenous learners is the work of Indigenous scholarship in education. As such this case study involved conversations about the gift-giving practices of diverse traditional territories that might be able to be applied to a variety of academic sites of struggle as alternative pedagogies for Indigenous education. Such counter-hegemonic strategies can contribute to the emancipation of Indigenous students and supports more pluralistic theories related to knowledge production. Indigenous theories and knowledge’s help student to understand academic pedagogy and research.

3.3.10 User-friendly – People Can Understand What The Theorist Is Talking About

At the end of my literature review for this study, I indicated that a collective offering of Indigenous scholarship is emerging and while the need to chip away at the hegemonic structures still remain, it appears we are slowly moving toward a more inclusive praxis. At this time, I also addressed a gap in the literature, suggesting the notion of how we invite and engage the academy into Indigenous discourse is largely absent. Given this gap a personal objective in this research was to appeal to a broad audience of Indigenous communities as well as to those in my community within the academy. I invited people into this discourse with the objective of finding a balance in the language used, speaking from an Indigenous narrative, incorporating and interpreting Gitxsan language when and where necessary but also including terms significant to the academy. An integral component of this process has been to identify areas where dissonance exists, identifying the challenges of the
transferability of different paradigms apparent but also the opportunity to explore areas of connection.

3.4. Gitxsan Worldview

This study’s articulation of the Gitxsan worldview started with the analysis of the Gitanyow Ayookxw: the Constitution of the Gitanyow Huwilp (2007) and Delgamuukw (2010) documents, as well personal experiences and the shared teachings of other Gitxsan leaders, Elders and community members. But for the most part, I have structured it as a narrative, weaving my personal experiences as a means to further locate myself and my relationship with my culture as well as to continue to provide critical analysis to understand the depth of colonial impact embedded in this relationship. It is also within this preface of a Gitxsan worldview that I respectfully invite my interpretation to be considered on a spectrum of learning where there is no definitive end point to reflect the fluidity that is at the heart of Indigenous theory. The characteristics pertinent to a Gitxsan worldview and comprising my theory are as follows:

1. Gitxsanimxw (the official language of the Gitxsan people)
2. Wilp/Wilkisi’witxw (House group/members of the father clan)
3. Lax yip (traditional territory)
4. Adawaak/Ayuuks/Limx’oy (oral history/House crest/mourning song)
5. Ayookxw/Li’ligit (law/feast system)
3.4.1 Gitxsanimxw

*Gitxsanimxw* is the official language of the Gitxsan people and it belongs to the language group, *Simalygax*. All seven of the Gitxsan leaders that I interviewed were fluent in *Gitxsanimxw*. Throughout the interviews, the participants interjected *Gitxsanimxw*. At times some of them struggled to find the English interpretation in their response to the questions. It was clear from this exchange that certain aspects of Gitxsan worldview are difficult to describe using a second language such as English.

Dr. Jane Smith (2004) stresses, “We cannot be Gitxsan without our language. Our language defines who we are” (p. 105). Dr. Smith’s words resonate and reinforce my insider-outsider association with my Gitxsan identity. I know where I come from and I am proud to have a name and active place within my *wilp* but there is a layer of disconnect in not understanding the language. In our *li’ligit* (feast system) I would estimate that ninety percent of the words spoken are in *Gitxsanimxw*. I have become familiar with the process and procedures of the *li’ligit* and can therefore assist my *wilp* in doing what needs to be done but I do not have the privilege of hearing and understanding first hand.

3.4.2 Wilp/Wilksi’witxw

*Wilp* in the English language means house, the plural of which is *huwilp*. The *wilp* is the social, political and economic unit representing Gitxsan society and has significance for how Gitxsan self-govern. In the *wilp*, a matriarchal system defines the roles, responsibility and rights of *Wilp* members however; the *wilksi’witxw* (father
clan) also has a role to play in supporting their descendants belonging to a specific 

wilp.

I belong to the wilp’s Malii, this is my family, where my sense of belonging started with my first name at five years old at a li’ligit. Later I received an adult name and most recently, I inherited a chief name, Ha-Youly. My twin girls also received names at 5 years old in the wilp’s’ Malii. To receive a name is an honor as these names have been in our wilp since time immemorial and our ancestors have carried these names with dignity and respect that we, in turn, have the same obligation to uphold. Preservation of this tradition involves acting responsibly: participating in the li’ligit, respecting Elders, and knowing the ayookxw (laws) of the Gitxsan people (Delgamuukw, 2010).

Upon receiving a name in the wilp, it is the role of the wilksi’wixtw to bear witness to your inheritance and confirm their kinship and ongoing support by publically calling out your name in the li’ligit. Approximately four to six people from your father’s clan are called to stand and announce your newly gifted name and you then reciprocate with a small amount to each person, usually one or two dollars, to recognize their role as witness. At one time, this practice was recorded in the collective memory of all that were present but today more and more of the huwilp are adapting various methods to record naming ceremonies within their traditional territories.
3.4.3 Lax Yip

The *lax yip* translates to territory in English and its definition is inclusive of the lands, waters, hunting and fishing resources that are within the boundaries of a territory. The *lax yip* is described as being key to our survival as Gitxsan people and while there is a notion of inherited ownership between each Wilp, there is also recognition of responsibility and variability inherent in this custody:

We use the whole land for a reason. Everything is connected we always say, the birds are connected to the land, the wildlife, the fish. You can’t take one area and say, ‘this is it’. We’re supposed to generate revenue from this land here to become self-sustaining. How can we (divide it up), when we used our whole territory for a reason? *(Am Sisee’ etxw Victoria Russel in Delgamuukw 2010, p. 100)*

My connection to the *lax yip* intensifies as I become older. It is something that I took for granted in my youth. It wasn’t until I moved away from home and came to live on Vancouver Island that I started to recognize my relationship and attachment; my longing for the mountains, the rivers and experiencing the earth’s cycle rotation through four distinct seasons. This relationship is perplexing to me as I am not someone who hunted or fished on the territory, and only harvested berries a handful of times. Yet, I have this profound connection to and appreciation for what this land offers, and I am constantly in awe of the untouched beauty that is reflected in its landscape. The mountains in particular inspire and humble me with their magnitude of sheer existence.

On one of my trips back home to complete the interviews for this study, I recall one vivid experience of driving along the Skeena River between Gitwangak
and Gitanmaax at dusk. It was the beginning of December and the mountains were once again becoming immersed in snow and the river was starting to freeze over. The moon was up and it was a clear crisp night. As I drove east, the image of the moon kept shifting against the backdrop of different mountain ranges, with each image becoming increasingly more breathtaking. I attempted to pull over and take pictures, but there was no way to capture the magnificence of the moment through a snapshot. Finally, I surrendered and honoured the moment by saying a prayer of gratitude and respect for being able to experience this splendour, for growing up with the familiarity and comfort of these surroundings and the opportunity to come home again and adding to our collective story.

### 3.4.4 Adawaak/Ayuuks/Limx’oy

The wilps’ Malii adawaak, ayuuks and limx’oy are introduced in Chapter One. To reiterate, the adawaak is the oral history of each Wilp and includes the stories of the origin of our members, connected to the lax yip. The adawaak in Gitxsan society is very important as it traces bloodlines, migration, and major events that have occurred in history. The ayuuks are the wilp crests, which have significance to this history and the connection to the territory. The limx’oy is the grieving song. The limx’oy is still sung today when Wilp members pass on. This interaction provides proof of connection and ownership to the lax yip dating back thousands of years.

It is the role of the wilp; particularly those in Chiefly positions, to ensure the events of the adawaak are repeated and shared with each succeeding generation. Thus, it is the role of each generation of wilp members to become familiar with their
adawaak. The telling of the adawaak by Gitxsan Chiefs played a prominent role in the Delgamuukw case to prove rights of ownership and authority over their traditional territories. Gyologyet Mary McKenzie, one of the plaintiffs, described the central importance of the adawaak:

Without adaawk you can't very well say you were a Chief or you own a territory. It has to come first, the adaawk. Names come after, songs come after, crests come after it and all that’s held, fishing places, all those come into one that’s the adaawk. It’s not a story, it’s adaawk to Gitxsan people. (Delgamuukw, 2010, p. 92)

It is this spirit and leadership that has kept our traditions alive for thousands of years and will continue to do so into the future.

3.4.5 Ayookxw/ Li‘ligit

The ayookxw are the laws of the Gitxsan people. Laws of inherited duty and responsibility that are intended to ensure balance and peace among the huwilp representing Gitxsan society. The ayookxw are founded on knowledge, experience and practices that are thousands of years old (The Gitanyow Ayookxw: the Constitution of the Gitanyow Huwilp, 2007. p. 17). Gwiss Gyen Stanley Williams described the ayookxw as follows. "It is knowledge that is practiced internally – with the mind and heart, externally – observing protocol in relationships with others (humans, animals and plants), and spiritually – cleansing ways that unite the heart and mind" (Delgamuukw, 2010, p. 7).

The li‘ligit is the feast system, which remains a mainstay in Gitxsan society. It is the place where the expectation among all those present is to see the ayookxw
demonstrated. The *li’ligit* can further be described as an institution in which Gitxsan people formalize their affairs; births, deaths, adoptions, rights of a land access, etc. A *wilp* group hosting a *li’ligit* will showcase its ability to uphold the *ayookxw* and in doing so build capacity for achieving status and respect in the community. It is also within this venue that the reciprocal social structure of the Gitxsan people is modeled:

Every aspect of the feast demonstrates the power of the host House and publicly re-presents the social responsibilities of the participants: invitations, dirges, regalia, dances and presentations, seating, contributions, payments and gifts…speeches by House members and responses by guest chiefs, and even the food, which demonstrates the ability of the House to manage its territory and trade with others (Anderson & Halpin, 2000, p. 31).

It has been my experience participating in the *li’ligit*, that one learns by doing and making mistakes. When I first became old enough to serve (hand out food such as oranges, apples, crackers, bread, etc.), I started out by politely asking people if they would like an orange and I recall my mom swooping in from behind me and taking my box of oranges and putting an orange in front of each guest, when she was finished she looked at me and said, “you don’t ask, you just give”. From this experience and others that were similar, I soon learned my role and responsibility as a *wilp* member hosting the *li’ligit*, is to give out all the food and gifts *wilp* members bought and prepared and it is the role of the guests to accept and never refuse. This is part of Gitxsan knowing the *ayookxw*. 
Wilp members hosting the li’ligit provide food, money and gifts, such as blankets, clothes, dishes, towels, and tools. These items are to express appreciation for the people in the community who have supported you in your time of loss and grief by bringing food, providing comfort through words, prayer or by simply being present. It is these gifts that acknowledge relationships, kinship, kindness and a way of being with each other supports ongoing existence.

The wilksi’witxw (Father clan) are exclusively responsible for looking out for the wilp by carrying out the tasks associated with the loss and burial of a wilp member including buying the casket, digging the grave, watching over the body before it is buried, keeping the house clean where the body rests in advance of the burial and hosting people who come by and pay respect. Everything in this regard is the role of the wilksi’witxw – even catching the tears of grieving family members is the job of the wilksi’witxw. The wilksi’witxw take on this role at a time when the wilp are most vulnerable, alleviating stress by taking on the difficult duties and allowing family members to grieve, however, it is still the role of the wilp to make the decisions as to who in the father clan will do what duty and to acknowledge their work at the li’ligit through payment of money and gifts.

Financial contributions are called hawaal and largely come from the wilp. The process of the hawaal is very formal. It starts with the Simogyet (Chief) of the wilp putting money in first, followed by the supporting chiefs and matriarchs and then the remaining members of the wilp. The Simogyet contributes the most money, the amount dependent on the work that needs to be done but typically it is in the thousands of dollar range. After all the wilp members are done, the Wwlksi’witxw
gives and then clan members but from different *huwilp*. In the *wilp’s*’ *Malii*’s case it would be clan members who are *Lax Gibuu* (wolf clan).

Every single contribution is announced, honored and witnessed along with the person's traditional name. The money is then added up and the total made public, from here the gifts are distributed, starting with the main workers from the *wilksii*’*witxw*. Once people are acknowledged and if there is still money remaining, this gift will go to the people who have come to act as witnesses. No money is to remain with the *Wilp*. Any remainder is distributed to the community in a good way. The gift giving that takes place in the Gitxsan *li’ligit* supports a process of reciprocity that Kuokkanen (2007) describes as circular or ceremonial in that they are life-renewing ceremonies where the purpose of the gift is to recognize all of the distinct relationships that exist in the world and to be responsive and responsible for their existence (p. 39). In this case, gift giving is symbolic of Gitxsan ontology.

The characteristics identified above describe the multitude of protocol embedded in Gitxsan ontology. Understanding and honouring protocol within a particular Indigenous worldview is necessary in order to respectfully engage in Indigenous research (Kovach, 2009a; Wilson, 2008 & Smith 2012). These protocols are used throughout my research in variety of ways: assisting me in how I engage with the Elders and Leaders who are the participants in this study, knowing that my actions for how I conduct myself have consequences for my *wilp*, and ensuring that at the completion of my research, I publically acknowledge all those that assisted me in the *li’ligit* through gift giving.
3.5 Indigenous Research Paradigm

It was the exploration of the three theories, with their distinct characteristics described above that guided me in formulating an Indigenous research paradigm. Wilson’s (2008) definition of an Indigenous research paradigm consists of the following four entities: ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology and the notion that they interact as a collective, their totality being greater than the sum of their independent parts has been helpful in this process (p. 70). He further suggests relationality is at the heart of an Indigenous research paradigm where, “ontology and epistemology are based on a process of relationships that form a mutual reality” (p. 71).

Kovach, (2009a) claims that integrating explicit conceptual frameworks provide researchers a genuine opportunity to put their perspectives forward, and demonstrate how these perspectives impact their chosen methods (p. 42). In Kovach, Carriere, Montogmery, Barrett and Gilles’ (2015) report, Indigenous Presence: Experiencing and Envisioning Indigenous Knowledges within Selected Post-Secondary Sites of Education and Social Work, they use the sweat lodge as an allegory to tell the story of their research. In this report the authors describe allegory and its use as a “narrative imbued with abstract (or not easily discernable) ideas or principles for the purpose of offering a teaching story. Allegory, as with metaphor, is a useful device in research that draws upon Indigenist principles because of its ability to represent holism and relationality in visual and literal forms” (p. 33).
To personify the epistemological, theoretical and methodological approaches taken in this research and recognizing the inherent connection as described by Wilson (2008), I present Figure 5 below as the Indigenous research paradigm put forward in this study.

**Figure 5: Indigenous Research Paradigm**

The paradigm encompasses the visual and symbolic representation of a Gitxsan episteme and acts as the container to conceptualize the multiple interconnected parts that constitutes an Indigenous research design. Given the multilayered configuration of this paradigm, it is useful to describe each layer and subsequent heading separately to ensure clarity in its distinct application.
3.5.1 The Li’ligit As Gitxsan Epistemology

My investigation into gift giving was initiated from my own experience and relationship with being Gitxsan and growing up participating in the li’ligit and the cultural assumptions I held about knowledge. Through my interviews with the Gitxsan Chiefs a deeper recognition as to how Gitxsan epistemology views knowledge as emerging through a relational process that is represented in the li’ligit was confirmed. In this study, I therefore use the li’ligit as the allegory to tell the story of this research. Similar to Kovach’s et al (2015) the intent behind incorporating an Indigenous tradition, such as the li’ligit, into this study is not to have the ceremony be represented in its entirety, but rather to consider the process of the li’ligit as one that can offer the reader different possibilities for connecting with the information that is being presented.

3.5.2 Gift Giving As Gitxsan Ontology

Through the above exploration of the li’ligit, and its embedded practice of gift giving, I was able to discern how this practice is reflected of Gitxsan ontology. The giving of gifts in the li’ligit signifies the kinship associations as well as the relationality among all things. The act of gift giving is intended to balance these relationships and demonstrate respect for their existence. More specifically, this tradition is a manifestation for how we interact and represent ourselves among our animate and spiritual relationships on a daily basis as well as show respect for our traditional territories. In this regard, the li’ligit and gift giving as epistemological and ontological identifiers express the fluid and dynamic reality indicative of an Indigenous theory.
3.5.3 Git’mgan, 4 R’s, Gift Logic And The 4 A’s As Axiology And Methodology

The *git’mgan*, features four components (reaching up, planted in the ground, crests and ceremony) each of which provide specific Gitxsan ethical positioning to analyze the information coming from the interviews with Gitxsan Chiefs. Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (1991) 4 R’s (respect, relevancy, reciprocity and responsibility) are also used to analyze the data from the Gitxsan Chiefs but offer a broader ethical approach for applying quality Indigenous principles into that academy.

Kuokkanen’s (2007) notion of Gift Logic, which provides critique of the modern day university in relation to its recognition of Indigenous epistemes, is used to analyse the interviews with the VIU Elders who are situated in this modern day context, sharing their traditional knowledge. From this critique, I reinterpret the 4 R’s; identifying the 4 A’s (accommodation, acquiescence, affiliation and acceptance) as being more reflective of the reality that exists at VIU in regard to its Indigenization efforts. The 4 A’s are also used in the Learning Circle with faculty, students and Elders to gather feedback on the process of Indigenization.

Collectively, this Indigenous research paradigm, with its distinct parts work together to inform a wholistic discussion for assessing the experience of Indigenization as it exits currently at VIU with the goal to create a deeper level of engagement related to Indigenous knowledge systems and their applications within the academy. The wholistic nature of the design also ensures that the knowledge and information that I gather is interpreted and analyzed in a similar manner. Lastly, the application of the paradigm further reflects the goal of enacting Indigeneity.
3.6 Discussion Summary

To restate, the exploration and positioning of the three theories in this study led to the conceptual framework identified above to encapsulate the following:

1. Decolonizing theory – to critically analyze the persistent subjugation of Indigenous people and their knowledges within the academy.

2. Indigenous theory – to move beyond critical analysis, to reclaim Indigenous knowledge and to make a contribution to the self-determining efforts of Indigenous people.

3. Gitxsan worldview - to situate a particular Indigenous worldview as a legitimate and valuable research approach. Including Gitxsan philosophy allowed me to honour and recognize the teachings of my grandparents, particularly my grandfather who is the biggest inspiration for this inquiry, along with my Wilp and my community, all of whom I see as co-contributors to this research.

Each of the above theories provided a distinct approach to guide this research however there are many points of intersections among them. Swadener and Mutua (2008) recognize the juncture of these theories as well as the value in their application:

Critical, Indigenous, decolonizing theory articulates an ontology based on historical realism, an epistemology that is transactional and a methodology that is performative, dialogic, and dialectical. It values ethical systems embedded in indigenous values. It transfers control to
the indigenous community. It uses spiritual models of truth and validity and values multivoiced, performative forms of textuality. (p. 22).

Linda Smith (1999) also supports Indigenous theory and methodologies being intrinsically connected. The relational and holistic nature of Indigenous worldviews make it difficult to translate into an academic text therefore incorporating cultural relevant symbols and processes as identified in my Indigenous research paradigm to assist in the interpretation and creating transparency for the researcher, the Indigenous communities and the academy. In the next chapter, I expand upon the use of the Indigenous Research Paradigm containing the git’mgan as the visual illustration identifying my methodology and axiology that led the methodological approach taken in this study.
CHAPTER 4: Methodology, Zeim-tsek

The pole, which encodes the history of the House through its display of crests, also recreates, by reaching upwards, the link with the spirit forces that give the people their power. At the same time it is planted in the ground, where its roots spread out into the land, thereby linking man, spirit power, and the land so they form a living whole. Integral to this link and the maintenance of the partnership, is adherence to the fundamental principles of respect for the land and for its life forms. (Gisday Wa and Delagam Uukw, 1992, p. 26)

4.1 Introduction

The zeim-tsek identifies the total contribution of the money received and distributed back to the community. All services and materials that are involved in a pole-raising or memorial li’ligit come out of zeim-tsek and the remaining sum is paid out to the guests for witnessing the event (Daly, 2005, p. 90). I associate Chapter 4, which explains my methodology with the zeim-tsek as included in this ritual is an acknowledgement and appreciation for all those who have supported the work in upholding tradition. Just as the li’ligit would not be possible without the many contributors to the zeim-tsek, this dissertation would not have occurred without the support and input from its contributors, the Gitxsan leaders, VIU Elders and participants of the Learning circle.

This chapter begins by identifying the context of engaging in an Indigenous methodological process. From here I moved into describing the particular
application of an Indigenous methodology used in this study. I explained my process of data collection which occurred in three stages: interviews with Gitxsan leaders; interviews with Elders from Vancouver Island University; and a facilitated learning circle with students, faculty and staff. I establish the research ethics and protocols and introduce the participants and contributors of the study and I close off this chapter, reflecting on the challenges and successes of employing an Indigenous research paradigm.

4.2 Indigenous Methodologies

I describe this dissertation as a personal inquiry and journey into Gitxsan worldview, centering Indigenous epistemology, knowledge, theory and methodology from my own location to tell a story. I have come to understand this journey as one that is particular to Indigenous methodology (Absolon and Willett, 2005; Archibald, 2008; Smith, 1999; Kovach, 2009a and Wilson, 2004).

A significant challenge in this endeavour is attempting to comprehend and describe the various components of an Indigenous research distinctly and collectively. Additionally, Kovach (2009a) believes incorporating Indigenous methodology ensures we are accountable to our relations as we are constructing knowledge along with our communities, giving back and making a contribution through the process. Following the lead of other Indigenous scholars (Ormiston, 2012 & Parent, 2014) to authentically represent tribal epistemologies that are holistic and multilayered, I incorporated a symbolic representation from my tradition to support an Indigenous research design.
Paramount in this chapter is identifying how the *git’mgan* acts as the ethical and methodological framework to analyze and interpret the findings. The characteristics of the *git’mgan* as explained in the opening quote embody the holistic application of Indigenous knowledge systems from a particular worldview. The quote also infers the *git’mgan* as being alive, as having relevance throughout the generations to inform history, identity and spiritual relationships. Wilson (2008) stresses that an Indigenous way of knowing includes “entire systems of knowledge and relationships” and “these relationships are with the cosmos around us, as well as with concepts” (p. 74). He also states “axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships” (p. 71). To this end, I believe as a researcher, the *git’mgan* will hold me accountable not only to a Gitxsan worldview but to the relations that have informed it. The *git’mgan* also serves to situate my tribal knowledge, making my biases transparent. Kovach (2009a) claims:

Tribal epistemologies cannot be disassociated from the subjective. Tribal epistemologies are a way of knowing that does not debate the subjectivity factor in knowledge production – subjectivity is a given. To embrace Indigenous methodologies is to accept subjective knowledge. (p. 111)

It is as Little Bear (2009) describes: “Knowledge is not a tangible thing, but its manifestations may be tangible. Knowledge is a methodology. A methodology is validation process. It speaks to how we validate sensory intake so that a person can claim, “I know” (p.7). My ultimate goal being to make the process of uncovering what is at the core of Gitxsan knowledge as public and fluid as possible. Kovach
(2009a) further suggests, “the ability to craft our own research stories, in our own
voice, has the best chance of engaging others” (p. 60).

In this study, I used Decolonizing, Indigenous theory (Smith, 2005), and
Gitxsan worldview, reflected through the li’ligit to counter a Western research
framework. The git’mgan representing the principles of Gitxsan worldview ensures I
am accountable to the relationships that I have engaged in this research process as
well as to my community. I position myself as a researcher using these entities to
conduct my interviews, sharing circle, and data analysis that allows me to articulate
an Indigenous way of being and knowing. In this process I make transparent my
intentions to find meanings that are clearly rooted in an Indigenous framework and
outside of Western knowledge production.

4.3 Research Design

My research design is divided into two phases. The first phase involved
incorporating Gitxsan principles presented in the four components of the git’mgan,
identified below in Table 2. The git’mgan provided a place to connect the responses
from the first two guiding research questions, informed by the responses from the
Gitxsan leaders, and facilitated a process to consider the data collection from a
Gitxsan perspective. In this phase, I also considered the formative 4 R’s (Kirkness
and Barnhardt, 1991) as part of the axiology. I used each of these R’s (respect,
relevance, reciprocity and responsibility) as universal Indigenous principles and
applied them to the findings to consider a broader theoretical application to
Indigenous knowledges. Table 2 below, identifies the process for the first part of data interpretation.

**Table 2: Data Interpretation: Phase One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Git’mgan</th>
<th>4 R’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do Gitxsan Elders’ and Community Leaders describe gift-giving practices and protocols in relationships to knowledge and meaning?</td>
<td>Ayuusks/Crests (Oral history)</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can Gitxsan knowledge and meaning be situated relative to non-Gitxsan knowledge systems?</td>
<td>Reaching up (Spiritual connection)</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planted in the Ground (Relationship to the land/nature)</td>
<td>Relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceremony (Witnessing and renewal)</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *wilp* crests represent its history illustrate a specific event, which connects the *wilp* to its ancestors (supernatural and human) and reinforces the identity of a *wilp* and its spiritual relationship to the land. These events are retold generation after generation through oral knowledge transmission. *Respect* for this way of knowing and receiving knowledge is explored, as is the idea that respect, from an Indigenous perspective is an embodied principle.

*Reaching Up* denotes both the literal and figurative extension of the *git’mgan* in that it extends up toward the ancestors connecting to the spirit world, expressing the relationship between the people and the spiritual world. Considering the

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relevance of the application of an Indigenous worldview in Western education is investigated.

The third component, *Planted in the Ground* makes the obvious connection emphasising the relationship between life and land, land being where life is generated, sustained and as such, becomes a foundational source of knowledge. Creating *reciprocity* between Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge is the focus of this section.

Lastly, I considered the fourth component, *Ceremony*. Ceremony, such as the *li'ligit*, is an essential element to Gitxsan and Indigenous tradition in that it represents the communal and sacred space where cultural and political practices are demonstrated. Gitxsan tradition as a self-sustaining governing system is noted, advocating the *responsibility* lies with the academy and other institutions to recognize it as such. The full analysis of phase one incorporating the *git'mgan* principles and 4 R’s is contained in Chapter 5.

The second part of my research design involved data analysis for research questions three and four that were informed by the interviews with VIU Elders and the learning circle with faculty, students and Elders. I incorporated Kuokkanen’s gift logic which then informed the 4 A’s identified in Table 3 below to interpret the findings.
Table 3: Data Interpretation: Phase Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Gift Logic (Kuokkanen, 2007)</th>
<th>Four A’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can VIU appropriately recognize and receive the gift of Indigenous perspectives within the diverse cultural and political landscape of the academy?</td>
<td>Redefine concept of the gift</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can VIU enact gift-giving protocols with Indigenous ethics such as: reciprocity, responsibility and hospitality are key components?</td>
<td>Recognize the epistemic ignorance in the academy</td>
<td>Acquiescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning to learn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore a new Relationship based on unconditional hospitality</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kuokkanen’s (2007) logic of the gift provided a valuable contribution to the analysis undertaken in this study as her work in its entirety is an Indigenous critique of the contemporary university to which my reinterpretation of the 4 A’s, is somewhat similar, albeit a more concentrated assessment of VIU and its efforts towards Indigenization. Collectively the logic of the gift and the 4 A’s, provide the opportunity to extend the analysis and interpretations in phase one of this study beyond a Gitxsan context and framework leading to a more fulsome exploration of Indigenization. As stated in Chapter 2, one of the criticisms I have of Indigenous scholarship is the challenge to reconcile two different objectives in the process of Indigenization. The first one being a call for the dominant group to take
responsibility for their colonial representation by engaging in critical discourse and
secondly, for the continued pursuit of Indigenous scholarship to reclaim their
traditions by privileging Indigenous knowledge in the academy and to give back to
their own communities. In this study, I believe I have attempted to bridge this
disconnect, reclaiming my tradition by centering a Gitxsan worldview but also
engaging in a critical discourse with my colleagues, through Kuokkanen and the 4
A’s. Through my interpretation in this second phase, I see myself as giving back to
my professional community offering deeper insight as to how VIU can enhance its
work in the area of Indigenization.

The following is a brief description as to how Kuokkanen’s work along with the
4 A’s was incorporated in the analysis in phase 2. Kuokkanen (2007) redefines the
concept of the gift informed by an Indigenous worldview identifying its complex
associations informed by multiple relationships. In doing so, she challenges the
academy to move beyond its perceptions of Indigenous people and seeing their
conceptions as primitive. I support this redefinition and subsequent challenge,
claiming that Instead of respect for Indigenous worldview at VIU, we have
accommodation for Indigenous learners.

Recognizing this epistemic ignorance in the academy is required in
consideration of the overall lack of knowledge by the academy in relation to
Indigenous people (Kuokkanen, 2007). This ignorance results in a hostile
environment for Indigenous learners. I agree with this contention and suggest that
at VIU, this lack of understanding leads to acquiescence from faculty to engage with
Indigenous knowledge and therefore relevant program and courses for Indigenous
learners connected to Indigenous knowledge paradigms is not achieved, leading to isolation.

*Learning to learn* requires a paradigm shift to which power and hostility are addressed and the academy learns to receive the gift of Indigenous epistemes (Kuokkanen, 2007. p. 125). In this section, the notion of reciprocity is examined at VIU through the use of *affiliation* agreements that support community based education.

Finally, Kuokkanen (2007) argues that in order to *explore a new Relationship based on unconditional hospitality*, the academy must do more than welcome Indigenous people, it must welcome without conditions, and demonstrate an openness to learn about the logic of the gift and Indigenous epistemes. She describes the process as a “relationship that is ongoing and unending” (p. 138). In this section, I suggest rather than responsibility for Indigenous learners at VIU, we have *acceptance* of the continual attempts to colonize Aboriginal people through law and education.

Incorporating the components of the *git’mgan* has assisted me to remain true to a Gitxsan tradition. Being cognizant of these traditions and identifying the universal interpretations and connections have allowed me to maintain what I view as an Indigenous ethical and relational stance throughout this research. Furthermore, this approach has assisted me to ensure my methods are also congruent with a tribal epistemology; as such the interviews conducted in this inquiry were structured as conversations to which Kovach (2009a) describes as being open-ended, “flexible enough to accommodate principles of native oral traditions…to show
respect for the participant’s story” (p. 124). I contend that Kuokkanen’s (2007) work and the 4 A’s have enabled me to offer a critical Indigenous standpoint that has the potential to make a contribution to my practice and to Indigenous research overall. Analyzing the findings from VIU Elders, who are immersed in their own cultural practices as well as VIU’s, along with faculty, students and staff who are participants in VIU’s culture, offers a contemporary perspective and relevant interpretation to the ongoing process of Indigenization at VIU as well as other institutions who are actively pursuing the same goals.

4.4 Key Interviews

In total, I interviewed 14 participants; seven Hereditary Chiefs from the Gitxsan community and six Vancouver Island University Elders and one Elder who was a friend and advisor to one of the Elders at VIU. Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. The majority of the interviews with Gitxsan Chiefs took place in their homes or in some cases in the residence where I was staying during my visit to the Gitxsan community to collect data. Five of the seven interviews with the VIU Elders took place in their offices at the university while the two Elders who requested to be interviewed together, were interviewed in one of the Elder’s homes.

4.5 Research Ethics And Protocol

In January 2014, my cousin Lucille died after a short and intense battle with cancer. She was someone I had hoped to interview for this study as she had a lot of knowledge related to our wilp and the protocols associated with the li’ligit. She was a wonderful person: compassionate, knowledgeable and strong in her faith and in
her culture. In her eulogy, which Lucille helped write before she passed on to the spirit world, she shared the teachings she received from our grandparents and the words of my grandfather as she remembered them, “to always do good”.

It was at her smoke feast that the Chief of my wilp (and also one of the participants chosen for this study) announced that I was doing a doctoral study that would encompass the li’ligit. At this time, as is the tradition in Gitxsan culture, I was called upon to respond and say a few words about my research. It was one of those moments that I have become quite familiar with, when cultural driven processes have the potential to clash with that of Western established processes. I was aware that my ethics approval for the study had not been approved so was hesitant to say too much but from a community and cultural perspective, I knew this was the time and place to make my intentions public. In reflecting back, I see how this moment provided an opportunity, an opening for me to state my purpose and motivation. As a result, when it came time to ask individual participants to contribute to this study through a formal letter of initial contact as identified in my ethics application, people were aware of the nature of the study and willing to ready to support the work. Protocol from a Gitxsan perspective had been inducted.

To ensure ongoing relational accountability in the data collection and to honor Gitxsan protocol, I presented each participant of the interviews and learning circle with a small gift to acknowledge their contribution. Baked goods, preserves, fruit and gift cards to local coffee and sandwich shops were among these initial gifts. At the conclusion of this study, a formal recognition will take place in the Gitxsan feast hall for the Gitxsan contributors and a similar honouring will be offered to the Elders.
and faculty, staff and students at VIU where members of my family will assist me to ceremoniously acknowledge their contributions through proper gifting procedures.

I involved the participants as much as possible in the process, inviting participants to review their transcribed interview scripts, edit their responses, and confirm the findings from the data analysis. The participants’ right to privacy and right to withdraw at any point without consequence were made transparent as was the right to anonymity, confidentiality and ensuring information would be kept secure. All interview participants, after being given the option to remain anonymous, provided consent to their real names being used in the dissertation and to be audio recorded. The names of the participants of the Learning Circle are not identified in this dissertation and each participant was asked to keep the comments made during the Learning Circle confidential in their signed consent form.

4.6 Participants And Access

The Gitxsan tradition of seeking the council of Hereditary Chiefs to provide leadership and guidance into Gitxsan ways of knowing and being was followed in this study. My starting point for identifying potential research participants was the Chiefs of my Wilp group, which is customary. From here, these Chiefs provided suggestions for other potential contributors outside of the Wilp but within the Gitxsan nation. As noted above, all but one of the Gitxsan participants were aware of my research intentions prior to me contacting them personally. I contacted each potential interview participant in person or by way of a telephone call and provided a letter of request. After a period of two to three weeks, I followed up with the
participant to confirm his/her interest, arrange meeting times and ensure he/she had interview questions in advance.

The Elders at VIU were formally and collectively asked to participate at one of their Elder council meetings. At this meeting, I personally extended the invitation and provided each of them with the letter of request, which outlined the details of the study. I made it clear that they did not need to provide an answer at that time and that they were under no obligation to consent. However, all but two of the Elders (who indicated they would be unavailable during my data collection time frame) verbally agreed to support my study indicating they felt it was important work.

4.7 Interviews With Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs

The Chiefs were very generous in sharing their knowledge with me. The majority of them were family or had kinship ties through the Gitxsan clan system. Regardless of the association, I made my intentions clear as to how I would use the information personally, professionally and academically. At the end of each interview, each of them expressed how proud they were of me for pursuing education and ensuring that I was honouring Gitxsan tradition and teachings. It was a humbling and gratifying experience knowing, we as a Gitxsan nation, have such a wealth of knowledge to draw from and guide us.

4.7.1 Phyllis Haigimsque And Perinne Campbell

Phyllis and Perinne are sisters and their grandfather was a brother to my great grandmother. I have known these women since I was a child and at the onset of the interview which took place in Perrine’s home in the Gitxsan community of
Gitanyow, I recounted a fond memory of receiving my first traditional name at five years old when their grandfather, stood me on a chair in the feast hall in Gitanyow and told the people that when he came back (reincarnated) he was going to come back as my son. From that point on the descendants of their grandfather, often refer to me as Geets, which means grandmother in Gitxsanimxw.

Today Phyllis carries the Sigidimhanak (Matriarch) name, Gwinuu. Perinne’s name is La: seexw and they belong to the Lax Ganeda clan. My awareness of these women is that they are very grounded in their culture, know the protocol of the li’ligit and have always recognized our familial connection. When my twin girls received their first names at 5 years old, Perinne made them vests with our clan crest. They are soft spoken but from our interview, I learned that they both believe strongly in standing up when necessary to ensure the teachings of the adaawx are followed. While both spent time away from their community of Gitanyow, attending residential school as well as post-secondary school, they know their language and indicated that their parents never spoke English at home. They shared memories of growing up hearing the teachings from both their grandparents and parents as well as shared stories of picking soapberries and learning how to cut fish.

What stood out from this interview is how the practice of gift giving is a process that is intended to uphold the teaching of the adaawk. By honouring the teachings from our ancestors we are continuing to give pride and status to our families, our wilp, community and culture. I was honoured to interview these women and proud to be related to them and to know how much integrity they have as Gitxsan women and leaders.
4.7.2 Dr. Jane Smith

Dr. Jane Smith is from the Lax Gabuu clan and her traditional name is Wii k’-axx. She is a teacher, storyteller and a fire keeper. Jane received her doctorate in 2004. Out of the all the people I interviewed, Jane is someone that I had not met. I had of course heard of her and was familiar with her published texts on the various stories of the Gitxsan people. I was nervous to meet her and a good friend of mine contacted her and introduced us. She was immediately supportive and it was evident from the onset that she had a passion for teaching and sharing her knowledge.

Jane started our interview indicating that she wanted to give credit to her grandparents and parents for their teachings. She stated that her mother who attended residential school was adamant that her children would not go and as a result they stayed home and learned the language and the culture. Jane’s interpretation of gift giving was very broad as she identified multiple ways in which the Gitxsan people give gifts through: language, story, prayer, ceremony and dance. She stressed the land as being one of our most prominent gifts and the place where all gifts come from.

One of the most profound and comforting things that I took away from our interview is her belief that the Gitxsan people are generous and that even those who do not have a lot, give. She indicated that from her perspective this is the meaning of life – to be able to give. I feel very fortunate to have been able to speak with Dr. Smith. She modeled her beliefs and was very generous with me, sharing her
wisdom freely and also incorporating and linking different Gitxsan stories into her responses to the questions. She is a gifted storyteller and a wonderful resource for the Gitxsan nation.

4.7.3 Glen Williams

Glen is my cousin and the Simogyet (Chief) of our wilp Malii. He is also the President of the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs. He has been very active throughout his life both culturally and politically. He was the youngest witness in the Delgamuukw case. He also spent a lot of time with my grandfather learning about the poles, songs, traditional names of the territory, and oral history. Our interview took place in his home in the village of Gitwangak.

Glen is very knowledgeable about the various aspects of Gitxsan culture and tradition. He is fluent in Gitxsanimxw and is a staunch believer in following the ayookxw and described the li’ligit as being the place where Gitxsan people gather with the various clans and different villages to “witness the laws unfolding” (G. Williams, personal communication July 29, 2014). It is the place we hold ourselves accountable and have other chiefs witness our work to see if we are following the teachings of our ancestors. Glen also made the connection we have to our land and further articulated how the land gives us our wealth as it provides food (hunting, fishing, berries) but more importantly he emphasized how our adawaak is what gives us our deed to our land as different and distinct huwilp groups. The adawaak provides the oral history of how we came to be and who we continue to be.
What I most admire about Glen is his unwavering commitment to upholding the traditional system and how he takes this forward in his negotiations with government and industry. In his work with the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs he has been instrumental in ensuring that the traditional system of environmental governance is maintained through the development of the *The Gitanyow Ayookxw: The Constitution of the Gitanyow Huwilp* (2007). In our interview, as Glen recounted the inherent accountability and transparency of our traditional process, he pointed out how it has only been recently that government is speaking of these terms, yet we have been responsible to them for thousands of years.

### 4.7.4 Fedelia O’Brien

I am not sure when I first met Fedelia but have known her since I was a child. I knew her as a friend of my mom and then I become friends with her daughter in high school. I have always known her to be an energetic and warm individual and well respected in the Gitxsan community. After our interview, I gained further insight and appreciation as to why she is so highly regarded.

Our interview took place in my mother-in-law’s home in New Hazelton. We had coffee and Fedelia started off by telling me that she inherited the name *Sigidimhanak*, of *Kulugyet*, from her mother and she was now the head chief of her *wilp*. Fedelia also spoke of the importance of following the *adawaak* and identified it as a lifetime responsibility. She reviewed the distinct roles and obligations between the father and mother clan in the *li’ligit* and in life. She stressed the interconnectedness of how we live and how we are maintaining our connections,
“everything is related in the feast house…our lives are in the feast house – our whole way of living is in the feast house…all our marriages, deaths and adoptions, 

everything” (F, O’Brien, personal communication, August 12, 2014).

Fedelia shared a particularly poignant reflection during our interview in which she spoke of her mother’s passing and how, as Gitxsan people there comes the moment after many years of having both your mother and grandmother with you, you suddenly find yourself standing alone, being the leader and the overwhelming responsibility that comes with this reality. She recalled everyone congratulating her when her mom passed and she received her name and how she wondered to herself, ‘What are you congratulating me for? It’s not a celebration, it’s hard’ (F, O’Brien, personal communication, August 12, 2014).

4.7.5 Tony Morgan

Tony is my cousin and holds the name Akwenndesk in our wilp. Years ago, I received his name Ha-youly. I was proud to inherent the name Tony once held, as I have always known him to be kind, respectful and active in the li’ligit system. Tony understands and speaks Gitxsanimxw and credits our grandparents for his knowledge of the language, history, and culture. He indicated that our grandparents were always teaching and leading by example; getting up early in the morning and starting their day with prayer and singing before staring their work in the garden or heading out fishing or hunting.

Our interview took place in our Uncle’s home in Gitwangak where Tony described how he grew up and related the Gitxsan teachings of the ayookxw,
adawaak, huwilp and li’ligit. It was clear from Tony’s explanation that the processes that safeguard these systems are very much alive today and he is an active participant in ensuring his role and responsibility within it. Tony is my recently deceased cousin Lucille’s brother. He situated his description of the interconnectedness and interdependence of the system by identifying who supported him during the time of her passing and how we, as a Wilp and a community, came together to do the work to put her to rest. He concluded our interview with the following words, “Yes, so a lot of accommodating goes on in our system to make sure that nobody is struggling or met with huge debt” (T. Morgan, personal communication, October 19, 2014).

4.7.6 Marie Hobenshield

My last interview with the Gitxsan Chiefs was my mother, Marie Hobenshield. At first I was hesitant to interview my mother. I know she has a lot of knowledge of the li’ligit system and Gitxsan culture overall as she too was raised by my grandparents (which in actuality are her grandparents but she considers them her parents and I was raised knowing them as such). I think my reluctance came from the fact that my while my mom has always been my biggest teacher of Gitxsan culture and tradition, this teaching had not come necessarily with words but more so by observing her actions, therefore I was unsure how an interview would unfold.

My mom’s traditional name is Ax-deha-nu-omt-maxt and she is one of the matriarchs of our wilp. She is fluent in Gitxsanmxw and is known for her ability to sing many of the songs that have been passed on by my grandparents. What stood
out for me in the interview was her interpretation of the cyclic nature of birth and death. She indicated that the Gitxsan word for what most would call a coffin in actuality translates to a cradle, depicting the Gitxsan belief that when you die, you return to the earth and the creator to which you first came.

My mom affirmed the generous and reciprocal nature embedded in Gitxsan philosophy. She also stressed the creator and the land as being among our biggest gifts and it is therefore our responsibility to take care of it, be respectful to ensure it can be passed on. The interview with my mom was very informative and at one point she indicated, “this is fun” (M. Hobenshield personal communication, November 18, 2014). I feel extremely fortunate to be able to learn from my mom and to have had her close by throughout the research process to ask clarifying questions. It is only appropriate that as my role model, she be a contributor to this study and acknowledged for all she has to offer.

4.8 Interviews With VIU Elders

I have much affection and admiration for all of the Elders at VIU. I am very grateful to work in an institution that recognizes the valuable role and contribution Elders provide in supporting and teaching students, faculty and the administration. I have been learning from the Elders ever since I came to VIU in 2006. My learning has largely come through observing, listening and simply being in their presence. Through their positivity and innate ability to provide astute insight and guidance no matter what the topic, they consistently inspire me to be, and do better. Spending
time seeking their contribution to this study solidified my respect and admiration for all the gifts they have and share so generously.

4.8.1 Ray Peter

Ray Peter is best known as Uncle Ray and he is one of the longer standing Elders-in-Residence at VIU in the Faculty of First Nations Studies. Uncle Ray is warm and witty. He always has a hug or a handshake and a funny remark for everyone he greets. He has a way of making people feel acknowledged and special. His gets much amusement in seeing me blush and this has become his mission every time we meet. But underneath all of that gregariousness is great wisdom and I am very grateful that Uncle Ray took the time to offer his perspective in this study.

Ray was born and raised in the Cowichan valley and his traditional name is Qwulshemut. He started our interview off by telling me that he was a residential school survivor but avoids looking back, except to consider the good things. He used the analogy of putting your finger in a bucket of water and creating a ripple effect to describe his philosophy in life. He asked me the simple question as to what happens when you pull your finger out of the water and then provided the following, “You’re born, you live, and you die. What you do in between being born and dying is up to you.” (R. Peter, personal communication, October 6, 2014).

Uncle Ray’s account of gift giving was described in what he referred to as the Stleshun – invite for a naming or memorial. He indicated that the whole family supports the hosting and planning for such an event. He also described giving and
hosting as being intertwined in that how much you give and how well you look after your invited guests is what gives you status among your community members. Details like looking after the fire and keeping your guests warm, making sure they were fed and had a place to sit and park their car were described as having a great deal of significance.

4.8.2 Deloris Louie

Deloris is also an Elder in the First Nations Studies program but spends one day a week in Shq’apthut, VIU’s Aboriginal student gathering place, to offer support and guidance to all students and faculty. She is from Cowichan First Nation and married into St’zmainus First Nation. Her traditional name is Swus-tanulwut. Deloris is soft-spoken and quiet and over the years of working with her, I have observed her to be contemplative and thorough when formulating a response to something that is asked of her. In consideration of this, I knew it was important to get her the questions that I would be asking well in advance so she had time to reflect and prepare. However, when it came time for the interview, I still found myself being too hasty, jumping right into the first question to which Deloris courteously responded, “Can I start off by naming myself?” (D. Louie, personal communication, October 1, 2014)

Deloris credits her parents and grandfather for being her most influential teachers in supporting her identity and awareness of her culture. Her description of gift giving was encompassed in her retelling the story of how her mother, Swuswasul’wut, gifted her with a mask (shts’u’hwus) and a rattle. She indicated that
the *shts’u’hwus* and rattle, which were accompanied with a song and ceremony, were passed on from generation to generation and her first son would be the next in line to receive it.

4.8.3 Geraldine Manson

Geraldine Manson is from *Snuneymuxw* First Nation and her traditional name is *C-tasi:*a. She refers to herself as a young Elder in training. Her mentor is Dr. Ellen White (Aunty Ellen) who was one of VIU’s first Elders-in-Residence. In our interview, as she customarily does, Geraldine refers to Aunty Ellen, recounting her specific teachings. Geraldine initially was somewhat reluctant to come to VIU but with encouragement from Aunty Ellen, she has established herself and is sought out by many faculty and students to share her teachings and awareness of local protocol and tradition.

I met with Geraldine in her office located in the faculty of Health and Humanities. I have always known Geraldine to be what I would consider a no-nonsense individual in that she gets right to the task at hand and if there is something to say, she states it directly.

Geraldine’s description of the gift giving process from a Coast Salish perspective and the memorials and various events that take place in the long house were very similar to that of the Gitxsan system. The process started with connecting to mother earth through prayer and by involving the whole family in the planning process. The hiring of workers to perform various tasks associated with the event...
and the practice for paying them for their contribution was also comparable as was the care and attention paid to hosting your guests.

What stood out for me in our conversation on gift giving was how Geraldine modeled everything she was describing as being characteristic of an Indigenous philosophy. She clearly conveyed the way, in which we honor our ancestors is by honoring ourselves by being humble, respectful, honest, sharing what you have, and by crediting the Elders and ancestors that gave you your teachings, not embellishing or taking credit for what does not belong to you. Geraldine personifies these principles and I feel privileged that she took the time to share with me.

4.8.4 Gary Manson

Gary Manson is from Snuneymuxw First Nation and his traditional name is Xulsimalt. Although Gary is one of our most recent Elders-in-Residence, I probably have the closest relationship with him given that he has been the skipper for two VIU canoe journey’s in which I have participated. The first one in 2008 that had us paddle from Fort Rupert to Cowichan and our most recent journey in July of 2014 from Nanaimo to Bella Bella. In his role as skipper for VIU students, faculty and administrators, who knew very little about paddling west coast waters and less about the protocol involved when arriving in communities, he led us patiently and competently. He taught us how to paddle with a strong heart and mind and how to sing, drum and dance with honor and respect.

When we met for the interview, I posed the first question to Gary from my interview script and he started talking and stopped an hour later, asking me if we
were done. To which I concluded that we were as there was nothing left unaddressed from my list of 13 questions. His initial response described his lived experiences and contextualized this reality in relation to the impact of colonization. He spoke of gifts lost (language, songs, ceremony and identity) and gifts gained (acceptance, recovery, pride and kindness) and his journey to becoming who he is today.

I felt very humbled after my interview with Gary. He weaved his personal stories along with stories from his culture expressing the importance of sharing from these places. He advocates that you have to “share the ugly stuff to really appreciate the gifts that you have been given” (G, Manson, personal communication, September 18, 2014). My reasons for holding Gary in such high esteem were further clarified after our interview. He exemplifies resilience and strength and he is someone that I have come to consider to be among my wisest teachers.

4.8.5 Stella Johnson

Stella self-identifies as Cree, Metis, French, English and German. She speaks Cree fluently and credits her grandmother for teaching her the language and love and respect for the land. I first met Stella in 2011 when she first came to VIU. She is very independent, and speaks often of being a single parent and raising four children. She has what I would describe as a subtle yet mischievous sense of humour and will often make a remark that is seemingly innocent until you note the accompanying glint in her eye.
Stella came to the interview prepared with notes as well as a bag full of gifts that she had received over the years that she wanted to show me. Stella spent some time initially relating what it meant to grow up Metis. She described Metis people as being rich, acknowledging European people as industrious and entrepreneurial, which she attributed to Metis people being able to look after themselves. She also indicated that Metis people grew up being ridiculed and many chose to change their names and not speak their First Nation language in order to assimilate. This assimilation and rejection has led to misconception and suspicion of gift giving practices from her perspective.

Stella described gift giving as simply being able to demonstrate kindness and gratitude for the people in your life, something that can be done at anytime and anywhere. She also believes that each day can bring a new gift but expressed concern that these gifts are not necessarily being received as people are too busy and do not take the time to slow down and grasp what is being presented to them.

4.8.6 Philomena Williams And Juanita Elliott

Philomena is an Elder-in-Residence that works out of VIU’s Cowichan campus. She is from Cowichan and her traditional name is T’awaxiye. When I asked Philomena if she would be a contributor to this study, she indicated that she would like to invite Juanita to be part of the conversation as she felt Juanita would have a lot to offer on the topic of gift giving. Juanita is Nuu-chah-nulth from the community of Hupacasatht but is married to a man from Cowichan and has been living in the nation for over 50 years.
Our interview took place in Juanita’s home in Cowichan and I felt immediately familiar with Juanita despite only having just met her. She invited me into her home, which was decorated with family pictures and First Nation’s carvings and paintings. I do not have the opportunity to interact with Philomena as often as many of the other Elders as she is in Cowichan and I am based out of Nanaimo but I have known her for a number of years and find her to be warm and engaging to talk to.

My time with Philomena and Juanita went by quickly. I enjoyed the reflective manner in which they considered each question and provided a response, corroborating with each other as they went. Juanita shared lively stories about different learning experiences from her childhood related to gift giving while Philomena spoke of how she was raised with her parents’ teachings and the many gifts they have passed on to her, such as the ability to listen, to understand the language and how to survive off the land.

My conversation with Philomena and Juanita emphasised the importance of following Elders’ teachings and culture and the ‘old way’ of living and being. They expressed concern throughout our interview that these old ways were either being altered or forgotten all together. They stressed how today’s generation needs to recognize culture as a gift and to embrace it or we will be at risk of losing it altogether.

4.9 Learning Circle Participants

Upon completion of the interviews with Gitxsan community and VIU Elders, I facilitated a Learning Circle inviting VIU students, faculty and staff to participate.
Posters were distributed via email list serves and posted on public bulletin boards at VIU. The open invitation brought a small sample group together that included five faculty, three Elders and six students.

4.10 Learning Circle With Students, Elders And Faculty

The Learning Circle involved 14 participants and was held at Shq’apthut, the Aboriginal student-gathering centre at VIU. A presentation was given on the research topic and the major themes coming out of interviews with 14 Gitxsan leaders and VIU Elders were reviewed and identified as values reflective of an Indigenous perspective. Participants broke into three small groups and were asked to consider the following:

- Are the beliefs systems and values identified in this study reflected in VIU’s Draft Statement of Values, Rights, and Responsibilities?
- Please discuss where there is alignment, areas of disconnect or what might be missing.
- Given this discussion, what are your thoughts on VIU and other Post-Secondary Institutions achieving the 4 R’s.

4.11 Successes And Challenges

As stated at the onset of this chapter, my goal is to make the process of uncovering what is at the core of Gitxsan knowledge as public and fluid as possible. In this regard, it is important that I acknowledge the successes and challenges that I encounter along the way in this pursuit. Working within an Indigenous research
paradigm has been both a rewarding and frustrating experience. The time spent with the Hereditary Chiefs and VIU Elders being among the most enriching learning experience that I have ever had. I knew all but two of the participants and despite these relationships, I was nervous about their willingness to contribute to my research. I questioned if they would relate to me as a researcher or if they might be suspicious of my motives, however my concerns were completely unfounded. In fact, it was the exact opposite, the Chiefs indicated how proud they were of me and the Elders told me it was important work that I was doing. In many cases they could not do enough for me, contacting me after the interviews with additional information.

I believe the success of this experience is due to the relations that I had with these participants and as Hereditary Chiefs and Elders, they see it as their role to share their knowledge with the next generation, especially those who are ready to learn. What was also clear is that the participants, despite the majority of them having attended Residential or Indian Day school, promote Western education. More specifically they recognize the value in incorporating both Indigenous and Western knowledge into present-day life. Fedelia O’Brien shared the following, “where you come from that is number one, your university comes second but you combine the two together and it makes you very, very powerful” (Personal communication, July 2014).

Another positive outcome that came from using an Indigenous research paradigm throughout this research is that in the process I Indigenized myself. Prior to engaging in this journey, I had my own assumptions and hesitations regarding Indigenization and my personal abilities to understand the complexities of an
Indigenous knowledge paradigm. Previous to engaging in this study, I would use air quotes when using the term Indigenization. I viewed it as academic jargon that had become the latest ‘buzz’ word within the academy. A term everyone was throwing around without really understanding its connotations, including me. I still contend that this is largely the case for most at VIU, however my exploration of Indigenous literature and Newhouse’s (2015) work has facilitated a pathway leading to a deeper understanding of Indigenization and its purpose.

I have come to interpret it as a self-determining process, one led by Indigenous people, exploring their ideas within the academy, inviting people into a critical and reflective dialogue to draw their own meaning and interpretations. With this newfound awareness has come confidence in my capacity to lead conversations in this area with VIU. I have presented the findings coming out of my literature review, using Newhouse’s (2015) three stages of Indigenization, three times thus far at VIU with encouraging results. People are now looking to me in this area for insight and guidance and perhaps they always were and I was not confident in my abilities to meet their expectations? I also contend, after much self-reflection, that part of the process of Indigenization is not just about learning to trust the ‘other’ but learning to trust yourself.

One of the most significant challenges in centering a Gitxsan perspective in this investigation has been the fact that I do not know Gitxsanimxw. In my interviews with the Chiefs, all of who were fluent in Gitxsanimxw, they would often use the Gitxsanimxw term or expression to respond to the questions I was posing and while they would try and interpret in English, I recognized that much was lost in translation.
In some cases they could not find the English equivalent. This was also the case with the VIU Elders whose first language was not English. Given my lack of understanding of the language and seeing how essential it is to each distinct Indigenous group, I am hesitant to suggest that this research is genuinely grounded in an Indigenous research paradigm.

An additional struggle that has presented itself is the challenge to navigate through the realities and inconsistencies of developing an Indigenous framework. I have been struck by the irony and contradiction of my engagement as I sit for hours, upon hours, alone in front of the computer writing in isolation, attempting to capture the fluidity and relational aspect of an Indigenous methodology. There were times, for example when I was trying to articulate the symbolism of the *git’mgan* to position Gitxsan principles, and I could not make the connection. I was gathering my information largely from anthropological textbooks, and I required more. I was missing the oral transmission of knowledge in order to have the components of the *git’mgan* come alive and be accessible. I therefore felt it was necessary to make a trip home to visit Earl Muldon a respected Gitxsan carver and Elder, to get an oral account of the characteristics from someone who had in-depth experiential and traditional knowledge of the ritual embedded in carving a pole. Ironically, Earl gifted me with a hardcover book that he coauthored detailing the history and tradition of totem poles for the Gitanyow and Gitxsan territories. Nonetheless the visit (and the text book) was helpful as I realized what I was really needing was to be in my community, to connect with the land, my family and with the knowledge holders, such as Earl, to ground me and re-energize me. Reflecting on the challenges and
successes demonstrates that engaging in Indigenous research and creating understanding of an Indigenous knowledge construct is an ongoing exploration of the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual and these areas need to be continually nurtured by the relationships that inform it.

4.12 Discussion And Summary

My earliest expectations of engaging in an Indigenous methodology process conjured up images where I would be immersed in a communal act of Indigenous knowledge collection, walking hand in hand with the research participants, gaining insight from deep conversations and transformative experiences. The literature review undertaken in Chapter 2 mocked my romantic ideologies and established Indigenous scholarship as requiring resistance and noted the isolation factor when working to address the hegemonic structure of learning institutions.

Undertaking Indigenous research for the purposes of completing a dissertation, can be an insulating endeavor, after the qualitative data collection is completed. However, the opportunity to reach out and seek support when needed is there based on the communal relationships that you have engaged in along the way. While Earl Muldon was not one of the original Gitxsan Chiefs identified to inform this study, he was aware of my research as he had been present at my Cousin Lucille’s smoke feast where I first made my intentions public. As a result he was very receptive in assisting me. In addition to Earl’s support, Harold Joe, one of VIU’s Elders who was not in the country when I was doing my initial data collection, was also someone whose guidance I drew on as a Coast Salish carver to gain a deeper
understanding of the philosophical and spiritual elements of the carving tradition to make a connection to the crest pole as a symbolic representation of an Indigenous learning paradigm.

I am grateful for the opportunity to bring forward all the contributors to this study and honored that they shared their experiences so freely with me. As a researcher, it is these individuals, and others who have supported and encouraged me who have made me strong and continue to hold me up. In Chapter 5, I present their contributions and my analysis as to how public education institutions can consider these distinct knowledge constructs respectfully and responsibly.
CHAPTER 5: Gifts And Analysis From Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs,

Nidn’t-deed

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my findings from the interviews with the Gitxsan Chiefs. Nidn’t-deed describes the witnessing by the high chiefs to acknowledge and confirm that the hosts have conducted its business in accordance of Gitxsan law. Using this term, ensures the knowledge that I have received from the participants is interpreted authentically and my work is done is a good way. Wilson (2008) contends, “The knowledge that the researcher interprets must be respectful of and help to build the relationships that have been established through the process of finding out information” (p. 77).

My findings and analysis from the Gitxsan Chiefs are presented in phase one where I address the first and second research questions of this dissertation, exploring how Gitxsan gift-giving practices and protocols work in relationships to ways of knowing and how this practice and knowledge can be shared in relation to other knowledge systems. The data informing these responses comes from the seven interviews with the Gitxsan Chiefs to which four gifts emerged: (1) Gift of Teaching: Role Modeling Respect and Responsibility; (2) Gift of Land: Identity and Relationship; (3) Gift of Sharing: Gratitude and Reciprocity; and (4) Gift of Knowing: Witnessing and Accountability. I position what would typically be identified as themes in a research study as gifts, promoting Kuokkanen’s (2007) claim that identifies Indigenous epistemes as being a potential gift to the academy if they can
learn to receive it appropriately. Identifying the themes as gifts also provides me the opportunity to express my gratitude and reverence for the time and teaching that was shared by the participants.

My analysis of phase one is presented within the four components and accompanying principles of the *git’mgan* and the 4 R’s. The *git’mgan* encapsulates Gitxsan philosophy in which everything is connected and the 4 R’s identify an ethical standard for working with Indigenous knowledge in the academy. Together, they are the axiology of this study, providing an Indigenous ethical foundation to address the dissertation’s first and second question - exploring how Gitxsan gift giving practices are connected to ways of knowing and being and how this knowledge can be shared outside of its tradition. Findings related to these first two questions and the subsequent analysis through the *git’mgan* and 4 R’s, provide additional information on Gitxsan epistemology and ontology and their innate hybridity, see Table 2 below first introduced in Chapter 4 to identify processes of phase one.

**Table 2: Data Interpretation: Phase One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Git’mgan</th>
<th>4 R’s</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do Gitxsan Elders’ and Community Leaders describe gift-giving practices and protocols in relationships to knowledge and meaning?</td>
<td>Ayuusks/Crests (Oral history)</td>
<td>Respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>How can Gitxsan knowledge and meaning be situated relative to non-Gitxsan knowledge systems?</td>
<td>Reaching up (Spiritual connection)</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Planted in the Ground (Relationship to the</td>
<td>Relevance</td>
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5.2 Gift Of Teaching: Role Modeling Respect And Responsibility

In being responsive to Smith’s (2003) ten characteristics of Indigenous theory outlined in Chapter 3, I started each interview locating myself and making my intentions clear. This action inevitably credited my grandparents and identified my inspiration and motivation found from my grandfather’s very specific teaching, “to be good is to do good”. Through my conversations with the Gitxsan Chiefs, I was able to gain further insight into this expression by asking each of them for their interpretation. Some of the participants were direct descendants of my grandfather and were therefore familiar with these words, although recollection of the exact phrasing differed, such as my cousin Glen, who understood the words as being, “to think to do good” (Personal communication, July 2014).

Jane Smith interpreted my grandfather’s words as “You have to walk the talk and to do good, is to give, share, be compassionate, think of others rather than self” (Personal Communication, July 2014). Phyllis and Perine suggested a similar philosophy was behind the words indicating it was about doing good things, because it made you feel good and fostered good feelings among people and communities (Personal Communication, July 2014).
Marie Hobenshield expressed it as:

To learn from your experience in order to set a good example, leave your mistakes behind and focus on what’s best, don’t think of negative things, think positive (Personal Communication, November 2014).

Glen agreed indicating that “think to do good” is about being positive even in the face of adversity and related it back to one’s understanding of the ayookxw, knowing the traditional laws is equated to being “wealthy with knowledge” (Personal communication, July 2014). With the assistance of the participants, I recognized my grandfather’s words being intrinsically related to the principles that continually renew a Gitxsan worldview.

When asked specifically how the practice of gift giving connects to history and culture, Dr. Jane Smith, a Gitxsan teacher, storyteller and Chief paused, and stated, “You could not, not do it. It is so instilled in you” (personal communication, July 2014). She went on to make the distinction between Gitxsan children and non-Indigenous children, suggesting that, “when a little white kid is born…they start planning for the kid’s university…when a little Gitxsan is born, they start to strengthen its spirit” (personal communication, July 2014). Smith’s words speak to the formation of Gitxsan identity and the ways in which it is fostered and developed through the teaching by the preceding generation.

All of the participants acknowledged their parents and grandparents as their most influential teachers and guides. Primary among this teaching was respect. Respect for self, family, the creator and existence. Respect was introduced at a young age and reinforced by a strong work ethic. Participants identified how their
ancestors worked hard, getting up early in the morning. In most cases, prayer was an essential component of this ritual, “They were up early singing or praying first before they went out to the garden” (T. Morgan, personal communication, October 2014). Marie Hobenshield also recalled this morning procedural of her grandparents making breakfast, singing and praying and how this was also the time she and the other grandchildren received oral teachings:

They would sit us down, grandpa in one chair, granny in the other, and he would talk and he would motion and use his hands to talk to you and he would pinpoint what would happen to us if we don’t listen… and how when that happens you are embarrassing us and you are hurting us and if you have any respect for us, you would not do those things. (Personal communication, November 2014)

It was also evident from the participants that hard work was a necessity for survival and with survival came responsibility. Each of the Chiefs came from big families and identified how keeping food on the table was a struggle. Jane Smith recalled being, “raised on fish, rice and potatoes” (Personal communication, July 2014). With this reality, being lazy was not an option:

If somebody needs wood chopped you go chop wood over there, you don’t stand around with your hands dangling at your sides, you don’t dare get caught doing nothing, you had to be busy…there is always something to do. (F, O’Brien, personal communication, July 2014)

And playing came only after the work was done:

Granny would have the garden going and she would say, ‘okay you girls I am going to show you how to do it…before you go to the ball field…she would say, ‘to survive in the winter time we have to eat and
you can’t eat a ball and you can’t eat a baseball bat’. (M. Hobenshield, personal communication, November 2014).

Fedelia O’Brien indicated that because there was so much work to do, they learned how to make work fun, playing games with the wheelbarrow and racing her siblings as they packed water up the hill. The winner was the one who had the most water in their bucket (Personal communication, July 2014).

Tony Morgan recalled learning how to fish with the guidance of his grandfather, and the repetitive nature of the work, “we would have to help him push the net out and he would tell us how to pull the net in and take the fish off and once they were all clean, push the net out again” (Personal communication, October 2014). Tony attributed his grandfather’s influence to his abilities and attitude today as a commercial fisherman who tries to reciprocate these teachings, “I talk to my relatives, when I see them…to not be aggressive and lazy, I always refer to our grandparents’ words” (Personal communication, October 2014).

The training that was imparted by the previous generation was described as strict by many of the participants (M. Hobenshield, F. O’Brien, T. Morgan, personal communication 2014). However, it was also obvious that the Chiefs appreciated the discipline they received and identified the correlation to understanding their culture, “I do my best because we were trained so well with Mom and Granny, they were really strict about our laws. We were constantly being reminded.” (F. O’Brien, personal communication, July 2014). Phyllis Haigimsque suggested these expectations were an accepted part of life, in preparation for leadership as Chiefs:
I really didn’t think much of the culture back then, it was just part of us, you know, this was how we were brought up...we knew who we were, what was expected of us. I guess I wasn’t really aware of being groomed. (Personal communication, July 2014)

In my conversations with the Chiefs, I noted that many of them had come full circle and were now recognizing their obligation to pass on their inherited teachings to the next generation. A number of the participants expressed pride when they witnessed their children and grandchildren carrying on the tradition of working hard and giving back. Fedelia shared the experience of her grandson getting his first moose:

I announced that at the feast and everybody was congratulating him and it’s nice to see...we served it at the feast and he gave away moose meat to the Elders, you don’t keep any of your first moose. (Personal interview, July 2014).

Fedelia went on to say how her grandson didn’t understand why everyone was making such a fuss and she explained to him, “Because it is a big deal, this is the first big step for you – you’ve become a man” (Personal interview, July 2014).

Phyllis described a similar story of her son sharing Oolichans with a lady in a neighboring village. The woman was so thankful and told her son that she would return the gift at her Wilp’s next ceremony. Phyllis indicated she was glad that her son did not object as some young people might do, and that he just nodded realizing by saying nothing, he was respecting the good feelings she had in receiving his gift (Personal communication, July 2014). Both of these circumstances symbolize a right of passage to which the next generation is taking their position in the
interconnected and interrelated world of gift giving. However, despite evidence of this transmission of knowledge, the participants did express the challenges in passing on the teachings as their role as Chiefs in their respected communities.

Fedelia expressed her concern that this level of training and respect is lacking today and suggested this is a result of a younger generation who lost their grandparents when they were young, she intimated that “they lose out on a whole life of training” (Personal communication, July 2014). Glen supported this notion, indicating that issues and disagreements today are typically the result of insufficient teaching which results in:

Younger people jumping up and down and going against the system and not respecting Elders and High Chiefs. That to me, is interpreted by no Ayookxw, no teaching. (Personal communication, July 2014)

Glen however suggested that disagreements are inevitable in any culture and he believed this fact to be healthy, “it is what keeps it alive and keeps it going” (Personal communication, July 2014).

Regardless of a lifetime of preparation, some of the Chiefs lamented about the feeling of overwhelming responsibility and being alone when they first inherited their Chief positions. Fedelia expressed how she struggled when her mom passed and she received her Chief name, “everybody was congratulating me and I was like, what are you congratulating me for? It is not a celebration, it’s hard” (personal communication, July 2014). Phyllis shared a comparable feeling the first time she spoke to her community in a Chief’s role:
I always thought of myself as being fearless you know, even right through university. I wasn’t afraid to stand up and say anything to a crowd, but boy, when I seen those faces of the Chiefs, and I knew they were Chiefs, you know my knees started shaking and I couldn’t find my voice. (Personal communication, July 2014)

5.3 Gift Of Land: Identity And Relationship

A clear outcome from the interviews was the view that land (the earth) is considered to be the greatest gift of our existence provided by the creator, the place where language, food, stories, history and survival amongst the Gitxsan people have originated. The adaawk tells the creation story of each wilp, it is the oral history confirming one’s identity to the past as well as the future. In my interview with Glen Williams, Chief of wilp Malii, he advised me that the adaawk of wilp Malii involves a grizzly bear and two cubs (told in Chapter 1) therefore the grizzly bear can be considered like a last name to those of us in the House group. He stressed how knowing this story, the ability to recount the history, sing the limx’oy in our ceremonies is critical to demonstrating our knowledge and confirming our identity, “it is the deed to your land” (personal communication, July 2014). The Gitxsan beliefs about knowledge as described by Glen identify how the philosophy and practice of Gitxsan epistemology and ontology is connected to spirit, land and relationships.

The connection between land and identity is not simply a symbolic one, but rather the gift of land and its resources has to be reciprocated by ensuring the resources are utilized appropriately through hunting, fishing and harvesting and redistributed to the community. Marie explains this intimate relationship and how it is constructed:
You live off the land, you hunt off the land, you eat off the land, and you cannot sell it because the creator did not sell it to you… it’s for your use because the creator gave it to you because you aren’t going to take it with you. You have to pass it on to another person and if you sell it, then you are lost and you cannot go back. (Personal communication, November 2014)

Knowing the land, learning to understand its movements therefore becomes an outcome of this close association. For example, Tony, described his grandfather as an excellent fisherman and hunter because of his attention to nature and its rhythm, “He knew the tides, knew the movement of the salmon, he knew the seasons…and he knew where to be at different times of the year, the four seasons always meant something to him” (Personal communication, October 2014). This description demonstrates the cyclical nature of time as opposed to linear. Many of the participants referred to the land and its resources as being contributors to wealth. The relationship and sustenance of the land supplies Gitxsan people with both physical and spiritual nourishment. Resources such as fish and game provide food that can be redistributed to community members as a form of gift giving coming from the land, while cultural rituals such as the blanketing ceremony provide comfort and a sense of belonging.

The blanketing or wrapping of a person occurs both at birth and at death. It is a ceremony that makes explicit the connection to land and the notion that we all come from nature (the creator and the earth) and when we die, we return. The recurring connection between life and death is facilitated by members of the Father clan, “The Old People always said, when a baby is born, the Father Clan, wraps the
new baby…and when you die, they wrap you again” (F, O’Brien, personal communication, July 2014). Fedelia indicated how in the past, they used moss, cedar or mountain goat to clothe the newborn babies (personal communication, 2014). Marie indicated that today the Father clan would buy new clothes at birth as well as when you die to signify the return to nature, “you can’t wear anything that has been worn, it has to be new because this is what happens when you are born” (personal communication, November 2014). The relationship between birth and death is unified in the symbolic act of throwing dirt on the grave. Marie described this process as blanketing, “it is not burying…you are blanketing back to earth” (personal communication, 2014). The dirt represents nature where the body returns to decompose while the spirit returns to the Creator. Embedded in this ritual is the cyclical nature of gift giving, an offering to which the principle of reciprocity is sustained through renewal and transformation.

The Father clan’s ongoing responsibility is evident through participating in significant events such as when an individual receives their first name in the feast hall. Whether it is a child’s name, or chief name, it is the Father clan that calls out the name (F. O’Brien, personal communication, July 2014). Everything from ear piercing to puberty, the father clan is involved. This sense of identity that is encouraged in Gitxsan culture reinforces the communal nature of Gitxsan worldview and that nobody is alone. As Fedelia states, “everybody belongs somewhere” (personal communication, 2014). She suggests that even the Gitxsan people who did not come back from residential school or the war, and may have ended up on the streets, get the same treatment as any Chief when they are brought back home and
returned to the earth, “because they always belonged, it’s just they never made it home…it doesn’t matter if you’re away a lifetime, you’re still a Gitxsan and you’re treated within our system the same way” (personal communication, 2014).

Caregiving of community members and of the land was a significant contributor to the notion of gift giving. Jane identified how her appreciation to land and gift giving had been inherited:

I have been taught to love the land and this is where all of it comes from. All the gift giving, this is the law of the land, and language, love of the land, and through stories, I have learned about gift giving.
(Personal communication, July 2014)

Smith’s (2004) thesis, Placing Gitxsan Stories in Text: Returning the Feathers. Guuxs mak’am mik’aax, tells a story about a porcupine that she referenced during our interview to illustrate the importance of land and the need to nurture its existence. I share the story in this dissertation as part of the data collected:

One beautiful summer day, as the story goes, a young porcupine was up on Sdikyoodena. He had been eating all day and was feeling like he should take a nap. Porcupine found a shady place by the scrubby fir bushes. He settled down for what he thought would be a long nap and pleasant dreams. Then Porcupine woke up. Something or someone was making an irritating noise. Porcupine looked around with his beady little eyes and saw what it was that had awoken him. Creek was trickling peacefully over on her way to the lake. Over Porcupine strutted, very annoyed. He drank up Creek and licked all the rocks dry. After all was quiet once again, Porcupine went to the shade under the fir bushes once again to continue his nap and sweet
dreams. Just as Porcupine was dozing off, Creek started her journey down the mountainside again. Porcupine was really angry this time. He went and drank up the creek and licked all the rocks dry. He went back to dream in the shade of the scrubby fir trees. This happened two more times, and each time Porcupine got angrier and angrier. After drinking up Creek the fourth time, Porcupine was so full of water, he needed to relieve himself. He waddled toward another clump of bushes. But he did not get there. In the stillness of the afternoon, Porcupine exploded, with fur and quills falling on the nearby bushes. Creek once again started her journey down the mountain.

Porcupines, the Gitxsan say are still easily irritated. At the slightest disturbance they will discharge their quills. (p. 109)

The porcupine story further emphasizes the need to respect the relationship to the land. In the story Creek is an entity, a spirit, the same as Porcupine, they are equals, each having a purpose and destiny that serves to maintain the greater good of creation. Smith’s mention of Porcupine upsetting the balance of nature by interfering with the environment, also positioned her current concerns that she shared with me in regard to the natural resource extraction that is occurring in the Gitxsan region, “I really love the land and I don’t know at what point I did. My grandfather did, my father did, and I am looking…is there anybody going to love the land like we did or will it end here?” (Personal communication, July 2014)

5.4 Gift Of Sharing: Generosity And Reciprocity

I have always known the Gitxsan people to be very generous and I recall visiting my granny when I was young and never leaving without a small gift. Sometimes it was candy, or an orange but most often it was change that she would
pull out from a small leather change purse that she had tucked into her bosom.

Jane supported this notion of kindness, “Gitxsan are just so generous” and further identified that to give is the, “whole meaning of life” (personal communication, July 2014). To this end, generosity and gifting takes many forms in Gitxsan culture from the explicit ceremonial procedures that take place in the *li’ligit* to the implicit, such as the sharing of wisdom and time.

Glen Williams spoke fondly of spending hours with his grandfather listening as he would teach him everything from how to behave in public to the history and stories attached to each totem pole:

> He’d say, do you see that one there? He was blind but he still described it to me and the fishing sites…yeah, it was all about the poles, the history, the law, how to behave, and how to conduct yourself, what to eat, what not to eat, what not to do and when to keep your mouth shut, all of that. (Personal communication, July 2014)

Phyllis also recalled memories of her grandfather coming to visit her and her six brothers. She explained how her Grandfather would make them sit in a circle on the floor, as he would tell them stories. One particular story involved a mythical person who could change shape and wanted to marry a princess:

> He went out to the mountain and he started kicking the mountain down to show off to the princess and her Dad…and he flew making himself into a bird, and flew into the tree, and he fell off the tree and they thought he was going to die, but when he landed on the ground, he turned into knots. (Personal communication, July 2014).
Phyllis described how she and her brothers laughed at this point in the story, and how her grandfather gave them a stern look, as it was not supposed to be funny. He was trying to teach them a lesson in regard to not thinking you were “so smart and cocky” (personal communication, July 2014). Phyllis also shared a wonderful memory with me of my grandfather hunting in her family’s territory, before he went blind. She recalled seeing him come to the village, carrying moose meat on his back, and taking the moose to the Chief’s whose territory he had been allowed to hunt on. Phyllis likened this act of kindness to redistribution of wealth because, “he knew the Ayuukts of the land” (P. Haigimsque, personal communication, July 2014).

As specified in the previous theme, land was unquestionably identified as the primary resource among Gitxsan people. The traditional territories of the Gitxsan people are home to fast-flowing rivers and snow-capped mountains that contain fish and wildlife that provides sustenance for community members. Depending on the location of one’s territory, different family groups have access to different food resources and therefore developed different skills and abilities connected to these resources such as hunting, fishing or harvesting. Therefore, part of Gitxsan generosity is reciprocating your abilities and the resources that are available to your community:

A lot of the territories are different. There may not be moose on somebody’s territory or there may not be mountain goats on their territory, so they shared”. (F. O’Brien, personal interview, July 2014)

Fedelia also indicated that those who did not fish or hunt, had big gardens and people would trade fish for vegetables, and in this manner, “Everybody had
enough of everything. There was no money exchanges, there was just food” (Personal communication, 2014). This system of reciprocation continues today for those who live away from their territory, such as myself. My Father clan continues to look after me in this manner by canning fish, ensuring I have food from home.

Another gift that is shared is the gift of ceremony. Jane Smith, a fire keeper, spoke of how she burns tobacco and food as an offering to the spirit world to guide the recently departed (Personal Communication, July 2014). She indicated how these ceremonies offer a source of comfort for family members who are grieving. Jane also explained how her ability to connect to the spirit world and nature was interfered with when she pursued her doctorate due to the emphasis on engaging the cognitive and it took some years to connect back to her “inner feelings” (Personal communication, 2014). Jane’s words reminded me of Newhouse’s notion of a good mind being the balance of both reason and passion and the goal of creating peace among all things (2008, p. 189).

An important message that many of the Chiefs communicated was the idea that giving does not have to come in the form of material objects. The sharing of time and your presence was also an integral component of gifting:

Even if you have nothing, if you have no money, and nothing to bring, you bring yourself and you work…You don’t just stay home and stand by the door, you get in there and work, especially if you have nothing, you work harder, cause people see what you are doing. My Dad always said to us whenever we were doing our feast, you remember all those people in the hall are watching your hands, they are not
watching your mouth or listening to your mouth, they are watching your hands. It’s what you do. (F. O’Brien, personal interview, July 2014)

The value in this case was not necessarily on what you contribute but how you do so. Glen echoed this principle and the emphasis on helping by showing up, “If you don’t have any money just show your face. Just get out there in public. People will see you. It doesn’t matter whether you have money or not, just stand there and be seen” (Personal communications, 2014).

Critical to the philosophy of gift giving is to never refuse a gift. Several people identified how refusing a gift is absolutely forbidden and considered disrespectful (M. Hobenshield, J. Smith, F. O’Brien, P. Haigimsque, communication 2014).

Jane Smith indicated that by refusing you are robbing the person who is trying to gift you (personal communication, July 2014). Marie clarified that it is not only the tangible gifts that cannot be refused but also the intangible such as when someone asks you question, you never respond by saying, I am too busy, “that is part of sharing” being there when called upon (personal communication, July 2014).

5.5 Gift Of Knowing: Witnessing And Accountability

The previous themes identified the importance of listening, observing, acting and sharing in order to preserve Gitxsan worldview and methods. Enacting these principles demonstrates Gitxsan people’s ways of knowing and being. However, similar to other knowledge constructs, accountability is necessary to claiming how one comes to know. In Gitxsan tradition, the gift of knowing is demonstrated and verified in the li’iligit. Glen described the process as follows:
It’s about gathering people together, other clans and other villages and it’s about witnessing, it’s about witnessing the laws unfolding in the feast and it’s about monitoring whether you know how to run a feast. (Personal communication, July 2014).

Glen further indicated the host’s actions are highly scrutinized by the other Chiefs and community members who confirm the Wilp’s knowledge:

It is all about witnessing the unfolding of your traditional laws. People really watch that, watch that you give your names away properly, that you follow the proper process of christening and you’ve paid up everybody. You put gifts on top. It’s all about monitoring traditional law”. (Personal communication, July 2014).

To this end, the final words at a li’ligit do not come from the hosts but the Chiefs of each house group, who take turns standing up, thanking the wilp for the food, hospitality and affirming that the proceedings were done in accordance of Gitxsan law and tradition. The word the hosts are waiting to hear is nis’nit-deed.

The participants specified, once again, that training for how to host a feast started early and certain rites of passage were required to indicate preparedness, the first one being the ability to show respect by being quiet in order to listen. Demonstrated ability in this area came through an invitation to a feast, as traditionally, children were not permitted. A few of the participants shared very similar memoires of their first time being in the feast hall. Fedelia remembered attending with her grandmother:

She would tuck me under the bench, under her feet…and they used to put paper on the floor as a table before we used tables and the food went on the paper in front of you, so if you put your hand out to try and
grab something, Bang, she’d slap your fingers (laughing). You don’t take anything unless is it given to you! So I would lay there wondering, Oh, jeez, I wonder when she is going to feed me? But then, they’d knuckle you in the head if you made a noise; you had to be quiet- like nobody knew you were there. (F, O’Brien, personal interview, July 2014).

Glen Williams also recalled sitting on the floor and having nothing to entertain you like children have today, “you don’t move around, you don’t have a cell phone or your iPad, you behaved and paid attention” (Personal communication, July 2014).

Phyllis described her experience as being incremental:

As a young person we were never seated with the adults, never. We had our own table and once we ate, we were told we could go, because then there was an exchange…the host would have their work to do without having to put up with kids being noisy. (Personal communication, July, 2014).

Phyllis indicated the first time she was allowed to stay behind; she ended up being asked to leave for being too noisy. The Chiefs indicated that this type of training and control with children does not take place today:

Kids are not suppose to be running around, they need to be quiet, no playing around and they can’t go out to play…they need to respect, they need to grow up and learn to respect the culture, that’s part of their training. (M. Hobenshield, personal communication, November 2014).

There were other examples of how certain protocols were becoming relaxed and altered such as the tets. Some of the Chiefs commented that only a few communities still follow this tradition and some house groups make invitations and
hand them out rather than doing it in person, “They go to a bingo game and pass out invitations…which is sad, yeah, it’s very sad” (F. O’Brien, personal communication, July 2014). However, despite these inconsistencies, the core philosophy and principles are still entrenched in a Gitxsan way of knowing and being. This was evidenced by a story Fedelia shared involving some of her students who were not behaving in school. The principal believed they had no respect and Fedelia invited him to a feast to demonstrate otherwise:

They couldn’t believe it…how well these kids behaved, and they were right on their job. They were polite; they did everything, carrying apples and oranges, handing out stuff. And if somebody gave them a direction, an elder—they were right there, you know, or when the feast was over…people needed help packing their stuff out, the kids were lined up, hauling stuff out. But you get that same kid back in school at 9 o’clock the next morning, and he’s back to being a little jerk…because of his situation in the school, he’s not happy, ’cause he can’t read and write. But he’s capable of learning, hands on, doing…that’s how we learned, right? (Personal communication, July 2014)

Prior to transitioning this discussion to exploring the components of the git’mgan, I wish to once again acknowledge the Chiefs for contributing their knowledge and in doing so confirming the Gitxsan hereditary system and its accompanying worldview as being in a constant state of renewal.
5.6 The Git’mgan: Exploring Gitxsan Gift-Giving In Relationships To Ways Of Knowing And Being

5.6.1 Crests

The crests featured on a *git’mgan* identify the history of a *wilp*. It is the role and responsibility of each generation to learn the significance of the family crests from the preceding generation. This transmission of knowledge is shared orally and the tradition and principle embedded in this act is to ensure Gitxsan ways of being and knowing are upheld. In exploring how the practice of gift giving connects to this philosophy, it was clear that the participants attributed their understanding of all related Gitxsan tradition as coming from their parents and grandparents, land and spirit. The participants further identified how this type of teaching takes many forms, from storytelling, experiential learning and direct mentorship. They valued the work ethic demonstrated to them, acknowledging how working hard teaches you survival, competency and the ability to offer a contribution to your community.

Throughout my discussion with participants, I came to understand how respect in Gitxsan philosophy is foundational to how one comes to know, as it is both a value and a principle that governs how one interprets and interacts with the world. Respect for self, others and all things animate and inanimate is fostered through an awareness and understanding that existence is established by being responsible to these different entities. The intended purpose behind the practice of gift giving is therefore to demonstrate respect for these reciprocal relationships between different entities such as: Father Clan and Mother Clan, environment and
spirituality, land and life and birth and death. The goal is to ensure a balance of existence is maintained.

What I found surprising in the information coming out of the interviews was the mention of feeling alone as a Chief given the communal existence of Gitxsan culture and I questioned if this response was indicative of the disrupted effect from colonialism. The sentiment made me realize despite the collective responsibility for the transmission of knowledge, authority in this area is ultimately held by the Chief. However, it was evident, notwithstanding the challenges that came along with their hereditary responsibilities, the Chiefs accepted their role, recognizing their duty was an extension of a larger social system to support the welfare of the community.

5.6.2 Reaching Up

A git’mgan extends out of the ground and reaches up connecting with the spirit world, linking Gitxsan people to their ancestors reinforcing their inherited knowledge and power. The spiritual relationship to the Creator, the ancestors, and land was a significant contributor to Gitxsan survival and knowledge creation as confirmed by the Chiefs. Recognition of this relationship was expressed through gratitude and prayer. For example, the work ethic as role modeled by parents and grandparents, amalgamated prayer as both a source of power to draw in and gratitude to extend out.

Upon reflection from the interviews and the Chiefs describing the manner in which their teachings were conducted, I gained further insight as to how my grandfather transmitted his knowledge. I have vivid memories of him speaking and
praying. Regardless of whether we were in the feast hall, a public meeting or gathered in his living room, when my grandfather started to speak, people would stop what they were doing and listen. Even as a young child, I learned to be still and pay attention despite not understanding the Gitxsanimx words that he was speaking. I realize now that in these moments he was, in fact, imparting his wisdom. I also recognize he was connecting his teaching to the spirit world by consistently concluding with prayer. He would extend his hands up in the air, similar to the symbolic gesture of the crest pole, attributing and demonstrating gratitude to the spirits as the source of his knowledge. My grandfather’s belief in maintaining the spiritual connection to all things was something he embodied.

In my discussions with some of the Chiefs, yet another unforeseen element was the compatibility of spirituality and religion. Tony Morgan described his grandfather’s teaching as being “meshed with bible teachings, they went parallel with our traditional cultural teachings” (Personal communication, July 2014) and Jane Smith agreed making the point that she sees the church and culture as “going hand in hand” and suggested that Gitxsan spirituality made it easy for the Missionaries to indoctrinate them to Christianity as the belief in the Great Spirit was already recognized (Personal communication, July 2014). Wilson makes the distinction between religion and spirituality-identifying spirituality as connected to an internal sense of the universe inclusive of a higher power or the environment and religion as an “external manifestation of spirituality” (2008, p. 91).

This description, along with the layered interpretation of gift giving and its connection to knowledge, shed some awareness into this suggested synergy of
religion and spirituality. Given that the ideology behind gift giving is to exhibit respect among all things to preserve balance and harmony, I can see how the inner exploration into the spirit and the outer exploration to seek spirit can be construed as harmonious in that they both are seeking a relationship between the human spirit and a higher power. From a Gitxsan perspective, however it goes beyond this dualistic association to include other spiritual entities, moreover, spirituality is considered to be inclusive of knowledge production and in a Western interpretation, especially from a scientific methodology, religion and knowledge are not viewed as being compatible.

5.6.3 Planted In The Ground

An observable characteristic of the git’mgan is the fact that it is embedded in the ground, connecting it to the land where all life is generated. Respect for land and nature as life giving forces was clearly articulated by the Chiefs. Land was distinguished as a place to draw spiritual and physical strength. Forming a close relationship to land, recognizing the seasonal patterns and cyclical association with life and death was part of respecting the earth’s authority. From this intimate association, came a deeper understanding of how nature can inform and sustain life if provided with reciprocated reverence.

The Porcupine story speaks to the risks involved when one entity tries to control or suppress another. Embedded in this story is the principle of mutual respect and what is required for peaceful co-existence. Smith (2004) further identifies the lesson of learning to control one’s anger and that everyone has a
purpose and destiny, “Creek’s destiny was to journey down the mountain and feed the rivers. Porcupine was destroyed and Creek continued her journey” (p. 109). In this story the reciprocal relationship between creek and porcupine was not respected and porcupine suffered the consequences, upsetting the balance. Indigenous stories are a vital source of education, communicating values and offering teachings that can inform our interactions with nature and other entities in the world.

I am grateful to Jane Smith who not only shared the story of Porcupine with me in our interview but also gifted me with other Gitxsan stories that she has published. In my review of these stories, I am amazed at their perpetual application. In the story of Porcupine and Creek, Creek was able to resume its intended path despite the interruption, which is indicative of nature’s resiliency. This story interpreted in a present day context, where Gitxsan territory and other Indigenous lands are highly sought after for economic gain, invokes a concern for Creek, and other natural resources and their continued ability to adapt and co-exist when there appears to be many more Porcupines trying to control and benefit from the relationship.

5.6.4 Ceremony

In Gitxsan culture, the raising of a *git’mgan* necessitates the hosting of a *li’ligit* by the house group to conduct its business associated with this ritual, following the traditional laws and seeking confirmation from the other Chiefs and House groups for their knowledge in this area. A Chief raising a pole signifies the continued respect for the history of the house, and the commitment to ensure this bond is not
forgotten. It is an aggregate process involving the house group coming together asserting their identity and their relationship to their territory, kinship affiliations and the rest of their community through gifting. Their ability to work collectively and accurately within this public venue will then determine their status. The progression is best described in the opening statement of Delgamuukw Ken Muldoe in the Delgamuukw case:

With the wealth that comes from respectful use of the territory, the House feeds the name of the Chief in the feast hall. In this way, the law, the Chief, the territory and the feast become one. The unity of the Chief’s authority and his House’s ownership of its territory are witnessed and thus affirmed by other Chiefs at the feast. (Delgamuukw, 2010, p. 5).

In the explanation above, the inherent reciprocity of Gitxsan tradition is once again reinforced with both host and guest having a mutual responsibility for knowledge preservation.

In Chapter 3, I proclaimed the li’ligit as a mainstay in Gitxsan society. The findings from the interviews with the Chiefs supported this claim who described the feast as a constant feature while many other traditions are rarely practiced such as ceremonies related to puberty (J. Smith, personal communication, July 2014). The Chiefs expressed concern that some aspects of this particular custom were being altered but overall the system appears to be intact. From my discussions with the Chiefs and personal experiences within my Wilp, I believe the Gitxsan system continues to uphold the principles identified in this dissertation: transmission of oral history, spiritual connection to all things, respect of land and nature and the
emphasis on witnessing to uphold Gitxsan tradition. Additionally, the ceremonial procedures described in this section, distinguish culture as being alive, not stagnate, but evolving through the generational relationships. The prominence for ensuring these rituals recur throughout the generations also fosters my belief that knowledge transmission will continue. As long as the system remains active, so will knowledge dissemination. In the next section I connect Gitxsan principles identified in the *git'mgan* to the 4 R's (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991), renowned Indigenous principles identified to improve universities reception and ongoing openness to Indigenous learners. In doing so, I extend and promote an axiology inherent in Gitxsan philosophy to a broader Indigenous ethical standard necessary to welcome Indigenous epistememes in the academy.

5.7 The Four R's: Gitxsan Worldview In Relation To Other Knowledge Systems

5.7.1 Respect

Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) contend that if universities are to respect Indigenous students they must authentically recognize them as people with knowledge and skills (p. 5). In Gitxsan worldview, respect is a lived principle that is demonstrated daily in its kinship associations, caregiving responsibilities and generosity of spirits. A prime example of this embodied ethic is to never say no when something is requested or offered to you. Saying no to a request or putting someone off if you are busy, implies you do not respect that individual’s needs in that moment or that your needs are more important than theirs. Saying no to something that is offered to you is equally offensive, as you are denying their
demonstration of respect for you. In the *li’ligit*, the main dish that is served is soup and the host’s job is to continually fill a person’s soup bowl if it is empty. The guest’s job is to never refuse, they are simply to stop eating, leaving a full bowl of soup to take home.

In Indigenous cultures, as described by Coast Salish Elder Geraldine Manson below, it is customary to introduce yourself by identifying where you are come from and who your family is. This act is typically all encompassing identifying your territory, nation, language, culture, ancestors, and family to confirm your identity, “In order to respect you, I have to tell you who I am and where I come from and I have to know who you are and where you come from” (Geraldine Manson, personal communication, January 2015).

There is a distinction to be made between the interpretation of respect from an Indigenous perspective and that of a Western perspective; in an Indigenous perspective, respect is given freely whereas in a Western concept, the expectation is that respect is earned. In the academy, tenure is an example of how respect is given through a rigorous process to which one has to prove their competence and expertise. The process is individualistic and contrary to the communal nature of expressing yourself in an Indigenous perspective (Ormiston, 2012).

I believe educational institutions would benefit from personifying the principle of respect as described above; creating a culture of association through service to one another and a protocol where respect is granted by extending your personal history and cultural traditions. Such a practice would facilitate collegiality, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and recognizing people’s distinct identities. I do
observe VIU attempting to invoke a protocol of respect by routinely acknowledging traditional territory at all public events and gatherings and I do hear from faculty who are seeking guidance to emulate this practice in their classrooms. I have also noted how this opening can have an impact as described by Gary Manson, a Snuneymuxw Elder-in-Residence at VIU, who commented that when he hears someone in the university recognize his territory, “I feel pride and stand a little taller for having my spirit recognized” (Personal communication, January 2016). However, I would argue the reciprocal layers of association inherent in the Indigenous view of respect remain unrecognized within the colonial context of the institution and Canada. To put this into further perspective, I share the following words by VIU’s first Aboriginal Chancellor, Shawn Atleo, who quoted his grandmother upon hearing the Residential School apology by Prime Minister Harper, “They are just beginning to see us grandson” (Personal communication, 2008).

5.7.2 Reciprocity

In Chapter 1, I questioned if the government’s training grants, focused on job creation to support economic development that VIU was implementing in partnership with Aboriginal communities, were reciprocal in nature. I expressed concern that this work might be hindering Indigenous self-determination in that the grants were motivated by a government agenda for Indigenous land use for resource extraction. In a follow-up report to document the impact of community-based deliveries implemented by VIU in this area, a faculty member described their experience as follows:
What I learned from [my students] was just fantastic. I get goose bumps thinking about [it]. They just showed me the tip of the iceberg of their culture…[the students were] deeply connected to the land and to the mood and the rhythm. There’s so much more that they have in their language and their sense about the environment than we do in our non-Aboriginal approach…they just felt everything about the land. (VIU Gathering Feedback on VIU’s Aboriginal Community-Based Delivery Partnerships Program, June 2015).

The words above clearly express how the experience of being in community had a profound impact on this faculty member as well as affirms the value Indigenous people have for land and language as described by the Gitxsan Chiefs.

Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) advocate for teaching and learning to be a two-way process, with faculty learning from students and students learning from faculty, creating reciprocal relations that leads to new and deeper understandings. As an extension of this standard, the practice of gift giving with its purposeful application of reciprocity has much to offer the academy. To clarify, the goal of creating balance as identified earlier, is not to have these different entities amalgamate or to synchronize their functions but rather to balance the recognition of their distinct roles, each having purpose and destiny and a societal contribution to make, similar to Porcupine and Creek.

Central to reciprocity as an ethical standard is the emphasis on connection. Recognition and respect alone do not foster mutual existence, creating the relationship between entities is what sustains existence and creates multiple ways of knowing through the varied and complex associations. Once again taking the story
of Porcupine and Creek as an example, Porcupine did not value or try to understand Creek’s contribution, there was no attempt at a relationship, and mutual existence was therefore not a possibility. In a Gitxsan system, the ultimate preservation and status of a house group, community and nation comes from ensuring the intrinsic and collective responsibilities are continually formulized through their working relationship.

Consideration of this philosophy as described in this dissertation has something to offer the academy that typically works in silos, representing distinct disciplines where, ironically as a place of learning, the goal is to foster independence and competition rather than collaboration and understanding. Altering this mindset to recognize that each component of the university, including the student body, is capable of making a contribution toward a learning community would go a long way in creating a sense of belonging and respect for all students. To that point, in a follow up conversation with some of the Instructors who were part of the community based deliveries, I asked them if their experience made them see Indigenous students in their classroom differently, to which one replied, “It helped me to see all my students differently” (Personal communication, December 2015).

5.7.3 Relevance

Fedelia O’Brien’s story described earlier of the students not being respectful in school but capable of exhibiting it in the feast hall is a good example of how the focus on Western education can lead to acting out behaviors or feelings of isolation by First Nations students in response to a learning style that is extraneous to them.
Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) argue the degree to which universities can reinvent themselves in order “to be more relevant to, and accepting of First Nations students’ perspectives and experiences, they will be that much more relevant and responsive to the needs of all students” (p. 6). In their work they refer to Eber Hampton’s (1988) twelve standards toward an Indian Theory of Education some of which included: spirituality, service, culture, tradition, respect, history, and place, and are consistent with a Gitxsan theory of education.

The connection to Hampton’s standards first presented almost three decades ago, and the use of the 4 R’s published shortly thereafter, and the fact that they both hold up as ethical standards to be put forward in this dissertation is telling. Despite the multiple and unique cultural identities among Indigenous people, Indigenous educational theories have similar and persistent characteristics that have relevancy in a contemporary setting. Similar to the point made with reciprocity, these standards identified could likely be applied to all students in higher education as they provide a holistic framework to which students from different background could potentially identify.

A standard pertinent to Indigenous education that has become extremely discernible to me through this process is that of language. In Chapter 4, I spoke of my challenge in interviewing the Chiefs given that their first language was not English and how they would often identify words or phrases in Gitxsan and then struggle to find the English interpretation. Evidently all of the Chiefs were fluent in English but given that my questions pertained to Gitxsan culture and ways of
knowing and being, they automatically responded using the terms consistent with this construct.

I have attempted throughout this study to put forward Gitxsan terms related to cultural practices and rituals such as the li’ligit and ayookxw, to respect and honor the tradition but I am well aware that my efforts are token in this regard. Through this experience, I have accepted that my understanding of Gitxsan tradition will never be able to achieve the level of comprehension that the Chiefs have attained without learning the language. The reality has impacted my practice in that I now view language revitalization as a moral imperative, both personally and professionally. What was once something I steered away from, overwhelmed by the complexity, and feeling inept to engage, I am now actively seeking a path forward. Creating relevancy for Indigenous learners in education has to incorporate language in some capacity.

5.7.4 Responsibility

I have always considered the Gitxsan tradition to be respectful and relational but through this study, I have come to appreciate how inherently self-sustaining and determining the system is with everyone and everything having a role and responsibility. The onus for achieving a balanced equilibrium is never placed on one singular entity. The implicit sharing that occurs in the everyday, such as the gifting of advice, time and food are equally important to nourishing Gitxsan philosophy as they are representative of the actions for how Gitxsan people govern themselves,
socially and politically. In this regard, what takes place in the feast hall is a manifestation of daily living.

Gitxsan culture, like all Indigenous cultures, has been impacted by colonization. There is evidence that rituals and ceremonies have been altered and the general physical health and spiritual wellbeing of communities is not what it once was. Dispersed throughout my conversations with the Chiefs was mention of lateral violence, political disagreements and family infighting. Gitxsan people are certainly not impervious to these conflicts. However, overall, the Chiefs spoke of their community and culture with optimism. It was clear that they continue to have faith in the traditional Gitxsan system. Glen Williams, as a contributor to the development of the (2007) *Gitanyow Constitution* stated that the Gitxsan hereditary system is all about the land, and as a Chief negotiator for Gitanyow, he expressed it was “unthinkable” that government continues to deny that this is not the case (Personal communication, July 2014).

Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) promote educational institutions as having a role to play in supporting the self-determining rights of Indigenous people by ensuring they work with communities and students to adjust their policies and practices to be more inclusive of the 4 R’s. The recognition of traditional territory is a starting point for respecting Indigenous peoples connection to land but certainly VIU can, and should be doing more to uphold the 4 R’s. In the next phase of my analysis, I will provide further examination as to how the 4 R’s are being incorporated at VIU.
As I attempt to bring my analysis of Gitxsan ways of knowing and being to a pause for now, I return to my touchstone, my grandfather’s teaching, “to be good, is to do good”. These words that were shared with me so many years ago, inspired a sense of purpose that has led me to this investigation. I am so grateful for the opportunity to hear, and learn more about both of my grandparents. In this sense, it might be suggested that I have come full circle, but as noted in Chapter 3, Gitxsan theory does not view learning as finite but ongoing. In this investigation I have gained a deeper awareness for the cyclical nature of Gitxsan existence and ways of knowing that are propelled by organic, inorganic and spiritual relations. This journey has therefore motivated my participation to be more than a cautious observer of the relationship but to accept my responsibility as an active contributor.

5.8 Discussion Summary

It has been both helpful and challenging to present my analysis within the four components of the git’mgan and the 4 R’s, to gain a deeper understanding of Gitxsan tradition and what it can offer as an educational theory, which was one of the objectives identified for this study. The challenges presented were associated with the components and principles being interrelated and their dissection proved counterproductive at times to addressing the stated purpose of this study. However, I found it advantageous to consider how each entity contributes to the whole and this was made more apparent through their separate investigation, providing me the opportunity to delve deeper into their function, which eventually provided insight into their complex association. Furthermore, employing the singular components of the
git’mgan assisted in identifying a theoretical perspective that is exclusively Gitxsan, and applying the 4 R’s supported the relational association to a holistic framework that is distinctively Indigenous.

Through my investigation of gift giving with the Gitxsan Chiefs and my analysis, I was able to transition my perspective of Indigenous ways of knowing from an expansive interpretation illustrated in Figure 6 that was informed by the literature review in Chapter 2, to a more local culturally specific example presented in Figure 7 that identifies the specific gifts related to a Gitxsan way of knowing. Figure 6 clarifies the workings of Indigenous knowledge systems as featuring 4 essential elements: (1) Indigenous knowledges are plural as (2) knowing is relational and knowledge is continually informed by the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional aspects that are never static and lead to (3) multiple ways of knowing to which (4) truth is subjective based on this reality.
Figure 6: Indigenous Ways Of Knowing

- Indigeneous Knowledges
- Knowing is Relational
- Truth is Subjective
- Multiple Ways of Knowing
Figure 7 captures the four gifts that emerged based on the input from the interviews with the Gitxsan Chiefs and interpreted through the *git’mgan* and the 4 R’s: (1) gift of teaching: role modeling respect and responsibility; (2) gift of land: identity and relationship; (3) gift of sharing: gratitude and reciprocity; and (4) gift of knowing: witnessing and accountability. These gifts represent a Gitxsan way of thinking and constructing the world that affirm the characteristics related to Gitxsan worldview and ontology as first introduced in Chapter 3. Gitxsan ontology is represented in the gift-giving practices that are in place to recognize the multiple relationships that support Gitxsan existence. Gifting respects the role and responsibility of each of these relations and acknowledges their distinct contributions. The reciprocal nature of gifting is intended to maintain this existence. The relations and rituals within Gitxsan culture such as the Father Clan, Mother
Clan, traditional territory, house groups, spirituality, and ceremony provide the foundation for existence and knowledge, but it is the relationships that are continually regenerated among all these relations that are formalized and represented in the *li’ligit* that lead to ways of knowing. Figure 7 further articulates the nature of Gitxsan epistemology that is a significant component of my Indigenous research paradigm. The question may remain for some in regard to how the above can be applied outside of this tradition, to which I would suggest, it is not the tradition that is open for external use and interpretation, but rather the values and principles embedded within it to which other traditions might find merit and affinity. In chapter 6, gift giving is expanded upon from the perspective of the VIU Elders.
CHAPTER 6: Gifts From VIU Elders And Learning Circle, *Mixk’aax*

6.1 Introduction

The *mixk’aax* is the Gitxsan word for the gift that is offered by each of the Chiefs from the house groups to whom you visit during the *tets*. The *mixk’aax* indicates that the Chiefs have received your invitation and are reciprocating the hospitality extended by attending your event. This term seemed appropriate to identify this chapter and the contributions being offered by the VIU Elders. Chapter 6 offers the findings from the interviews with VIU Elders as well as learning circle with faculty, staff and Elders.

My findings are presented as part of phase two where I address the third and fourth question research questions of this dissertation, exploring how VIU can recognize and receive the gift of various Indigenous perspectives as well as enact a protocol of gift-giving with Indigenous people in which reciprocity, responsibility and hospitality are key components. The gifts received from the Gitxsan Chiefs were equivalent to the gifts presented by the VIU Elders. A slight variation being that with the Elders’ explanations of these gifts, in certain instances different principles were emphasized, for example in the gift of teaching, role modeling and respect were consistent applications for attaining this gift, however I noted self-determination as having a stronger connotation than responsibility. These kinds of variations led to different associations between the ‘Gift’ and its associated attributes. The four gifts have therefore been modified to the following in phase two: (1) The Gift of Teaching: Role Modeling Respect and Self-Determination; (2) Gift of Land: Spirituality and
Responsibility; (3) Gift of Sharing; Reciprocity and Interconnectedness; (4) Gift of Knowing; Acceptance and Healing.

6.2 Gift Of Teaching: Role Modeling Respect And Self-Determination

As with the Gitxsan Chiefs, each interview started with protocol by making my intentions clear as to why I was investigating the practice of gift giving and acknowledged my grandparents' influence and the specific teaching from my grandfather, “to be good is to do good”. My grandfather’s teaching were an interview strategy that helped each Elder to focus the topic of the teaching gift and associated values. Each Elder was requested to reflect on my grandfather’s teaching and offer similar teachings from their ancestors. Elders associated the gift of teaching with the core value of respect. For example, Deloris Louie shared these words from her mother and grandfather, “treat your friends, the family around you with respect and they will in turn respect you” (Personal communication, October, 2014). She went on to say that, her grandfather would tell her never to use bad words toward another individual, as it would come back to you. Ray Peter echoed this teaching stressing that respect was to not judge people, “to me, no matter where I go, I still will treat you the way I want to be treated. I will talk to you in a nice way. I will look at you when I talk to you” (Personal communication, October 2014). Geraldine Manson identified “to be good, is to do good” as an Indigenous philosophy to which she emphatically related to respecting your ancestors teaching:

All those dear Elders that has given me this knowledge, and took the time to teach me were well respected. Don't ever disrespect those Elders. So do good by sharing. Be honest. Don't ever add anything to
their words to credit yourself. That credit goes to those elders, not you. You didn't earn it. They did (Personal communication, October 2014).

Stella Johnson suggested that the words represented the importance of being humble and acting respectfully and if you demonstrate these qualities, your natural goodness will come out (Personal communication, September 2014). Juanita Elliott and Philomena Williams shared humorous antidotes that came from their parents. Juanita recalled her mother saying, “I don’t care what you do, just be the best” and how she would tell her “nobody is better than you, they might be better looking, richer, but not better” (Personal communication, September 2014). Philomena indicated she thought the saying was connected to an expression her parents would say in Hul’qumi’num that loosely translated to, “if you stay in bed all day, you will get smelly in your blankets” and she recalled how they repeated these words often to stress the importance of getting up early and to not be lazy (Personal communication, September 2014).

Lastly, Gary Manson told me that I should consider these words shared by my grandfather as a special gift because it came from somebody close to me. He indicated that the words reminded him of an Uncle who would tell him not to be ashamed of himself. Gary said, initially, he did not understand the words, thinking he was failing, but later understood his Uncle was trying to tell him, “Be proud of who you are. Be proud of what’s in you” (Personal communication, September 2014). Gary also shared that as an Elder, he now believes these words shared by our ancestors, were words to encourage us to get to this place where we are now.
The Elders further commented on their roles today as grandparents, who are in the position of gifting their teachings that came from their Elders, experiences on the land and being active in their culture. They are now reciprocating what they learned to the next generations, telling their grandchildren to listen, explaining who they are, where they belong, and how to be in public. Stella spoke of her responsibilities as a grandparent and great grandparent, lamenting that as single mother, she did not have time to teach her children her language and culture and how this had become her priority for her grandchildren, “That's a gift that I want to give to them” (Personal communication, September 2014).

Stella went on to express her concern that most parents are working and not spending time with their families and family values are getting lost, “There isn't a home life anymore. People don't eat together. There are a lot of things that are missing. There is no family connection anymore, like it used to be” (Personal communication, September 2014). During a follow up visit with Philomena Williams after our initial interview, she voiced a similar sentiment as she had recently lost her Dad and she wanted to ensure that I included the gift of time. She explained that was all her Dad wanted during his last few months was for his family to be present spending time together (Personal communication, December 2014).

The Elders identified the principles of respect, working hard and acting responsibly as important values that were taught from childhood and imparted daily. Deloris stated the teachings were never ending, starting from the time she woke up in the morning, until she went to sleep at night and how they would often sound the same, but in reality they were a little bit different each day. She also recalled her
Mother emphasizing, “I am here, I am here, listen to me. Who is going to give you the teachings? Who is going to tell you what is right and what is wrong after I am gone?” (Personal communication, October 2014). Deloris indicated that she later realized that it was important for her mother to be the one to pass on her traditional teaching, as she would also tell her, “I don’t want you to be out there begging and pleading. I will guide you to what you should be when you grow up and become an adult” (Personal communication, October, 2014).

Embedded in the Elders description of their lived experiences was a strong indication of determination and endurance. Ray Peter further explained that hard work was necessary to prove you were capable in life and worthy of such honours as becoming a singer and drummer:

I became a lead singer, but it did not happen overnight. I was being taught and trained and guided along with everything I did to become a leader, and I had to earn my right to use a drum. We’re not, just because we’re guys, automatically meant to hold a drum. In those days we had to earn the right to use the drum. It didn’t matter my heritage, you know. It didn’t matter who I was, whose son I was, whose grandson I was. That had nothing to do with it. I still had to earn the right to be able to hold a drum in one hand, you know (Personal communication, October, 2014).

This persistence among the Elders is not one I had noted prior to interviewing the Elders. Their optimism has always been apparent to me but through my interviews, I came to appreciate how much they have endured in life such as poverty, residential school abuse, single parenting and racism. Their tenacity and insight was inspiring as evidenced by Stella’s words:
If somebody’s going to push you around, well, you don’t take it. You push back, you know, because once you run, you’ll be running for the rest of your life. You have to stand up for yourself. I’m not saying that you go around beating up people, or whatever, but you protect yourself because if they can see that they can hurt you and you’re running, they’ll always keep after you because that’s just the way it is (Personal communication, September 2014).

The notion of survival is revisited and expanded upon in section 7.5 under the Gift of Knowing.

6.3 Gift Of Land: Spirituality And Responsibility

The Elders, akin to the Gitxsan Chiefs, identified land as being the ultimate gift and stressed the responsibility to be good stewards. Stella Johnson recalled gathering plants from the land for medicine as a child and being taught to not take more than you need. She also remembered watching her grandmother putting tobacco in the ground and saying a prayer to thank the plant and the earth (Personal communication, September 2014). Similar to Gitxsan Chief Marie Hobenshield, Stella reinforced the notion that we do not own the land and therefore have an inherent responsibility to nurture it for the next generation:

We are basically borrowing it and trying to keep it and preserve it for our future. So that is why the respect for everything, the land, the animals, or, whatever you have. We are just here, borrowing what the creator has given us to share (Personal communication, September 2014).
Stella further shared her fear that the respect and relationship to the land was deteriorating:

We are losing a lot. Even the medicines, the herbs and the different things are being lost because of construction and different kind of things happening. They’re not respecting the land or really having the knowledge of where things are that shouldn't be disturbed. That's the same idea, as you never pick all the medicines or berries or whatever you are gathering. That you should always leave for future so they can continue producing. (Personal communication, September 2014)

Philomena Williams similarly spoke of a time when the food coming from the land and ocean was in abundance such as octopus, fish, and ducks. As a cook in the big house kitchen, she recalled the different communities bringing food into the kitchen to contribute to a community ceremony, “nobody was poor because we had the forest, we had the ocean, you had all that you needed to survive” (Personal communication, September 2014). She too, expressed concern that this was no longer the reality, and food produced from local resources was becoming sparse.

Geraldine Manson described the importance of making a spiritual connection to the land in a ceremony where cedar trees were harvested for totem poles. She explained how she talked to Mother Earth, Grandfather and Grandmother trees and brought an offering to acknowledge their contribution:

When we go up the mountain early morning, we acknowledge them. We do it through prayer. We shake their hand, their beautiful cedar boughs, and talk to them. They recognize us, giving them that energy. We thank them, telling them where they're going on their journey, so they're not getting anxious. They know that they're going to get a
place of honour. They know that (Personal communication, October 2014)

Throughout my discussions with the Elders the reverence for the land was apparent. Philomena informed me that she considered, “Mother nature as her bible” (Personal communication, December 2014). Juanita shared a story of an Elder who, when asked what the difference was between religion and spirituality, stated, “when you are religious you go to church and you think about fishing, and when you are spiritual, you go fishing and think about god” (Personal communication, September 2014). These descriptions demonstrate the Elders’ understanding of everything having spirit; there is not one higher power but many, each having their own unique pre-eminence that we need to respect and honor.

6.4 Gift Of Sharing: Reciprocity And Interconnectedness

The Elders at VIU who are Coast Salish belong to the Longhouse. The Longhouse being the main ceremonial space where cultural traditions are carried out. In their roles at VIU, the Coast Salish Elders identify the Longhouse as being a sacred place and are protective of this space, only sharing certain aspects. In the interviews, they did share details related to naming and memorial ceremonies, which I understood to be more public. In describing the rituals and protocols related to these events, the Elders commonly referred to the procedures as “the work being done on the floor” (Geraldine Manson, Ray Peter and Deloris Louie, personal communication, October 2014). Through their explanations of this work, it was apparent that gift giving was a central practice in Coast Salish culture.
The Elders’ description of the gifting that takes place in the Longhouse was comparable to Gitxsan practices from the types of gifts distributed such as blankets, towels and dishes, to the demonstration of communal support by attending events and circulating currency in respect of historical and ongoing relationships among families:

So the old people say, you have to be out there helping, go longhouse to longhouse. You see people hosting something and you get on the floor and pay to help. You get called as a witness. I want to help that family. You go, give money. You don't know them. You go give them money anyways because your grandmother or somebody might have helped them years ago. Now you tell them who you are. I'm granddaughter to So-and-so. I want to help now. (Geraldine Manson, personal communication, October 2014)

The custom of compensating people for their various contributions leading up, and during these events was also comparable to Gitxsan practice as was the emphasis on “being good” by being a good host. However, a noted distinction in Coast Salish tradition is the family hosting a ceremony, employs community members to take care of all the duties at the ceremony. Geraldine stressed that hiring people guarantees that all the details of your event are attended to and your guests, many of whom have travelled a great distance, are taken care of:

That's the foundation of hosting. You have all that in place. Your guests are well taken care...because you're so busy out there on the floor, and you hire your fireman, your doorman, your usher, your kitchen, those who are going to take care of the bathrooms. (Personal communication, October 2014)
Other commonalties from the Elders’ descriptions of their ceremonies that I believe correlate to Gitxsan traditions were recognizing kinship ties and ensuring financial, emotional and physical assistance provided by community members were reciprocated and made transparent. In this regard, it would seem that the Coast Salish tradition of gifting is also related to upholding respectful relationships and balancing a shared existence. Deloris Louie indicated that the value of the gift is important in that it represents the value you hold for yourself and others:

You don't just give a little trinket, you give something because you think highly of yourself, you think highly of the work you are going to be doing and you think highly of the visitors that will be coming that will stand up for you. (Personal communication, October 2014)

From my discussion with Ray Peter it appeared that gifting practices within Coast Salish ceremonies were once an expression of wealth – wealth that was achieved through demonstrations of extreme generosity. Ray identified Stleshun as being the Hul'qumi'num word that describes the invite for a naming or memorial and indicated that these events no longer happen on a grand scale as they once did:

The last family that did it, that I know of and I heard of…saved and saved for I don’t know how long, and their house was just packed. Him and his wife…gave everything away, his canoes, his rifles, a shotgun. Everything that went into a house. They sat on apple boxes. In the eyes of government and everybody, materially, they were poor. They had nothing. Clothes on their backs, wooden boxes for sitting on, eating on, you know, but in eyes of all the people on the coast, they had status. (Personal communication, October 2014)
In the VIU Elders’ descriptions of ceremonial gifting, the specific detailed application of gifting from their cultural context was not as transparent as it was with the Gitxsan Chiefs. I believe this distinction was related to me being an outsider to their culture and it was therefore difficult to ascertain all the nuances associated with the practice. However, from what was shared it was evident that gift giving is a fundamental practice for signifying respect and validating relationships. Ghostkeeper (2007) identifies this as “Spirit Gifting” to which the “spirit, mind, and emotion are the only constant aspects in gift exchanges between any combination of living beings” (p. 11). In this regard gifting does not foreground the material aspect of the gift, but rather the responsibility to the gifting process to demonstrate the commitment to its Indigenous community.

6.5 Gift Of Knowing: Acceptance And Healing

In my interviews with the Elders, most of who attended residential school, their wisdom was grounded in their experiences of survival and persistence to which they described as acceptance and healing. They shared teachings from their ancestors but many spoke of their journey to becoming an Elder was one of resistance, as they had to overcome self-doubt which was an outcome of internalized colonialism, and learn to accept the gifts that were being offered to them. Elder Gary Manson, in particular, was very forthright in his explanation of how residential school impacted his life negatively and shared many insights as to how he overcame his anger and grief through acceptance of his culture.
As indicated in Chapter 4, I probably have the closest relationship with Gary among all the Elders at VIU after participating in two canoe journeys together. I trust him explicitly and I am humbled to think that he may reciprocate this feeling based on the stories he shared with me for the purposes of this study. He stated a few times that he was not sure if he should be sharing the stories with me as he had not done so with many people, but believed it was important work that I was doing. As much as possible, I quoted Gary directly to retain the integrity of the stories.

The first story he shared with me related to two sacred ceremonies, the rattle and mask ceremony. Gary explained that these ceremonies had not been used in his family for a long time and Gary was asked to “reawaken the rattle” by his Mother and Uncle. He initially refused as the responsibilities associated with the ceremony magnified his addiction and anger associated with the abuse he suffered at residential school (Personal communication, September 2014). But sometime later, after his mom died, Gary believes his ancestors came in the form of two Blue Jays and he was once again presented the gift to reawaken the rattle. Gary described how he went to speak to an Elder as he was still not confident in his abilities to lead the ceremony, to which the Elder told him, “Oh, yeah, I forgot, you’re special, you don’t want to work for nothing, you just want it handed to you” (Gary Manson, personal communication, September 2014). Gary described this experience as being “hit with lightening” because the Elder made him aware of his selfishness at turning away a very special gift (Personal communication, September 2014). In reflecting on the story some thirty years later, Gary pointed out that the ancestors continue to bring forward messages and these messages come to us in different
ways, in his case, he became stronger once he accepted the gift. Gary’s story of reconnection to these ceremonies also demonstrates a reconnection being made to land, ancestors and the spirit world. It is a connection that is inclusive of an Indigenous epistemology to which Wilson (2008) describes as “our cultures, our worldviews, our times, our languages, our histories, our spiritualties and our places in the cosmos” (p. 74).

The second story Gary shared speaks to Indigenous axiology and the natural laws that govern our relations in life and death. It is a story from his past when he was struggling with the aftermath of the abuse suffered in residential school:

I was full of hate and anger at that time and for a long time after that. The addiction came… I was an avid hunter, I was hunting all the time. I remember this one day, we were staying at my parents’ house, and my neighbour had died and I said to my friend, “Let’s go hunting, I don’t want to be around this.” Big mistake right there, not to respect my neighbour’s death. (Personal communication, September 2014)

From here, Gary identified how he and his friend killed a female deer and when they opened it up, it had babies inside, “you could feel the doom, but we took it anyway and returned home” (Personal communication, September 2014). Tragically, when Gary returned home, he found out his baby son had died:

All the cultural stuff was telling me I shouldn’t have been hunting at the time, I was disrespectful to my neighbour that died… I never got over that for a long time… I need to share that with you because you need a story behind why you shouldn’t do things… I want to share because its part of things you should know… I don’t like that I feel it right now, but
it's there, I need to share it with you. (Personal communication, September 2014)

Gary indicated that he blamed himself and grieved for a long time after this incident until someone in the community advised him to hold a memorial to let his son go. The rituals associated with the memorial ceremony did provide healing for Gary and the rest of his family:

Thirty years later, it started to go right, you know, that was a gift, and I share that with you because your grief can be blind. I should have gifted myself a lot earlier…to be so hateful, and not let anybody near you is not very good to do. I tell you that story because of that. The gift of love would have come a lot earlier if I had known what it took. I was so relieved after that, so were my kids. It is medicine for us to do that. (Personal communication, September 2014)

Gary’s personal experiences offer a significant contribution to this study in that they speak to the colonial influences that interfere with Indigenous people’s relationship to their traditions and ceremonies, as well as highlight how these cultural ceremonies and their associated philosophies provide healing. In Gary’s situation, he found peace once he accepted his cultural teachings, but he also gained insight into the reality of life and death and recognition of things beyond his control, “Life and death…you don’t have control of that gift, somebody else has control of that gift” (Personal communication, September 2014).

As noted at the onset of this chapter, throughout my conversations with the Elders at VIU, they clearly identified how colonialism has impacted Indigenous existence and practices. As a result, they stressed the importance of cultural identity
and being proud of who you are and where you come from. Respect and admiration for their ancestral teachings was unmistakeable as each of the Elders attributed their abilities to the guidance they received in their journeys to becoming Elders.

Geraldine Manson explained her journey and passing on of traditions in the way:

To be proud of who I am took time. To be proud of who I was, was a journey. And if it wasn't for my dear mother-in-law, who taught me to be a mother, who taught me to be a grandmother, taught me culture, taught me language, taught me to stand up, to believe in myself, was a beautiful thing. And then came the other elders, who gave me knowledge of the land. Aunty Ellen gave me spirituality, to believe that, to connect to that spirituality of knowing the energy, what that is. Understanding medicines. Understanding traditional knowledge is really important. Understanding the world and helping others is a must (Personal communication, October 2014).

It was evident that the Elders accepted their inherited responsibility to continue to pass on the teachings, and to give back to their communities. Geraldine stated that she was told by one of her Uncles before he passed, “It’s up to you now to pass it on, not to hold it” (Personal communication, October 2014). She indicated that from her perspective sharing what you know, and what has been given to you is the essence of Indigenous knowledge.

6.6. Learning Circle Findings

In the Learning Circle with faculty, staff, students and Elders, we reviewed the gifts presented above coming from the Gitxsan Chiefs and VIU Elders and discussed the values embedded within each gift. From here, we explored how these values
linked to VIU’s draft Statement of Values. Overall, the participants in the Learning Circle were challenged to see how the values aligned and noted many disparities. For example, the participants felt the significance placed on land was not reflected at VIU as it was within an Indigenous context and questioned how VIU with the stated value of “Enacting the idea of the University as a repository of knowledges” (Draft Statement on Vales, Rights and Responsibilities of Vancouver Island University Faculty, October 2, 2013) was equivalent to land-based learning. There was agreement that a culture existed at VIU but some questioned if students could identify what that culture was, to which one student stated, “There is a VIU culture. I fit in, in certain areas but not in others” (personal communication, February 2014). Others thought culture exists in silos among different departments but there was no defined cultural center.

It was also noted that in Indigenous communities’ ceremony and protocol were enacted daily whereas at VIU, it comes twice a year at convocation, and only once a student completes their program and walks across the stage. Yet, another discrepancy was the emphasis on “shared knowledge” put forward by Gitxsan Chiefs and VIU Elders while VIU’s draft statement identified a unidirectional approach, with an identified role to “help the students explore the range of theories” but not encouraged to pass on. In this case the participants expressed that the students are viewed as receptors only.

One particular bullet that stood out for participants in the draft Statement of Values was the following, “Evaluating students on the basis of their performance within guidelines established by academic and professional bodies and other
accrediting organization” (Draft Statement on Vales, Rights and Responsibilities of Vancouver Island University Faculty, October 2, 2013). Participants commented on the academic and skills centered approach for evaluation, indicating that there was no assessment provided by community or respect given for Aboriginal students’ cultural capacities and responsibilities. It was felt that student accountability was measured purely on attendance and assignments, which was a myopic viewpoint in comparison to the findings from the interviews that identified accountability as being related to how one conducts themselves in relation to upholding their cultural traditions, and demonstrating respect for themselves and others. Analysis on the Learning Circle, using the 4 A’s as a particular application to disrupt the institutions current relationship with the 4 R’s, is further explained in Chapter 7.

6.7 Discussion Summary

In this chapter the four gifts that first emerged in Chapter 5 from the Chief’s contribution were slightly revised based on the Elders interpretation as: (1) The Gift of Teaching: Role Modeling Respect and Self-Determination; (2) Gift of Land: Spirituality and Responsibility; (3) Gift of Sharing; Reciprocity and Interconnectedness; (4) Gift of Knowing; Acceptance and Healing. The examination of the practice of gift giving was broadened from one that originated as uniquely Gitxsan to one that is inclusive of a larger Indigenous perspective. In Chapter 7 I provide analysis on the gifts coming from the interviews with the VIU Elders using Kuokkanen’s gift logic and the 4 A’s as a critique of the established processes in a modern day university that is attempting to be inclusive to Indigenous worldviews.
As I transition, this discussion, it is essential that I express my appreciation to the contributors of this research. I am grateful to work and have relationships with the Elders, who despite their hardships in life, give so freely of themselves in order to secure a better future for the next generations.
CHAPTER 7: Analysis From VIU Elders And Learning Circle,

\textit{Ant’aadit}

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I offer my analysis from the interviews with the VIU Elders. \textit{Ant’aadit} is the Gitxsan word referring to the delegation that welcomes guests as they enter the \textit{li’ligit}. They will often call out the Chief’s name as they enter and escort them to their seat and ensure they are taken care of. I think this term is appropriate for this chapter given all the VIU Elders have done for me in this investigation but also in consideration of how welcoming they are to all visitors.

My analysis of phase two is presented through the application of Kuokkanen’s gift logic and my reinterpretation of the four A’s, see table 3 below describing phase two as introduced in Chapter 4. Kuokkanen’s (2007) gift logic is divided into the 4 key areas as identified below to unpack the systemic challenges and barriers inherent in the academy. Similar to Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (1991) work, she too admonishes universities for placing the responsibility of adapting to the institution on Indigenous students rather than the Institution adapting to Indigenous students. Her work provides a comprehensive analysis of the academia as a whole that led to the consideration of VIU’s current status through the 4 A’s as a more specific critique.
### Table 3: Data Interpretation: Phase Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Gift Logic (Kuokkanen, 2007)</th>
<th>Four A’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can VIU appropriately recognize and receive the gift of Indigenous perspectives within the diverse cultural and political landscape of the academy?</td>
<td>Redefine concept of the gift</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can VIU enact gift-giving protocols with Indigenous ethics such as: reciprocity, responsibility and hospitality are key components?</td>
<td>Recognize the epistemic ignorance in the academy</td>
<td>Acquiescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning to learn</td>
<td>Affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore a new Relationship based on unconditional hospitality</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the conclusion of this analysis, the cumulative analytical approach grounded in principles central to Indigenous philosophies will be further characterized, identifying their potential to guide and enhance the work of Indigenization.

### 7.2 Gift Logic: Redefining The Gift

In presenting the gifts shared by Gitxsan Chiefs and VIU Elders in this study, I am confirming Kuokkanen’s (2007) notion of gift logic that understands the world as having elaborate and extensive relationships (p.7). I am also verifying that this
interconnectedness is how Indigenous people continue to identify a way of knowing and perceiving the world; it is not an antiquated epistemology but rather, one that is viable and inherently sustainable. In my discussions with participants, the colonial attempts to interrupt this worldview and related traditions were evident but at the core, the giving paradigm, with its associated values and principles, remain intact.

Central to the logic of the gift is the understanding that Indigenous worldview is innately connected to the natural environment through an infinite web of relationships, “Social ties apply to everyone and everything, including the land, which is considered a living conscious entity. People are related to their physical and natural surroundings through their genealogies, their oral traditions, and their personal and collective experiences with certain locations” (Kuokkanen, 2007, p. 32). I believe my study not only corroborated Kuokkanen’s work but also provides further insight into gift logic’s associated principles of reciprocity, responsibility and reverence. In this investigation of gift giving practices of both the Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs and the VIU Elders, it is evident that Indigenous principles are not merely espoused but enacted. I also contend, as does Kuokkanen that the gift-giving paradigm has something to offer the academy.

Unfortunately, scholarship surrounding gift theory has historically misinterpreted Indigenous philosophy related to gift giving, seeing it as a threat against Western values; an example of this intimidation is provided by former Indian Agent, William Halliday (1935) in his work Potlatch and Totem:

The privilege of giving (feasting) began to be abused and distorted until it resembled a huge octopus, which held all customs and habits of the
Indians in its embrace. It was a particularly wasteful and destructive
custom, and created ill feelings, jealousy, and in most cases, great
poverty. (p.4)

The explanation hints at the enormity of the tradition but completely
misinterprets the purpose and process, identifying giving as something immoral.
Kuokkanen (2007) argues that this misinterpretation remains entrenched today with
the academy still suspicious of Indigenous worldview that has the potential to disrupt
the status quo: a status quo that is driven by individualism, capitalism and patriarchal
ideologies (p.8). I support the idea that gift giving from an Indigenous perspective
remains misunderstood by the academy and I also share Kuokkanen's fears that a
neoliberal agenda is driving the academy to view knowledge as profit. I further
suggest that the manner in which Indigenous and Western knowledge constructs
and interprets land is a prime example of this divide.

The findings coming from the interviews with the Chiefs and Elders identified
what I would describe as spiritual stewardship for the land, a collective responsibility
to nurture the land, which in turn provided basic sustenance, the goal was not profit
but rather to promote a holistic relationship, giving and receiving to maintain
balance. Previously, I was not recognizing the pragmatic function as much as the
spiritual. I now see it as Kuokkanen (2007) describes, “Living off the land involves
hard work, but in return, the land gives Indigenous peoples their very being.
Indigenous people understand the land’s bounty as both a gift and as a relationship
made manifest, but they do so in concrete rather than romanticized terms” (p. 42).
Elmer Ghostkeeper (2007) describes the different perceptions between traditional
knowledge and Western scientific knowledge suggesting that in the former, “People live with the land for today and this moment” and “the subsistence pattern is supported through ceremony, ritual, and sacrifice” (p. 82). He then identifies the latter as “People live off the land for tomorrow and the next moment” and “the subsistence pattern is supported through economic growth, profit, and acquisition of wealth” (p. 83).

In exploring the above distinctions, it would appear that a gift giving paradigm does have something timely to offer the academy, industry and government who are attempting to reconcile its relationships with Indigenous people in this country within a context of depleting resources and a labour market economy. At the core of this debate is a very different value set that I would contend needs to be deconstructed and considered in order to have any possibility of bridging the gap between worldviews and creating equitable relations.

7.3 Recognizing The Epistemic Ignorance In The Academy

As first identified in Chapter 2, Kuokkanen purposely engages the term epistemes to look beyond epistemology as a body of knowledge but rather as a lens by which one perceives the world. Indigenous epistemes therefore becomes the less recognized factor in social constructs that renders it invisible among hegemonic Western education. From here, epistemic ignorance is determined by:

The ways in which academic theories and practices marginalize, exclude, and discriminate against other…In the process of producing, reproducing, and disseminating knowledge, these “other” epistemic
and intellectual traditions are foreclosed to the point that generally there is very little recognition and understanding of them (p. 66).

To this end, Kuokkanen suggests, it is not simply what the academy does not recognize but how it actively excludes through epistemic ignorance that then becomes a form of indirect epistemic violence.

An element of epistemic ignorance that resonates is when Indigenous people speak from their different epistemes; it is viewed as “difference” that then requires a translation into the “sameness” due to the assumption that the difference only resides at a surface level (Kuokkanen, 2007, p. 76). In the Learning Circle the difference between Indigenous and Western worldviews was acknowledged and participants struggled to reconcile the different perceptions of land, culture, ceremony and protocol. One of the Elders in the Learning Circle spoke to the disconnect at VIU and the desire to shift the discourse:

History indicates we were discovered. We are an oral history. We hold people up who are doing good stuff. Racism [historical and current] talk should be mandatory, it creates un-comfortableness but it is about time. History of where we come from needs to be in the teachings. Once it becomes common knowledge then it becomes accepted. We are not there yet (Personal communication, February, 2016).

A student in the circle then shared their thoughts on creating an integrated learning environment where Indigenous worldview is considered as having merit for all students:
Non-First Nations need our First Nations teaching as a tool. We will be working together and what a positive tool this would be for all students. Not all students are reaching those sources. It would be beneficial to have a mandatory course in First Nations history. To create a community where we are all included (Personal communication, February, 2016).

These conversations identify institutional epistemic violence and advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous epistemes.

Creating a discourse on difference involves both a decolonizing approach as well as further identification of Indigenous worldview to which Kuokkanen (2007) describes as a “discourse of multitudes”:

Not until hegemonic institutions and individuals have become aware of different discourses, once the multitude of epistemes is made visible, can we proceed with the project of decolonization, of deconstructing Eurocentric biases, of dismantling the hierarchies of discourses and epistemes (p. 47).

The argument connects to both the theoretical framework of this study as well as the stated purpose expressed in Chapter 1 that seeks to identify similarities and differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems that lead to deeper levels of discussion and engagement for Indigenous students in higher education. I would also suggest a discourse of multitudes is a necessary first step in Newhouse’s (2015) notion of ‘complex understandings’ where those in the academy come together to share various perspectives.

The gifts presented in this study offer a contribution in this regard as they present multiple epistemes that have not previously been made transparent at VIU.
For example in the 2010 Academic Plan, one of the core objectives addresses the Academic Community to which it states, “The recommendations outlined below are intended to support the character, achievements and strengths of our various teaching communities, affirm the principles underlying the academic community, and ensure the appropriate services are provided to support the academic activities” (p. 16). The proceeding recommendations then speak to the need to formulize a statement of academic values and to formulize the role of the Elders and First Nations Advisory Committee, recognizing “the knowledge they embody” (p. 16). What is suggested in this communication is that the principles of the academic community are obvious and I would also argue privileged, given that they only have to be affirmed and there is no mention of Indigenous principles to support the “academic work”. This absence of Indigenous principles speaks directly to Kuokkanen (2007) claim that Indigenous epistemes are less recognized and their exclusion creates a subtle but threatening form of epistemic violence.

7.4 Learning To Learn

Kuokkanen (2007) claims, “Learning to receive compels us to make the gift visible and to acknowledge that it exists. Second, it demands active participation in the form of responding and reciprocating” (p. 126). I appreciate this statement as its takes the onus off of Indigenous faculty, Elders, guest speakers and even Indigenous students, who are often called upon to provide an Indigenous narrative but does not require the non-Indigenous members of the academy to engage in the discourse from their perspective. Furthermore, gift logic discharges the academy
from perpetuating colonial logic that insists, “we must know” to suggesting that we may never know.

A critical component of gift logic is ensuring that it is founded on the principle of care and collaboration and not controlled by capitalism and exchange. Kuokkanen (2007) believes that in the current context of austerity, universities are more than likely not to engage in gift logic but rather to view knowledge as having economic value. Kuokkanen’s point is a valid one and connects to the one I conveyed in Chapter 1 regarding the process of Indigenization being catapulted by VIU’s shrinking resources. However, while I am sceptical of VIU and other universities intentions for bringing Indigenous worldview into the academy in this context, I am not as convinced as Kuokkanen that the interest in its entirety stems from greed.

In my work at VIU, I interact with faculty facilitating professional development opportunities for enhancing understandings related to Indigenous perspectives, while there certainly is not what I would call a ground swell of interest; there has been a growing level of participation in these different sessions over the years. My experience in building these connections is that many faculty and staff have a strong sense of social justice that has them recognize the inequalities against Indigenous people that they want to be conscious of and not replicate in their practice. I have also noted of late, that faculty and staff are expressing concern for the land and the environment. They appear to be seeking a stronger sense of community and recognize that Indigenous epistemes and worldviews have much to offer these areas of interest. I am admittedly optimistic about this enhanced curiosity but not
completely impervious to what Kuokkanen (2007) might suggest is well-intentioned citizens’ looking to Indigenous people for reasons based on self-interest and personal gratification rather than epistemic engagement.

7.5 Exploring A New Relationship Based On Unconditional Hospitality

During my interview with Geraldine Manson she described the extensive procedures involved in planning for an event that her family would host:

Four years we start saving, gathering, because when you host, call people, we go community to community. We enter their longhouse and we announce we're going to be, this date we're going to do a memorial. We're going to do a naming. We're going to do something in our longhouse and we're inviting you. And we do it our language. We hire a speaker. And we're inviting you. So we know that day there's going to be maybe up to a thousand people coming. (Personal communication, October 2016)

When I asked Geraldine about the significance of four years, she replied that it responds to the four seasons and four pillars in the Longhouse, “there’s four of everything…four years, you’re not rushed, you don’t take short cuts…it is just like in university, you’ve got four years” (Personal communication, October 2014). Geraldine’s words stress the importance of planning, preparing and ensuring protocol is followed as a host. It is a process that Kuokkanen (2007) advocates can be advantageous to the academy.

Kuokkanen (2007) identifies hospitality as a process featuring two critical components, “welcome of the “other” without conditions (such as translations or definitions) and openness to learn about the logic of the gift and Indigenous
It is this type of unconditional hospitality that was first extended to the settlers by the First Peoples at the time of contact and it is a type of hospitality that I affirm remains today among Indigenous practices as described by Ray Peter:

If I invited you and didn’t even look at you, didn’t bother with you and didn’t feed you, and didn’t keep the fire going, you had no real place to park your car, would you come back? And if you invited me, would you treat me that way because you remember how I treated you, hmm? And so, we were told you have to treat your guests like royalty. It does not matter what kind of a person they are. It does not matter. They have taken their time to come to your gathering, see? So you say thank you right away, when they come, you’ve raised them on a pedestals. (Personal communication, October 2014).

The type of hospitality that is being described above identifies how the principles of respect and reciprocity are put into practice as described earlier. It also speaks to an ethic of care that is reflected in the logic of the gift (Kuokkanen, 2007, p. 148).

Kuokkanen’s (2007) gift logic and unconditional hospitality can assist in providing a response to this study’s third and fourth research questions: how can VIU appropriately recognize and receive the gift of Indigenous perspectives within a diverse cultural and political landscape of the academy and, how can VIU enact gift giving protocols with Indigenous ethics such as reciprocity, responsibility and hospitality being the key components? In regard to the third question, Kuokkanen is clear that gift logic cannot be considered within a discourse that privileges liberal multiculturalism as it perpetuates sameness and does not address colonialism leading to racism nor does it engage critique of the status quo and who holds power and privilege. Kuokkanen further contends, and in doing so makes a contribution to
the forth question, that in order for gift logic to become a reality the academy will have to surrender its role as supreme host and commit to a “continuous process and practice of reciprocation, recognition, and negotiation without closure” (p. 154). In an effort to deliberate Kuokkanen’s recommendation, I considered VIU’s current role as host exploring how the principles of respect, relevancy, reciprocity and responsibility from an Indigenous perspective are being recognized. In this critique, I suggest that instead of the 4 R’s of quality Indigenous education, we have the 4 A’s of accommodation, acquiescence, affiliation and acceptance.

7.6 The Four A’s: Enacting A Protocol Of Gift-Giving

7.6.1 Accommodation

At VIU symbolic gestures of respect such as welcome signs to the university with Coast Salish language and totem poles at all of our campuses are in place but I contend that these examples only signify the necessary first steps indicative of Newhouse’s (2015) phase one and two of Indigenization to which the academy has opened its doors to Indigenous learners and communities, and recognized them as having a distinct cultural identity. However, these demonstrations do not necessarily acknowledge a particular worldview and unique Indigenous knowledge systems. Without indication of a commitment to a deeper level of exploration and understanding of another way of existence and knowing, a culture of accommodation for Indigenous learners is perpetuated. Slight modifications are made in recognition of the ‘other’ but it is grounded in the principle of social justice or supporting the premise of diversity. In this arrangement, the Indigenous student
continues to be seen as ‘other’ provided special allowances based on difference but with no attempts to learn from or connect with the differences across cultural groups. Kuokkanen (2007) refers to this level of respect as “repressive tolerance” where “Indigenous people and their epistemes are allowed to exist in the celebratory spirit of different perspectives or points of view but are not recognized, heard, or understood except superficially and relativistically” (p. 79). Without attempts to move beyond a symbolic recognition of respect of Indigenous people and their worldviews, Indigenous students in the academy will remain as subjugated and Indigenous peoples’ histories and knowledge will continue to be rendered as non-existence (Kuokkanen, p. 78).

The Chiefs and the Elders collectively identified respect as a core value, an embodied principle that is demonstrated by personal actions and interactions with others. Respect is how you represent yourself spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally: respecting yourself and others is necessary to developing and preserving cultural identity were consistent teachings coming from the interviews. In this context, respect becomes an integral component for how we generate and regenerate knowledge as Indigenous people.

To further make the distinctions between notions of respect and accommodation I return once again to Chief Justice Finch’s (2012) paper on The Duty to Learn: Taking Account of Indigenous Legal Orders in Practice that provides a response to the question, “How can we, as practitioners and as a society, make space within the legal landscape for Indigenous legal orders?” and is similar to the third guiding question posed in this study, “How can VIU appropriately recognize and
receive the gift of Indigenous perspectives within the diverse cultural and political landscape of the academy?” In Finch’s response, he identifies a threefold process of recognition:

First, by recognizing the true nature and scope of the challenge; second recognizing the preconceptions and limitations which hamper the existing Canadian legal perspective; and third, by recognizing the need for humility, respect and receptivity in our individual and collective approaches to Indigenous legal orders. (p. 5)

In the response above, education could easily replace the word legal and offer a similar application to the academy. Finch’s concept of respect is further described as:

Respect in this context is simply the acknowledgment that we are all human, we are all different, and that no matter how important they may be, our values cannot be treated as absolute and exclusive. We all have much to learn from one another. (p. 17)

I support the contention that it is the recognition of the distinct cultural values between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that can create the opportunity to singularly unite and define a relationship. Moreover, Finch’s notion of a duty to learn offers appropriate sentiment to what is required to begin to understand these differences and unpack distinct cultural values. Where I take slight issue with Finch is in his proposition that enacting respect among differences is a simple endeavor. I believe this is the assumption that leads to accommodation in that it can hasten dialogue related to exploring and learning from each other. There is also an implied expectation in Finch’s words that our values can be aligned and while I too believe
this is possible, I think recognizing and accepting where alliances among value systems are not possible is part of demonstrating respect for the other.

### 7.6.2 Acquiescence

Creating relevant programs at VIU has developed slowly and I would suggest somewhat reluctantly with very few programs employing Indigenous perspectives in a robust manner. The Elders recent induction as Faculty will undoubtedly serve to enhance work in the area of creating and offering more related programing for Indigenous learners but I assert that further Indigenous representation is required at VIU, especially at a faculty level. I would also argue that increasing relevancy is not just a matter of having an augmented Indigenous presence in the academy, as it is not the sole responsibility of Indigenous people to provide Indigenous programing to Indigenous learners. The Elders and other Indigenous people provide authenticity and integrity to the process of Indigenization but everyone has a role and responsibility to move from what I would currently describe as a culture of acquiescence to that of genuine relevancy.

I believe for the most part there is agreement that we need to offer more applicable programming for Indigenous learners in the academy, but similar to the principle of respect, this acceptance is somewhat passive and there is a lack of understanding as to how to approach this work aside from relying on Elders and other Indigenous people. Finch (2012) suggests any designs for changing the current landscape entails taking into account the colonial context and ensuring receptivity as a quality involves, “acknowledgement of real past and present wrongs:
receptivity to the memory of such wrongs, that is, as well as to new knowledge” (p. 17). Conversely, Kuokkanen (2007) argues this lack of understanding is purposeful to “maintain prevailing hegemony that serves the interests of those in power” (p. 80). I propose that both views have merit but where they fall short, is that they identify what to do and why, but do not address the how. Recognizing colonial powers and dismantling dominance is a given, what is less transparent is how to engage in a dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups addressing issues of oppression, power, and privilege and the subsequent feelings of shame, blame, and guilt. I return to Newhouse’s (2015) vision of complex understandings introduced in Chapter 2 where the goal is to come together, share various perspectives and seek relationships among these perspectives.

Newhouse (2015) argues that complex understandings are based on dialogue rather than a dialectic:

In this sense, it is deeply rooted in traditional Aboriginal notions of how one comes to understand. The notion can create a broader and deeper understanding of a phenomenon. It fosters a conversation among different disciplines, perspectives, knowledge systems, methods of inquiry. It fosters understanding without necessarily inviting competition. Challenge is present through the attempt to understand and explain the sometimes differing, sometimes similar views. (Speaking notes from keynote address, 2015, p. 6)

Newhouse goes on to suggest that Indigenous scholarship “offers the promise of collective knowing rather than expert knowing” and “brings with it a willingness to engage with other disciplines and other ways of knowing” (p. 6). In his argument
Newhouse makes it clear that Indigenous knowledge is inclusive of the mind, spirit and body and therefore welcomes and considers Western knowledge that incorporates these areas. What I appreciate about Newhouse’s notion of complex understanding is that it names the tensions and offers a format for discussion. I believe what Newhouse is proposing can eventually lead to the fourth phase of Indigenization - trust, that I referenced at the end of Chapter 2. Prior to determining how a culture of trust might present itself, additional analysis is required.

7.6.3 Affiliation

Strong evidence of community relationships has developed over the years between VIU and Indigenous communities that typically start with a Memoranda of Understanding or Learning Partnerships progressing to an Affiliation Agreement. While VIU considers these communities partners, I am cognizant of the fact that in the standard application of creating an affiliation agreement to support community-based education, VIU, as the public education institution, holds all the power and control in the partnership. I therefore suggest that rather than engendering a principle of shared reciprocity leading to mutual trust, we have settled on affiliation as the value to which we collaborate with Indigenous people and their communities, which does not necessarily engender a sense of hospitality that Kuokkanen (2007) advocates is required.

Through the interviews, reciprocity was expressed as a circular process to which all things are recognized and connected through the practice of gifting. For example, taking resources from the land required an offering was made back
through the gifting of tobacco, prayer, song or expressions of gratitude recognizing the land’s contribution. It was also demonstrated that these resources were then shared amongst community members, distributing the wealth. Kuokkanen (2007) interprets this example of Indigenous circular reciprocity as being a key element in gift logic:

Reciprocity is a key principle and practice…besides building and maintaining interpersonal or group-to-group relationships, reciprocity plays a key role in interactions between human and non-human realms…sharing and giving form the basis of the community’s well-being, receiving from others who have something to share is considered a normal part of life (p. 145).

Embedded in this holistic design is an ethic of care and the philosophy of communal authority, no one entity having supreme power over the other. If VIU is to move past its current austere affiliation status with communities, this notion of circular reciprocity has to be considered. I would also suggest given that Kuokkanen’s (2007) gift logic is grounded on care and collaboration rather than capitalism, VIU’s adaptation of such principles would absolve its association in this manner.

The process of truth telling and witnessing led by Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission has brought a new awareness of Indigenous people’s history and existence in this country. I think this work is an example of endorsing reciprocity from an Indigenous perspective to invoke an emotional response that previous policy documents such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples did not. As a result of this heart-centered work, I am optimistic that this response will
lead to a shared responsibility leading to transformative change. In the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission it states:

Reconciliation must support Aboriginal peoples as they heal from the destructive legacies of colonization that have wreaked havoc in their lives. But it must do even more. Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to transform Canadian Society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share. (2015, p. 8)

At VIU it is clear to me that we have to create ongoing opportunities for truth telling, witnessing and learning, fostering emotional connections that unite us. We have to learn to trust ourselves in being vulnerable with each other. As Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in this country we have a mutual existence but what is being offered through reconciliation is the opportunity for a deeper, more responsive relationship.

7.6.4 Acceptance

At VIU, my office has been developing, organizing and facilitating professional development opportunities for many years for faculty and staff in the area of advancing awareness and understanding of Indigenous people’s history, culture and knowledge. These sessions take place over four or five months in order to create safety and relationship and are facilitated with the support of the Elders. Most recently we have been bringing in Indigenous students who are part of the Aboriginal Mentorship program, offering an intergenerational perspective. The focus of late has inevitably been related to reconciliation and Indigenization. Discussions addressing racism, power, and privilege in the academy are occurring as deemed necessary by
Kuokkanen (2007). What I am observing in these sessions is a willingness to listen, learn and a desire to accept the gift of Indigenous epistemes for which Kuokkanen further advocates. Where I see the struggle among my non-Indigenous colleagues is trying to understand how to demonstrate responsibility from their respective social locations and professional disciplines. To clarify, this group that I am speaking of is small with approximately 50 people engaged in discussion out of a possible 2,000 employees at VIU.

Recent developments such as the TRC and court rulings in favor of Indigenous land and title rights have increased the profile of Indigenous people in this country. While these developments are positive, they are also concerning in that many in this country will see themselves as being forced to accept Indigenous people. Part of me accepts this as justifiable irony, but another part finds this perception disconcerting knowing it is difficult to work with mandated agenda’s regardless if you believe they are defensible. Rather than focus on the binary assertion between exclusion or mandated, I suggest similar to other Indigenous scholars (Ermine, 2007; Nakata, 2007) that the emphasis should be on creating a shared space to explore various belief systems with a willingness to engage in the unknown and unfamiliar.

What I am coming to conclude in my analysis of the 4 A’s, based on the information provided by the Chiefs and Elders, through the exploration of Kuokkanen’s (2007) work and the current status of VIU, is that Indigenous values such as respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility are exemplified principles that manifest in their communal relationships and have the potential to do so in the
academy. These principles grounded in various Indigenous ways of knowing and being can be a gift to the academy to enhance connection, understanding and compassion that are currently missing not only between Indigenous and non-Indigenous epistememes but all the epistememes. In this brief exploration of the 4 A’s, it is apparent that while there are efforts being made at VIU to be hospitable to Indigenous epistememes, I would not go as far as to suggest they are unconditional. Moreover, there is much work that needs to be done to reconcile our relationships and mutual existence at VIU with Indigenous knowledge, communities and students. It is work that is distinctively decolonizing as it requires letting go of the persistent Western egos and committing to heart-centered work that will take time and a committed effort to begin to deconstruct our socialized and cultural values and principles. In summary, the 4 A’s have initiated preliminary dialogue in this area, offering a mechanism to unpack the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews in the academy. Through continued exploration, we can begin to make transparent the multiple and complex foundational principles that ground our philosophies and belief systems.

7.7 Learning Circle Analysis

The Learning Circle provided further opportunity to explore Indigenous knowledge and associated principles in contrast to Western forms through VIU’s draft statement of Academic Values. In this introductory exploration, there were more distinctions than similarities noted, such as how knowledge is shared and reciprocated between students and faculty. In the draft statement, students were not
recognize in this relationship as offering a contribution compared to an Indigenous philosophy where all things were viewed as contributing to knowledge formation. I was able to take this input back to the committee who acknowledged this distinction and the following statement was adjusted, from “helping student to explore” to “working together to explore” (Statement on Values, Rights and Responsibilities of Vancouver Island University Faculty and Students, February 2016).

Additionally, in the Learning Circle I shared my reinterpretation of the 4 A’s to inform a critique of the Indigenization efforts at VIU. I explained to participants that the 4 R’s: respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991) were considered the ethical standards for achieving quality education for Indigenous learners in the academy. I then introduced the 4 A’s of accommodation, acquiescence, affiliation and acceptance suggesting that the 4 A’s were a more appropriate identifier of the current status of Indigenous education at VIU. I rationalized that rather than respect for Indigenous learners, there was accommodation, instead of relevance for Indigenous people’s worldviews, there was acquiescence, in place of reciprocity of learning between Indigenous epistemes and the academy, affiliation agreements was how Indigenous ways of knowing were recognized and finally rather than responsibility, there was acceptance for the self-determining rights of Indigenous people. From here, I presented participants with a bar graph that I developed and invited each of the participants to consider, from their perspective as either a student or a staff person at VIU, where they thought Indigenous education was positioned in each of these 4 areas.
The graph was developed as tool to test my hypothesis of the 4 A’s in relation to the 4 R’s. In this circumstance, the 4 A’s as a critique of the Indigenization efforts at VIU were utilized to measure where participants of the Learning Circle felt VIU was situated in response to achieving the gold standard of quality Indigenous education as defined by the 4 R’s. The results indicated that both staff and students see VIU as somewhere at the midpoint of approaching the 4 R’s. I was surprised to note that the staff accounts were slightly less optimistic than the students in most cases. My assumption being that the Indigenous students, coming from a marginalized position, would be more critical of the role of Indigenous education at VIU. However, the placement on the scale by the staff could be construed as the staff not feeling supported in the work of Indigenization. Overall the findings are limited in that there is not an exact match in interpretation. Questions regarding the graph’s validity and application may also arise in that it is taking a linear measurement of a complex, organic process that is difficult to define in such terms. Nonetheless, the findings suggest there may be opportunity for further development in this area to critically reflect on the work of Indigenization within the academy. Figure 8 below is an example of a potential dialectic tool.
Figure 8: Discursive Tool For Moving From The 4 A’s To 4 R’s

The tool above features the 4 R’s in the centre as the holistic representation of quality Indigenous education: A dynamic space, from which the academy, hosts Indigenous epistemes and knowledge and a place for reflection and enhancement using the 4 R’s as ethical guideposts for ongoing development. The surrounding 4 A’s offer the oppositional standard providing discursive analysis to continually drive and encompass the gold standard approach for Indigenous education. The 4 A’s are the symbolic representation of Indigenization and identified as such in different contexts can therefore continually challenge and disrupt the academy.

7.8 Discussion Summary

The four gifts that first emerged in Chapter 5 from the Chief’s contribution were slightly revised in Chapter 6 based on the Elders interpretation as: (1) The Gift
of Teaching: Role Modeling Respect and Self-Determination; (2) Gift of Land: Spirituality and Responsibility; (3) Gift of Sharing; Reciprocity and Interconnectedness; (4) Gift of Knowing; Acceptance and Healing. The examination of the practice of gift giving was broadened from one that originated as uniquely Gitxsan to one that is inclusive of a larger Indigenous perspective. Additionally, Kuokkanen’s (2007) gift logic has been instrumental in informing the exploration and related analysis of the Indigenous concept of gift giving within the academy.

Through my interviews with the Chiefs and Elders, I came to further understand the meaning and intention behind my grandfather’s words, to be good, is to do good to which the Gitxsanimxw translation is Ze da ho gaak ham weiiin Dimee am Dim weiín. I noted how these words resonated with those of the VIU Elders who speak of doing work in a good way, and is connected to the Hul’qumi num expression, Na’tsa’maht Shqwaluwun to describe coming together as one; one heart, one mind and one spirit. From here I associated Newhouse’s (2008) identification of a good mind being the balance of reason and passion to conclude that these concepts of goodness are grounded in the lived principles and values of respect, relevancy, reciprocity, responsibility and hospitality that have been thoroughly investigated in this study. In this investigation, additional principles have been made known such as: self-determination, identity, spirituality, gratitude, interconnectedness, witnessing, accountability, acceptance and healing.

In Chapter 5, I shared the Gitxsan Gift Giving Model, concluding that gift-giving practices are in place to recognize the multiple relationships that support Gitxsan existence and that these relationships are foundational to how we come to
know. At the conclusion of this Chapter, I am making the claim that an Indigenous way of knowing and being in the world is based on a principled approach to learning. Principles that govern our actions to guide our relationships and to ensure that the foundations of Indigenous knowledge systems honour the heart, mind and spirit, which mutually create something that is intended to be ‘good’. Figure 9 below is an offering that has unfolded from this research process. It is an illustration of goodness theory grounded in Indigenous philosophy that can guide the work of Indigenization at VIU.

In the figure, I position a good heart and mind at the center supported by the Gitxsan and Coast Salish teachings that speak to the notion of goodness and balance. The gifts coming from Indigenous people's worldview identified in this study by the Chiefs and VIU Elders surround the concept of a good mind. These gifts: oral teachings, reverence for the land, sharing what you know and intuitive knowing are essential for creating mutual existence. In other words, you cannot have a good mind without the intention of doing good things. The articulated principles can be seen as gifts to further deepen the understanding for how the academy can be more hospitable to Indigenous epistemes.
The characteristics and associated foundational principles identified in the figure above offers both a pragmatic and visionary guide to consider the work of Indigenization at VIU, such as policy development, informing curriculum and pedagogical approaches that has not previously been articulated. Ormiston’s (2012) research on transformative Indigenous leadership in education supports this approach:

This correlation between “being” and “doing” is not merely a question of ontology; rather, it is also connected to epistemology. Transformational leaders hold particular forms of knowledge, and
disseminating these knowledges in a mindful way is critical for considering student success, in connecting with communities, and in promoting strong Indigenous identities. (p. 208)

This figure, informed by Indigenous leaders, reflects the heart-mind balance consistent with an Indigenous way of being and doing. I contend the characteristics and principles that surround this approach and have been made visible in this study are the points of intersection for engagement where other epistemes, traditions and academic disciplines can be invited to consider the application of Indigenous knowledge systems from their perspective. In this regard, we are centering our exploration of each ‘other’ starting with our principles and lived traditions, rather than investigating a body of knowledge that can be impossible and daunting to comprehend in its amassed and variable form.

At this point, it is important to make the distinction as well as the alignment between Figure 8, *Discursive Tool for Moving from the 4 A’s to 4 R’s* and Figure 9, *Goodness Theory, An Ethical Approach to Indigenization*. The goodness theory is similar to Newhouse’s (2015) complex understanding phenomenon in that it is intended to be relational in nature, based on a dialogue rather than dialectic (p.6). The discursive tool however is very much intended to invite discussion on existing tensions. I therefore contend that the 4 A’s provide the required critical analysis to accompany this discussion and intention of putting forth Indigenous theory and methodology in the academy. This analysis ascertains that good intentions alone do not equate to good things for all people, in particular for Indigenous students. In this analysis, a number of commonly used principles were deconstructed to demonstrate
that certain principles are not interpreted in the same manner across different epistemes. This disruption is necessary to move VIU beyond a surface level of engagement with Indigenous people to one that is more amenable to receiving and reciprocating our collective gifts, which in turn has the potential to renew relationships based on the recognition of distinct and shared values.

At the end of this investigation I am reciprocating the gifts offered in this journey, by presenting both the discursive tool and theoretical approach for transformational consideration for those in the academy who are struggling with the same realities and questions that I came into this study with. To be clear, it is not the tool or approach nor is it a necessarily complete, defining it as such would be counterproductive to the notion of recognizing the fluidity of our lived realities (Newhouse, 2015), but I do see it as a contribution to which I will provide further comment in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 8: Conclusion, So’o

8.1. Introduction

The so’o is the food that is given out to the guests at the li’ligit. It is an expression of the hospitality provided and a gift of gratitude for those who have attended and witnessed the wilp uphold the traditional laws. The so’o is plentiful, consisting of packages of crackers, loaves of bread, and fruit. Providing families and communities with sustenance beyond the event to acknowledge community support and nurture ongoing relationships. In keeping with this tradition, this concluding chapter is offered in appreciation of the numerous contributors of this study and an expression toward creating good relations to its witnesses. Because of the multitude of enduring relationships represented in gift giving practices, this chapter is not intended to come to a finite close, but to highlight the gifts received (findings) and the gifts reciprocated (contributions). Also discussed will be the questions that arose out of the literature review, limitations, opportunities for further research and ongoing reflections.

8.2 Gifts Received

Prior to reviewing the gifts received, it is important to restate the purpose of this study, which was to:

- Critic, decolonize and Indigenize Western forms of education
- Create an Gitxsan theoretical framework through the articulation of Gitxsan’s feast ceremony and gift-giving beliefs and practices
• Expand on the developments of Indigenous ethics and methodologies

• Center Gitxsan worldviews and ways of knowing in educational discussions on educational and institutional transformations

• Identify how Gitxsan gift-giving practices and ways of knowing can enhance VIU's understanding of the relevance of Indigenous worldviews for Indigenous and all learners.

To summarize the gifts received, I will review the four major research questions posed in Chapter 1.

8.3 How Do Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs Describe Gift-Giving Practices And Protocols In Relationships To Ways Of Knowing And Being?

The Gitxsan Chiefs described the practice of gift giving as being the tradition that honors, renews and creates good relationships. Giving was defined as the law that upholds traditional roles and responsibility. Giving and receiving represents a principled approach to ensuring balance of our mutual existence. It is through these ongoing relationships that knowledge is generated and will continue to do so generation after generation. From this discussion, four foundational gifts emerged: (1) gift of teaching: role modeling respect and responsibility; (2) gift of land: identity and relationship; (3) gift of sharing: gratitude and reciprocity; and (4) gift of knowing: witnessing and accountability. These gifts confirmed the characteristics related to Gitxsan worldview and the foundational principles that constitute Gitxsan theory that was introduced in Chapter 3.
8.4 How Can Gitxsan Knowledge And Meaning Be Situated Relative To Non-Gitxsan Knowledge Systems?

In providing a response to the above question, it is critical to point out that finding meaning and association among knowledge systems, is dependent on how one approaches the participants and related subject area. Indigenous theory as articulated by Smith (2003) provided an Indigenous responsiveness to this work that also integrated a decolonizing perspective. Smith’s 10 characteristics of Indigenous theory assisted greatly in developing my methods, guiding my process, interpreting my transcripts and weaving together my analysis:

1. Located within a culturally contextual site
2. Born of organic process involving community
3. The product of a theorist who has an understanding of the cultural epistemic foundations of an Indigenous worldview
4. Focused on change
5. Although not universal, portable to other sites
6. Flexible
7. Engaged with other theoretical positioning (i.e., not an isolationist theory)
8. Critical
9. Workable for a variety of sites of struggle
10. User-friendly – people can understand what the theorist is talking about.
Contemplating these critical areas at the onset of this study grounded my methods and assisted in conceptualizing the perimeters and expectations of this study. In reviewing these characteristics, I am confident that they have been integrated into this research.

By applying the same questions to the VIU Elders as the Gitxsan Chiefs, I confirmed and expanded upon the principles that are relevant to Indigenous knowledges. The same four gifts were identified however additional principles that shape these characteristics were added such as: self-determination, identity, spirituality, gratitude, interconnectedness, witnessing, accountability, acceptance and healing. Initiating a discussion from my own tradition, I was able to engage with the Elders, who I view as an extension of my community. Moreover, I was able to connect the similarities among traditions but also point out the distinctions. In doing so, I offer a contribution that is uniquely Gitxsan but distinctively Indigenous.

The Learning Circle provided further opportunity to explore Indigenous knowledge and associated principles in contrast to Western forms through VIU’s draft statement of Academic Values. In this introductory exploration, there were more distinctions than similarities noted, such as how knowledge is shared and reciprocated between students and faculty. In the draft statement, students were not recognized in this relationship as offering a contribution compared to an Indigenous philosophy where all things were viewed as contributing to knowledge formation. I was able to take this input back to the committee who acknowledged this distinction and the following statement was adjusted, from “helping student to explore” to “working together to explore” (Statement on Values, Rights and Responsibilities of
Vancouver Island University Faculty and Students, February 2016). The Learning Circle affirmed that given the venue, faculty, staff, Elders and students appreciate the chance to dialogue on the principles and values related to education from the different epistemes and explore relationality, identify the issues and generate questions for consideration.

8.5 How Can VIU Appropriately Recognize And Receive The Gift Of Indigenous Perspectives Within The Diverse Cultural And Political Landscape Of The Academy?

This research demonstrates that a critical component of Indigenization, and a necessary consideration for this question, is the exploration of Indigenous principles – the philosophical thinking behind the doing. The main findings in this research identify a concept of goodness grounded in Indigenous philosophy that is connected to oral teachings, reverence for the land, sharing what you know and intuitive knowing. It is not a standard concept from which we engage in the academy.

In order for those at VIU to first learn to recognize gifts of Indigenous knowledge, opportunity for learning, sharing and creating dialogue has to be offered. These opportunities have to be facilitated by Indigenous educators, those of us working in the academy who have taken up the work of Indigenous scholarship, including Elders who continually nurture this very principled work. I also contend that non-Indigenous educators who understand Indigenous scholarship through their extensive relationships can facilitate this work. We all have a responsibility to demonstrate the generosity of spirit and share our teachings that has been role
modeled by our ancestors, mentors and Elders. It is as Gary Manson states, “to follow the path that has been laid before you” (Personal communication, January 2016). From here, it is the responsibility of those at VIU to receive these gifts in a good way – being willing to engage both with the heart and mind.

In many aspects, it is reflective of the work of reconciliation in that the dialogue must honor the need for truth telling by Indigenous people and witnessing of non-Indigenous people. It is emotional work in that it can leave us vulnerable exposing our lived realities that are personal and at times painful to reconcile, however it is in this personal exchange that has the potential to transform socialized beliefs and perceptions related to the Other from one of indifference to that of personal connection as indicated by a non-Indigenous woman who witnessed Survivors' life stories during the Truth and Reconciliation hearings, “By listening to your story, my story can change. By listening to your story, I can change” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, 2015, p. 21).

In addition to the information coming out of the interviews, Kuokkanen’s (2007) conception of a discourse of multitudes to make the various epistemes visible in order to create more equitable relations and Newhouse’s (2015) notion of complex understandings where through dialogue, we seek relationships among the different perspectives to create deeper understandings has supported the development of the Guiding Principles for Quality Indigenous Education presented in this study. More specifically, I see the guiding principles as providing the context to initiate dialogue by articulating Indigenous principles and processes. It is a starting point to consider the application of Indigenization.
8.6 How Can VIU Enact Gift-Giving Protocols With Indigenous Ethics Such As: Reciprocity, Responsibility And Hospitality?

If VIU is to successfully enact Indigenous gift-giving protocols, it must embrace the tensions that go along with doing this work from the place of the Other. These points of tensions can be transformative places to engage in dialogue, as it is the tension that signifies difference that must be unpacked if we are going to truly learn to see each other. Tools such as the 4 A’s, accommodation, acquiescence, acceptance and affiliation, are helpful in this regard as they offer critical analysis, articulating the tensions to deconstruct the institutions current relationship with the 4 R’s, respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility. The 4 A’s can therefore assist in hosting productive spaces to invite dialogue from different perspectives to explore VIU’s relationship with Indigenization. Once again, I suggest it is the work of Indigenous scholarship to continually interrupt and challenge the status quo to ensure complacently is not the standard approach to Indigenous education. To this end, I believe the work undertaken in this study can offer VIU constructive feedback, recognizing its efforts but ensuring we are continuing to transform our relationships and not become content in our good feelings toward the other: distinguishing the difference between good intentions and actually committing to the work in a good way with a good mind.

Kuokkanen’s (2007) disputation with the academy’s liberal notions of multiculturalism is also helpful in addressing the tensions. Her contention that Indigenous epistemes cannot, and should not, be considered within this setting as multiculturalism breed’s sameness and does little to address colonial inequities in its...
protection of the status quo. Consistent with enacting Indigenous protocols and ethics is recognition that Indigenous people’s cultural identity and association cannot be equated with other cultural groups, as they are the First Peoples of this land, who have been marginalized since contact as was expressed by the participants in this study. Colonization has impacted communities, families and individuals in different ways. These lived experiences impact the ability to develop trusting relationships. Settler populations, especially those from the Western world, have to be aware of how they are implicated in the ongoing systemic oppression of Indigenous people. If Settler’s are to move to allied positions with Indigenous peoples, they cannot be motivated by uniformity. Creating a hospitable environment in the academy requires accepting difference.

8.7 Gift Reciprocated

Through the gifts received in this study, I reciprocate identifying the following five gifts as my most significant contributions: 1). Accepting the Gift: To be Good, is to do Good; 2). Gitxsan Gift-Giving Model; 3). Indigenous Research Paradigm; 4). Discursive Tool for Moving from the 4 A’s to the 4 R’s; and 5). Goodness Theory, An Ethical Approach to Indigenization. These gifts are reciprocated to all that might find value in their interpretation and application but I see these gifts offering a contribution in different ways and have therefore organized them as such in this chapter. The first one being a gift to myself that I can extend outward, the second offering to my Gitxsan community, the third a gift to Indigenous scholarship, the fourth gift of the Discursive Tool is offered to other public secondary institutions who
are in the process of Indigenization and lastly, Goodness Theory, is a gift back to the VIU community.

8.7.1 Accepting The Gift: To Be Good, Is To Do Good

In reflecting on the process undertaken in this study and the significant learning that has occurred, I believe the greatest gift that I have received and can offer back is the acceptance of my identity and way of being in the world. When I first came to VIU, I had a good sense of who I was and what I could offer the academy, however the dominant intellectual culture and language of the academy cast doubt on my abilities and limited my potential contribution. The exploration into Gitxsan gift giving has reaffirmed my belief system and the teachings that I have received. Through my conversations with the Gitxsan Chiefs as well as the VIU Elders, I understand that if I am to advocate for respect of Indigenous perspectives, I have to first respect myself and that respect is an embodied principle. A significant aspect of an Indigenous way of knowing and being in the world is to role model the teachings that have been provided to you and to share these teachings as gifts back to your community and for future generations. More specifically, I have learned the intended meaning and value behind my grandfather’s words, to be good, is to do good.

My grandfather was a very wise and respected man because he lived his life in a good way. VIU Elder Gary Manson described this good way as, “You always use a good mind and a good spirit, despite what is around you…the longer you use that and the more people that know it, the honorable you are…that’s a gift in itself”
(Personal communication, September 2015). Gary further assisted me in understanding that nurturing a good mind and spirit is not an effortless endeavour because as humans we have flaws, and knowing these flaws is yet another gift as is the understanding we can overcome them. Going forward asserting my identity in the academy, Gary’s words are helpful in creating a path of accepting my role and responsibility in doing the work of Indigenous education to which the concept of goodness is at the center. Ormiston (2012) identifies this as being critical to transformative educational leadership, “living the good life” or “living life in a good way” to which “respect and authority are predicated on the leader’s ability to live an ethical, accountable life (p. 209).

8.7.2 Gitxsan Gift Giving Model

The Gitxsan Gift Giving Model informed by the Gitxsan Chiefs is an expression of the gifts that were shared with me. Through its articulation, identifying the value and principles, consistent with Gitxsan philosophy and situated in a specific culture and tradition, I offer this model as both a gift back to the Chiefs to honor their teachings and demonstrate my accountability to what they shared; as well as a gift forward to future generations of Gitxsan people who may be looking to enhance their understandings of what it means to be Gitxsan and represent themselves in this complex world with multiple traditions.

Additionally, structuring and organizing the dissertation chapters through the usage of Gitxsan practices connected to the li’ligit such as the tets, bats’aa, hawaal, zeim-tesk, nidn’t, mixk’aax, ant’aadit and the so’o using Gitxsan language has been
purposeful to anchor my research journey within an Indigenous space of protocol and teachings. It was also intended to remind the reader of the cultural episteme upon which these traditions are based and evoke the spirit of reciprocity, responsibility and hospitality that are fundamental Indigenous characteristics. The organization and form supports the message and content embedded throughout this research – to uphold a worldview that informs a particular knowledge system that has value and merit in academic research. In doing so, I am honoring my grandfather, the contributors to this research, my family and my community.

8.7.3 Indigenous Research Paradigm

Wilson’s (2008) concept of an Indigenous research paradigm incorporating epistemology, ontology, axiology and methodology, assisted in formulating the Indigenous research paradigm used in this study that is uniquely Gitxsan and also indicative of a decolonizing approach to doing research. In this regard, I respectfully suggest that while Wilson offered the model, my contribution is in the implementation of such a paradigm. In this study my gift back to Indigenous scholarship is defining and articulating the specific application from my cultural traditions to inform a research paradigm. The Indigenous Research Paradigm will hopefully encourage other Indigenous scholars to find traditions that are relevant to their identity and processes to act as the conceptual framework for their investigations.

At this time, I would like to acknowledge the work of all the Indigenous scholars utilized to develop the Indigenous research paradigm starting with the Gitxsan Chiefs who assisted me in understanding to a greater depth the practice of
gift giving and the utilitarian representation of the *git’mgan*. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) have been the catalyst to this analysis and their courage to critique the academy in the area of providing quality Indigenous education for Indigenous learners has provided a touchstone; moral compass and theoretical framework since I began my work in education. Kuokkanen’s (2007) Gift Logic, a critique of the contemporary university has provided further resolution to propel my specific analysis using the 4 A’s to critique VIU’s process of Indigenization. It is within these frameworks that we can move beyond the linear confines of academic research to a more holistic application that allows us to find connection and strength to assert ourselves.

8.7.4 Discursive Tool For Moving From The 4 A’s To The 4 R’s

The 4 A’s of accommodation, acquiescence, affiliation and acceptance as indicated can be a useful tool to deconstruct institutions current relationship with the 4 R’s and provide critical analysis. In the Learning Circle the 4 A’s had a direct function as after their critical consideration, changes were brought forward to VIU’s draft statement of Academic Values. In this situation, a value previously phrased in accommodation language, “helping students to explore” was adjusted to be more respectful and reciprocal “working together to explore” (Statement on Values, Rights and Responsibilities of Vancouver Island University Faculty and Students, February 2016). In this regard, the tool as a gift has already been received and reciprocated through the acceptance of this particular offering.
The tool provides a unique contribution beyond VIU in that it can be adapted to fit different contexts but at its core is the 4 R’s that have long been the universal standard for Indigenous education. This study was instigated by a variety of concerns related to the lack of recognition of Indigenous knowledge and the notion that Indigenization in a political context was being driven by a market economy that did little to address the ongoing inequity and isolation of Indigenous learners.

External and internal factors will continue to influence educational institutions and the work of Indigenization both positively and negatively. The interpretation of what is good and what is bad will remain debatable depending on the different traditions, disciplines and perspectives. Discursive tools such as the one provided in this study offer a method of inquiry to explore these distinctions and tensions while ensuring a consistent center that is rooted in an Indigenous philosophy.

8.7.5 Goodness Theory, An Ethical Approach To Indigenization

The last gift that I believe I am reciprocating back in this study is the Goodness Theory, An Ethical Approach to Indigenization identified in Chapter 7. I believe the approach offers a contribution to the process of Indigenization at VIU in numerous ways. The first one being that it was generated by Indigenous epistemes. The VIU Elders in particular informed the approach and as the local knowledge providers representing the traditional territories that VIU resides, it is important that they guide and direct this work. The approach also centers Indigenous knowledge and its intended consequence of balancing a good heart and mind. The identified values and principles that surround this concept are contextualized within an Indigenous framework but are not exclusive to Indigenous people.
I am optimistic the approach will resonate across epistemes as I think there is a universal belief that knowledge, and the ongoing production of knowledge, ought to be grounded in ethics and related to goodness as knowledge production is ultimately about improving our given realities. However, the belief systems that inform this development are not necessarily interpreted universally and this is part of the anticipated tension. I see the approach, identifying specific Indigenous characteristics and associated principles that surround a way of knowing, being the portal for dialogue. It is the starting place for conversation that has the potential for connection, conversion but also offers a place to identify disparities. It is a site for engagement, the principles being the place where others can explore their relationship to Indigenous epistemes from their particular social location and academic traditions. I contend that when we speak from this place of value, we are speaking to the how and why we do the work we do, not the what. In this respect our responsibilities are not driven by external influences such as corporate agendas or otherwise but from ourselves in relation to each other to which the greater project of the academy can be defined.

8.8 Limitations Of Research

My insider/outsider location could be viewed as a limitation in this study; my insider location viewed as having bias and outsider location misinterpreting the information being presented to me. To counter both issues, I have attempted to make any perception of bias as transparent as possible, promoting Indigenous knowledge as intentionally subjective in light of its relational aspects. My outsider
location, as someone who is Gitxsan but lives in Coast Salish territory as a visitor, has also been valuable in that I have been able to articulate how and where I can make connections from this location, which is related to the goal of this study.

As stated one of the unintentional outcomes of this investigation has been learning to trust myself in relation to identifying what are the principles associated with Indigenous ways of knowing and being. A subsequent consequence has been learning to speak and act first from my heart and then my mind. In this regard, I believe I have moved closer to being an insider. I have strengthened my Gitxsan episteme, recognizing that inherent in this is the responsibility for lifelong learning. I sense that I am moving beyond cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2000) that has manipulated much of my educational experiences toward an understanding of my authentic self in relation to Others.

To that end, I have further determined my role in this third phase of Indigenization to what I would define as a third generation Indigenous scholar attempting to make a contribution by upholding Indigenous traditions and knowledge systems, respecting and trusting the relationships that surround me to engage emotionally, holistically, and spiritually. That being said, I am reluctant to suggest that in the eminent future we will find ourselves in a fourth phase of Indigenization defined as mutual trust as proposed in Chapter 2. Trust is very personal to each individual and there is still much healing and acceptance that has to occur. I do believe however that we can continue to aspire to this reality, in our hopes for a better-shared future.
8.9 Future Implications

At the beginning of this research project I was convinced that Gitxsan belief systems and practices, similar to the broader Indigenous knowledge systems had something to offer the academy. My convictions however were largely based on lived experiences and an innate feeling. As my dissertation demonstrates, this is an important starting point to engage and undertake transformative work of this kind. This dissertation has offered me a venue to deepen my understandings, engaging the heart, mind and spirit to pursue assumptions, clarify meanings, and gain new interpretations both personally and professionally. In many aspects, I feel this journey has been more personally rewarding than outwardly. All the things I was advocating for at the start such as decolonization, cultural revitalization, Indigenization, emancipation and transformation have transpired on a very personal level. Although this process will be ongoing given the colonial context that continues to dominate, I am stronger, more confident in my abilities as an Indigenous researcher and scholar. Through this transformation, I feel myself opening up to the tensions and possibilities of which Newhouse (2015) speaks. I am, in fact, eager to share my teachings and lead conversations in this area.

Going forward, incorporating non-Indigenous voices such as university administrators and faculty to provide a response to the gifts identified and how they might be received in academic practice would be of value. For the purposes of this initial study into gift giving, I felt it was important to privilege Indigenous voice given the stated goal to centre Indigenous perspectives as the starting place for this particular conversation in the academy. To do otherwise, I contend would have
generated a different result than the one described above. I wrote this dissertation at a time when things are very fluid in Indigenous education, the release of the *Truth and Reconciliation Committee report* (2015) and its 94 recommendations across all sectors and the continual court decisions that are being made in favour of Indigenous peoples rights and recognition have generated increased interest in the area of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Canada. If we are to transform our current realities both within the academy and in the general public to a more amicable space, Indigenous gifts such as the ones identified in this research must be considered and taken seriously. I believe the gifts reciprocated in this study offer a contribution to that end, particularly the discursive tool and goodness theory, as offering sites for dialogue. Future research could involve implementing these gifts and assessing their effectiveness for increasing understanding across epistemes leading to transformative educational practices.

**8.10 Ongoing Reflections**

In summarizing my literature review in Chapter 2, I stated that I was challenged as to how, from this place of ongoing decolonization and cultural revitalization, those of us who are Indigenous and in the academy demonstrate relationality and responsibility to our positions and the people outside of our family and community? This gap in the literature was identified as the lack of association between the intersection of the dominant group taking responsibility for their colonial representation, and Indigenous scholarship’s pursuit to reclaim spaces through
critical revitalization of Indigenous epistemologies, pedagogies and methodologies. I also identified a number of additional questions:

1. Who determines non-Indigenous people’s ability for authentic engagement with Indigenous epistemologies and when this transpires?

2. What is the identifier for the conversion point from when we move from an anticolonial discourse to one that is more inclusive to which Indigenous worldviews are equivalently acknowledged?

3. Are we as Indigenous people prepared, even willing, to share our situated knowledges outside of our tribal relationships?

4. Has too much been taken to fully regain trust that leads to mutually inclusive acceptance, given our history and relationship within a Canadian context?

5. What is our role and responsibility as educators within the academy to address the larger societal issue of continued denial of Indigenous land title?

As I conclude this investigation, I accept that providing an in depth response to each of these questions is beyond the scope of this study and in many aspects it would be in fact premature to do so. These questions are very timely and depictive of what Canadians are being required to consider. As Canada prepares to celebrate 150 years of Confederation in 2017, never has Indigenous rights been more prevalent. The April 14th, 2016 court decision upholding Metis and non-status as Indians is another example of Canada being held accountable to its fiduciary responsibility. While these historical and contentious issues play out in the political arena, those of us on the ground are challenged to find the necessary starting points
to address these pertinent questions. I believe that the gifts received and reciprocated in this study can provide the opening for this discourse. I am advocating that what is needed and perhaps missing in this third stage of Indigenization where we are bringing our knowledges into the academy, is a principled approach to shared dialogue. Through such an approach, I believe we can work toward establishing a collaborative process to which we can support each other where appropriate to uncover possible remedies to these questions and challenges.

In relation to the third question related to Indigenous peoples preparedness, and willingness to share their situated knowledges outside of their tribal relationships, I do believe through this investigation, I can offer additional insight. I return to Newhouse (2015) who claims that we are in fact sharing our knowledges by virtue of being in the academy. In Chapter 5 and 6, I articulated the connection between Indigenous ontology and epistemology, with the onus being on relationships. If this is the foundation for how we come to know, Newhouse’s contention is valid, as the academy becomes an extension of these realities as we continually form relationships with those that surround us. The context evidently becomes more foreign but nonetheless it is an extension. Furthermore, the Elders at VIU confirmed that it is possible to share Indigenous knowledge within the academy and they model a generosity in doing so. The Elders also determine the boundary as to what is open for distribution. In a recent discussion with Elder Gary Manson we discussed the complexities related to Indigenization and what was appropriate for sharing and exploration to which he expressed, “my question is what
are you going to do with it?” (Personal communication, January 2016). Gary’s question is an ethical one, inferring to the moral obligation of the academy to be transparent and responsible with the information that is being shared.

To that end, I wrap up this part of my journey where I started, with my Grandfather who was the main inspiration for this study. He has been with me throughout this research process. His contribution made evident through the teachings and oral history that he passed on and was restated by many of the Gitxsan Chiefs interviewed in this study. His words, “to be good, is to do good” have guided me through this inquiry and will continue to act as my moral compass. But through this investigation, I have gained a deeper understanding of the meaning inherent in his words, I see my role and responsibility going forward as an Indigenous person to ensure a principled approach is consistently taken. To live a life seeking goodness within myself and in my relationships with all things.
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