

**GWA'SALA-'NAKWAXDA'XW NATIONS COMMUNITY ORGANIZING:
STORIES AND LESSONS LEARNED
(REPORT ON A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS)**

by

JOHANNA INGRID MAZUR

B.F.A. (Visual Arts), Simon Fraser University, 1997

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MASTER OF ARTS (PLANNING)

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THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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We accept this project as conforming
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Abstract

The collaborative community-based research project presented in this report emerged out of a research partnership initiated by the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations on the north end of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, with the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. This report discusses the community engagement process and research principles of this project, through my experience and worldview, with additional reflections shared by some of the co-researchers and participants through follow-up interviews.

The project was about honouring, recording and learning from the ways the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations are supporting each other and building community for their children and future generations. I collaborated with members of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, to create a booklet of stories about grassroots community organizing and collaborative planning, entitled *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Community Organizing: Stories and Lessons Learned*, designed as an appendix to the *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Comprehensive Community Plan*. As co-researchers, we hosted a series of focus groups for community members to share their experiences, values, inspirations and reflections connected to the planning, organizing, performing and volunteering they do for their community. The booklet of stories is a compilation of what people shared at the focus groups and photos we gathered to highlight people's words. The stories are included in this report with permission from the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations.

As a white Settler researcher collaborating with an Indigenous community, given the context of colonization, I believe I have a responsibility to develop practices with community members that address power inequalities, and prioritize Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of knowing, for the possibility of research to be relevant and beneficial to the community. Our research principles and practices were:

- Community ownership of the research
- Relationship building
- Knowledge sharing and capacity building
- Process-Based: Flexibility in the project process and outcomes
- Community participation in all aspects of the research
- Collaboration and collaborative decision-making
- Prioritizing Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of knowing
- Building on the strengths and resources of the community

The Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations wanted our research partnership to create opportunities for community members to develop job skills and build capacity through projects with university researchers. Employing a collaborative approach for this project meant that community members were co-researchers, participating in research ethics development,

research design, participant outreach, focus group development, facilitation, analysis, and writing. Building respectful relationships was at the foundation of our research approach, which resulted in increased trust and participation. Community members shared community norms, values and protocol that continued to support me in my roles as project facilitator and research team supervisor. Our mutual giving and receiving opened up spaces for capacity building, knowledge sharing and community building.

Preface

Our collaborative project developed out of an ongoing research partnership between the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations and the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. My contributions towards this project and the submission of this report partially fulfill the requirements of a Master of Arts in Planning.

We produced a booklet of stories about community organizing and planning in the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations¹ reserve, Tsulquate, as an appendix to the *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Comprehensive Community Plan (GNCCP)*. The *GNCCP* is a living document representing the values, dreams and development goals of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, developed collectively by community members and Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP) staff over three years, beginning in 2008.

Several community members collaborated on this research project, from conception to completion. Jessie Hemphill, GNCCP Coordinator, supervised the partnership development and provided support during the community engagement process for this project. Jessie and I collaborated on the development of the research focus, broad research questions, guiding principles and research ethics. Once we developed preliminary ideas for the research project, the CCP Advisory Committee (made up of community members) provided input and approval on the research focus. I worked collaboratively on a research team with four community members, Christy George, Cathy Swain, Natasha Walkus and Donna Williams. They were hired as Research Assistants (RAs) for the *GNCCP* and were co-researchers for this project. I coordinated the project and supervised the research team. The RAs and I are listed as the creators of the booklet. The RAs contributed to the various aspects of the research, including participant outreach, focus group development and facilitation, transcription, data analysis, writing, and participant feedback and participant approval processes. The community member participants contributed to the stories by sharing their experiences, ideas, visions and motivations at our focus groups. They also had an opportunity to give feedback on the draft story they contributed to and approve the final version. They are acknowledged for their words directly in each story and named below in this preface. The photographs in the booklet are included with permission from the photographers, Cathy Swain and Jessie Hemphill, and from the people represented in the photos. Once the stories were completed and compiled into a booklet, the CCP Coordinator organized a meeting with the CCP Advisory Committee for its review. Community members held a vote to approve the publication of the stories booklet in this report.

Appendix 1 of this report is the booklet of stories we produced for the *GNCCP*, entitled *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Community Organizing: Stories and Lessons Learned*.

¹ 'Nations' is intentionally plural and meant to honour the history of the community as two separate Nations.

The following people deserve special recognition for their contributions to the stories:

In addition to contributing to the supervision of the research partnership and the overall development of the research project, Jessie Hemphill worked on the first draft of the “Family Activities” story and “Candlelight Services” story. She also provided some of her photographs and did the graphic design for the entire booklet.

Thirty-four community members were project participants. They contributed to the content of the stories booklet through focus groups and follow-up meetings:

Irene Sheard (deceased), Mary Johnson and Willie Walkus contributed their experiences and ideas to the *Elders' Words of Wisdom* section of the story booklet.

Sandra Charlie, Eddie Charlie, Joanna Jack, Maggie Jack, Ravena Coon and Willie Walkus contributed their experiences and ideas to the *Christmas Dinner* story.

Jack Walkus, Sue Walkus, Natasha Walkus, Colleen Walkus, Louie Walkus and Jackson Walkus contributed their experiences and ideas to the *Family Activities: Easter Egg Hunts, Halloween Fireworks and Sports Tournaments* story.

Annie “Bunny” Jackson, Alvin Walkus Jr., Andrew “Malong” Dawson, Buddy Walkus, Ernie Scow, Doris Anderson, Lucy Scow, Maggie Fox, Vanessa Walkus, Walter Brown and Wilfred Williams contributed their experiences and ideas to the *Tla tla tlo nam Singers* story.

Annie “Bunny” Jackson, Eva Walkus, Irene Sheard (deceased), John King Sr., Cathy King, Mac Stewart, Maggie Fox, Paula Walkus and Richard George contributed their experiences and ideas to the *Candlelight Services* story.

Jessie Hemphill, Irene Sheard (deceased), John King Sr., Bob Swain and Cathy Swain contributed their experiences and ideas to the *Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw CCP* story.

The CCP Advisory Committee contributed their knowledge to the *Other Community Activities* section.

Dr. Leonora Angeles, my faculty advisor at the School of Community and Regional Planning, is the Principal Investigator of the research project. Jessie Hemphill, of the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nations, is the second reader for this project report.

The University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) in Vancouver conducted an ethical review of the research procedures and provided a Certificate of Approval – Minimal Risk. The UBC BREB number is H09-02947.

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List of Abbreviations

AANDC	Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
ABCD	Asset-Based Community Development
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
BCR	Band Council Resolution
BREB	Behavioural Research Ethics Board
CBR	Community-based Research
CBPR	Community-based Participatory Research
CCP	Comprehensive Community Plan
CHR	Community Health Representative
DIA	Department of Indian Affairs
DVD	Video Disc or Digital Versatile Disc
FNIF	First Nations Infrastructure Fund
G-N	Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations
GNCCP	Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Comprehensive Community Plan
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
PAR	Participatory Action Research
RA	Research Assistant
RAs	Research Assistants
SCARP	School of Community and Regional Planning
UBC	University of British Columbia

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Acknowledgements

I sincerely thank the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations for welcoming me into your community and providing me with a learning experience of a lifetime. Jessie, you were instrumental in making this experience possible. I am inspired by your kind spirit, openness, generosity and hard work. It is not easy to begin working in a community and cultural context that is not my own, and you were there for me, creating a home away from home. I have heard you speak fondly of the strength and integrity of your grandmother and I see you carry these qualities forward in your community. Cathy, Christie, Donna and Natasha, your dedication to your families and community is heartwarming, and your willingness to share your knowledge really made it possible for me to work in the capacity as a co-researcher and supervisor. I truly enjoyed our time working together, from our laughing outbursts and sharing of tears, to our hard work and meaningful accomplishments. Colleen and Bob, thank you for sharing your home and personal stories. You both kept me grounded and helped me to slow down and enjoy the nuances and curiosities of life in the midst of a whirlwind of activity. There are so many kind community members that participated in this project. You have all touched my heart, each in your own way. With some of you, I had the fortune of connecting on a deeper level, and some of you, I regret that I only had the chance to meet you briefly during our focus groups. Thank you for sharing your personal stories and putting your trust in the process. I believe your love for your elders, your children and the rest of your community shines through your words that you have shared in the stories and the work that you do for your community.

I sincerely thank my family, friends and teachers for their undying support in what was a long haul to get this project done. I either lived with you, was supported financially by you, spent days in coffee shops and libraries with you, laughed and cried with you, spent hours on the phone with you, or travelled to Port Hardy and back with you. I love you all for everything you have done to encourage me and support me. A special thank you to Nora Angeles for your support as my advisor and friend.

On a personal note, I could never have foreseen that the time and money invested in my academic education would become more of a spiritual journey, given what I have learned about myself through intercultural relationships. My curiosity about my place in this world is expanding. What I am most grateful for is the trust I have developed in my heart.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to the *Late* Irene Sheard, an elder of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. Irene tirelessly served her community and greatly contributed to this project. She opened her heart and shared her love of for her elders, children, community and culture.

I am grateful to have worked with you and learned from your example.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Project

From 2008 to 2010, the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations developed their Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP), with funding received from Indian & Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)², First Nations Infrastructure Fund (FNIF)³. A broad cross-section of the community was engaged in a collaborative planning process to create the *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Comprehensive Community Plan (GNCCP)*⁴; a document that expresses community values, visions and goals, and outlines plans in the areas of culture, economic development, education, governance, health, infrastructure, lands and resources, and social issues. Jessie Hemphill, the CCP Coordinator, facilitated a two-year community engagement process for the *GNCCP* with her community, and compiled all of the community input into a draft/living document. Extensive community participation and collaborative decision-making was encouraged by Jessie and welcomed by participating community members.⁵ Community members initially involved in the planning process formed the CCP Advisory Committee as the collaborative decision-making body. The committee was always open to anyone in the community to participate. Jessie facilitated CCP Advisory Committee meetings, special topic planning meetings, community events, family meetings and questionnaires, to provide creative, diverse and accessible options for community members of all ages to contribute their ideas. In addition, she used various means to communicate with the community about the *GNCCP*, such as newsletters, presentations, suggestion boxes, posters, Facebook and Twitter.

In February of 2009, a partnership was initiated by the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, under Jessie Hemphill's lead, with the School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The community was looking for students and faculty interested in working collaboratively with community members on community-based research (CBR) or special projects connected to the *GNCCP*. To initiate the partnership, Jessie emailed an open invitation letter to SCARP. Her letter caught my attention because of her expression of passion and care for her community. She shared her personal history, a brief history of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, the current situation of her community, and possible topics for CBR projects with her community. She insisted that any guest researcher needed to do research *with* her community not *for* her community.

² INAC is now referred to as AANDC, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

³ (Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, 2011, GNCCP 2007-Ongoing webpage)

⁴ The *GNCCP* is available on the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations website:

<http://www.gwanak.info/for-members/projects/comprehensive-community-planning-2007-ongoing>

⁵ A diverse representation of the community contributed to the *GNCCP*. Adults and elders participated in the CCP Advisory Committee meetings and CCP special topic planning meetings. For the CCP community events and small family meetings, elders, parents, adults, children and youth participated. There were community members that regularly participated in the meetings and other who came periodically. Some community members only participated in the bigger CCP community events. Not all community members contributed to the *GNCCP* and some community members don't support the CCP.

The invitation to develop a research partnership with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations community came at a fruitful time. The community planning process provided a rich environment for SCARP faculty and students to learn about Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw values and priorities, with opportunities for us to build relationships and work with engaged community members. Jessie's kindness, openness and enthusiasm for us to get involved with the *GNCCP*, greatly contributed to the successful development of our partnership.

At the time of Jessie's invitation, I was looking for opportunities to collaborate with an organization or community group on a CBR project, for my master professional project. I had not specifically looked into working with an Indigenous community, but I was drawn to Jessie's invitation because of her priority for community empowerment through participatory approaches to planning. As a white Settler researcher considering research with an Indigenous community, I believe it is imperative to work within a research context where the Indigenous community impacted by the research can determine the research principles and focus, as well as participate in all aspects of the research, and maintain ownership of the research outcomes. Through participatory research approaches, there are opportunities for the power inequalities resulting from the colonial policies and abusive research practices to be addressed.

My first trip to the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw reserve, Tsulquate, was in April 2009, with Leonora Angeles, a SCARP professor, and Manjit (Jeet) Chand, a SCARP student. Jessie invited us to a CCP Advisory Committee meeting to introduce ourselves to community members and discuss our potential research partnership. This meeting gave us an opportunity to start building relationships with community members and for community members to shape the research partnership. They told us how they envisioned having guest researchers working with the community, and outlined principles of engagement and outcomes they welcomed. They especially wanted community members to benefit directly from research projects by developing job skills. They also hoped the presence of university students would encourage young people to seek education and training opportunities.

Jessie followed up with community members at a subsequent CCP Advisory Committee meeting, with a discussion and an anonymous survey, to ensure there was a broad base of support for the collaborative research partnership. The CCP Advisory Committee and the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations Band Council approved the research partnership on the basis that our research engagement would enhance the work of community members for the *GNCCP* and would not exploit or have a negative impact on the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations.

I decided to collaborate on a research project with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations for several reasons. First, the guiding principles set out by the community are harmonious with the principles I believe are important to employ when attempting to create more just societies, such as working collaboratively with the community and creating opportunities for community members to develop skills. Second, because Jessie and the CCP Advisory

Committee were committed to using participatory community engagement for the development of the *GNCCP*. Third, there were opportunities for intercultural knowledge sharing, which is of great interest to me. Finally, we had a common approach to community development that builds on the strengths and assets of the community and honours local ways of being.

Before beginning the project, I spent several months getting to know the community and building relationships, to understand how to work respectfully and effectively. I wanted to learn about their visions and goals for their community, and how they create positive change, acknowledging there is a diversity of perspectives and approaches in the community. I attended community events, volunteered with Jessie and community members as they worked on the *GNCCP*, and explored ideas for a collaborative project. I listened to elders and other community members speak about how they wanted to create opportunities for their children and grandchildren; to be happy, to feel loved, to practice their culture, to develop job skills, to pursue education, and to spend time in their homelands. I heard many stories about what community members were doing to build community and support one another. Community members often expressed how they wanted to create more opportunities for people to come together as a community, support one another and build positive relationships. By the end of this initial period, I had developed a basic sense of the range of community values, visions, history, cultural norms, and accepted approaches and communication for group work. It was through my time living in the community, getting to know families and spending time developing strong relationships, that helped to further develop intercultural sharing and my understanding of local ways of being.

From August 2009 to April 2010, I lived in Port Hardy and Tsulquate for a total of sixteen weeks to complete this project, returning to Vancouver regularly for school and personal commitments. Jessie and I worked together to design a feasible research project for the *GNCCP*. After exploring a couple options, we came up with the final project idea over a conversation about what research could potentially support the implementation of community-led projects outlined in the *GNCCP*. Jessie explained to me that projects are likely to succeed when community members are invested in the planning and implementation; especially when they initiate the project, develop community support, and encourage others to get involved. We also wanted to celebrate previously successful planning efforts in the community, in the hopes of developing greater understanding, and support for, the CCP process and implementation.

While developing this research project, we discussed the following questions:

- What are the existing activities, projects and programs that benefit the community?
- How do community members get inspired to initiate and organize activities that benefit the community as a whole?
- What supports do community members need to begin projects and sustain them?

- What methods do community organizers employ to get others involved with community planning, projects or activities?

To explore this inquiry, we thought it would be useful to create a community resource featuring success stories illustrating how and why Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community members are contributing to positive change in the community. We discussed many examples of community members dedicating their personal time to organizing programs, activities and events to strengthen the community. We considered how this resource could record and honour people's efforts, and possibly inspire others to get involved in community organizing and mobilize financial support for community-driven activities.

In October 2009, four community members were hired as Research Assistants (RAs) when funding became available for special research projects for the *GNCCP*.⁶ One of their responsibilities was to work collaboratively with me, as co-researchers, on this project. Before beginning the research, we presented the project idea to the CCP Advisory Committee, to see if community members supported the project focus and to get their input. Community members responded well to the research focus and shared their ideas as to which activities and community members could be considered for the booklet of stories.

My role as project coordinator was to facilitate the research process and supervise the research team. I facilitated working sessions for the RAs to collaborate on all stages of the research and make key decisions for the project. Jessie provided ongoing guidance on community protocol and norms, supported the RAs in my absence, and facilitated all meetings with the CCP Advisory Committee to provide input and approval of the research. To create this booklet of stories (attached here as Appendix 1), we hosted a series of focus groups with community organizers and volunteers to share their experiences about their community work. By April 2010, we completed the booklet for the *GNCCP*, featuring five stories and lessons learned about community-led development.

In September 2010, Jessie organized a CCP Advisory Committee meeting to determine if community members wanted the booklet of stories to be published in this report and on the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations website. The community members present at the meeting held a vote and approved the booklet for publishing. See Appendix 1 for the booklet of stories, entitled *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Community Organizing: Stories and Lessons Learned*.

At the time of completing the booklet, we did not have the resources to do a project evaluation for all Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community members participating in this project to provide feedback on our research process. A collaborative project evaluation could have created a space for us to come together to voice our experiences and perspectives of the research process, develop a shared understanding of lessons learned, define benefits resulting

⁶ The funding that became available was INAC funding for special research projects related to the *GNCCP*.

from the project, and come up with ways to improve future collaborations. A questionnaire could have given an opportunity for community members to evaluate the partnership and project anonymously.

Fortunately, in June 2011, we were able to return to the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community to conduct interviews with ten participating community members, because of the efforts and financial support of two UBC professors, Penny Gurstein (SCARP Director) and Margot Young (Faculty of Law). They decided to arrange these interviews to include this project as a case study in their research about university-community partnerships in community-based research. I was able to go with them to support their work, along with Aftab Erfan, a doctoral planning student doing an action research project with the community at the time. In addition to questions about our partnership, Penny and Margot added questions to their interview schedule, so that I could include community perspectives about our research project in this report (See *Section 5*). For this opportunity and support, I am grateful. This overlapping of efforts is a great example of a flexible approach that works so well in community-based research. As well, by combining our interviews, we were able to be respectful of community members time and provided an opportunity for participants to remain anonymous, other than Jessie, given her unique position.

Writing this project report has brought me to a deeper understanding of what it means to participate in Indigenous research, as a non-Indigenous, white Settler researcher. I have realized that I am only beginning to uncover what I have learned from our intercultural experience and to develop a language or voice to describe our research practices. After completing our project, I have been reading Indigenous scholars' writing about their work towards developing an Indigenous research paradigm. I have found that these writings address many of the issues I am struggling to describe. Yet, these approaches and principles are difficult to fully comprehend without thorough practice, because they are created with a different worldview other than my own. I have also read other theory that has been created outside of an Indigenous paradigm, which I have encountered on a regular basis in my studies and community work, but it falls short of embodying the language to describe our experience. Our collaboration integrated Indigenous ways of knowing and Western ways of knowing. Throughout the project, we had conversations about research objectives, principles and methods, and reflected on our research practices. I feel comfortable with the process and outcome of our project, as we received a lot of positive community feedback on the research practices and the stories booklet.

My challenge in writing this report has been to figure out how to write about our project when, as co-researchers, we did not determine a theoretical framework for our work. Throughout our collaborative research process, we took a flexible approach, allowing the project to unfold organically based on the needs and ideas of the RAs, participants, and the community at large. We shared an understanding that this approach was necessary to keep the community interest at heart. In other words, our research principles developed out of our collaborative process. I am primarily representing our collaborative experience from my own

voice, interpreted through my own biases and lenses. I will represent our experiences, conversations and community feedback in a way that incorporates my own learning and my observations. In *Section 5*, I will summarize Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community member reflections, provided during the interviews Penny and Margot conducted about this research project. My intention is to present this project with honesty, integrity and a profound respect for all of the community members involved.

I believe this report could be valuable to researchers, consultants, and agencies working with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, as well as Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations community members working in planning and/or managerial positions. It may be a useful reference to other planners, consultants, researchers and communities working collaboratively in planning, community-led development projects, and community-based research, in so far as it is not used as a model for collaborative work, as each community context is unique.

I am thankful that Jessie Hemphill is the second reader for this project, given her collaboration on this project, and her leadership within our partnership. In regards to our partnership to date, four UBC students and four faculty members have been engaged in research, workshops and/or training with the community through this partnership. Our project outlined here is the first collaborative project completed through this partnership.

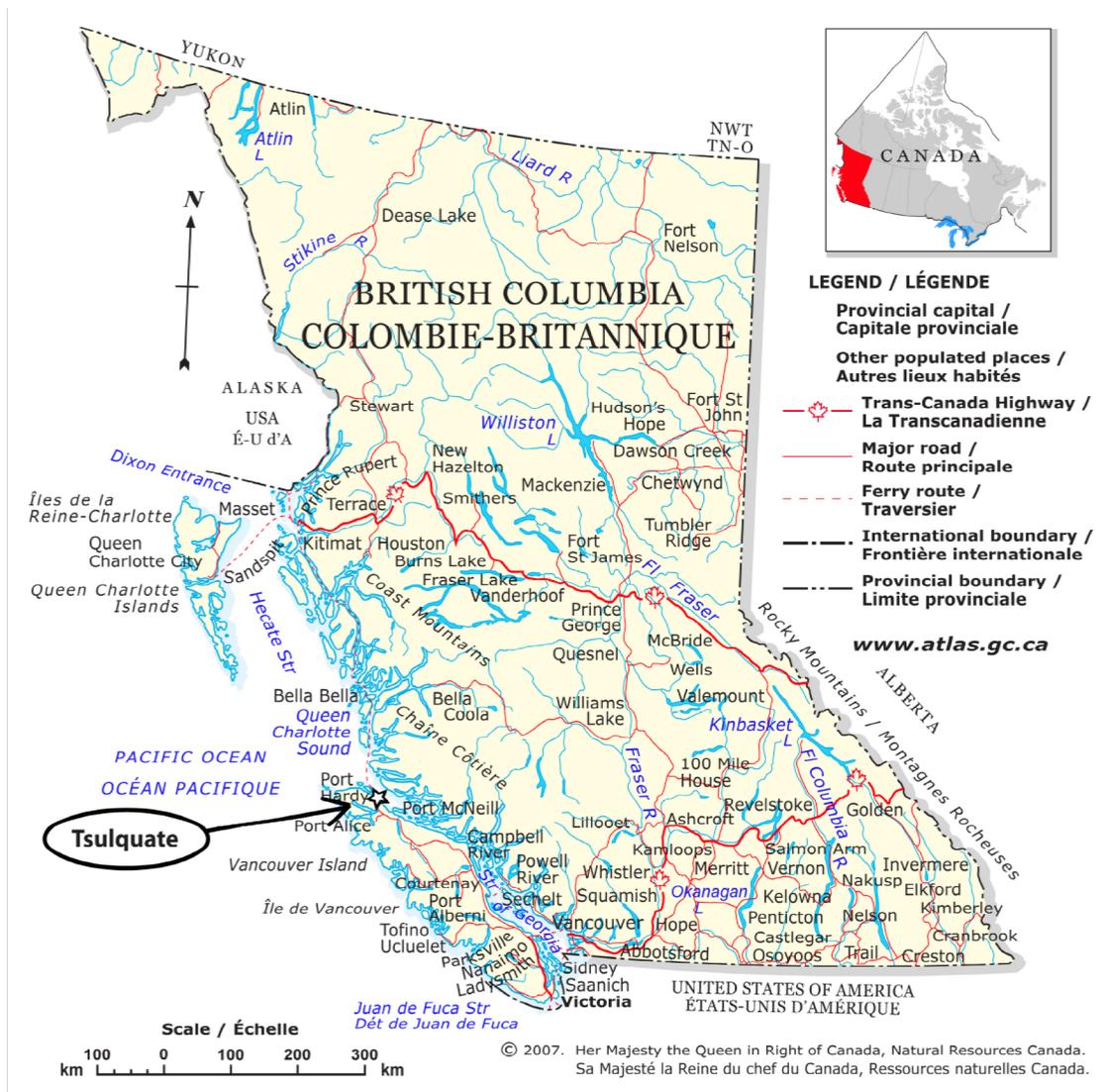
1.2 Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations

The Gwa'sala and 'Nakwaxda'xw peoples are two Nations now living together as the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. Their combined territories are on the south coast of British Columbia, extending “from the areas south of Blunden Harbour, north to Seymour Inlet to Smith Inlet, including the outlying islands, inland rivers, inlets, bays, watersheds and mountains”.⁷ The Gwa'sala people are from Smith Inlet and the surrounding islands, and the 'Nakwaxda'xw people lived in the areas of Seymour Inlet, the Deserter's Group, Blunden Harbour, and surrounding islands.⁸

⁷ (Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, 2011, *Natural Resources Department* webpage)

⁸ (Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, 2011, *About Us* webpage)

Figure 2. British Columbia Map¹⁰



Since 1964, the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations peoples have been living in Tsulquate, a reserve located immediately adjacent to the town of Port Hardy, within the boundaries of the Regional District of Mount Waddington¹¹, on the north end of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. Tsulquate is now home to approximately 501 Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community members, living in approximately 104 homes, mainly in single family homes, and

¹⁰ (Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, Natural Resources Canada, 2007). The map is adapted by myself, with the additions of the Tsulquate oval, the arrow and the star.

¹¹ (Regional District of Mount Waddington, 2011) The Regional District of Mount Waddington is the northern third of Vancouver Island and an adjacent area on the mainland.

in some duplexes, on a land area of 0.60 square kilometers.¹² Close to 350 additional band members live off-reserve, many in Port Hardy, and some elsewhere. The current population of Port Hardy is estimated at 4,500¹³ an increase from 3,822 reported from the 2006 census.¹⁴

In the early 1960s, the Gwa'sala and 'Nakwaxda'xw Nations were forcibly relocated and amalgamated by the Canadian Government, from their traditional villages in their homelands to Tsulquate, a new reserve on the traditional territory of the Kwakiutl people of Fort Rupert. For years prior to the relocation, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) was pushing the bands to live closer to 'civilization' with the intention of assimilating them into 'white society' [sic], and saving money in service provision.¹⁵ The Gwa'sala and 'Nakwaxda'xw peoples strongly rejected this idea.¹⁶ The Gwa'sala people wanted to continue living in their territory and maintain their village of Takush in Smith Inlet. The 'Nakwaxda'xw people were considering a move to a new location down inlet at Ethel Cove, closer to jobs and services, but not a move away from their homelands.¹⁷ Despite the desires of the two bands, the DIA coerced them into moving to Tsulquate, by threatening them to either accept the plan, or face the discontinuation of all monies and services to their communities.¹⁸ The Gwa'sala and 'Nakwaxda'xw peoples were told that the new village at Tsulquate would have roads, water, electricity, a sewer system, sufficient housing for everyone, a community hall, and job opportunities.¹⁹ In 1964, the two bands finally succumbed to the move, based on the DIA promises.²⁰ Shamefully, the government did not uphold their promises, and the new location was unfit for living, with only three small unfinished houses, no running water, no electricity, no sewers, and no proper roads. Given the horrible conditions, they considered returning to live in their traditional villages, but in an attempt to stop the Gwa'sala and 'Nakwaxda'xw peoples from returning, the government burnt down their homes.²¹

In the *GNCCP*, the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw people refer to the impacts of colonization and government abuse on their people, and ideas for healing their community:

“Our community has lived through many terrible things: disease epidemics that wiped out most of our people; the loss of our land, human rights and culture due to the Indian Act and other actions of the Canadian and provincial governments; the relocation of our people and destruction of our homes; the abuse and loneliness of residential schools; and the destruction of families because of unnecessary child apprehensions. These horrible events have caused sadness in our people that has lasted for generations. [...]

¹² (Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, 2011, *About Us* webpage, referenced Statistics Canada 2006 Community Profiles)

¹³ (Town of Port Hardy, 2011)

¹⁴ (Statistics Canada, 2006)

¹⁵ (Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, 2010, *GNCCP Community History* Section, p. 7)

¹⁶ (Emery & Grainger, 1994, p. 12)

¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 11-13

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 14

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 13

²⁰ (G-N Nations, 2011, *GNCCP Community History* Section, p. 7; Emery & Grainger, 1994, p. 14)

²¹ (Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, 2011, *History-vision* webpage)

Reconnecting with our past in positive ways might be a good way to bring back happiness. Camping trips to our home lands, spending fun quality time with elders, learning our songs and dances, and other activities like that will bring us pride and happiness.”(G-N Nations, *GNCCP Main Issues* section, 2010, pp. 3-4)

Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Nations people are very dedicated to maintaining connections to their homelands and to each other, and providing opportunities for their children, grandchildren and future generations to thrive. Spending time in their traditional territories is out of reach for many Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Nations members, due to the expense of travel and access restricted by the government. There are a few activities that provide limited access for some to visit and interact with their homelands, such as boat trips for elders, gathering of traditional foods and medicines, a land and wildlife stewardship program, government fisheries jobs, and trips related to the treaty negotiations. Since 1994, the Band has been negotiating “a Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Treaty²² to regain control of lands, resources, and laws that will reflect distinct needs for the community and [their] our ties to the homelands.” (Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Nations, 2011, *Treaty* webpage)

Community members have a diversity of livelihoods, and do a variety of cultural activities to support their families and community; outlined on the Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw website:

...we build our own houses, run our school, medical clinic... and invest in fishing and forestry. Band members study at colleges and universities to become teachers, lawyers, policemen, accountants, managers. Others operate seiners and gillnetters, or are loggers. Some are painters and carvers. Some are learning how to look after the forest and the rivers so that there will always be trees and fish. Families hold potlatches and young people are learning to dance and sing, learning their names, so that they can potlatch when their time comes. (Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Nations, 2011, *History-vision* webpage)

Many community members have a keen interest in teaching and learning their language at home and at the Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw School, and through adult language programs and cultural activities. The language of the Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Nations is Kwak’wala²³ (alternatively called Bakwam’kala), which belongs to the Wakashan or Southern Kwakiutl language group,²⁴ spoken by eighteen bands of the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation, whose combined territories include northeastern Vancouver Island, the mainland directly to the east, from Douglas Channel to Bute Inlet, and the smaller islands in between.²⁵ Based on a language

²² “Today, [the G-N Nations are] near completion of stage four of the six stage BC Treaty Process, the Chief Negotiator, the Negotiation Team and staff of the Treaty Office work to prepare negotiation positions, information packages for community meetings and seek necessary training to build capacity for employment requirements of negotiations. After stage four, the community will be asked to vote to continue to pursue a Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Treaty. After completion of stage five, which is the finalization of the entire agreement, the community will again be asked to vote on a final Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Treaty Agreement.” (Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Nations, 2011, *Treaty* webpage.)

²³ (First Peoples’ Heritage, Language & Culture Council, 2011)

²⁴ (Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Nations, 2011, *About Us* webpage)

²⁵ (First Peoples’ Heritage, Language & Culture Council, 2011; Emery & Grainger, 1994, p. viii)

needs assessment conducted in 2010, of the 851 Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations band members²⁶, 21 are fluent speakers, 210 understand or speak somewhat, and 120 are learning speakers.²⁷

The Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations have both elected and traditional leadership, an elected Chief and Council through the federal government system governed by the Indian Act²⁸, and hereditary chiefs from the Gwa'sala and 'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. The Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations Band Office is the administrative hub of the community, with the offices of the Band Manager, Executive Assistant, Band Council, and Band staff working in economic development, education, finance, housing, fisheries, forestry, GIS mapping, treaty, stewardship, public works, social development and communications. The Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Health & Family Services is a community-run health centre that delivers community health programs and services, such as counseling, education, immunizations, clinics and referrals for community members to health providers elsewhere.²⁹ The heart of the community is the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw School, an independent school with classes from Nursery to Grade 7, following the British Columbia curriculum requirements with an emphasis on special Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw cultural programs. The teachers and students host regular events that welcome the entire community, including cultural performances, holiday concerts, conferences, workshops, and special community lunches and events. Students continue on to the Port Hardy Secondary School, the only secondary school in the area. Students who need a flexible learning environment attend the alternative Eke Me-Xi program in the community, a young adult secondary program that houses Grades 8 to 12. For adult learners, there are training programs and the Adult Learning Centre in the community. The Wak'as Hall is a large gathering space with a stage, bleachers and kitchen. It is used for sports, bingo, community events, community meetings, conferences, and comfort services for loved ones who have passed on. The Elders' Centre houses staff, the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Trust office, and hosts gatherings, meetings and workshops in the main room. It also provides a kitchen space for elders' catering enterprises. As for outdoor recreation spaces on the reserve, there is a small playground and park next to the river, and the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw School has a playground and a field. There are several churches of various denominations on and off the reserve where some community members congregate. There are more community events and activities being organized by the community than there are spaces to accommodate them, which is why the weekly Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Culture

²⁶ (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Society, 2011, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw First Nation webpage)

²⁷ (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Society, 2011, Kwakwaka'wakw webpage)

²⁸ "The Indian Act is a Canadian federal law that governs in matters pertaining to Indian status, bands, and Indian reserves. Throughout history it has been highly invasive and paternalistic, as it authorizes the Canadian federal government to regulate and administer in the affairs and day-to-day lives of registered Indians and reserve communities. This authority has ranged from overarching political control, such as imposing governing structures on Aboriginal communities in the form of band councils, to control over the rights of Indians to practice their culture and traditions. The Indian Act has also enabled the government to determine the land base of these groups in the form of reserves, and even to define who qualifies as Indian in the form of Indian status." (UBC First Nations Studies Program, 2012, *Indigenous Foundations* webpage on the *Indian Act*)

²⁹ (Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, 2011, *Health and Family Services* webpage)

Nights are hosted at the Sacred Heart Friendship Centre in Port Hardy, and the recreation programs access facilities, such as the pool and gym, in Port Hardy.

1.3 Locating Myself in the Research

Before I discuss my intentions and responsibilities I carried during this project, I would like to introduce myself, share my reflections about the work I do, and provide a picture of how I approach my relationships with others and the Earth. I am a white woman Settler, of Icelandic, Welsh and Ukrainian descent. I grew up in a middle class family in the prairie city of Winnipeg, Canada. As an adult, I decided to relocate to Vancouver, Coast Salish Territories. For many years, I worked in the film industry before dedicating my time to community building. With this change, I seek opportunities to collaborate with people who are working with the principles of inclusion, equity, justice, self-determination of indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities, collaborative decision-making, knowledge sharing, relationship building, and ecological sustainability. When working in community development, and in other capacities, I believe I have a responsibility to maintain awareness of my power and privilege in relationship to others, address systems of oppression that impact the communities I am working with, and support empowerment approaches as defined by marginalized communities. As a community-based researcher, I want to work in contexts where there are opportunities to use research practices that can challenge power inequities, encourage respectful relationships, and empower marginalized communities. I appreciate that we each bring to collaborative work our own identity, history, experience, knowledge and values. I connect with people through compassion and treat people as individuals with their own lived experiences. I work from the understanding that our communities are fluid, overlapping, always changing, and made up of a diversity of assets, networks, approaches, and beliefs. I also look to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Maori theorist on the decolonization of Maori peoples in New Zealand, when considering the complexities of 'community' in the context of colonization:

“The idea of community is defined or imagined in multiple ways, as physical, political, social, psychological, historical, linguistic, economic, cultural, and spiritual spaces. For colonized peoples many local communities have been made through deliberate policies aimed at putting people on reserves which are often out of sight, on the margins. Legislation and other coercive state practices have ensured that people stay within their own community boundaries. Communities have also made themselves, however, despite policies aimed at fragmenting family bonds and separating people from their traditional territories. Indigenous communities have made even the most isolated and marginal spaces a home place imbued with spiritual significance and indigenous identity.” (Smith, 1999, pp. 125-126)

I recognize that Canada is founded on the colonization of many Indigenous Nations, with unique cultures and histories. Settlers³⁰ of these territories continue to benefit from the occupation and expropriation of Indigenous lands and systemic racism and violence against Indigenous peoples. As a Settler, who supports the freedom and self-determination struggles of Indigenous Nations, I have a responsibility to educate myself on these issues. Through friends, colleagues, activists, Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, I have learned about the impacts of colonization and neocolonial systems of domination. I have also developed an understanding of various Indigenous approaches to healing, sustainable development, self-determination and decolonization.

I believe that transformation in our society needs to come from the grassroots, from people taking action to change our relationships with each other, and with the Earth. I have a responsibility to take action to help create a society that respects Indigenous self-determination and freedom, and protects the Earth's ecosystems. I stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, as well as migrant, racialized, occupied, poor, LGBTQ, and disabled communities, to challenge imperialism, colonialism, systemic racism, discrimination, domination, and destruction of ecosystems. I am at the beginning of my journey as an ally of Indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities. I recognize that I need to be doing more to challenge the privileges I hold as a white Settler individual, by making better choices. At times, I fall into patterns that support the status quo, instead of spending my time building solidarity alliances. Professionally, I would like to develop long-term alliances with Indigenous communities and Nations. Personally, I am continuing my own process of decolonization,³¹ that includes listening to Indigenous peoples' stories and strategies, reflecting on my privileges and responsibilities, facing fears, engaging in truth telling, letting go of comforts and guilt, and taking action. See *Section 2* for a discussion of the literature of Indigenous-Settler alliances and decolonization strategies.

My main intentions for working on this project were to contribute positively to the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations community by collaborating with community members in a respectful way, and fulfill a requirement of my masters degree to do a professional project. It was also my intention to develop respectful relationships with community members, share knowledge through our cross-cultural collaboration, and support the development of our partnership between the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations and the School of Community and Regional Planning.

While working on this project, I had several roles to consider: guest of the community, university researcher, project facilitator and supervisor of the research team. I believe I had a

³⁰ I am referring to Settler as a non-Indigenous person living on Indigenous territories colonized by a Settler society, such as in Canada, and recognizing the diversity of backgrounds and histories in Settler peoples. I am drawing from Regan (2010) and Barker (2010) in the development of my understanding of the term Settler. For a discussion on the roles of the "decolonizing Settler" and the "colonizing Settler", see Barker (2010).

³¹ I am framing my discussion of Settler decolonization with reference to Barker, A. (2010) & Regan, P (2010).

responsibility to respect the ways of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations in each one of these roles.

I believe I had a responsibility to the best of my ability to:

- Honour the research practices and principles set out by the community;
- Prioritize Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations ways of knowing;
- Follow community norms and protocol;
- Be self-reflective to understand my biases, assumptions and intensions;
- Listen and observe with care to learn how to be respectful in the community;
- Show my respect to community members;
- Use community-based approaches and decision-making processes;
- Work collaboratively on all aspects of the research;
- Follow through with the project until completion;
- Maintain high ethical standards as determined by the community;
- Create a safe space for community members involved in the project; and
- Honour the participants' contributions through validation and approval processes.

After spending a couple of months developing our partnership, and developing relationships with Jessie and other community members, I made the commitment to develop a collaborative research project with the following assumptions:

- Mutual trust could be developed between myself and community members;
- We could establish roles, responsibilities, and principles we were comfortable with;
- I could work collaboratively without overriding Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of knowing in my position as a university researcher;
- I could learn and apply Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw protocol, norms and approaches to community development, with support from community members involved in the project;
- I could uphold the guiding principles defined by the community, with support from community members involved in the project;
- My initial experience with community members would be somewhat representative of future experiences throughout the research engagement;
- We could facilitate the process in a manner that meant participants could have trust in the process or feel comfortable with deciding not to participate; and
- We could complete a research project with limited financial resources.

1.4 Research Questions and Principles

The research questions for this project were developed out of discussions Jessie and I had when collaboratively developing the project focus, and informed by feedback provided by community members at a CCP Advisory Committee meeting. The research questions were initially articulated for the project summary that was submitted with the application to UBC for ethics approval for this project. Once the RAs got involved in the project, the research questions were used as a starting point for carrying out our project.

Main Research Question

- What are the stories and lessons learned from community planning and community organizing of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations?

Sub Research Questions

- What are the lessons learned from the participatory approach used in the development of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Comprehensive Community Plan?
- What are the 'success stories' of activities, events and projects of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations?
- What happened to make these achievements possible?
- What practices do community organizers and planners recommend for future organizing and planning?
- What supports do community members need to get activities, events and projects going and to sustain them?
- What are community members dreaming of for future Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community engagement, community planning and community organizing?
- How do community members get inspired to initiate, organize and volunteer for activities that benefit the community as a whole?

Our research principles were developed organically as we developed our partnership and this research project. Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community members defined some research principles at the outset of our partnership development, while others became clearer in the collaborative process used to design this project. During the research process, we often reflected on our research practices and integrated new understandings into future practices. However, we did not categorize them and list them, as I have below. For the purpose of this report, I am the sole person from a large group of community members participating in this project who is organizing these principles into a list for discussion, from my point of view and through my own biases. The categories used to articulate our practices are drawn from our experiences and from a body of literature on the practice of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR). For a full discussion on our research principles and practices, see *Section 2*.

Our overarching research principles that governed our practices were:

- Community ownership of the research;
- Relationship building;
- Knowledge sharing and capacity building;
- Process-based: Flexibility in the project process and outcomes;
- Community participation in all aspects of the research;

- Collaboration and collaborative decision-making;
- Prioritizing Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of knowing; and
- Building on the strengths and resources of the community.

1.5 Ethical Considerations

This research project was subject to ethical review by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB). The research project was approved by BREB and found to be of minimal risk to Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community member participants. See Appendix 2 for the 'UBC Behavioural Ethics Board Certificate of Approval'.

1.5.1 Development of Ethical Considerations

The research methods detailed for the ethical review were developed in collaboration with Jessie Hemphill, the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Comprehensive Community Planning Coordinator. Jessie provided extensive input and review of the BREB application to ensure that our research practices were ethical as far as the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda Nations are concerned, and community norms and protocol were integrated.

I also referenced the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, specifically Section 6 – Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples, while we were developing our practices for this research project.³² Although our practices were not developed from this Tri-Council Policy Statement, this set of guidelines was useful as a reminder of things to consider:

The Tri-council recommended practices for research involving aboriginal peoples are:

- To respect the culture, traditions and knowledge of the Aboriginal group;
- To conceptualize and conduct research with Aboriginal group as a partnership;
- To consult members of the group who have relevant expertise;
- To involve the group in the design of the project;
- To examine how the research may be shaped to address the needs and concerns of the group;
- To make best efforts to ensure that the emphasis of the research, and the ways chosen to conduct it, respect the many viewpoints of different segments of the group in question;
- To provide the group with information respecting the following:
 - Protection of the Aboriginal groups' cultural estate and other property;
 - The availability of a preliminary report for comment;
 - The potential employment by researchers of members of the community, as appropriate and without prejudice;
 - Researchers' willingness to cooperate with community institutions;

³² Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. (1998, with 2000, 2002, 2005 amendments).

- Researchers' willingness to deposit data, working papers and related materials in an agreed-upon repository.
 - To acknowledge in the publication of the research results the various viewpoints of the community on the topics researched; and
 - To afford the community an opportunity to react and respond to the research findings before the completion of the final report, in the final report or even in all relevant publications.
- (CIHR, NSERC & SSHRC, 1998, with 2000, 2002, 2005 amendments, pp. 6.3-6.4)

The Tri-Council policy statement of 2010, a later version than the one I initially referenced, noted that the recommended practices for ethical conduct in research involving Aboriginal peoples, "is offered in a spirit of respect. It is not intended to override or replace ethical guidance offered by Aboriginal peoples themselves. Its purpose is to ensure, to the extent possible, that research involving Aboriginal peoples is premised on respectful relationships. It also encourages collaboration and engagement between researchers and participants" (CIHR, NSERC & SSHRC, 2010, p. 105).

For further discussion on our research principles and practices, please see *Section 2*.

1.5.2 Participant Consent

We followed the practice of informed written consent with participants. Besides the written informed consent received prior to participating in the research, written permission was acquired for the use of participants' names and/or photos once they had an opportunity to review the final draft story to which they contributed and/or appeared in.

1.5.3 Community Consent

We had a community consent process with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw CCP Advisory Committee. As the CCP Coordinator, Jessie Hemphill facilitated discussions and decision-making processes with the CPP Advisory Committee, to approve the research partnership, scope of the research, and the research output (the booklet of stories). The community discussed the options of approving and publishing the booklet of stories, and held a vote with the people who were present at the meeting. The Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Band Council also approved our research partnership between the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations and researchers of the University of British Columbia, by issuing a Band Council Resolution (BCR). The BCR included overarching parameters for our research engagement.

1.6 Research Limitations

1.6.1 Main Limitations

- Because I was only living part-time in the community for the duration of this project, we had some communication challenges while carrying out the project. While in the

community, I worked full-time, while the RAs worked part-time. At times we held research team meetings and group working sessions, but otherwise the RAs often had different schedules. This meant that I was the communication link within the research team. While I was away, we had communication plans in place, which worked to some extent, but at times there were challenges. When communication was compromised, we experienced an overlap of work, incomplete work, misunderstandings, or conflicts between research team members.

- Because I was only living in the community temporarily, relationship building was limited to a short period of time. Limited trust was developed between myself and community members, and many community members who participated in the project only met me for the first time during our focus groups. As a result, people's comfort with participating may have been compromised.
- Two of the Research Assistants left their positions for other permanent jobs in the community prior to the completion of the project. This was a very positive outcome for the RAs who secured permanent employment, but it decreased the community representation in our research team. Jessie offered to contribute to the writing of the stories, which helped to maintain community participation in the writing process.
- To respect the knowledge and teachings of Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw elders, their participation in this project was a priority. Elders participated in the CCP Advisory Committee meetings to provide feedback and approvals for this project. We invited elders to participate in all of our focus groups, but for two of our focus groups they were not able to make it out. There were limitations to the focus groups where elders were not present, as their knowledge was not integrated into the process or represented in two stories.
- A collaborative evaluation of the research project was not done with community members participating in the research project at the time of completing the booklet of stories, because we did not have the resources or time. Several community members provided informal feedback about the research practices and outcomes during the research process, and ten community members provided feedback in *Section 5*. Because the community did not collaborate on the analysis of our research practice, we have not developed a shared understanding of the lessons learned from our collaboration.

1.6.2 Other Limitations

- It was impossible to represent all the perspectives and experiences of the community in the booklet of stories:
 - First, for the story on the *GNCCP*, the RAs chose not to invite community members who did not support the *GNCCP*, because our intention was to create stories that were focusing on the positive aspects of the community.
 - Second, community members who were invited to participate in the study were also involved in the community activities at each focus group, or directly associated with the activity. Community members not engaged in community

organizing or volunteer work were not invited. As a result, barriers to engagement in community organizing, volunteering and planning may be missing.

- Third, children and youth perspectives were not included in the booklet of stories. For children and youth under the age of 19 to participate, we would have needed to apply for full-board ethics review of the research process, which we did not have time to process.
 - Fourth, not all community members involved in the organizing or volunteering for the activities being featured were available for the focus group, or we missed inviting people who should have been invited. In some instances we were able to follow up with people, but not in all circumstances. Leaving people out of the process may have left gaps in the shared stories and in the ‘Lessons Learned’ that were summarized and included at the end of each story.
 - Finally, we did not represent all of the grassroots community organizing activities in the booklet, given time and capacity constraints. Because of the incomplete representation of the community organizing activities the research team had concerns about community members feeling left out if their experiences or memories of past activities were not incorporated.
- During the focus groups, there were established leaders within the group, as they were the community members who were the main organizers of the activity being discussed. It is possible that some members of the focus group may not have felt comfortable to share their experiences and ideas given the group dynamics or their level of involvement in the activity.

1.7 Organization of this Report

This report is organized as follows: *Section 2* provides a discussion of the research principles and practices based on the collaborative project study. *Section 3* describes the methods used for the community engagement process. *Section 4* presents some of my personal reflections on the principles, practices and methods. *Section 5* provides some of the Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw community member reflections on the research project, i.e. the GNCCP Coordinator, three Research Assistants, and selected project participants. Finally, *Section 6* presents some conclusions and recommendations for other collaborative research projects and partnerships with the Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Nations.

The project output is a booklet of stories for the GNCCP, entitled *Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw Nations Community Organizing: Stories and Lessons Learned*, included as *Appendix 1*.

2 RESEARCH PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

One of the first stories Jessie shared with us, that I often thought about while working with her community, was about a book that a government worker wrote on the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. Alan Fry represented his perspective of Gwa'sala and 'Nakwaxda'xw people during the period following the amalgamation and relocation. He believed they would not survive and called his book *How a People Die*³³. I felt uncomfortable with the sentiment expressed through its title, despite knowing that the book represents some truths about the deplorable conditions the 'Nakwaxda'xw and Gwa'sala people faced. My frustration came from the fact that the community did not choose to be represented in this way. Jessie had also said that if her community were to write a book about their village now, it would be called *How a People Live*³⁴. I still have not read this book, because I was more interested in spending time with community members, to hear the stories they wanted to share. Jessie's account of this book, and the community's desire for being represented otherwise, held lessons about the importance of Indigenous peoples representing themselves. It was also a reminder of how much power lies in the production of knowledge. We needed to find respectful ways to work together, that address the power imbalances resulting from colonization, for the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations to represent themselves through our research.

From my experience working with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community, I heard personal stories of hardship and trauma, and of resilience and hope. Like any community, there are a diversity of opinions and approaches, challenges and divisions, and a wide range of positive contributions that people are making to the community. Elders and other community members spoke highly of the positive contributions that people were making when they created opportunities to bring people together to support one another. The community also welcomed guests who were keen on doing the same. I saw many examples of community members generously supporting each other and dedicating their time to creating positive change for their community and for future generations. Several examples are represented in the booklet of stories, included in this report as *Appendix 1*.

As previously discussed, students and faculty from the School of Community and Regional Planning were invited to do collaborative research by the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. I came to the community without a research agenda. I would learn from the community how we would work together and what research would be relevant. I brought with me my experiences and skills to contribute to a collaborative process, a respect for the wishes of the community, an openness to connect with and learn from community members, and a commitment to use research practices that would prioritize Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of being and knowing.

I began my work with the community by building meaningful connections with people. The connection and relationship that Jessie and I built was key, given that we were collaborating

³³ *How a People Die*, by Alan Fry, is a novel originally published by Doubleday & Company in 1970. Second publishing of this novel is from Harbour Publishing in 1974.

³⁴ An hour-long documentary has since been produced in 2012 about the GN community, titled *How a People Live*.

on the development of project options to present back to the community, and the research ethics application for UBC. I also spent time building relationships with community members involved with the *GNCCP*, staff at the Band Office, and children playing outside in the community. I learned a great deal about the community by carefully listening to the stories people told at community meetings and in conversation; learning the values and goals people shared through these stories. With this approach, I trusted that our collaboration would be fruitful and a project would emerge out of our process of working together and building respectful relationships.

2.1 Important Considerations for Indigenous Research

A broader discussion about Indigenous-Settler relationships is needed here to highlight important considerations for Non-Indigenous researchers engaging in research partnerships and projects with Indigenous peoples, communities and Nations.

Canada is founded on the colonization of hundreds of Indigenous Nations. Under colonization, Indigenous peoples have suffered a systematic attack on their cultural practices, languages, governance structures, traditional knowledge, and tribal and clan connections, through stolen lands, forced relocations, the Indian Act, reservations, residential schools, systemic racism in state institutions, to name a few injustices. As Settlers, we are likely to be aware of the high rates of poverty, incarceration, suicide, and addictions that Indigenous peoples experience, but we are less likely to face our role in perpetuating these realities. We are a colonial society that continues to deny that we maintain systemic racism and colonial practices in our daily lives.³⁵ Settler society benefits from these acts of domination, as Lynne Davis and Heather Yanique Shpuniarsky point out:

“Whether the heirs of early colonization or more recent immigration, Canadians depend upon the lands that the Canadian state has appropriated from Indigenous peoples; Canada’s economy has been built through the cultivation of lands and the extraction of resources from Indigenous territories. Even the most basic survival needs such as access to clean water has rested upon the displacement of Indigenous peoples from their traditional territories.” (Davis & Shpuniarsky, 2010, p.341)

One important consideration for Indigenous research is an analysis of knowledge and power so that research does not become a form of research that supports colonization and imperialism, but rather an avenue for outside researchers to become allies with Indigenous struggles. Addressing these very real privileges and power imbalances is vital to working ethically, honestly, and respectfully. If we want our society to be based on equality, justice and respect, we need to live our relationships differently by developing principles that shape our partnerships based on equality and mutual respect. We need to acknowledge that the Canadian state is not currently based on these principles, and many still chose not to relinquish power over Indigenous Nations. Becoming allies and partners of Indigenous communities mean more than just words. When building partnerships with Indigenous communities, Caitlyn Vernon defines what these new relationships can look like:

³⁵ (Barker, 2010, p.321; Regan, 2010, pp.34-37)

“Being an ally means more than just offering our support to Aboriginal peoples’ struggles – it means making changes in our own lives. Those of us who are settlers to British Columbia have directly or indirectly supported, and have benefited from, racist and genocidal government policies towards First Nations. Developing new relationships with Aboriginal peoples today means knowing the past and bearing witness to the present, apologizing for our shared histories and taking responsibility for our own complicity, offering compensation and working together to build new relations. Building new relationships means addressing the balance of power and challenging the privileges of settler society.” (Vernon, 2010, p.290)

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, an Maori scholar in New Zealand, states that “[r]esearch is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized.” (Smith, 1999, p. 7) Power imbalances can be reinforced or shifted through research. Non-Indigenous researchers have a responsibility to ensure that Indigenous people participating in research have the power to make decisions, create knowledge and to maintain the rights to their traditional knowledge. Smith demonstrates where the power lies in the research process:

“In a cross-cultural context, the questions that need to be asked are ones such as:
Who defined the research problem?
For whom is this study worthy or relevant? Who says so?
What knowledge will the researcher gain from this study?
What are some likely positive outcomes from this study?
What are some possible negative outcomes?
How can negative outcomes be eliminated?
To whom is the researcher accountable?
What processes are in place to support the research, the researched and the researcher?
Moreover, it is important to question the most fundamental belief of all, that individual researchers have an inherent right to knowledge and truth.”
(Smith, 1999, p.173)

Ensuring Indigenous peoples are participating in all aspects of the research ensures that research practices are informed by local Indigenous knowledge. It is important to point out that: “Indigenous knowledge is not a uniform concept. It is as diverse as the cultures of those who hold this way of knowing. It is composed of traditional teachings, empirical observations, and revelations. Indigenous knowledge is personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language.” (Pidgeon & Cox, 2002, p.99, paraphrased Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Brant-Castellano, 2000; and, Smith, 1999). When researchers respect the depth of Indigenous ways of knowing, space is created for local Indigenous practices and values to be incorporated into the research process, and encourages the people being researched to participate as researchers and researched. (Smith, 1999) Although an in depth discussion on the developments of an Indigenous research paradigm is very relevant here, I will not explore this, as it is beyond the scope of this project.³⁶

³⁶ Scholars who come to mind are: Shawn Wilson, with his book *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008), and Margaret Kovach with her book *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* (2009).

Hence, a **second** important consideration for Indigenous research is for research to contribute to ongoing decolonization processes and struggles for self-determination. Indigenous Nations, leaders, activists and scholars continue their struggles of decolonization and self-determination, especially when it comes to challenging colonial power imbalances and asserting a diversity of Indigenous ways of being and knowing, in areas such as, governance, policy, planning, community development, and research. Adam Barker, a Settler scholar focusing on Indigenous-Settler relations, insists that in addition to Indigenous peoples rejecting colonial society through decolonization tactics, Settlers must also go through their own process of decolonization³⁷:

“The Settler who chooses a decolonizing existence must adjust to new and challenging realities. First, and more importantly, there must be an understanding that Settler people, including those who reject colonial society and culture, may continue to benefit from that society and culture on many levels. There must further be an understanding that, in order to restore a measure of balance to inevitable power relationships and imbalances in society, Settler people must be willing to take the power that has been granted to them by virtue of their ‘membership’ in Settler society and put it at the disposal of those whose power has been violently co-opted or stolen.” (Barker, 2010, p.323-324)

For research to contribute to ongoing decolonization processes and struggles for self-determination of Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous researchers must see themselves as allies and contributors to alliance-building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. As Barker argues, such alliances must contribute to decolonization and social change:

“In order to generate long-term alliances, Settler people must work to understand why many attempted solutions to social problems caused by Settler political structures, social norms, and chosen lifestyles continue to fail, replicating hegemonic colonial harm. This approach inevitably points to continued colonial involvement among past and present Settler peoples and societies, and thus to decolonization as a response to colonialism....There is much discussion in the literature about the need for Indigenous peoples to ‘decolonize,’ but there has traditionally been little recognition that Settler people can and perhaps must, decolonize as well. Just as Indigenous peoples must defeat the legacy of prior colonization and the realities of current neocolonialism in order to achieve freedom, Settler people must do the same for themselves.”(Barker, 2010, p.318)

The usefulness of research to colonizers and colonial projects is obvious in that research outputs and researchers themselves can become tools and participants of oppression. Non-Indigenous researchers therefore need to recognize the privileges they possess, made possible through research: “We must be prepared to face the fact that our comfortable lives, our ‘privileges,’ exist because we are useful to imperialism, and that being an ally and confronting

³⁷ (Barker, 2010, p. 318 & pp. 323-324)

imperialism requires us to risk our comforts and to confront the entire system.”(Barker, 2010, p. 321)

Some indigenous scholars argue that the only way to fully address power imbalances in research is to develop an Indigenous Research Paradigm and to create a space for Indigenous realities to be studied through theory created by indigenous peoples themselves, such as Smith (2009) and Wilson (2008). Thus, a **third** important consideration for Indigenous research is the understanding of Indigenous Knowledge and research principles that resonate with Indigenous voices and struggles for respect and self-determination. To transform our society and end the oppression of Indigenous people, Settlers must individually and collectively make commitments to relinquish power and work from new understandings and principles. In Barker’s words, “to understand what needs to be done, decolonizing Settler people must first achieve an understanding of the meaning of respect, both in Western traditions and Indigenous traditions, and then experiment with manifestations of respect in relationships.”(Barker, 2010, p.329)

Outsider-researchers, in particular, need to recognize their unique positionality as potential allies in Indigenous struggles for self-determination, if they are to become effective allies and partners of Indigenous communities. As Davis and Shpuniarsky said:

“Self-determination is a principle that Indigenous peoples insist upon in forming relationships with other parties. This is a value that is actively practised when Indigenous peoples interact with one another; it takes the form of non-interference in the business of other Nations. This principle reflects careful attention to power and control issues. Since Indigenous peoples continually face the imposition of laws, customs, and cultural beliefs by Canadian society, many Indigenous people are highly attuned to social behaviours and ways of speaking that reflect paternalism.”

(Davis & Shpuniarsky, 2010, p.336)

Ally work and partnerships with Indigenous communities must ensure that Indigenous voices truly get heard and not suppressed, diluted or forgotten when non-Indigenous researchers attempt to speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples. As Davis and Shpuniarsky argue:

“The issue of voice is particularly potent in a field of power imbalances. In the wider society, it is quite evident that non-indigenous voices are understood as the voices of authority. Within coalitions, when non-indigenous people assume that they have a right to speak for their Indigenous partners, this actually mirrors the wider society and echoes a historical experience in which Indigenous peoples were prevented from speaking for themselves.”

(Davis & Shpuniarsky, 2010, p.340)

Respecting Indigenous voices entails more detailed considerations when building alliances with Indigenous peoples. Kevin Fitzmaurice outlines some key considerations on building successful alliances between aboriginal peoples and social/enviro justice groups, as defined by Lynne Davis and Heather Shpuniarsky while presenting their research findings in 2005:

- “respectful relationships,

- trust,
- taking time,
- acknowledging anger and the colonial legacy,
- understanding privilege and benefit,
- working through guilt,
- respecting difference,
- collaboration, and
- learning the history of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal (or settler) relationships.”
(Fitzmaurice, 2010, p.351)

In conclusion, Indigenous research practitioners and scholars have developed guiding principles for research with aboriginal communities, to develop a culture of respect for Indigenous ways of knowing in research. For example, Shawn Wilson, an Indigenous (Cree) scholar working in Australia and Canada, shares guiding principles for Indigenous community-based research, in his book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, originally defined in 2001 by Judy Atkinson, an Indigenous scholar in Australia:

- Aboriginal people themselves approve the research and the research methods;
- A knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to the community;
- Ways of relating and acting within community with an understanding of the principles of reciprocity and responsibility;
- Research participants must feel safe and be safe, including respecting issues of confidentiality;
- A non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching;
- A deep listening and hearing with more than the ears;
- A reflective non-judgemental consideration of what is seen and heard;
- Having learnt from the listening a purposeful plan to act with actions informed by learning, wisdom, and acquired knowledge;
- Responsibility to act with fidelity in relationship to what has been heard, observed, and learnt;
- An awareness and connection between logic of mind and the feelings of the heart;
- Listening and observing the self as well as in relationship to others;
- Acknowledgement that the researcher brings to the research his or her subjective self.” (Wilson, 2008, p.59)

The next section explains the research principles and practices employed in the collaborative project case study.

2.2 Research Principles and Practices

Our research principles and practices for this project were developed incrementally and organically. Community members involved in the partnership development defined some

principles at the outset, while others emerged as we worked collaboratively to design and carry out this project.

Before this report was written, our principles and practices were not formally recorded. Throughout the development and realization of the project, we informally evaluated our research practices through dialogue. Our reflection informed our practice. We aimed to uphold community-defined research principles, create capacity-building opportunities for community members, maintain high ethical standards, and create a relevant resource for the community out of the research process.

We primarily used community-based approaches to carry out the project. The participatory approaches that were established for the development of the *GNCCP*, to facilitate the CCP Advisory Committee and CCP meetings, were applied to the community engagement process for this project. Given that I was coordinating and facilitating the project, our practice was also informed by my education and experience in community development planning, community-based research, and participatory research processes.

As previously stated, our overarching research principles/practices were the following:

- Community Ownership of the Research;
- Relationship building;
- Responsibility;
- Process based; Flexibility in the project process and outcomes
- Knowledge sharing and capacity building;
- Community participation in all aspects of the research;
- Collaboration and collaborative decision-making;
- Prioritizing Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of knowing; and
- Building on the strengths and resources of the community.

Here, I will describe what each principle or practice means in the context of this project, and why they are important in the context of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community.

2.2.1 Community Ownership of the Research

I am using the word ownership here to encompass intellectual property rights, and having the authority to define the research partnership, scope, and process.

Although we were working collaboratively, the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations hold the intellectual property rights of the research. The community has the authority to use, alter, and disseminate the research as they wish. Each participant has the right to their own words and images, with opportunities to validate how their words and photographs were represented, and whether to include or retract their contributions.

The community initiated the research partnership for the purpose of having students and faculty from University of British Columbia (UBC) work with community members on research projects for the *Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Comprehensive Community Plan (GNCCP)*. The main principles for the partnership were outlined by the CCP Advisory Committee, and approved by the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Band Council with a Band Council Resolution. Community members collaborated on all aspects of this research project: design, ethics, participant outreach, focus groups, analysis, writing, participant validation process, and dissemination. The output of the research, the booklet of stories for the *GNCCP*, belongs to the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nations. All of the research data and consent forms from the focus groups has remained in the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw community.

This project report is required by university policy to be written by me and published under my name. To include the booklet of stories as an appendix to this report, the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw CCP Advisory Committee discussed the option and voted in favour of giving me permission to publish the booklet in this report. The report is also available on the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw website.

2.2.2 Building Positive Relationships

The importance and impact of building positive relationships for the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nations is voiced in the *GNCCP*:

“During the comprehensive community planning meetings, no matter what the topic of discussion was, we always came back to the issue of community togetherness. Above all other factors, positive connections and relationships between community members are seen as the most important part of a healthy community [...] The stronger your relationships are, the stronger you make our whole community. If we work together and help each other out, we will be able to accomplish great things.”
(Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nations, *GNCCP Main Issues* section, p. 3-4)

Building positive relationships was a foundational practice for this research project. The connections and friendships we made were authentic, coming from a genuine mutual interest in building meaningful relationships. Relationship building was a reciprocal process. I sought out activities to participate in and community members invited me to events. I was made to feel welcome to join any community event and connect over conversation.

I was coming into a small, connected community, knowing very little about the community, and community members knowing very little about me. Jessie and I spoke about the importance of connecting with community members, in a friendly and respectful way, for the community to develop trust in people working in the community. When I had conversations with people, I first listened to what they wanted to share about their community and their experiences; the kind of listening that seeks an understanding of their values, priorities,

history, struggles, passions, family, and their role in the community. I shared my intentions for being a guest in their community, and anything about myself I felt comfortable in doing.

Learning about cultural norms was an important step to building relationships, just as building relationships was an important step to learning local knowledge and appropriate ways of doing things. I learned from Jessie, the RAs and other community members how to be respectful with elders. For example, asking an elder if they would say a prayer before our meal, serving elders their meals first, and listening carefully without interruption to elders' teachings when they spoke. Jessie and the RAs provided me guidance on the appropriate ways of working and communicating with elders, children, and other community members, in various contexts. I also learned respectful ways of being and doing community work through observation, when participating in community activities. I was eager to develop connections with as many community members as possible. I had the opportunity to connect with children, youth, adults and elders in the street, at the band office, through the CCP process, and at community events. I went to CCP Advisory Committee meetings, CCP Community Visioning events, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw School performances, CCP holiday events, CCP family meetings, Culture Nights, the Christmas Dinner event, the Candlelight Services event, social events with band staff, sports tournament, and a family comfort service. I volunteered at the Candlelight Services, CCP Community Visioning, and several CCP meetings and events, with food preparation and other needed tasks.

Jessie and I communicated openly and were committed to developing a close relationship. Given that Jessie is the community liaison for our partnership and supervised the development of the community engagement strategy for this project, it was important for us to develop mutual trust and a shared understanding about our values, intentions, expectations, roles and approaches. Developing close relationships with the RAs was equally as important, as we were working as co-researchers on the research team. I spent a considerable amount of time building positive relationships with the RAs, by taking time to socialize at work and outside of work. For the RAs birthdays that came up while we were working together, I organized lunches and made homemade birthday cakes to share with available family members and staff. To develop relationships with staff and council, I socialized with people at the band office when opportunities arose. Jessie planned meetings with available band staff members, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw School staff, and Band Council members, for us to make presentations about our project options.

Community members were also very forthcoming with kindness towards me. They visited with me on the street or at the office and invited me to participate in community events. Genuine connections were facilitated by staff, research team and community members. Jessie, the RAs and other community members invited me out to lunch, coffee and over to their homes for dinner. They shared intimate details about their lives and were open to whatever I wanted to share in return. One amazing example of their expression of affection was when they threw me a surprise party at the Elders Centre. They sat me down at a head table and

brought out fresh of the grill pancakes, gifts, and shared kind words of appreciation. I am grateful that our time working together has resulted in several lasting friendships.

Close and genuine relationships opened up opportunities to learn about Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of being, which made it possible for us to co-develop and carry out a relevant and respectful research project. As well, participating community members felt comfortable to share intimate and meaningful experiences at our focus groups. With this reciprocity, it was possible to develop a project that serves the community. As Kovach argues: "Giving back involves knowing what 'useful' means, and so having a relationship with the community, so that the community can identify what is relevant, is key. This can be identified as both participation and representation in research" (Kovach, 2009, pp. 81-82).

2.2.3 Knowledge Sharing, Experiential Learning and Capacity Building

We had many opportunities for knowledge sharing during our partnership development, collaborative project development, collaborative work in our research team, and focus groups. Knowledge sharing is a collective process of teaching and learning. The principle of knowledge sharing recognizes that everybody participating brings something of value to the group process. The exchange of skills, experiences, ideas and values can build capacity for all those involved, both through giving and receiving. Capacity building is essentially "enhancing people's awareness and capabilities, individually and collectively, to produce results they truly care about."(Senge & Sharmar, 2001, p.197).

Knowledge sharing was the catalyst for this project. In our research team, we each brought our knowledge to the group. I facilitated our working sessions for the RAs to learn various CBR skills, encourage critical inquiry, evaluate our practices, and make key decisions for the project. They informed the research process with their local knowledge, such as engaging participants through their networks, and facilitating my learning of cultural values, norms, protocol, community history, and the roles of various community members involved in local community development. Jessie also contributed her knowledge of community networks, relationships, culture, values, approaches, assets, norms and protocol.

Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community members expressed a desire for our research engagement to provide opportunities for community members to develop job skills. As co-researchers, community members had the opportunity to learn community-based research skills through experiential learning (or learning-by-doing). According to Paulette Regan, experiential learning in an indigenous context means empowering people for positive social change:

"I believe that education is not simply about the transfer of knowledge but is a transformative experiential learning that empowers people to make change in the world. Failure to link knowledge and critical reflection to action explains

why many settlers never move beyond denial and guilt, and why many public education efforts are in-effective in bringing about deep social and political change. At the same time, I am mindful that, because radical change is not ultimately in its best interest, the dominant majority is apt to reinforce benevolent imperialism and colonial attitudes, often unconsciously, in ways that are antithetical to decolonization. [Regan references Helen Cobban (2007) here] An unsettling pedagogy is therefore based on the premise that settlers cannot just theorize about decolonizing and liberatory struggle: we must experience it, beginning with ourselves as individuals, and then as morally and ethically responsible socio-political actors in Canadian society.”(Regan, 2010, pp. 23-24)

2.2.4 Process-Based: Flexibility in the Project Process and Outcomes

This project was process-based, as opposed to outcome-based. The project focus was not solidified at the outset of our research partnership, but developed over a six-month period. Once we established the research focus, Jessie and I discussed a potential outcome, (to create a booklet of success stories about community organizing), while acknowledging there was room for the project to take shape once other community members got involved in the project. At each stage of the research process the project outcome was more defined, but remained flexible. For example, when we conducted focus groups to gather people’s experiences, for a series of stories about grassroots community organizing, we did not have a pre-determined voice or format for the stories. When we were developing the focus group questions, I asked the RAs if they had a sense of how the stories would take shape. They said that it would depend on what and how community members contributed at the focus groups.

As previously discussed in this report, the guiding principles and research practices were developed organically and incrementally. We integrated the processes of practice, and reflective dialogue, so there was continuous learning from practice, and applying lessons learned to future practice, and so on. Specifically, Jessie and I discussed the overall community engagement strategy, our partnership, and facilitation and supervision of the research team. Within our research team, we evaluated our approaches to community engagement, and our group work. Within our focus group, participants offered feedback about community engagement and the organization of the focus groups. A specific example of our flexibility of approach is how we developed the “Wisdom From Our Elders” section of the booklet. The RAs realized during the period of our focus group research, it would be respectful to have a special focus group for elders, even though we were inviting elders to the other topic-based focus groups. This extra focus group would provide an opportunity for elders to share what they wanted about their community for our project. We also found that during our topic based focus groups that one elder spent a lot of time telling stories about community history and values that were more general. The stories that came out of these two examples ended up as passages in the section ‘Wisdom From our Elders’. Therefore, the forming of this section of the booklet developed organically out of our flexible research process.

This process-based approach is parallel with Michelle Pidgeon's national research project done with Aboriginal university students in Canada:

“To avoid using the Western-coined term *research methodology* to describe the details of the project, the term *research process* was borrowed from Archibald et al. (1995). Research process was the chosen language and was intended from the beginning of the research to create an atmosphere wherein the study became “a flexible procedure rather than a fixed, rigidity, an organic entity adaptable and consistent with Aboriginal principles of respect and honor that are basics to the traditional teaching[s]” (Pidgeon, 2002, p.100, quoted: Archibald et al., 1995, p.16)³⁸

Therefore, the *research process* became “a dialogue that was growth-oriented and allowed the incorporation of other Aboriginal values such as spirituality and sense of community.” (Pidgeon, 2002, p.100, quoted: Archibald et al., 1995, p.16)

2.2.5 Community Participation in All Aspects of the Research

Community-Based Participatory Research is research done *with* not *on* communities (Heron & Reason, 2001). While there are various degrees of community participation in research, participatory action researchers endeavor to achieve full community participation that is important for addressing power inequalities:

“Participatory research has long held within it implicit notions of the relationships between power and knowledge. Advocates of participatory action research have focused their critique of conventional research strategies on structural relationships of power and the ways through which they are maintained by monopolies of knowledge, arguing that participatory knowledge strategies can challenge deep-rooted power inequities”
(Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001, p. 71).

As previously mentioned, using participatory approaches is an established practice for the GNCCP, and integral to prioritizing Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw ways of knowing. There were three ways community members participated in this project:

1. As co-researchers: Jessie, Donna, Cathy, Natasha and Christy, were involved in various aspects of the research. In combination, they collaborated on the design, participant outreach, focus groups, analysis, writing, and the validation process with the participants and the community.
 - a. Jessie led the partnership development and collaborated on the project development, with additional support with writing, graphic design, and

³⁸ For original source quoted by Pidgeon (2002), see: Archibald, J et al. (1995). *Honoring what they say: Postsecondary experiences of First Nations graduates*. Canadian Journal of Native Education, 21, 1-247. For more discussion on this topic, see: Archibald, Pidgeon & Hawkey. (2010). *Aboriginal Transitions: Undergraduate to Graduate Studies*. Indigenous Education Institute of Canada, The University of British Columbia: Vancouver, BC.

facilitating the CCP Advisory Committee meetings to get community input on the partnership, project focus, and booklet approval.

- b. The RAs collaborated on various research activities, and made all the key decisions for the project through a collaborative process that I facilitated. They each collaborated on a different set of activities, depending upon the activities they were interested or available to work on.
2. As participants: Community members participated in the focus groups, to share their experiences, and in the follow up meetings, to provide more input and validate the analysis and writing. They had opportunities to contribute, but they were not involved in the overall decision-making for the project.
3. As the CCP Advisory Committee: Community members who attended the five CCP Advisory Committee meetings, where our research partnership and this project were discussed, participated in the partnership development (2 meetings), project development (2 meetings), booklet approval (1 meeting).

For a detailed outline of the methods used during the community engagement process, beginning after the project focus was determined, see *Section 3*.

2.2.6 Collaboration and Collaborative Decision-Making

Collaboration was a guiding principle outlined by Jessie in her invitation letter sent to SCARP to do research with her community. Our research practice was informed by the collaborative approach to developing the *GNCCP*. The Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community had established collaborative (or participatory) approaches, for the development of the *GNCCP*, i.e. a collaborative planning process open to all community members to come together to share ideas and make decisions for the future of their community. I had the opportunity to attend many *GNCCP* meetings Jessie was facilitating: community dialogues, collaborative decision-making processes, sharing stories, brainstorming ideas for project development, family meetings, and social events. Given that this project was a *GNCCP* project, some community-based participatory approaches were mirrored in this project: collaborative group work, collaborative decision-making by community members, supporting the participation of elders, community input and validation of draft project output, and hosting homemade meals for participating community members.

First, Jessie and I collaborated on developing the research focus, with the input of community members through the CCP Advisory Committee. Second, we often worked collaboratively in our research team. In our research team, I facilitated group working sessions and consensus decision-making processes for the RAs to make the key decisions for our project. Third, we held a series of focus groups, to bring people together to share their experiences doing collaborative community work. The participants also came to follow-up meetings, to validate the stories and lessons learned written from the focus group data.

2.2.7 Prioritizing Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Ways of Knowing

Prioritizing Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of knowing means respecting and integrating the teachings of elders, community-based approaches, community norms, and protocol, as part of our research practice. Given that this was a collaboration between Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community members and myself, our different ways of knowing were interacting throughout the research process. As a guest research facilitator and supervisor of the research team, I had the responsibility to ensure that our research process and principles were not compromising or disaffecting Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of knowing.

The following research practices helped to prioritize Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of knowing:

- Reflection and dialogue about how to prioritize Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw knowledge;
- Community members as co-researchers;
- Collaborative community-based decision-making;
- Community ownership of the research;
- Remaining flexible and open-minded;
- Research initiated by the community; and
- Integrating elders' knowledge through participation.

I began to learn about local approaches to community engagement by observing Jessie and the community working together on the *GNCCP*. Throughout the research process, I sought ongoing guidance from Jessie, the RAs, and other community members involved to make sure community norms, protocol, and local approaches to community engagement were being respected. At times we used tools I have used in other contexts, with assurances from Jessie and the RAs we were not disaffecting community-based approaches.

2.2.8 Building on Strengths and Resources in the Community

Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community members expressed support for developing a research project that focuses on the positive aspects of the community. In the *GNCCP*, it was also noted that an important way to deal with community-wide trauma was to “[r]ecognize people’s gifts and abilities” and, “[a]s a community, celebrate one another”.

(Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, 2010, *GNCCP Main Issues* section, pp.3-4)

There were several ways that we were able to build on the strengths and resources in the community:

- We focused the project on the success-stories of community organizing, and honoured those who are committed to effecting positive change and supporting the community as a whole;
- The research project was developed to support the *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Comprehensive Community Plan*;
- Community members were co-researchers;
- Our research practices were informed by community-based approaches; and
- We prioritized Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw ways of knowing.

The questions we developed in our research team, encouraged community members to share their reflections on the volunteer work they do to organize activities to benefit the community as a whole. Our inquiry references some aspects of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is a philosophy that uses a collaborative engagement process for positive change; facilitating a group of people (i.e. team, community, organization, etc.) through a cycle of discovery, dream, design, and destiny.³⁹ As well, “Appreciative Inquiry involves the practice of asking questions that strengthen the capacity of those answering the questions to focus on positive potential.”(Prokop et al., 2007, p.1) For our research focus groups, we developed our guiding questions to generate discussion around community assets, resources, accomplishments, inspirations, and values to pass on to future generations. See *Appendix 3* for our focus group schedules.

AI also connects well with community development that builds on the strengths and resources of a community is, also referred to as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). “As an approach to community-based development, ABCD rests on the principle that a recognition of strengths and assets is more likely to inspire positive action for change in a community than is an exclusive focus on needs and problems.” (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003, p.477, quoted: Greene, 2000). Collecting success stories from within a community and analyzing why there is success, is common to ABCD, and “used to mobilize community members around a vision or plan.” (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003, p.477)

³⁹ (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. xv)

3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AND METHODS

This section outlines the community engagement process for this project; how the research team was formed, how we worked together, how other community members participated in the research, how the project was approved. Because I have already discussed the development of our partnership, research focus, research ethics, and research principles and practices, this section will detail the community engagement process of training, hiring and collaborating with the four Research Assistants that worked with me on this project.

3.1 Project Timeline

Table 1. Project Timeline

2009	
February	Jessie emailed invitation letter to SCARP to initiate project partnership
April	First trip to Tsulquate to meet CCP Advisory Committee members and discuss potential partnership
May	Band Council Resolution (BCR) approved and outlined partnership parameters
	Second visit to Tsulquate to volunteer for Jessie in community for the <i>GNCCP</i>
	Meetings with Jessie to discuss potential project ideas
June	Submission of potential project ideas to Jessie
	Third visit to Tsulquate to attend community events and secure apartment
August	Moved to Port Hardy and continued working on developing project ideas
September	Presentation of project idea to CCP Advisory Committee, council and other community members working at the school
	Development of RA position job description and posting job
October	Development of UBC ethics application
	Training and hiring process for RAs
	Development of new project idea
	CCP Advisory Committee approval of the new project idea
November	Submission of UBC ethics application
	More on-the-job training for the RAs to prepare them for working
	Community outreach about the project
	Research project development with the RAs
December	Participant outreach
	Organizing and hosting focus groups
	Transcribing of focus group data
2010	
January	Transcribing of focus group data
February	Writing stories and ‘Lessons Learned’, as well as collecting photographs
	Follow up focus group meetings with participants
April	Final approval of stories, ‘Lessons Learned’ and photographs by participants
October	CCP Advisory Committee vote to approve and publish stories booklet

3.2 Training and Hiring Research Assistants (RAs)

There was funding from the CCP budget to hire up to four CCP Research Assistants to work part-time. Jessie Hemphill, Manjit Chand and I developed the job posting which went out to all of the houses in the community. We had planned to short-list six applicants. Instead of conducting interviews, we decided to run a two-day training in community-based research skills, to provide an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate their skills, their ability to work in a team, and their commitment to the job. The training also provided an opportunity for them to learn basic skills in community-based research. A fifty-dollar honorarium was given to training participants. Because only six community members submitted applications, everyone who applied had the opportunity to participate in the training. Participation in the training was also a requirement for two other CCP staff members.

Jessie, Jeet and I designed and facilitated the two-day training. At the end of the two-day training, there were three forms of evaluation to determine who would get hired: a self-evaluation; an evaluation of fellow participants; and an evaluation of the participants by the facilitators. Because only four candidates ended up completing the training, all four were offered a part-time position as a CCP Research Assistant, which they accepted.

3.3 Building Our Research Team

Working collaboratively in a research team was a great way to build capacity in community-based research and maintain community ownership of the research project. Using a research team approach meant that the four CCP Research Assistants (RAs) collaborated on all aspects of the research project. Although I was the research supervisor, my role within this team was to facilitate as many opportunities as possible for the Research Assistants to contribute their ideas and make decisions about the research project. As a supervisor, I was responsible to collaboratively come up with the research focus, coordinate the research process, design and coordinate learning opportunities for the RAs, maintain high ethical research standards, provide support with conflict resolution, and ensure the research outcomes are useful for the *GNCCP*. Types of approaches to decision-making and collaborative work employed

Facilitated Team Activity

As a facilitator, I ran a mini-workshop for the research team to learn about a topic connected to a decision to be made and/or to guide a decision-making process. The facilitated team activities provided opportunities for the RAs to share and build upon their knowledge, present options for the next step in the research, and collectively make decisions. I did not take part in the decision-making other than to facilitate. My facilitation style encouraged reflection and discussion by asking the RAs questions. I also summarized their ideas to maintain focus on the topic or goal, and encouraged the RAs to draw connections between their ideas in order to move towards collective decisions.

Collaborative Team Activity

When there were specific tasks to accomplish, I would facilitate a team discussion to clarify our goals and the details of what we needed to do. I would participate in the decision-making with the RAs. The RAs would then work individually or in pairs to complete the tasks. I worked on the various tasks when needed, as long as I did not take away from the RAs opportunity to learn and contribute. Because the RAs often had different schedules, and they were out in the community doing the work, individually or in pairs, I was the coordinator and liaison.

Informal Presentation

I made informal presentations to the RAs on topics that they did not have prior knowledge on, such as the UBC ethics protocols. The RAs had the opportunity to discuss the topic, ask questions and contribute their ideas.

One-on-one Training

I provided one-on-one training to the RAs to prepare them for a task they were about to undertake, such as facilitate a focus group. Although we did facilitation training in our initial two-day training, providing this extra support just prior to the task worked well, because the RAs could refresh their knowledge, feel confident and prepared, and apply what they learned right away.

Individual or Paired Activity

The RAs worked individually or in pairs on tasks, such as, transcribing, writing and outreach. As coordinator and supervisor, I also worked individually and in pairs.

3.3.1 Outline of our first week working together as a research team

Here is an outline of our first week of the RAs and I working together on this project, developing the research team, a shared understanding of the project goals, a shared understanding of community engagement and community organizing, and an agreed upon work plan and timeline:

Informal Presentation about the research project focus, goals and output ideas.

Facilitated Team Activity about our research team and community-based research:

- a. What are our roles in the research team?
- b. What are your expectations for the project?
- c. What are your interests and personal goals for the job?

Facilitated Team Activity about community engagement:

- a. What is community engagement?
- b. What are best practices for Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community engagement?

Collaborative Team Activity to create a work plan and timeline for the project:

- a. What are the steps of the research project?
- b. What is the best approach and time needed for each step?
- c. What are possible challenges or considerations for each step?
- d. What are the ways we could address the possible challenges?

3.4 Choosing the Stories

One of the first steps in the research was to decide what community activities we would choose to feature in the booklet of stories that we were creating about local community organizing for the CCP. We would run focus groups with the people involved with organizing these activities and write stories representing their experiences in community organizing that they share during the focus groups. Because a goal of the research project was to celebrate activities that benefit the community as a whole, we needed to create criteria for choosing the activities to write stories on. To come up with this criteria, I facilitated a discussion with the RAs, guiding them to come up with a list of community values and priorities for what makes an activity beneficial to the whole community.

Facilitated Team Activity to create a list of existing community activities:

- What are all the activities community members are organizing that benefit the community as a whole?
- Who are the key organizers in the community?

The RAs combined their lists with the lists of positive community activities and organizers that community members made during the CCP Advisory Committee meeting.

Facilitated Team A ctivity to create criteria for choosing five activities to focus on for the stories from the full list:

- What makes an activity beneficial for the whole community?

The criteria created by the RAs, is a list of the values and priorities at the foundation of activities beneficial for the whole community. The RAs came up with the following criteria that they used as a guide for choosing five activities to focus on for the stories:

- Gives people hope (positive role models)
- Inspires people to learn (example: culture)
- Something for children and youth to do
- Connected to the CCP goals and values
- Provides fundraising support for activities
- Provides space for communal healing
- A lot of people in our community are participating
- Real ownership through contribution to activities, projects and programs
- Positive impact in our community
- Makes people feel cared for
- Teamwork
- Brings people together
- Gives people support
- Honoring loved ones

Facilitated Team A ctivity to reflect on which activities best correspond to the criteria:

- RAs individually choose the top three activities that meet the criteria and present them back to the group.
- How are these activities beneficial to the whole community?
- What are your personal experiences of these activities?
- Which are the top five activities that we should research?

The five community activities to research, chosen through consensus were:

1. Christmas Dinner
2. Candlelight Services
3. Family Activities - Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Fireworks, and Sports Tournaments
4. Tla tla tlo nam Singers
5. Gwa'sala-'Nawaxda'xw Comprehensive Community Planning

The content of the stories was derived from what community members shared at the focus groups, from their experiences organizing positive community activities. We decided that there would be a separate focus group for each activity.

3.5 Participant Outreach

Potential participants were invited by the Research Assistants (RAs) to take part in the research on the basis of their involvement in or knowledge of the activity or event that was being discussed at each focus group and featured as a story for the booklet. In some cases, we also invited elders known in the community for their knowledge of or experience in the topic. Participation in the research focus groups was completely voluntary and community members were given the option of withdrawing from the project at any time. Community members interested in contributing their time, stories and ideas accepted the invitation to participate and provided their informed, written consent. At times, participants would suggest to the research team to invite other community members that had not yet been invited, because of their participation or connection to the activity or event being discussed. The RAs followed up with these requests by inviting the community members to participate in the research focus group.

The method of participant outreach was designed in collaboration with Jessie Hemphill and validated by the RAs who conducted the participant recruitment. Jessie recommended that the RAs take care of the participant recruitment to ensure that community members didn't feel pressured to participate. She decided that written informed consent should be used, instead of aural informed consent.

Informal Presentation about the UBC research ethics relevant to this project:

- What are the research ethics protocols that were collaboratively created by Jessie Hemphill and myself, and approved by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board?

Collaborative Team Activity about the UBC research ethics relevant to this project:

- How can we maintain confidentiality and inform community members about their rights, such as voluntary participation, withdrawing their words at anytime, deciding to stop being involved in the research?
- What is the best way to explain to community members about the research ethics protocol, the invitation letter and the consent form?

Facilitated Team Activity about participant selection and outreach:

- Who are the possible people we can invite to the focus groups?
- What are their roles in organizing these activities?
- What are the community protocols and norms important to follow?

Collaborative Team Activity to prepare for the participant outreach:

- Prepare phone lists, invitation letters, consent forms, and checklists.
- Write a description of the project for inviting people to participate.
- Practice with each other what you will say during participant recruitment.

Collaborative Team Activity about participant recruitment plans:

- What are the best ways to approach community members about participating in the research?
- What are ways we can keep track of the work we are doing to invite people to participate in the research?
- What supports do you need to successfully complete this outreach work?

Individual and Paired Activity to do participant outreach:

- RAs worked in pairs or individually to deliver letters of invitation and explain what the project was about to community members.

Collaborative Team Activity to debrief from the participant outreach:

- Prepare phone lists gather consent forms, and checklists.
- Discuss how things went in terms of approach and response
- Discuss outreach strategy and organize for more outreach

3.6 Focus Groups

We ran six focus groups for community members to share their experiences in community organizing, community engagement and community planning. Five of the six focus groups were each centered on a different community activity or group. The activity-based focus groups covered the following activities: Christmas Dinner (5 participants), Family Activities: Easter Egg Hunts, Halloween Fireworks and Sports Tournaments (6 participants), Tla tla tlo nam Singers (11 participants), Candlelight Services (9 participants), Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw CCP (5 participants). A sixth focus group was organized for elders to share what they felt was important about the community (2 participants). There were a total of thirty-four community members who participated in the research focus groups, four of whom contributed their ideas and experiences at two different focus groups. See *Appendix 3* for focus group questions.

We prepared homemade dinners for participants and their children after each focus group. We provided childcare on site or at someone's home. Fruit and beverages were always available.

Participants were asked permission for the focus groups to be audio recorded. Notes were taken by two note-takers from the research team, as a back up to the recording and in cases when permission to record was not granted by the participants. Five focus groups were audio recorded. Transcripts were prepared by the RAs from the five focus groups that were recorded, while I prepared the transcript for the elders' focus group from my short hand notes. Transcripts were distributed to all participants for validation with the draft stories.

Collaborative Team Activity to prepare focus group questions:

- What kind of stories would community members likely connect with?
- What are the types of experiences and ideas community members may share at the focus groups?
- Drafting an outline for the stories with broad themes, with the understanding that the themes may change once people share their experiences and ideas at the focus groups.
- Drafting questions to ask community members at each of the focus groups that correspond to themes we hope to cover.
- Printing out copies of the questions for the focus groups.

Collaborative Team Activity to organize the focus groups:

- Coordinating dates for the focus groups according to people's schedules.
- Organizing each focus group location and child-minding arrangements.
- Buying groceries and cooking meals for each focus group.

One-on-one Training on facilitation skills for the RAs that were interested facilitating focus groups and follow-up meetings:

- What are the ways that a facilitator can create a comfortable space for the participants and provide opportunities for everyone to participate?
- What is a good communication style when asking questions to community members?
- What things need to be covered before running the focus group to maintain high ethical standards?
- What are the ways that you can ask follow-up questions?
- What are ways that I can support each of the RAs during the focus group?

Collaborative Team Activity to run the focus groups:

- Supported facilitation of focus groups
- Note taking at the focus groups
- Preparing and serving a meal for the participants

Collaborative Team Activity to debrief from the focus groups:

Depending upon the focus group, some discussions were more informal when we could not all get together, sometimes this would take place while we were cleaning up from the focus group.

Individual Activity to transcribe the recordings of the focus groups

3.7 Developing the Stories and Lessons Learned

The booklet of stories that we produced, has five (5) stories based on community events, planning or cultural groups on the Tsulquate reserve, as well as other sections as follows:

- Introduction
- How the Stories Were Chosen
- Elders Words of Wisdom
 - *Irene Sheard*
 - *Mary Johnson*
 - *Willie Walkus*

- Christmas Dinner
- Family Activities
- Tla tla tlo nam Singers
- Candlelight Services
- Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw CCP
- Other Community Activities

3.7.1 Stories Booklet Writing

The focus group transcripts were the source for the content of the five stories, the Elders Words of Wisdom section, and for some of the content for the Other Community Activity section. For the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw CCP story, in addition to the focus group transcripts, the CCP meeting minutes were referenced to include details about the CCP that were not discussed at the focus group. The stories are primarily composed of direct quotes. We composed the stories with as many direct quotes as possible instead of re-writing people words, respecting the way people wanted to share their ideas and experiences. There were times when information needed to be combined and summarized, to provide a clear picture to readers of a process or sequence of events, especially for introductions, transitions and conclusions. We tried to write the stories as best as possible to represent how the activity or event was shared during the focus group, and include at least one quote from every participant who voiced their ideas and experiences.

3.7.2 'Lessons Learned' Development

After the stories were written, the available RAs and I read through each story and worked collaboratively to find the main lessons that community members had shared through their stories. Participants had an opportunity to review, change, add and subtract from the 'Lessons Learned' section corresponding to the story they contributed to at the follow-up meetings.

3.7.3 'Other Community Activities' Section Writing

The section at the end of the story booklet, called 'Other Community Activities', is a compilation of positive grassroots community activities, providing current and past examples. There were various stages of compiling this section. First, at a CCP Advisory Committee meeting, community members were asked to collectively list of all the positive community activities, current and past examples. Building on this list, the RAs added activities and detail to existing activities, and checked facts with community members when needed. The initial draft section was printed and brought to the focus groups for participants to validate the activity list and to provide an opportunity for participants to add other activities and details. This glossary is not intended to be a complete list of all the positive grassroots community activities, but a demonstration of the range of different volunteer activities community members do for each other.

Collaborative Team Activity to choose the quotes from the focus groups for each of the five stories:

- For each story, the RAs individually highlighted the quotes that they felt were important to tell the story.
- The selected quotes were grouped into the themes from the story outline that we created before the focus groups.

Collaborative Team Activity to write the stories:

- At the story writing stage, two of the RAs, Christy George and Natasha Walkus got other full-time jobs. Donna Williams and Cathy Swain continued to work with me. Jessie Hemphill also collaborated in the story writing. The stories are mainly quotes from community members woven together with some sentences that we wrote to tie them together.
- Reading the stories within the group and discussing our reactions to the stories.
- Cathy, Jessie and I found photos for the stories from our personal collections. When needed, we asked specific participants for their photos.
- Writing the 'Lessons Learned' that accompany each story - To write the 'Lessons Learned', we analyzed the stories, looking for when community members expressed values and actions benefit the community.

3.8 Participant Feedback and Approval

Once the five draft stories were written, and the elders' quotes were chosen for the 'Elders' Words of Wisdom' section, participants received a draft copy of the story or section that they contributed to. Participants also received a copy of the transcript of the focus group they participated in. They were asked to review the story and transcripts to make sure they were quoted appropriately, and that experiences and ideas were represented to their satisfaction.

Follow-up meetings were arranged with the participants from each focus group to integrate any changes they wanted to the story they contributed to, and to the corresponding 'Lessons Learned' that we summarized from their story. Some participants requested small changes or added information they prepared. In both cases, the changes were noted and integrated at the meeting. When participants were not able to make it to a meeting, the RAs visited them one-on-one to ask for their feedback. Once the stories were revised, a final draft was delivered to each participant of the story they contributed to for their approval of the content and to publish their name and/or photo if applicable. We did not show each participant the entire booklet at the time due to the issue of confidentiality.

Collaborative Team Activity to get feedback on the stories from the community members who participated in the focus groups:

- Setting up the group meetings for participant feedback.
- Facilitating group meetings for participant feedback.
- Making the changes or additions to the stories and ‘Lessons Learned’ requested by the participants.

Collaborative Team Activity to get feedback on the stories from the community members who participated in the focus groups:

- Visiting each participant to get final approval of the changes made to the stories and to get their written permission to publish their name and photos along with the stories.

3.9 Community Approval of the Stories Booklet

Once all of the participants approved the content of the stories and quotes, and provided their consent to publish their names and/or photos, the draft stories booklet was presented at a CCP Advisory Committee meeting for community approval. By vote, the community members at the meeting approved the stories booklet for the *GNCCP* and granted permission to publish it with this report.

4 REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH PRINCIPLES, PRACTICES & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

This section represents my reflections on our research principles, practices and community engagement process for this project. My writing is based on my observations and opinions, unless I have noted otherwise, i.e. when community members provided informal feedback during the research process. It is my intention to illustrate what worked well, the areas for improvement, challenges, discoveries and outcomes. I believe that our community-based approaches and our practices prioritized Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations ways of knowing, and contributed to developing a resource that is relevant to the community. This project also created opportunities for community members to benefit from the research process.

Please see *Section 5* for Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations community members' reflections on this project, contributed through interviews, one-year post project completion.

4.1 Respect, Relationships and Trust

Genuinely connecting with community members through respect and compassion was integral to the research with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. For community members to participate in this project, community members needed to develop trust in me and in our research practice. I believe this trust developed out of my respect for the community that I demonstrated through my intentions and actions:

- Respecting the wishes of the community;
- Demonstrating my positive intentions through positive actions;
- Demonstrating my respect of elders;
- My friendly conversations and affection with children;
- Having conversations and greeting people in the community;
- My dedication to learning community values and approaches;
- Adapting as best as possible to community norms;
- Being open to criticism and making an effort to integrate suggestions;
- Treating people with respect, even in the face of conflict;
- Dealing patiently and carefully with challenging situations;
- My commitment to volunteering long-term;
- Helping out at community events;
- Living in the community; and
- Working collaboratively.

Over the course of the project, several community members voiced their trust in me directly and/or demonstrated it through acts of kindness and generosity towards me, especially the people I had the most contact with. Jessie told me that some community members trusted me because I was kind to children and many children enjoyed having me around.

Although I spent as much time as possible connecting with community members, it was still very limited. At the focus groups, there were some community members present that had seen me around the community, and there were some people who had never met me. By then, the RAs and I had developed connections, and we were on a teasing basis with each other. The comfort we had established in our relationships came across to other community members, which helped to bridge the gaps. In a sense, the RAs could vouch for me. Actually, there was a time when one of the RAs said to the participants, “She is one of us now.” Another action that helped develop trust and safety at our focus groups was that we fed people a homemade meal, to welcome everyone and show our respect for their time and contributions. Finally, the participants were quickly put at ease because our topic of inquiry was about honouring the work they are doing for the community and providing an opportunity for them to pass on their stories and lessons learned to the community.

Learning cultural norms and protocol was a process that also involved making mistakes. It was important to debrief to learn how to be respectful. For example, after facilitating a focus group, I found out from the RAs that I was not leaving enough of a pause after someone stopped speaking at a focus group, i.e., I generally waited two seconds, but that was considered to be interrupting someone.

4.2 Revisiting Community Participation

In retrospect, there were ways we could have integrated a deeper level of participation with community members with the time and resources we had:

- Some of the suggestions given to me were not implemented due to the timing of when they came, and lack of support from the RAs to go ahead. For example, an elder and chief suggested that I speak with another leader in the community to get their input into the project. This suggestion came at a time when we were in the validation stage of the project. When I brought this back to the research team, the RAs said it was too late to include their input. They felt uncomfortable approaching him because he had not been included from the beginning.
- In the meetings when elders were not available or didn't show up, we needed to go ahead because of time constraints. It was noted on 2 occasions that we should have more elders present. In hindsight it would've been beneficial to have more visits with elders in the community as a way of building relationships.

4.3 Research as Community Togetherness

Our research process provided opportunities for contributing to ‘community togetherness’ or ‘community unity’; a significant Gwa’sala-Nakwaxda’xw Nations value discussed in the *GNCCP*. We hosted focus groups for community members to share their experiences organizing beneficial activities for the community. I observed that community members were very engaged in sharing their stories and experiences. I think some of the reasons why the focus groups were comfortable spaces for community members, was because we came together around a shared homemade meal, and we were talking about activities they were very passionate about. During our focus groups, community members told stories, honoured

loved ones with their words, honoured the teaching of elders with their words, thanked people for their positive contributions to the community, practiced cultural traditions, and passed knowledge to the next generation.

Below are two examples of how community togetherness developed as a result of this research project:

- During a focus group, one of the Research Assistants took the opportunity to practice a *Digita* – a cultural practice to make peace with another person by declaring to that individual that you have done wrong and you are making a commitment to continue the relationship with respect. The group acts as a witness and a support network. Money is handed out to each person to honour their role as witnesses, and the wrongdoing is never mentioned again.
- During a focus group, one of the participating community members expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to have her grandson present to witness and learn the history behind the work the family has been doing for the community. She said it meant a lot to her to pass this onto him so he could carry it forward.

4.4 Using a Process-based Approach

A process-based approach worked well in the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations context, and for this type of project, for the following reasons:

- I was comfortable with this approach, because I think it was the only way to work without disaffecting local knowledge. Our project developed from a shared understanding of community-based values, practices and objectives, resulting in a research process and a project output that the community, in general, is happy with.
- In this position, I had an opportunity to learn how to be a researcher, how to be a supervisor, and how to be respectful, by listening to community members and observing the community. The RAs were also learning to be co-researchers. I believe we were able to effectively manage our responsibilities because we were taking one step at a time and could integrate lessons learned as we carried on.
- Allowed time to build relationships and develop trust, between community members and myself; both needed to do research in a safe and respectful way.
- Part of a process-based approach is being very flexible and open to change, and creating space for many people to contribute to the development of a project. We adapted and changed our project as more community members interacted with the project.
 - Our initial research option changed into a project idea that community members were ready to engage in.
 - There was a space for the RAs to shape the project in their own way, as they got involved after Jessie and I collaborated on developing the project focus. Once the

RAs began collaborating on the project with me, they developed a sense of ownership of the project.

It is important to note challenges I experienced using a process-based approach:

The development phase of the project was six months long, half of the overall research period. After four months, I needed to be open to letting go of our initial project idea, even though a lot of time had gone into its development. Jessie and I came up with the stories booklet idea fairly quickly after we decided to change the project focus given previous collaborative work and mutual trust we had developed. This change was made for the sake of developing a more appropriate and feasible project that incorporated the community's needs and priorities. This flexible and decolonizing approach is at odds with a more traditional academic approach of coming into a community with pre-determined research methodologies and agendas. The logistical confines of a university degree program could potentially lead to the use of research practices that re-enforce power imbalances resulting between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, when researchers are not willing to use participatory approaches, acknowledge the historical injustices, develop research topics relevant to the community, and use practices respecting the cultural context within which the project is taking place.

4.5 Knowledge Sharing, Experiential Learning and Reciprocity

The collaborative process for this project, as discussed above, is characterized by rich and mutually beneficial patterns of knowledge sharing, based on experiential learning and reciprocity. Jessie's openness to share her knowledge and experiences with the *GNCCP*, made it possible for me to work effectively and respectfully as a facilitator and supervisor in this context. Jessie developed a high level of trust with us after we worked with her to design and facilitate a two-day training for RAs together. It took half the overall time spent in the community (8 weeks over a 6 month period) to learn about the community, build initial relationships, develop the project focus, and develop the ethics application. Experiential learning and reciprocity continued throughout the process through my attempts to do long-term volunteering and community capacity-building.

4.6 Community Members as Co-researchers and Co-learners

Reciprocity and experiential learning are best demonstrated by having community members as co-learners and co-researchers in the project. The approaches used to manage the research team and facilitate the research process, contributed to our capacity to do community-based research. These include: collaboration, relationship building, knowledge sharing, and experiential learning. As a research team, we had many opportunities for experiential learning and knowledge sharing. Our facilitated group working sessions within our research team, meant that we all teachers and learners. Our group work sessions integrated dialogue, reflection, critical inquiry, brainstorming, storytelling, collaborative decision-making, socializing, and laughter.

Working in a research team with community members as co-researchers and co-learners impacted the research process and outcomes on many levels. Here are some examples:

- The research was relevant to the community, i.e., many participants expressed they were happy with the booklet of stories. The community approved the final booklet.
- Community members, in general, trusted the project. A large percentage of the people invited to participate in the project, wanted to participate.
- Some participants voiced their trust in the research process, especially the opportunity to validate the stories and make any desired changes. All participants approved the stories they contributed to and how their words were represented.
- Some participants offered constructive criticism, i.e. ways to improve the research process.
- All members of the research team developed new skills in community-based research and community engagement in the context of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community. Three of the four RAs took on more responsibility as the project progressed, and in turn, demonstrated increased confidence in their abilities. This was possible because of opportunities for the RAs to learn from watching me facilitate and then trying it out for themselves, with my support. Many of these learned skills were transferable to other jobs in the community. Three of the four RAs have gained full-time employment with the band.
- During the research process, the RAs expressed to me that they preferred working in the group sessions for the following reasons (compared to individual work):
 - They felt more productive with a facilitated group process
 - They enjoyed the social interaction
 - They felt more engaged in the work
 - They were more confident in their work and the outcome; i.e. a diversity of contributions were made, and they like the support.
For example, the process of choosing the stories to research for the booklet was a very in depth collaborative process that took one week. Having a fair representation of the two Nations and the various families in the stories was important (i.e. collaborative decision-making more representative of community/diversity of families)
 - They all wanted to participate in decision-making
 - They each had their own networks and local knowledge useful to the process
- I was able to develop my capacity for working in the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations context, and facilitating community-based research.
- In addition to learning how to do CBR, the RAs learned many skills applicable to various types of employment and for doing local community engagement.
- Our opportunity to develop relationships and work effectively as a team was apparent to people who were not working on the project. Other staff in the band office always said how much they enjoyed hearing us laughing while we worked together.
- The RAs developed a sense of ownership over the research project demonstrated by their commitment and co-authorship of the booklet of stories.

The following are what worked well in our approaches to facilitating the research team project:

- Group decision-making

- Incrementally increasing responsibility, having opportunities to complete small tasks and building on previous work, helped to build confidence in RAs and increased their commitment to the work
- Flexibility in the level of involvement in the research team
- Leaving it to the RA to determine when they were ready to try a new task, like facilitation.
- Support the RAs with one-on-one training before they attempt a new task and create a support system in case they need it (i.e. acting as support facilitator if needed)
- Providing support and information for good decisions.
- Spend time at the beginning as a team, setting up systems for file management (in computer and in file cabinet)
- Work together with one of the RAs on a task, like co-writing.
- Provide opportunities for RAs to improve on previous mistakes
- Management style: needed to be more flexible as a guest, because we were co-researchers and I was a supervisor. RAs came to me with issues, we dealt with them as best as possible. They had high expectations for what was fair in the group. Flexibility while maintaining fairness meant that sometimes I had to deal with distributing the workload by consensus.

4.7 My Role as Supervisor to the RAs

As a supervisor of the research team, I was responsible for facilitating communication within our research team, and at times interacting with other staff and community members in regards to this project. Overall, I believe I was effective in supervising the research team.

The most challenging aspect of this role was dealing with conflicts. I was not always aware of the personal histories that played into these challenges and local approaches to resolving differences, dealing with complaints, or addressing shortfalls in work responsibilities. Because I was in the community for a short time, there were some issues I did not address, because I did not feel confident that I had been there long enough to follow through with the process. It helped to have a lot of experience in project coordination, management and group facilitation, and to use a respectful and communicative approach when issues arose.

I believe the following approaches and supports made it possible for me to be effective in this role:

- I had support from two community members who provided confidential consultation about appropriate local approaches to deal with issues at hand
- I maintained a very flexible approach to communication with the RAs, i.e. using email, phone calls, texts, Facebook and in person meetings, depending upon the availability of the RAs. This approach was more challenging for me as a supervisor, but more accommodating the needs of the RAs.
- I encouraged a lot of socializing during work hours, which encouraged teamwork, camaraderie and mutual respect.
- I organized special birthday events for the RAs, to show my appreciation for their commitment and my affection towards them.

- The RAs had a sense of ownership and responsibility to the project because they were co-researchers.
- I was open to criticism, both personally and in regards to the research process. I was willing to take responsibility for how my actions may have contributed to the issue, and to come up with a shared understanding of how to better work together.

4.8 Building a Strong Partnership

It was important to develop this research project within a partnership. Relationships developed through networks over long periods of time, and with open communication, can increase opportunities for knowledge sharing. The Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations initiated the partnership and a lot of work has gone into building trust and connections.

The following are the factors that I believe have contributed to building a strong partnership to date:

1. Having a community representative responsible for facilitating the research partnership between the university and the community is necessary:
 - To send out the invitation and initial discussions about the partnership
 - To support the process of building relationships between researchers and community members; facilitate introductions, set up meetings, etc.
 - To facilitate community feedback and approval
 - To provide opportunities to observe and learn local approaches to group work, community planning and decision-making.
 - To give an overview, and provide opportunities to learn about community history, networks, leadership, community goals and visions, programs, organizations, decision-making processes, values, norms, etc.
 - To facilitate a community engagement process
 - To connect researcher with local resources
2. There was a committee structure (CCP Advisory Committee) to integrate community-wide feedback and input on the project, and for collaborative community-based decision-making for project approvals.
3. The community led the partnership; decided what the partnership would look like, approved the nature of the partnership, and determined what research was relevant to the community.

5 GWA'SALA-'NAKWAXDA'XW NATIONS REFLECTIONS

This section presents Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations reflections about this project and our broader partnership, collected one year after this project completion.

In June 2011, UBC faculty researchers Penny Gurstein, then Director of the School and Community and Regional Planning (SCARP), and Margot Young, a professor of UBC Faculty of Law, were co-researching community-university partnerships in community-based research. One of their case studies was our partnership, between SCARP and the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations community members, selected from those who contributed to the partnership development, participated in this project, and/or collaborated with UBC researchers. In addition to myself, there were three other UBC researchers collaborating with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations.

The following questions that were asked related to this project:

- What are the benefits of your involvement in the project to create the stories for the CCP?
- How do you think the community benefits from having the stories?
- If we were to do this project again, how would you suggest we do it differently?

Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations community members responses are organized in the following themes:

- Relationship building and partnership development
- Quality of collaboration
- Dynamics of community participation
- Benefits of community participation
- Project outputs and outcomes of the project

5.1 Relationship Building and Partnership Development

Many of the community members interviewed had positive feedback about our relationship building and partnership development with the community, although there were some aspects that still need improvement.

One community member noticed that people got attached to us and demonstrated this with their use of humour and teasing. Another community member explained we fit in well and built valuable trust, which is not easy to do, through extremely respectful relations. Jessie said that our personal involvement with the community was a major factor, especially being personable and open. With this approach, she said they feel like they are being helped as opposed to oppressed. Various people gave examples of our approach and actions that build trust and encouraged more open communication: genuine interest in learning from and working with the community; connecting socially in the community; sharing a homemade

meals; interacting in a friendly manner with elders and children; discussing community matters; demonstrating care and kindness by doing special things for individuals; participating in community meetings and events; working in a volunteer capacity; and, relocating and living in the community.

To build an even deeper connection and have a greater impact at the community level, community members suggested to: come back any time to visit the community; keep friendships open and show our commitment beyond the research; join comfort services and funerals when there is a death; and, stay and work in the community for longer.

Jessie and another community member appreciated we were learning from the community and could provide some support to the work the community was already doing. They stated the CCP community engagement process was an opportune time to develop a partnership and for us to begin working with the community. One community member noticed we were quite actively involved in the CCP meetings. Jessie said our help during the CCP with the basics, like setting up chairs, cooking and cleaning, was needed. She added that our collaboration on this project did not negatively affect the work she was already doing with her community through the CCP, and in fact she learned a lot from me and really benefited from the help.

5.2 Quality of Collaboration

All community members interviewed had positive feedback about the quality of our collaboration, and some also had constructive criticism on the quality of our collaboration.

Jessie was impressed with how well we were able to adapt to the needs of the community, as long as those needs could be expressed. Jessie said a community liaison is very important, for the community to be able to tell researchers what they need to be doing different, and to explain to the community what the researchers are really here to do in a more informal way. Jessie said researchers needed to have concrete research ideas and expectations to explain in plain language to community members, but still invite engagement. One community member involved in our partnership development was at first worried we were collecting history to make money like so many previous people have done, but relieved once learning the research data and outputs from this project would remain under community control. One RA appreciated how the researchers thought outside the box. Both a project participant and an RA felt this project was very well organized.

Jessie said as a 'Nakwaxda'xw person, she takes a lot of pride in having collaboratively worked on these tools, which are helpful for her in meeting academics or professionals as peers instead of in an unequal relationship.

Jessie said I did a phenomenal job with the work on our project. Jessie also shared, from her unique perspective, valuable constructive criticism for partnership and project development. First, it was unclear to her what the student researchers were doing academically beyond the work in the community, specifically academic goals, requirements and levels of supervisors. Second, because there had to be a planning aspect to the projects, they were not necessarily the immediate short-term things that the community needed or wanted. She added that the community needed more concrete things like running a daycare, or life-skills training. Third,

although she informed and reviewed the UBC lengthy ethics application and consent forms, there was no time in her schedule to do so. Fourth, the workload with supporting students and faculty to get up to speed and connect with the community was too much in combination with her other work, although she felt it was needed and not much could have been done differently. It was manageable for her once four community members were hired part-time to work as RAs, and student researchers took over their supervision. Fifth, once having a personal connection with researchers, it was frustrating to experience the difficulties we had getting our program requirements done.

Several community members praised the opportunities provided for capacity building for the four community members hired as RAs, during the two-day training and learning skills on the job.⁴⁰ Jessie commented that our initial two-day training was successful because of our creative ideas that communicated ideas well. One RA noted the positive learning environment we created for the job candidates, where they were free to share laughs and contribute to a group process as a way of demonstrating their skills. Another RA did not remember the two-day training. A community member suggested that the RAs could have used more computer and research training before starting their jobs.

The RAs interviewed all had positive experiences working with the community on the booklet, and enjoyed working with us as researchers. There was mainly positive experience with our collaborative work, although there were some challenges discussed regarding our research team. Initially, one RA felt intimidated with the idea of working with university researchers because of our different education levels, but the experience was positive because she said we didn't make her feel stupid. All three of the RAs interviewed felt supported by my project supervision and coordination. One RA felt good working at times without supervision, which gave her the opportunity to face challenges and resolve them, while another RA felt there were negative experiences working as a research team. Although she said there was camaraderie, she did not feel part of the group, and said she would only like to do this kind of work in the future on her own. The RAs enjoyed working with us, saying the researchers were patient, supportive, hard working and got things done in a great manner.

5.3 Dynamics of Community Participation

Feedback about the dynamics of community participation was shared in relationship to participant outreach and representation, facilitation and location of meetings, and project topic.

Jessie was amazed and pleased with how many people were involved in this project, from across generations, including new people who were not normally asked to share their ideas, for which they responded well. She also said it was amazing how much work we were able to get done, where it can be difficult to make things happen, even though some things come together so easily. Jessie felt that having community members as RAs doing the participant outreach really helped get community members involved, because they are well connected in the community. She said we could have improved our approach by doing outreach through

⁴⁰ See below for more details on benefits and outcomes for the RAs from this project.

natural relationships, using simple plain language, because calling people on the phone to invite them was too formal. One community member suggested that door-to-door introductions by a community liaison, between researchers and elders, would have increased elder participation. Another community member felt everything possible was done for community outreach to get people to meetings, and was also surprised by the amount of people came to meetings on a volunteer basis.⁴¹

Four people spoke about how the project topic either helped to engage people or people really enjoyed speaking about their experiences. Jessie said that having concrete events as topics, like the Christmas Dinner, helped people understand how they could contribute to the research project. One RA said that most people who were asked were very willing to participate, kindly accepting and able to offer their support. Jessie, one RA and a couple other community members discussed how some people declined to participate in this project because they did not support the treaty process, and thought the CCP was connected to the treaty. They added that this connection was not the case and there was a misunderstanding at the time we were doing outreach for the focus groups.

We received feedback about how our approach to meetings and focus groups impacted the dynamics of participation. Jessie spoke about how cooking meals in people's homes, setting up chairs, and drawing pictures with little kids went a long way to help engage people. She also felt we engaged people beautifully, with patience and flexibility, and developed really close relationships with people, which gave people room to express what they needed. Three participants said they were pleased coming together with the community, with the opportunity to share their experiences with us and with each other. Two people also suggested more time was needed to contribute their ideas, including an opportunity to have private interviews. One of them stated that a combination of more time and an open-ended interview or focus group would allow space for elders to tell their own stories. One RA commented that the UBC students were very good listeners, writing down what people were saying as opposed to what they wanted to hear. Jessie suggested I develop my facilitation skills to be less formal and to use more innovative activities to better engage people. Project participants also gave the following feedback about our research meetings: really enjoyed the nice, comfortable well-paced meetings; very touched by the researchers and liked the energy in our work and clarity in what we were asking; it is helpful to have options to have meetings in the home or outside the home, as people feel more comfortable with one over the other.

One community member made recommendations for researchers in cases where there is a division between families in a community. On one hand, it is good for researchers to be mindful about who is comfortable with each other in a meeting, as healing between families may be needed. But, on the other hand, it is also good for children to see elders from different families together to realize they should not be divided. The same community member also made suggestions for researchers working with elders. First, some meetings with elders are needed without children to eliminate interruptions, while other meetings with children listening to elders tell their stories can be valuable. Second, elders at meetings can benefit from translation and people speaking louder. Third, make regular visits with elders to prepare them ahead of time for research meetings and be prepared to record in those visits if

⁴¹ Community member was referring to meetings both general CCP meetings and this project.

needed. As well, it was noted that researchers to look into what is going on with fishing, picking and gathering in each season to ensure people are around.

5.4 Benefits of Community Participation

Community members identified benefits at an individual and community level resulting from this project.

The three RAs interviewed really enjoyed the experience of working with their community directly, especially at the focus groups. They enjoyed hearing stories about their elders and what the participating community members have done for their community. The RAs said they really just enjoyed spending this kind of time being with people and sharing meals and conversations. Two RAs said they both got to know family members and other community members more because of the focus groups and initial training. One RA and two other community members spoke about how the researchers and this project brought people together who otherwise would not normally come together, which was referred to as a gift as people came together over a meal despite some of the divisions between some families.

Two of the RAs said they gained confidence from working on this project. Both said it helped them to continue to look for work and/or training, and one RA gained confidence to interact more with community members and to speak at meetings. One of the RAs said she got a part-time job that turned into a full-time job in her community as a direct result of working on this project. She also became more aware of her surroundings and had a better understanding of local economics. Two of the RAs spoke about the benefits of working in a team: building lasting friendships; laughing and having fun; and feeling supported. They also said they developed job skills, including interviewing, facilitation, note taking, record keeping, transcribing, teamwork, planning, scheduling, communication and computer skills.

Jessie said that one of the benefits to having university researchers working with the community is the human power and skills we bring to the community, which can hopefully transmit to other people. One RA said that this community work really shows the kids in the community a good example of how the young can be involved in local projects and activities. She is proud to see when youth want to go to university and she wants to be that support person and a good example. One community member felt that because community member participants discussed the steps to community driven activities at the focus groups, there could be an organizational benefit generated. As well, it was said that this project penetrated the walls that people may have with university researchers, because people loved to talk about their efforts, and community members need more of that kind of acknowledgement.

One of the participants spoke about how a family focus group in the home provided an opportunity for important issues like suicide prevention to come up, and helped to release some pain that comes from dealing everyday with kids who are challenged by suicidal thoughts and attempts in the community. The same participant felt that the project worked well, and the focus group and this follow up interview were opportunities to address the racism he has experienced off-reserve and with residential school. One RA said participants from the focus group she facilitated gained a lot of confidence because of the stories, helping them to realize how far they have come since they started.

5.5 Project Outputs and Outcomes of the Project

The RAs discussed potential outcomes at the community level. One RA said there seems to be more positive energy flowing and so much more activity in the community since the CCP happened.⁴² Two RAs felt the project can be useful for people in the community to see what is being done, what happened before, and the lessons learned from people's organizing in the community. Another RA noted that a benefit of the stories is that the community can look at how much positive activity is going on and how family oriented it is. One RA said that people's words were well represented in the stories and she was pretty sure that the whole community would appreciate the booklet, as it can just bring people back to the community and who they are as a people.

For their part, community members spoke about how the booklet of stories can impact the community into the future. One community member was glad we came to the community as the stories open everyone's eyes to what is going on and bring togetherness. Another community member said the story collection process helped people to share and get to know each other, and having the researchers in the community helped them do that. In reading the booklet of stories, one community member commented that the families were equally represented, which is empowering for the community as a whole. It was also noted that the history and family roots gathered would help the new council. In terms of the impact of the book of stories on the community history, one community member stated that it would strengthen their grandchild as a teenager when looking up family history, and provides an opportunity for the younger generation as adults to reflect on what a good feeling the community must have had in sharing such information.

Community members had differing ideas about how the booklet would be disseminated to, and used by, the community. One person was not too sure whether community members would be re-telling the stories from the booklet or how the stories would be getting into the community. Another person was glad to hear the booklet is available on the Nations' website, because many people have computers and don't have time to read a bunch of papers. The same community member said it would be nice to have it on video, especially for elders who can't read a lot or go on computers. Another community member noted the photos in the booklet would be very useful as people in the community love photos. One RA hoped it could be put in their community library. Two RAs noted that they were anticipating the booklet's distribution. One said it would be good to see the outcome, while the other said there was negative feedback because the booklet had not yet been distributed to the broader community. Jessie thought the booklet might not get used much by community members, but remarked that the stories booklet has been very helpful for new staff and for government and agency representatives who are not familiar with the community. The booklet was handed out at a big meeting with people from the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, CMHC, Industry Training Authority, and some people from INAC, to inform them of community needs, how the community likes to work, and good lessons on how they can work with the community.

⁴² This project was only a small part of the CCP and she was referring to the entire two-year process that Jessie was facilitating.

6 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

It is my hope that this report can serve as a resource to the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations, SCARP faculty involved in this partnership, and other university researchers embarking on collaborative projects with this community. Below, I have put forward a series of recommendations specific to Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations community context, because every research team or committee, regardless of whether it is Indigenous or non-Indigenous, has its own social, economic, and cultural context. Therefore, it is important that these recommendations be read in the context within which this project took place, and not seen as a model for all community-university collaborations.

The following recommendations are divided into two parts: 1) recommendations for collaborative projects between university researchers and the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations; and 2) recommendations for continued partnership between SCARP and the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. These recommendations come from two distinct perspectives: my own perspective as a university researcher on this project, and the perspectives of the ten Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations community members who participated in post-project interviews. (See *Section 5* for interview data).

6.1 Recommendations for Collaborative Projects Between University Researchers and the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations

- To establish a Community Research Committee of community members to serve as advisors and collaborators on the research project. Depending on the project, the committee could be composed of community leaders (as defined by the community), interested elders, and any other people the community sees fit. To develop project goals, objectives, activities and timeline in collaboration with the Community Research Committee.
- To ensure researchers and or faculty secure funding to pay community members as co-researchers and also raise funds for honoraria for participants and research expenses (dinners, lunches, snacks, drinks, materials, supplies, childcare, space rental & travel).
- To ensure that researchers communicate their skills and abilities to the project, as well as the practical project outputs and outcomes to community members.
- To ensure researchers communicate their topic and research intentions in plain language to community members, throughout the research process.
- To provide capacity-building opportunities for community members.
- To ensure researchers incorporate flexibility in their day-to-day research activities and their overall timeline, to cover for changes with the research topic and processes and unforeseen events in the community.
- To ensure researchers create a 'community of support' for academic and personal reflection.

- To ensure researchers develop respectful and personal relationships with community members and participate or volunteer in community activities as much as possible.

6.2 Recommendations for Continued Partnership Between SCARP and Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations

- To establish a Partnership Committee composed of community members from the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations who have previously been involved in SCARP and Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nations collaborative projects, and any other community member as identified by the community.
- To establish a monitoring and evaluation process whereby the community assesses the outcomes and outputs of each project, and determines how/if to continue the partnership with SCARP.
- To ensure that university partners read and review all previous research undertaken with this partnership.

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Appendices

**Appendix 1 - Project Output: *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw* Community Organizing:
*Stories and Lessons Learned***

APPENDIX 1:

GWA'SALA-'NAKWAXDA'XW
COMMUNITY ORGANIZING:
STORIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

CREATED BY :

JOHANNA MAZUR AND

CHRISTY GEORGE, CATHY SWAIN,

NATASHA WALKUS & DONNA WILLIAMS

INTRODUCTION:
MAIN ISSUES
COMMUNITY HISTORY
MAPS
COMMUNITY
VISION

PLANS:
OVERVIEW
CULTURE
ECONOMY
EDUCATION
GOVERNANCE
HEALTH
INFRASTRUCTURE
LANDS & RESOURCES
SOCIAL ISSUES

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 - *Youth Activities*
 - *Lahal*
 - *Indian Baseball*
 - *Sports Tournaments*
 - *Volunteer Coaching of Sports Teams*
 - *Trips to the Home Lands*
 - *Gathering Traditional Foods*
 - *Preparation for Cultural Occasions*
 - *Hunting and Fishing for Our Community*
 - *Cooking and Donating Food to People in Need*
 - *Coffee House*
 - *Cleaning Our Community*
 - *Fundraising for Children's Carnival Bracelets*
 - *Singing for Our Community*
 - *Cultural Day*
 - *Pool Tournaments*
 - *Family Nights*
 - *Movie Nights*
 - *Mothers' Day Breakfast*
 - *Fathers' Day Suppers*
 - *New Years' Eve Celebration*

Introduction

We are a team of people who are interested in sharing the stories about community members who organize activities that benefit the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community.



Left to right: Johanna Mazur, Natasha Walkus, Silena George, Christy George, Donna Williams, Jessie Hemphill, Jeet Chand, Cathy Swain.

We, Cathy Swain, Christy George, Donna Williams and Natasha Walkus, were hired to work part-time on the team. Jessie Hemphill, the CCP coordinator, provided her leadership to get this project started and her support along the way. Johanna Mazur, a student from the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia, accepted Jessie Hemphill's invitation to work as a volunteer with the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw people on this project.

There is a rich tradition within our community for people to support one another and work together. The stories in this booklet are a documentation of some of the positive things community members are doing together and for others. These stories are being told here to honour the people who are doing positive things for our community and to hopefully inspire others to do the same. We hope that our children and their children can learn by positive example and will pass on the stories about the history of our lives.

The CCP (Comprehensive Community Plan) has been worked on by many different community members for the past year and a half, which outlines our dreams and goals for our community. It is now up to community members, leadership and staff to take our community in the directions we want to go. These stories can remind us of what we are capable of doing for each other when we work together.

When we first began this project, we came up with close to thirty ideas of stories to be told. Since we did not have time to research all these stories for this booklet, we had to come up with some guidelines as to how we could choose what stories could be shared here. We have included the main points of how we chose the stories in the *'How the Stories were Chosen'* section in this booklet. We decided to focus on five stories for now. Of course there are many, many more stories to be told.

Once we knew the five stories to focus on, we met with the people who organized or worked on the activities to hear about their experiences. These small group meetings were called focus groups. The stories were collectively written to include the ideas and experiences shared at the focus groups. Once the stories were shared with us, the stories were written. We then got feedback from the people who came to the focus groups to make sure their words were used in the way they wished.

Thank you to all the community members who shared their stories.

Photo Credit:

Cathy Swain provided most of the photos for the stories from her collection. Jessie Hemphill included several of her photos taken at community events and the band office, and did the graphic layout of this story booklet to match the CCP. Johanna included several of her photos from the community events she attended and the research project meetings. Natasha Walkus contributed her photo of the late Billy Williams and Bunny Jackson provided the memorial photograph of Terry Grant.

How the Stories Were Chosen

At the beginning of the research for this booklet, we asked community members at a CCP meeting to list all of the positive activities that were happening in the community, now and in the past. Before the stories were chosen from this list, we came up with these guidelines to help us decide which stories we should focus on:

- Positive impact in our community
- Gives people hope (positive role models)
- A lot of people in our community are participating
- Inspires people to learn (example: culture)
- Makes people feel cared for
- Brings people together
- Gives people support
- Something for children and youth to do
- Connected to the CCP goals and values
- Provides fundraising support for activities
- Real ownership through contribution to activities, projects and programs
- Teamwork
- Honoring loved ones
- Provides space for communal healing

With these things in mind, we chose the five positive community activities to tell stories about. We decided to focus on activities that community members were volunteering or contributing their time to benefit the community as a whole.

Although we would have loved to honour all positive activities in our community, we were not able to list all of the positive things that are happening through the activities and programs at the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Band School, Health and Family Services, the Band Office, the Elders' Centre, the Youth Centre, and Churches, because of our short time limit on this project.

Elders' Words of Wisdom

Irene Sheard



"I think the people that inspired me the most were the elders because they were so willing to help out in everything that we did in this community. They're the backbone of this community. And, when you listen to them, they're soft-spoken but you know, they have wisdom and I still look up to them for advice. When they're gone, we need to know and pass what we've learned, pass them on to our future generations. Because the future generations are going to be our leaders and we have many, many, many children here in this community. If we don't document anything that we learn from our elders we will lose it all, we will lose our language, we will lose everything, our cultural part of our community, of our families. We need to document whatever we hear from our elders. And we need to talk, we need to have our young people go out there and talk to them. Because if we don't have the young people go out there we will lose it all... those are the people that inspired me because they were hard, hard workers. They never stopped."

"What I would like to see is that our young people go back to education. Not only that, but the elders come together and teach them the traditional values of our language and arts and the potlatch system. They need to know that. You can't just do whatever you want to do unless you know the background of it, the background of your bighouses that you come from. It's really good that we have our cultural events... and we have the recreation going on... What I'd like to see come back too, is more field trips to our traditional lands, and I've been talking to one of our Elders that have been going up to Smith Inlet and Blunden, bringing people there too. Invite our young students and our young people that are working with the band."

Mary Johnson



“I really think it’s important to have these positive community activities. It brings us together, family, friends. It brings other communities to our Christmas Dinners. Hospitality, part of life is to open our hearts to other people, teaching our children, our grandchildren, to share our love. Our community is always sharing, whether it’s a happy or sad occasion, our community as people, is always so open to offering our hearts to other communities. We are humble. We open our hearts. That’s the

way it had been done throughout the years... Our elders have always been a good example. We are positive role models, to show our positive lifestyle and bring back our roots. People from off reserve come to celebrate different events. It’s really nice to have different activities, to celebrate the holidays.”

“Encourage our young people, our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, keep encouraging family to talk positive. If you see children and their expressions on their faces are sad, give them a hug, tell them you love them, talk positive, and encourage them. When they come home from school acknowledge them, show them appreciation, if it is to do with sports or other activities. Be proud of them, praise them and do prayers for them.”

“I wish there were more facilities for our young people, our grandchildren, in the near future. I would like to see a recreation building. I would like to see a miniature museum. We have youth that are artistic. In the band school we have children who learn how to do arts and crafts, tourists that come to Port Hardy are always looking for something to buy.”

Willie Walkus



“John Charlie, I watched him feed people that couldn’t feed themselves. One family that lived on their boats he brought food to them. I always seen his big white van parked down there. He had lots of skills and talents. He wasn’t educated and he couldn’t read, but he would go to the big stores and get things donated to feed people by explaining what he was doing. You would see him on the road and the park giving things away from his van. He talked about opening a food bank. The guy

that opened up the Harvest Food Bank must have picked it up after he passed away. His heart was with the people that had nothing.”

“Natasha’s Grandpa Lou-Pie, Grandpa Lou Walkus, he was a comedian. He really knew how to make people laugh. When he was around you would never see the reserve the way it is today. He was not dirty. He used to be a clean man. He made a box with a rope on it and pulled it around the community to pick up garbage. That’s where I got the idea for the kids to clean up the reserve to earn their bracelets for the Carnival. The fundraising for the Carnival started in the 1980s, so the kids from the community could go. Every year, there is a community clean up that kids do. If they pick up garbage in the community, two garbage bags full, they earn their bracelet for the Carnival rides.”

The Christmas Dinner

Luke 2:10-12... *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*

The Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Christmas Dinner is a well-loved tradition. Families from the community, from town, and from surrounding communities, including people from



Wak'as Hall, Christmas Dinner 2009

Alert Bay, Fort Rupert and Quatsino, come together to celebrate, support each other, and share in fellow-

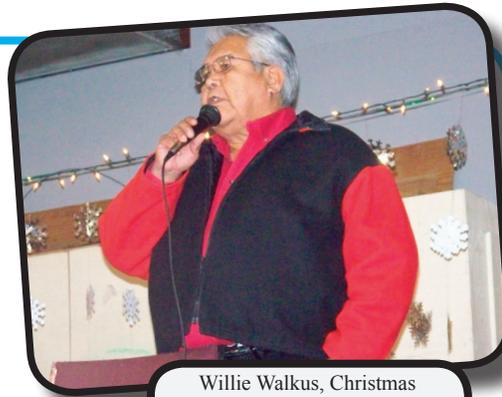
ship. The organizers are so glad to also see the foster parents attending with their children. They too have a role within the community because they are there, loving and nurturing our children. Sandra says what she likes about the Christmas Dinner, is that "its an annual community event

which brings everyone together in a positive way." This past Christmas Dinner at the Wak'as Hall, well over seven hundred people enjoyed turkey dinner, dessert and an evening of entertainment. And they do try to ensure that any diabetics are fed first, along with the elders. Children wait in excitement for the end of the meal, when the time comes for Santa and his helpers to give out gifts to all the children. Over the years, there has been entertainment like beauty contests, music performances, skits and the turkey shoot contest. There have been other activities in the past connected to the Christmas Dinner, including the Christmas Light Contest and the Polar Bear Swim.



Left to right: Cheri-Lynn Walkus, Mary Jane Puglas, Christine Walkus, Santa

Elder Willie Walkus remembers the history of the Christmas Dinner: "1979 is when we first started our Christmas Dinner, in the pink house at the bottom of the hill. This was a community place. Filled it up with whoever could come. We brought our own plates and cups... Then it got bigger... Then we used to use the Receiving Home for our dinners." Sandra and Eddie Charlie also remember that the Christmas Dinner all got started with the hard work of Tom and Annie Wallace, and Paddy and Nellie Walkus. They also remember that for years, Gertrude Walkus helped a lot with the Christmas Dinner. Irene Sheard is another elder who has selflessly given of herself to whatever is being done in our community, whether its health, education, or whatever program, she is always willing to show her appreciation of the efforts of whomever is running a program. Her caring and her acknowledgement of every program she takes part in are very much appreciated.



Willie Walkus, Christmas Dinner, 2009

As the Christmas Dinner grew in size, the Lions Hall, and more recently the Wak'as Hall, have been decorated and set up for the dinners. Over the years, Eddie shares how the elders are always honoured over the years: "I always picture a lot of the elders out there sitting in the front row. The way we had it this year with the Christmas dinner, I really liked the way it was set up with the elders all sitting in the front row, right in the front with round tables."

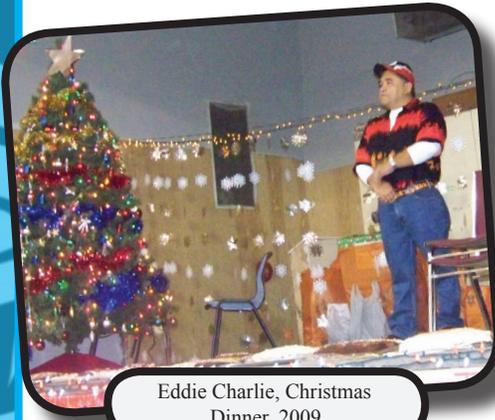
Sandra would like to do more to welcome guests from other communities, "and think ahead when it comes to our guests, to set aside tables for them, because it's an honour to have them and hear what they have to say about our community and how we come together as a group, and sometimes we just start off with as a small group and wind up being huge."



Sandra Charlie, Christmas Dinner, 2009

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The lists for the children's gifts are begun months in advance of the Christmas dinner so that advance shopping can be done while there are good sales happening in the stores. While they are doing this, the volunteers also ensure that any help needed to compile the Elders' lists are done. They work with Willie Walkus and Bunny Jackson on that list. Willie and Bunny have been in charge of finding and wrapping the elders' gifts.



Eddie Charlie, Christmas Dinner, 2009

The Christmas Dinner takes a lot of preparation and is a time that really shows people's strengths and their dedication to the community. Besides the year-round fundraising, the setting up of the Christmas Dinner takes a full week. First the hall is decorated, then the candlelight service is put on, and then the gifts are wrapped for the children and the elders, which usually takes a whole day. The day before the dinner, the

tables are set up and the last of the decorations are put up, including the Christmas tree. For the dinner, the cooking starts the day before the event, including a full day to prepare the jello and baked goods.

Sandra and Eddie Charlie took over the organizing and fundraising for the Christmas Dinner back in 2005, always with the support of their family members and the staff at



Eva Walkus

the Health and Family Services. A lot of community support is needed when putting on such a big event. Eddie says, "It's actually been pretty good going down island, taking different groups down there to shop [for presents], and Sandra's always had the list with her. She knows the age categories and how much she is going to use per child... It's nice to get together with the community..."

The whole community wants to get



Joanna Jack and Rolando King



Michael George, Sandra Charlie, Perry Charlie (Bingo Committee Members)

involved after we come back, whether it's packing the presents in and up the stairs until the gift wrappers come in, from upstairs to downstairs to wrap, and then to put them underneath the bleachers for storage until the big day. For the Christmas wrapping, you put a notice out, and the next day the wrappers come out, it's amazing to see the amount of people that show up to wrap." Over the years there has been so many community members helping out with the preparation for the Christmas Dinner, which is greatly appreciated.

The support people in the community give to others goes beyond the Christmas Dinner. Eddie says, "How the people come together and help each other, whether it is a death, whether it's Christmas dinner, whether it's just helping people out on the reserve here... I see it every day that some people are helping other people out, trying to make it better for them." Maggie Jack adds, "It just amazes me how our people pull together no matter what the situation is... the involvement from the elders... I always look at our elders, the impact they have with us and the teaching and the knowledge that they give us, to look after our children and raise our children in the best way that we can. And it is for our children that we do these things... I am just so thankful to be part of this community and how we work together."



Gary Walkus, Bingo Committee Member

Sandra is looking forward to this year's planning for the Christmas Dinner, hoping a new committee will be formed for the Christmas Dinner to bring more people in to help. There is still more help needed to do all of the Christmas activities that there once was. Sandra says, "There is just not enough of us, when it comes to the committee, the

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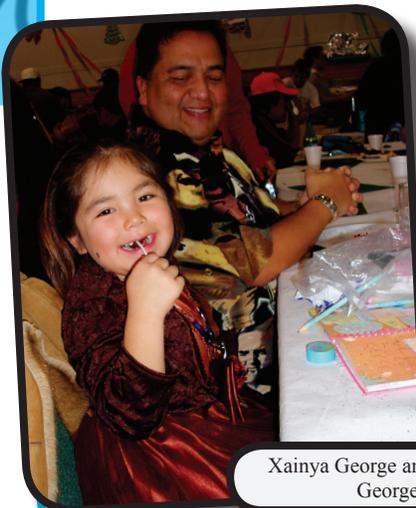
groups, the staff, the Bingo, there is just not enough of us to plan.” Raising money for the Christmas Dinner is very hard work for the entire year. The fundraising is mainly done through the Bingo Committee. Many community members have been part of the Bingo Committee over the years, raising money for the Christmas Dinner, Wak’as Hall



Left to Right: Leslie Speck Jr., Anthony Walkus, Leslie Speck Sr., Amanda Walkus

payments and sports teams, including Sandra and Eddie Charlie, Joanna Jack, Gary Walkus, Thomas Jack, Vonita Hill, Rick Coon, Perry Charlie, Loraine Wilson, Wilson Charlie, Michael George, and the late Peter Charlie. The contributions of the Bingo workers are also appreciated throughout the year to support the fundraising, Marion Wamiss, Bob and Cathy Swain, and Michael George working on concessions, just to name a few, Darryl Coon Sr. on clean up, Henry Charlie and Wallace Walkus on set up, and Wilson Charlie and Lorraine Wilson as the Bingo callers. The Bingo crew is acknowledged for their hard work through an appreciation dinner before Christmas every year, where there is a gift exchange and a Christmas bonus given out to each worker. There are also opportunities created for community members to raise money for sports teams and other events, by helping with the cooking for the Christmas Dinner. Sandra says, “Those are the reasons why we started, was to help these

groups. To inspire them to come and be involved, to being a part of it.” Before there was Bingo in the community, when the population was low, Sandra remembers “the program dollars used to contribute in all areas.” As the population of the community grows, funding the Christmas Dinner has been challenging. The Lions Club has always been very helpful in lending or renting tables for the dinner, through Richard George’s support. Sponsorships from the Band’s Support Funds, the Social Development department and the Treaty Office have all been very



Xainya George and Richard George

helpful in past years when needed. Sandra and Eddie both feel that a separate 'fundraising committee' is needed to handle the various contests, prizes, and to organize the current annual events and the ones that have not been possible to keep up, for example, the Polar Bear Swim and the Turkey Shoot.



Late Peter Charlie

The recent loss of Peter Charlie, who was working the Bingos regularly, has been very difficult for the family and the community. Eddie says, "We're short-handed right now and Sandra put a notice out to the community about trying to get a couple workers up there after the loss of my nephew. One of the workers had to take time off for a little while, with what he's going through, because of my nephew, with whom he was very close. That was a big loss with Peter not there. Sometimes it just doesn't seem the same up at the Bingos."

The Christmas Dinner is a time to lift people's spirits and come together as a community in celebration. Ravena Coon says, "We work with the community on a day to day basis and witness all the struggles, and it seems as though every other month we have tragedies, and this one main dinner is something that we know is a positive... just the look in all the kids' faces, the parents' faces is when you know." Eddie says, "I think there's lot of positive things that come out of this, throughout the years we have been having this... It's nice to see the impact that has happened in this reserve throughout the years we've lived here. Whether we lost elders, we still come together as one... I always think about David Walkus when he lost his wife near Christmas, and how the community still came together, and he also passed away near Christmas another year. The community came together then too, after his death."

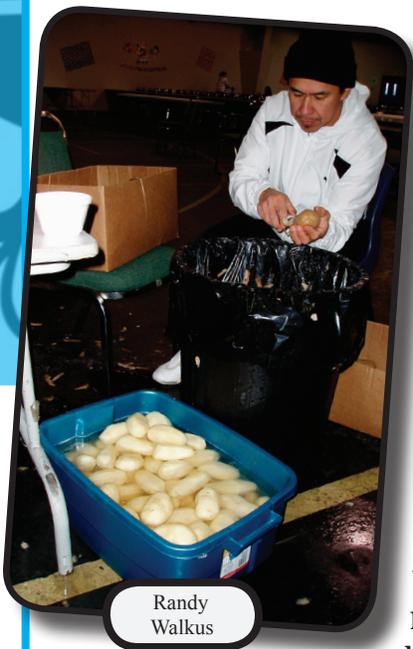
The Candlelight Service is always planned a few days before the dinner to give people the chance to grieve and honour loved ones before the Christmas celebration. Eddie says, "For sister Bunny to have that

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candlelight service, it brings everybody together, whether it's crying or just being with each other. You sit there and you look at all these pictures, you think about this person who was here just yesterday... and now they're gone, and yet, we still get together and have this Christmas Dinner."

There have been some very memorable times putting on the Christmas Dinner. Ravena and Eddie both remember the year the power went off, about three years ago. Eddie says, "It was Christmas Dinner day and we were running around with our heads chopped off because there was no power. We had all the turkeys, all the potatoes... One thing about the day that the power went off, everybody still got together and helped each other... We phoned Richard George that day and asked him if there was any possible chance we could use the Lions Hall to cook all our turkeys. We had a lot of turkeys." Ravena adds, "That was the two hockey teams that did that... both the teams and the spouses were like, *"Okay, we're up for a challenge, we have to do it."* It was just awesome. I've never seen our teams pulled that close together in such a short time... But once that power went out it was just like poof, everyone knew that the community

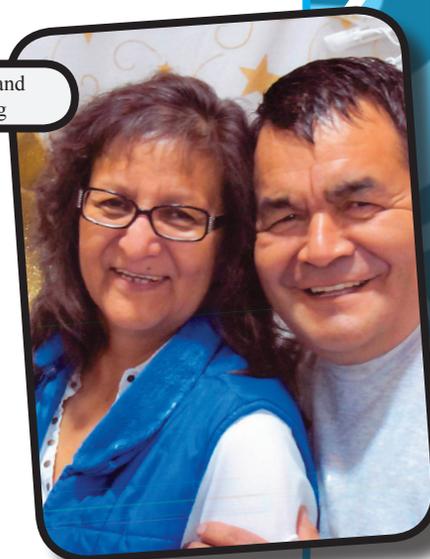
had to be fed." Eddie adds, "It worked out just right, when everybody got up there and the lights went on and everything. Everybody just got together and started putting everything into place... That was a really good time too." Ravena also remembers her first time coming back home in the early 80's: "That year I could remember the Christmas dinner being held in the Chief's house, which was my uncle's... We all stayed there, and I went in tired, and all I could see were people peeling potatoes and carrots, and it was the most amazing thing to me to come to. And it's pretty overwhelming to go back to that memory because I've lived in a city most of my life before that, and to see such, I don't know how many people back then, but it was wall-to-wall full. And they were preparing still at three o'clock in the morning,



peeling.”

The positive influence of elders’ teachings shine through the efforts made to put on the Christmas Dinner. Eddie says, “If it wasn’t for a lot of the elders that have gone today, we learned a lot of the things that was brought up, in this reserve... With an open mind and open heart, to do what you have to do at the hall there, to help the community out, to show the community that you care and you love them... Today I thank God, for being there for both of us, to do what we do every year, for our community.” Sandra shares how elders have given her strength and guidance: “There are quite a few of them who have played a huge role in our lives trying to teach us, trying to mentor us, trying to help us along...I think that’s what gave me that positive outlook... there’s a lot of stuff that we do, through the staff and what we do within in the community and how involved we are... I think about Paddy, his wife, Tom Wallace and his wife. There are so many elders out there that have played a huge role in our lives. And I’m so thankful for those teachings to this day... It’s always good to listen, always good to learn. The biggest part is respecting that from them. I’m very grateful for the role that they played for us.” Maggie also shares her respect for elders that have passed on: “They’re the ones that have inspired me to do what I am doing today, because of the teachings they have taught me. I try to do the best that I can, what I’ve learned from them, because they’re the ones that gave it their all, no matter what. Any situation, they never turned their back on it. You know they loved you to death, in any situation good or bad. That’s what I always looked at with my dad, and my grandma and everyone. That’s what inspires me and that’s what kept me sober today, is my dad’s testimony, and that’s what inspires me to go forward and do the things I need to do, and how he perceived himself... We’re surrounded by all the ones that gives us strength, to the ones that are with us today, and the ones that are gone before us.”

Maggie Jack and Bobby King



The efforts that go into putting on the Christmas Dinner is a way for

the many people involved to put into practice the teachings from elders. Ravena says, "When I think about the Christmas Dinner I think about when I moved here, my grandpa [Louie G. Walkus] passed away not long after that, so I didn't know my grandparents. And I hear stories about my grandmother [Elizabeth Walkus] and she died very young, and this is the teaching of our people, to feed our people always. And like Sandra said, it's a great honor to have Chiefs from other places come. And that's exactly what my Gran did, back in traditional lands. I'm always told by elders that she brought them in and fed them, you know, opened her house no matter if she had twelve kids and I think that's the part that really inspires my heart... I myself have never been



Ravena Coon and Darryl
Coon Sr.

back to traditional lands... from our elders they teach patience, from aunty Janet, she's taught, if she hasn't taught me through herself I've learnt it through Tina. And those tools are life-long. I can honestly say five years ago, my community didn't matter. I had a job. I didn't want to be involved in politics or anything. As long as I was working, as long as my husband was working, we were making ends meet. But now, being a part of the community, I've

never been or held so much pride in my heart... even my mom [Cathy Swain], I don't know how she has her patience, she can barely squeeze a buck, but she opens her house... And when I see Christmas Dinner, I'm so proud. I see people that butt heads here and there, but it warms my heart to just look around and see that everyone's there, even though there's all that history. That's why I say this is the most positive time in our year that you can get everyone under one roof and have a happy time."

Opportunities for the next generation to learn about supporting the community come out of children being involved in preparing for the Christmas Dinner and other community activities. Sandra says, "To have Quinten sitting here, it warms my heart that he's here, because this is the generation that eventually will take over... who will carry on his knowledge, his expertise, things that he'll carry forward... and it

warms my heart to see something like this in place, because it will be important for this generation to realize the importance of togetherness at this annual community event.”

Everybody has their own inspiration and reasons for planning activities for the community. Sandra says, “My reasons for doing what I do within this community is wanting to give back in a positive way, whether it’s big or small. It’s exciting to see the spirit of Christmas and a good way to end the year, being together with everyone.”



Left to right: Quinten Coon, Eleanor Walkus, Tianna Walkus, Mary Ellen Paul

Lessons Learned

- **Committees are a good way to get others involved and share the workload**
- **Community gatherings provide opportunities to honour elders and guests**
- **Community gatherings create healing opportunities for community members**
- **Building in small opportunities for community members to work provides funding for sports teams and other activities**
- **Planning ahead can help when working with a tight budget**
- **Children can learn to care for others by being involved with putting on community gatherings**
- **Any contribution, no matter how small, is meaningful**

We would like to thanks Sandra Charlie, Eddie Charlie, Joanna Jack, Maggie Jack, Ravena Coon, and Willie Walkus for sharing their experiences and ideas for this story.

Family Activities

Easter Egg Hunts, Halloween Fireworks, Sports Tournaments

Every year, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw parents and children gather around Easter time. The adults each get a bunch of small eggs and one numbered prize egg to hide, and the kids hunt for them, some even winning prizes. Community members that once hunted for eggs, hidden by their aunts and uncles, are now grown and hiding eggs for their own little ones to find. This event brings so much joy and laughter to the community, and it all started with Jack Walkus and his desire to do something for the kids.



Easter Egg Hunt,
2010

In the mid 1980s Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw children who went to the main Port Hardy Easter egg hunt were not getting treated fairly. Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw kids and their parents have been a lot happier since we started having our own community's egg hunt, and Jack says, "That encouraged me... to push for one for the next year, made me happy just to see the

kids' faces. It doesn't happen when you go into town for the Easter egg hunt in town. I'm not saying that it's not a good thing, it's just a lot more difficult cause kids are shy to go into town and mingle... cause then they don't feel comfortable about taking eggs off of another kid that they don't know, so they just come home maybe with an empty Easter basket.... I watched it happen two or three years before I started. Seen it happen, thought maybe it's time, pushing for us



Louie Jack Walkus, Sue
Walkus and Louie Walkus IV

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to get our own Easter egg hung in town or on the reserve. And lots of the parents wouldn't even bring the kids into town anymore... they wait till we start ours."

Jack decided to start doing one in Tsulquate, and asked the band council to help. From small beginnings, this annual event has built to the point where it costs seven or eight hundred dollars a year to supply all of the Easter eggs and prizes. Jack says, "In the first year I did it... they were so excited cause at that time it was the first time I had a number of events... and it was just an ongoing thing ever since then. The Lions Club had their Easter egg hunt at noon, so in order to accommodate the kids that did go to town to join their Easter egg hunt we started our Easter egg hunt at 1:30 for the younger kids and then half an hour later for the older ones."



Easter Egg Hunt, Tsul-
quate Playground, 1989

Although it began with Jack, over the years other community members like Ernie and Dorothy Henderson, and Port Hardy Secondary School grads, have organized some hunts, all with the purpose of seeing kids in our community have fun. Jack says, "Whether or not it was me doing it myself or me and my family or somebody else, as long as something was happening for the kids... my main concern, my main goal in life is actually to promote our children... We did a lot of stuff that involved the kids and watching them grow up to be what they're doing now and then have the opportunity to do that with the grand-

kids. It's really rewarding to me personally to be able to do that."



Jack Walkus,
Easter Egg Hunt, 2010

Jack's daughter Colleen says, "... There's been times when there wasn't going to be an Easter egg hunt and my dad had contacted the right people and got the ball rolling and got the money from here and there. You know he made people get the



Andrea Walkus-Andrew, Don Walkus, Sue Walkus, Easter Egg Hunt, 2010

money from wherever they could get it so that the Easter egg hunt could happen every year." Over the years many people have participated and helped out with the

hunt. Some of those involved have now passed

on, including "Auntie Laura and Uncle Martin" and Billy Williams. Others who participated include Jack's children, their spouses and grandkids, Colleen Walkus, Andrea Walkus, Harvey Walkus, Missy Walkus, Perry Charlie, Stephanie Walkus, Louie Walkus, Jackson Walkus, Charlotte Dubitski, Donnie Walkus, Sonny Andrew, Natasha Walkus and Harry Puglas.

Those who organize the hunt do many things to try and make it as much fun as possible, even for those who show up late. Sue says, "...At the end of the Easter egg hunt, we never put them [the eggs] all out, because of the late comers. There is always late comers that are coming in when it's time for the older ones and they are too young. So we always make a box for each age category, and hand it to them. They missed the fun of looking for the eggs but they didn't miss out on the chocolates and stuff. They always get a bag... we're always making sure that the kids are happy, walking away happy, and the ones that didn't make it on time they're happy too". Even kids that can't go at all still benefit from the hunt. Jack says, "After the day is over and we still had something left over we'd go drive around to houses to see knowing that some kids were sick and



Louie Walkus, Easter Egg Hunt, 2010

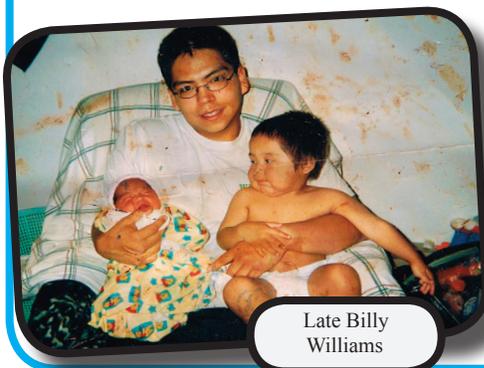
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we drop some candy off to the kids, that's the way we've been doing things."

The rest of the community is very appreciative of those who organize the Easter egg hunt. Sue says, "They're really happy they see all the kids that are happy, running around looking for Easter eggs with their bags, then a lot of people seem to appreciate like what I just mentioned that their kids are sad because they only have one or two eggs in their bag and they say 'go see Sue' or one of my kids that are carrying around a bag full of stuff. They throw some in their bags and then the kids like that. They're happy."

Almost twenty years after starting the Easter egg hunt, Jack and Sue's family started doing fireworks on October 31st to celebrate daughter Colleen's birthday. This celebration has meant a lot to the family, since it helps them to make up for many of Colleen's birthdays when the family was not all together. A funny thing happened in 2009, when Louie the III, Jack's son, learned a valuable lesson. He didn't realize that the firework had been lit minutes before, and as he bent over to light the firework, it went off and grazed the top of his head. So, the lesson is, always making sure who lit what, where.

In addition to celebrating their own family with the fireworks, others from the community enjoy this time to come together and celebrate. Sue says, "Every year we see new faces... people that we don't see come out to these things, like in the past, we haven't seen them come to watch. But it seems to be growing... a lot of people honking their horn after it was over, yelling good show, good show." Colleen says, "It's become a tradition... people are going to go trick or treating and then they're going to go to the fireworks, you know, so it's a positive way to bring the community and family together, tradition."



Late Billy Williams

Not only has the fireworks brought the community together, but it has helped create fond memories of those who have passed on. Jack says, "Late Billy Williams, he was a big one for helping with the fireworks... He was always there and he was a big part of our lives for the longest

time... We always have good memories of Billy with regards to family gatherings with our family. My daughter's late husband was always there right in the forefront helping us get things done." Sadly, Billy committed suicide a few years ago, but the family still has these memories to cherish.

In addition to the Easter egg hunt and the yearly fireworks, Jack also coordinates a yearly Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw floor hockey tournament, a memorial tournament to honour loved ones that have passed on. Jack also coordinates the *G-N Memorial Team*. Instead of dedicating the whole team to one person who has passed on, players can each choose who they want to remember and represent, and it is open to players from other communities. Colleen says, "There's a sense of belonging that my dad has given to all of them [the players] and you know, an equality, they have a place that they can call home now, they have a team that they can call their own and can be proud..."

Just like the egg hunts and the fireworks, the tournaments also bring the community closer together. Sue relates that "one of our elders that used to come to hockey tournaments all the time... I remember talking to her and I told her I was so happy to see her there, and she looked at me and laughed. She said, "This is good medicine. Look at all the people". It was Violet Walkus. That's what she told me, it's good medicine to bring the people together. That's what I remember about her. She was there at every tournament before she passed away."

Violet Walkus was a very respected elder in our community and renowned for her dancing. Colleen says, "She is likely remembered by so many people, and she did have the ability to bring our community together. In her last potlatch everyone wanted to be there to watch her do her dance and there was people there who were watching her and crying, people that were crying just to see her out there on the dance

Late Violet Walkus and great grand daughter Damaya Walkus



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floor was something so powerful, and something so moving, the last time that we were able to see her dance at her potlatch, that inspired a lot of people and it brought our community together. Like my mom said, and those were Violet's words, it was good medicine. And what she did was good medicine for our community."

Having opportunities like the tournaments to spend time with our elders is important. Jack says, "What we learned from our elders is respect, you know, you gotta respect, whether you like it or not you gotta respect, respect what people are thinking and maybe they may be wrong, maybe right, but you gotta respect what they're saying... the elders teach you right from wrong, but that's what they're there for... and what they say you gotta really respect what they tell you, and pass it on to your kids. You know, say thank you, thank you very much... cause there is a lot of stuff that we have to take and teach our kids cause the elders won't be here forever."

As with the Easter egg hunt, some years it is tough to find the funds to carry on with the fireworks and other events, but as Colleen says, "We always find a way to make it happen." Sometimes it can be difficult to get people to help out, but Jack's wife Sue says, "It's not hard when you have a big family, you phone your brothers and sisters and say "Look this is what I have and I might need your help, are you available?" Colleen says that a big lesson she's learned from her dad is "push the right buttons, dig in every pocket you know, and do whatever it takes to make it happen." About the most recent year's egg hunt, Jack says, "Pretty well everybody went down to help... Lately, the community has turned to modern technology to get people involved and out to events. Regarding text messages, Jack's daughter Natasha says, "I think that it got [the fireworks show] pretty big this year... It was a bigger turn out this year than any other year, so technology's come a far way from paper."

While these events provide entertainment for young and old, there is a deeper reason Jack's family devotes so much time and energy to organizing them. Colleen says, "We are in the fight against suicide... it has touched our lives and it's left an impact and it's just something that motivates us and drives us... my dad hosts tournaments all the

time and that's to give the young adults and teens something to do other than drink... it's such a positive outcome every time, you see all the people from the bleachers, all the teams that come to my dad's tournaments and they say thank you very much, you know, and it's just like I said, it's something that drives our family to do more for the



G&N Memorial and The Regulators

youth and the community.” Jack adds, “...It was really hard to have a suicide like that happen so close to home, so close to the heart and to see this young man take his own life, to not understand why it happened and this is, this actually probably drove us to provide community events for the kids and the adults. It's not just kids that are suicidal... there's so much suicide attempts happening, just about every week on reserve that we know of that it is a really, really hard subject to think about so we try to think and do positive things to promote soccer, hockey, Easter egg hunt stuff, that everybody can be happy to look forward to instead of being depressed to the point where they're very, very suicidal... we're trying to get them [the youth] not to think about it again or the next time... you see a lot of people that go to soccer and hockey and play in tournaments. They're the people that are out there drinking and they sober up to come and watch.”

Jack's advice to others about community organizing is: “...Don't do it for recognition of yourself... do it to give the kids, or anybody for that matter, a moment of happiness in their lives that some of the time, most of the time, is not a good life... You're doing it for the kids. You're doing it to make other people happy. In doing that, you'll be happy.”

Jack and Sue continue to push for more positive things for the community's children. Their next goal is to have more recreation time for the kids. Jack says, “We brought a petition around to have the hall. Take it back from one of the bingos so we can have more hall time and we're talking about the little kids. Like we see them on the streets playing hockey and soccer on the pavement and traffic. And this is something that parents don't like to see happen...but they don't have a place to

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go. I'm hoping something will come out of that petition that we submitted to the band office just so that they'll have some place to go." Hopefully other community members will continue to support these activities and events, and continue to find fun ways to get together and show our love and support for one another. In this way, people continue to be hopeful for their own future and look forward to the day their kids will be the ones putting out Easter eggs for their own little ones.

Lessons Learned

- **Family activities let children and adults know they are loved**
- **More recreation time is needed in the community for children and youth**
- **Sports tournaments promote healthy choices**
- **Plan community activities with love and compassion instead of for recognition**
- **Encourage our people to feel that their lives are important to our community**
- **Honour our loved ones that have passed on with positive actions**
- **Pay close attention to our elders words of wisdom**
- **Tradition brings recognition of community values**

We would like to thank Jack Walkus, Sue Walkus, Natasha Walkus, Colleen Walkus, Louie Walkus, and Jackson Walkus for sharing their experiences and ideas for this story.

Tla tla tlo nam Singers

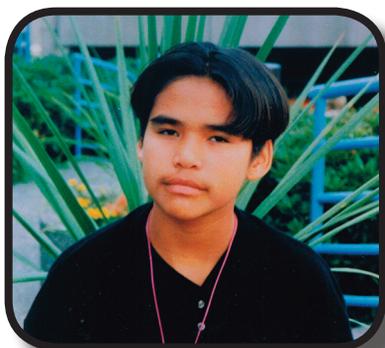
Alvin Walkus Jr.	Dave Wallace	Shawna Jacobs
Andrew "Malong" Dawson	Davis Henderson	Tiffany Charlie
Buddy Walkus	Duane Nelson	Tom Wallace Jr.
Bob Chamberlain	Ernie Scow	Tristan Swain-Walkus
Charles Willie	Gary Walkus	Vanessa Walkus
Clayton Walkus	Late Harvey Walkus	Walter Brown
Daniel Charlie	Lucy Scow	Wilfred Williams
Darryl Coon Sr.	Maggie Fox	William George
	Mike Willie	

The Tla tla tlo nam Singers are a cultural singing group in the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community. Buddy Walkus, Gary Walkus, Alvin Walkus Jr., and Davis Henderson, started the singing group together about 15 years ago. Buddy says, "A few of us got together and we just started learning how to sing, sing songs, potlatch songs... Then our group started to expand with different people coming in and out to sing with us. We just go to different houses and start learning new songs together." The group is still growing, Buddy says, "There's these guys that sit here with us at the log you know, and we respect them as Tla tla tlo nam Singers. It's not just us as a group that started it, it's everyone that comes to the log that are Tla tla tlo nam Singers... we love to do what we do, this is a big passion for us to go to events like potlatches and feasts." The Tla tla tlo nam Singers are currently the only singing group from the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community, so they are relied on and recognized by many people in the community.



Singers at the log, Gift of Life Celebration

The group performs at potlatches and feasts for families in the North Island, and more recently at the culture nights at the Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre in Port Hardy.



Late Kenneth Henderson

The name Tla tla tlo nam honours the late Kenneth Henderson. Buddy says, "We got the name Tla tla tlo nam. It was our brother Kenneth's Indian Name. After he passed away we went to ask Aunty Bunny [Jackson] and Uncle TK [Thomas Henderson Sr.] if we could use his Indian name for our singing group. That was our grandfather's Indian name. Kenneth Henderson was his name. He was 'Nakwaxda'xw, coming from Blunden

Harbour. Bunny shares her thanks with the singing group: "To know that you guys are doing this in honour and in memory of my son. I don't know if everybody's here but I just wanted to thank you all for those of you that are here."

Buddy speaks about his friendship with Kenneth: "When we first started learning how to sing, we started hanging out more together... we grew up together, but after we learned how to sing we hung out even more than we did when we were kids."

Maggie Fox remembers her brother Kenneth's passion for singing: "He kept us on our toes all the time. We'd forget songs and it would just seem to happen that all of us, except Kenneth, we would all forget the words. We'd all stop singing and Kenneth, he was so loud... When he sang, I had a recording of us, and it happened that time, at the Receiving Home, we all stopped singing, but Kenneth, and you could just hear his voice, and he was like, "What are you guys doing?" He was just looking at us. We were all, "What are the next words?" We stopped and we were just thinking, and he just starts, he's like, "Heyyyyy!" He just started singing, and he was trying to tell us what the words were."

Buddy and Kenneth started singing together when they were teenagers. Buddy says, "When Kenneth and I first started to learn how to sing, we didn't care, we just learned. We didn't care where we sung, or how long we were singing. We would just walk around the reserve

singing... I remember one of our elders, yelled out at us, my uncle John Charlie... "Hey! You don't sing that unless you're in the Bighouse, you *%#*head! Don't ever sing that again!" He turns around, walks back in, slams the door, comes back, "I mean it!", turns around and walks back in. Kenneth and I were real scared. We were walking up the hill. He was at the big white coffee house when he said that to us... That's not the first time we've gotten in trouble for doing that. We walked out of the reserve singing songs that we weren't supposed to be singing. And so, we knew that, and we were walking to town this other time, and we started singing out loud again, not knowing Uncle John was around. Same thing, he got mad at us, because we sang, he told us not to do that."

The first song that Buddy and Kenneth learned together was the ladies professional dance, belonging to the Kwakwiltl people in Fort Rupert, called "Yawilinukw". Buddy says, "I think he just loved the song. Every time I hear this song I could hear him, I could hear his voice, singing with the song, and singing with us all the time, that song... Kenneth would start off with that song. Right away I knew he loved the song. He couldn't stop listening to it. He especially loved to listen to uncle John sing. We had a tape of Uncle John singing. Uncle John was really loud when he sang that song. That's how Kenneth was, he sang his heart out. But every time I hear that song, I always think of brother Kenneth." Alvin Walkus Jr. adds, "I think all the brothers all have their own signature song, Kenneth, the Ladies' Professional, brother Harvey, Fun song called Wu hu hu wey, Davis, his Peace Dance, Gary's Hamatsa song, Ernie's Number Seven."

Maggie Fox shares her memory of Buddy when he first started singing: "He was really young and at that time. He didn't have a drum. He used a basket and a ladle, and that was really something. Shows how determined he was to learn and sing, what he was really talented at, and have time to teach others, even though he just used a basket and a ladle for his drum. And I thank him for going so far to where he's at today. A year later... he made his own tape for singing, with a basket and a soup ladle and Uncle Tom Wallace bought him his own drum."

Ernie Scow later joined the group and reflects on how he began learning: “Bud and I, like when we sing, he teaches me. He taught me and he wanted to learn Lahal songs. It was Lahal songs, it was our culture and it was, “Laxwalis.” He learned that, and just the years going to school, and Bud would give me a tape. I don’t know if it was just him singing but he said, “Yeah, I’ll give you a tape”, and I said, “Sweet.” I didn’t have nothing to listen to it on at all, but I said, “Sweet, something to learn.” And Bud turns around and says,



Buddy Walkus Sr. Ernie Scow,
Walter Brown

“I want you to sing it now, in one week.” I bit my lip and, “Yeah, okay”... It was like a about a week after, I saw Bud and he asked, “Did you learn any of those songs?” I said, “Yeah.” I started singing one, he started singing one, and I started singing with him...”

Lucy Scow shares her experience of learning the dances. She says, “I was a really good friend with Kenneth when we grew up, but I only really went for the dancing and then all throughout the years I started learning this song.... I’ve learned a lot of things that I never thought I would... like the hand movements. You’d just do it but you don’t really know the meaning of it, but being with these guys... you know what’s what, and who this song belongs to, and who’s supposed to sing this, and who you’re supposed to ask to sing this.”

The Tla tla tlo nam Singers are sharing their cultural knowledge as they learn from elders, relatives, and other community members. Buddy shares what he has learned about our culture growing up: “When I first started I didn’t know that each tribe had their own songs and their own dances. It took me awhile to learn, to learn that... I’m excited to learn more of our songs and our dances, our histories behind them, behind the songs and dances and to learn our language. I found out, you know, that I sit in the Bighouse, after the potlatch or feast is done, all the chiefs get up, they get up and speak and most of them talk in Bakwamgala... But just to encourage all the next generations to come

after us to try and learn our language.” Buddy continues, “It’s cool to hear all the old men speak... they’ll tell you at the beginning, whose song it is, who danced it, and then they’ll tell you again, right after the song... I think that’s how we’re getting to know who these songs and dances belong to...” Alvin adds, “...You learn some of the hand movements and you learn where the songs came from, cause a lot of them, we find out that it’s through our relatives from Rivers Inlet or our relatives in Kingcome... I just wanted to try and learn as much as I can about our family’s histories and some of the songs that we had. We have a tape of great grandfather singing some of our songs, some of the chants. We have grandpa Joe Seaweed, he sings some of the songs and he’s explained a lot of things cause his kids had a lot of really nice names. Alex, and Lloyd and Henry, we hear all these stories about when we go to potlatches about grandpa Willie Henderson and Henry Seaweed dancing, and you just get it from the songs when we’re listening to it... Some of the songs that belonged to Phillip Paul and you hear that Phillip Paul was Davis [Henderson’s] great grandfather and he was one of the founding people, who founded Blunden Harbour. You hear the stories about how they found Smith Inlet and Storm Islands and all the little village sites that are along the coast. You hear about all these at the potlatches and feasts... I just like to sit there and listen because when they’re telling it, and they expect you to listen. I just like it. You share it and write it down someday.”

Learning our culture from our elders can often begin within the family home. Ernie says, “A long time ago, when my Gran [Mona Williams] was alive, the first song we learnt, we were living in Vancouver and knew nothing, nothing about the culture up here. And we got a tape, it just had one song on it, and every time we sang it, my Gran would

sit there... and she’d talk Kwakwala. We didn’t know what she was saying, we just said, “I love you.” And she told us what she said, you know, learning’s the best thing. It’s good medicine.” Ernie also shares a teaching from his Grandpa: “What I learned from an elder who’s passed on now,



National Aboriginal Day Celebration at Memorial Park

grandpa Chee-po [Tom Smith]. He always said, "You learn our culture before it's gone," and he said, "A lot of things are gonna go..." he called himself a baby, compared to an elder. He said, "I'm just a baby. I'm just a kid." And he was 70 years old when he called himself a baby, and he was like, "When all of us old-timers go, our culture's gonna change. Our language is gonna change." Bunny acknowledges that opportunities to learn about our culture are sometimes rare: "I always think back to my younger days when I was still living in Alert Bay with my grandparents and I always remember my grandfather teaching me. He used to Kwakwala to me and that's where I learned my Kwakwala from when I used to be with him... I would have liked to be around some elders that could have, you know, taught me things as I was growing up... I'd like to wish for so much things that didn't happen. In becoming a parent at such a young age, you know, it was really hard... I had no one really to look up to, to help, to ask for help from. I don't have too much on Kwakwala or too much on anything that I could be teaching my kids, except what I'm learning today, when I hear from our elders here... I think it's really important today that, you know, our kids learn, learn Kwakwala, learn the culture, learn how to dance, sing."

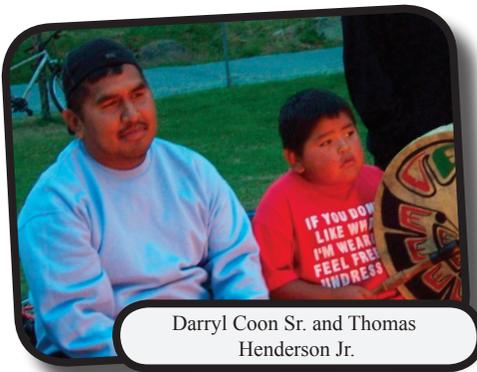


National Aboriginal Day Celebration at Memorial Park

Learning Kwakwala is an important part of being able to learn and follow protocol when performing the songs. Buddy explains the importance of "listening to our elders when they get up to the log... If you're gonna borrow a song, you get up and you tell them... If I got up and I sang a song from Fort Rupert, a mourning song, you know, I'd have to get up or I'd have to get the Chief to speak for me... That just goes to show how much I need to know, how much I need to learn our language so I can get up and, you know, speak for myself, because I know that we have to do that one day... I'd try my best, you know, to listen and learn, try to pick up what they're saying, from what I know, and in our Kwakwala language. I sit there when I have dinner at Auntie

Kathy's, I just sit there and I listen to them speak in our language and that's helping me a lot... I'd like to learn firsthand from my grannies that already know it, and they're still here today, my Granny Gertie [Walkus] and my Gran Kathy [Walkus], my Granny Louisa [Joseph], they used to sit there and talk, and speak in our language all the time... those are the three elders that really inspire me... They're teaching me how to speak our language." Wilfred Williams also shares his respect for his Gran's [Margaret Rose Scow] teachings: "She always talked Kwakwala to me, and she explained on what it was, what she was saying... there was certain words she would say to me, "You know what that means?" So, she took all her time... I just fell right off it after she passed away. It's been a long time..."

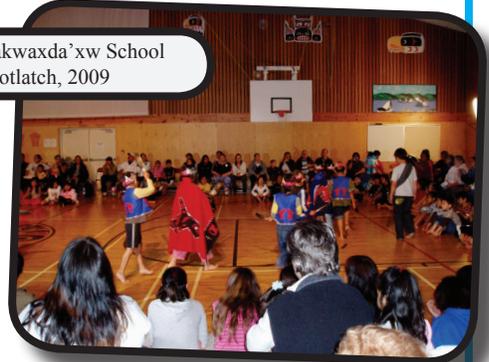
Ernie describes the group's passion for learning our culture and teaching others: "Being part of the Tla tla tlo nam is awesome. It's good medicine when you learn our culture, cause you learn from the older people, like way before our time. And we're just, slowly gonna bring it back. Me, being from Musgamagw, coming here learning Gwa'sala and 'Nakwaxda'xw songs, it just makes me feel good inside, learning... We can do a lot with our culture. Instead of one night, one night a week, we can book the



Darryl Coon Sr. and Thomas Henderson Jr.

hall and have singing and dancing, and teach the reserve, teach the young kids, cause they had their play potlatch. They had all the kids up there, when I was helping them, teaching them singing and dancing. They all got that thirst to dance. We don't have a bighouse yet, but eventually we're gonna get one.... It's gonna be like school to them." Alvin adds, "We're slowly building and we're getting to a place where we're really comfortable and I think it's time we build our own place to sing at. We've been through sister Maggie's house, Uncle Paddy and Auntie Nellie's house, William and

Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw School
Play Potlatch, 2009



Helen's house, Aunty Bina's house, Davis' house, Bossy's house, Receiving Home, Wak'as Hall, Mary Duck's yard. Yeah, we have to build our own building."

Children in the community have shown that they are hungry to learn the culture by example. Bunny says, "I see lots of the young ones really wanting to learn... that's a really good thing to see, our young ones wanting to learn... I remember when he [Buddy] used to walk around with headphones on and singing. That was really nice to learn all these songs and it didn't take him that long to learn them. I'm thinking of my grandson Brodie Walkus he stands there, he's singing away to me, even without a drum...and he's learning it from our groups when they sing...that's a really good thing to see." Maggie adds, "What my mom said earlier about my son singing, my son's not even in school yet and he knows how to sing one whole song..that's how determined he is to learn how to sing... I taught him a

the words aren't right on there, but he's got a great idea of how the song goes, and the beat to the song, and my son's four years old. Maybe one day I'll ask him to sing for the Tla tla tlo nam Singers. When he learns a little bit more about this song that my brother Buddy could probably teach him...I really take my hat off to my son for being so determined to learn to sing that song, from his heart and he's not scared to sing it in front of anybody...I just wanted to bring that out there, because, you know, that's how young they can start. As soon as they start talking, they're able to sing, if we stand behind them and guide them...And it's up to me to make that a priority in my life to learn more about it."

The community has been giving a lot of support to the singers to continue to learn and teach the culture. Alvin says, "We've been getting a whole lot of different encouragement from all the elders, and some of the elders have passed on. But, it's not that we're trying to make our-



G-N School kids perform at the Gift of Life Celebration

selves be famous or make any money or do anything, it's because we all share a really big passion about our culture. And it's about keeping, as best as we can, to keep it alive." Since November 2009, there have been culture nights at the Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre, where the singers often come to teach the songs and who the songs belong to, as they are learning the songs and the histories of the songs. It is a time for families to come together in a circle, support one another, and share in the learning. Doris Anderson explains how the culture nights



Culture Night at Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre

got started: "I went to Gold River, Mowachaht-Muchalaht, and I saw their culture night, and I was inspired by how they did it. That's what inspired me the most, and I participated in their dances and went through the lessons. And I don't know too, too much about culture, but I was happy that Buddy and Ernie, and there's Gary, willing to do the culture night, and they helped me out too, Charles Willie, Harriet Willie... it was just nice. Little kids were there, so nice

to see. I learned the culture from Betty [Walkus] and that's all I really know. I want to learn more. I want to speak Kwakwala, and a lot of other things. I told an elder I need to know a lot more. There's a whole bunch of things I need to learn. She said she was still learning too."

Andrew "Malong" Dawson says, "In our culture nights the elders share the meaning of our songs. Spruce

Wamiss had shared at one of our culture nights that we need to know the meaning of the songs and hand movements. It is part of the teachings of the people that are doing that dance. We need their teachings to go on with the program stuff. Protocols for the bighouse is like a guideline that needs to be enforced and we are working on enforcing the guidelines at our culture nights."



Culture Night at Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre

Malong also shares, one of the reasons culture night was started was “to learn the different community songs and dances, but mainly focusing on G-N because we are all living here in this one area. It gives us a chance to learn together.”

As the Tla tla tlo nam Singers continue to learn from the elders and other people with traditional knowledge, they continue to inspire others to learn about our culture. Buddy says, “It’s just trying to keep our culture alive, for not only us as a singing group, but for our elders and for our kids.” Maggie says, “In honour of the Tla tla tlo nam Singers, and myself, and my community, I just really take my hat off to the Tla tla tlo nam Singers for being there so long and inspiring our community the way they do. ... I encourage you guys to keep doing what you’re doing, keep going forward... Take one step back and look what you’re doing because the circle’s gonna get bigger and bigger and bigger and we’re gonna get stronger and stronger every time. And we’ll all be united and sing together and dance together. Bring our culture back.” Ernie adds, “I thank the Tla tla tlo nam Singers you know, they welcomed me with open arms, and I felt that warmth, I always feel good when we get together.” Bunny also shares her words: “I’m really, really proud of you guys, for what you guys are doing. And you said it all, you know, the kids want to learn. The kids really want to learn. They want to sing, they want to dance. They want to know the culture. Sure, they’re teaching it at the school, but that’s not enough. They need more. Just want to tell you all that I’m very, very proud of you all. Thank you.”

Lessons Learned

- **It is important for elders to share their knowledge of protocol to younger people**
- **Encourage young people to take on a leadership role**
- **Openness and including everyone is important**
- **Culture can bring people together and strengthen relationship**
- **Do what you can to learn and practice our culture**
- **Group efforts can inspire everyone to work harder**
- **Learning the culture tells you about your own identity**
- **It's important to listen and learn from our elders**
- **We need a Big House where we can do our cultural activities**
- **Children in the community are hungry for cultural knowledge**
- **We can learn from positive things in other communities**

We would like to thank Annie (Bunny) Jackson, Alvin Walkus Jr., Andrew "Malong" Dawson, Buddy Walkus, Ernie Scow, Doris Anderson, Lucy Scow, Maggie Fox, Vanessa Walkus, Walter Brown, and Wilfred Williams for sharing their experiences and ideas for this story.

We would also like to acknowledge the members of the group who were not available or not in town at the time of the focus group meeting.

Candlelight Services

Memorial candlelight services have helped the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community find support and love as we remember and grieve for our loved ones that have passed on. The Candlelight Services are planned a few days before the Christmas dinner every year. Irene Sheard explains, "I just got involved with Bunny last year, entering my name in for their [candlelight] committee because we need to come together and help out... with whatever we need to do for the community. The candlelight service is a good way to start when we celebrate Christmas, because it helps us to let go just for that moment, just for the days to come, and maybe years to come. It's different for everybody, some people will let go overnight, some people can't let go... I've seen it in my home, I've seen it out there, people are hurting out there and those of us who are a little more healthier should be out there to help out in any way we can."

The Candlelight Services began with a handful of people inspired by the candlelight services in town. Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community member Richard George remembers attending a church candlelight service. He says, "The minister gave everyone a candle as they walked in and he turned all the lights off, and there was only one candle lit in the very back room, at the main entrance, and one of the ushers came out with a lit candle, so that lit up the whole room, and then everybody got a light from that one light, and they passed it around throughout the whole church. And the whole church was lit up. And it was really amazing at the time because I sat beside Nunu [Helen Knox] and she's an elder that's from Fort Rupert and she's passed on. I can remember her, watching her cry, because she just lost a family member." Bunny Jackson, who has been the main organizer of the Candlelight Services in Tsulquate, was touched by the candlelight services in town. She says, "I was very close to my dear friend Terry [Grant] after I lost my son. I started going to her candlelight service in town cause it made me feel



Late Judy Terril "Terry" Grant

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a little bit better. I asked her one day, her and I talked a lot on the phone to each other, I asked her if it was possible if we could have one down in our community. She said, "That would be nice." She said she could help me. I said, "That would be really nice Terry". That's how it all got started down here. She was always worried about me after I lost my son. Then one day she called me and said I have some sad news I need to share with you, I was wondering if you could come to my place. I said, "Yes Terry, I will be right there." She then told me about having cancer. I was ever so hurt and sad to hear that, because she was just like a sister to me. I told her something that I never told anyone else. She was a wonderful, nice, friendly lady. She talked to me about her family. I truly, truly do miss her. At one of our Christmas Dinners we all honoured her with a big Angel. She really loved it. We told her, "This is for all that you do for our community". She will always be in our hearts, especially in mine. I have lost three ladies to cancer. She was going to read the report to me when she was ready, she said to me don't rush it, I'll be here for you. I said, "Thanks Terry, that means so much to me. I was so, so hurt when she passed on, it felt like a knife going through me. "She is gone but not forgotten." I care and love our community so much I hurt when I see our people hurting. I just want to help in any way I can for our people."

At the time that the services started, there had been many deaths in the community. Richard says, "We had lost a lot of loved ones so close together. I can remember at the time, within a month, we had eighteen deaths, and it just seemed like every week, or every other week, we were having one or two comfort meetings for families, the winter was getting harder and harder." Bunny adds, "Terry was very close to a lot of the people down here, and it was so sad to see her go, and I thank

her for doing that because to this day we're still doing it. And we have more and more people every year, coming to it, and there's a lot of people that don't know how to let go, it doesn't take the pain away, it just eases it."

When the services got started in the community, Terry also donated some



Candlelight Service 2009, Wak'as Hall

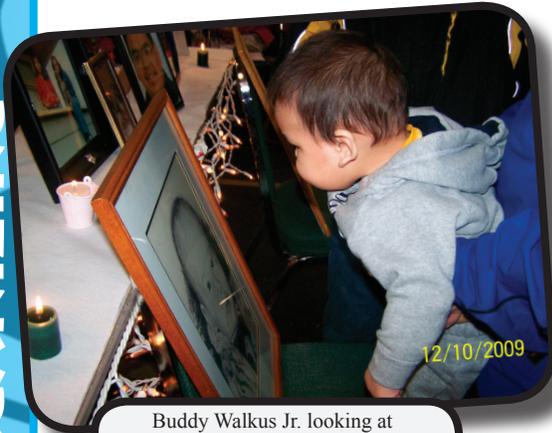
of the things needed to set up the service. Richard says, "Terry and the florist [from Port Hardy], they got us this oasis, and they put them in water... we stuck our candles inside these oases, and every candle represented someone who had passed in our community... in the hall, the tables were set as a cross, and everyone brought their picture up there of their loved one that has passed on... the candle lights are really calming, and everybody sat there and watched the cross get lit up... basically it was to lighten the load before Christmas dinner, because we wanted everyone to be lifted when we have our Christmas dinner."

These services have become an important part of our community's healing journey. Richard says, "It's given hope, because I know in the past candlelight services, pastor Don [Felkley] has shared scripture and prayers and different groups have gotten up, different families have gotten up to sing, and different people in the community have gotten up and shared stories about loved ones that have passed on... we go through so much pain, and so much loss and loneliness... we take for granted that we're always going to have our loved ones, like we're always going to be one big family, and it's very difficult and people choose to let go at their own time... there's times that we're all strong and there's times that we just have to cry and let it go... last year or the year before Bunny and I organized counsellors to circulate on the outside [at the service] and these were workers from our community and from town that came in, and if anybody was having a breakdown then that counsellor could go to that person, and take them aside if they wanted to talk, and then do a follow up so that there'd be continued healing in our community..."

These services go a long way to show people that they are loved and supported in their grief. Bunny says, "The pain doesn't go away, it just helps you, you know it helps you through it. A lot of people haven't grieved over their loved ones, and it's a good place for our people



Candlelight Service 2009, Wak'as Hall



Buddy Walkus Jr. looking at drawing of Shandelle Walkus

to get together and talk about how they are feeling.” Paula Walkus acknowledges that youth also need a way to deal with the loss of their family members: “My son Billy can’t let go, he still has a hard time dealing with the loss of his grandpa, and I get worried about him.” Richard shares a memory of how people support one another at the services: “It’s a huge impact on our people...the thing that was so beautiful last year, I think it only started off with one person, going to give that person a hug and went around the whole cross, everybody just went around hugging everybody and nobody left without a hug... It was a huge impact right from the kids to the eldest. It was amazing. Our people dropped all their guards and they supported one another, so it has a huge impact, it’s a very healing tool for our community.” The services are also a time to welcome guests from other bands. Bunny says, “The services get bigger and bigger every year, and the people from Fort Rupert are already attending.” Irene suggests a way to extend the welcome to our guests is to put out a welcome on cable.

Elder Irene Sheard relates the services to traditional practices: “Back in the olden days... part of the healing process for our elders, when that was their way of remembering their loved ones... we would burn, burn food, and then whatever belongings they had in their memory, and this candlelight service is another way of remembering our loved ones that are gone. Part of the things that they did in the past few years... all the boats went out when someone had died up there... They lay flowers out on the water for the people, the loved ones that passed on, that they lost... There’s so many things that the elders did in the past and I think the candlelight service is just another way of remembering them today, cause a lot of our elders are gone and because they’re so spiritual... We follow their practices... A lot of us don’t know too much about what needs to be done, and what we burn and burn their belongings. At least we can do it this way, with the candlelight services.”

About the support for organizing the services, Bunny says, "It's a good place for our people to get together and talk about how they're feeling. And I am really happy that there's more people that are wanting to join into the [organizing] committee." Bunny shares her appreciation to those involved in helping out with the services: "I truly thank my daughter for all of her work. She's been there from the very beginning and always by my side. I thank my sisters and my brothers, cause those were the ones that were always helping me when we first started doing this, and thank you to brother Richard for always being there, I really appreciate all the names that are there for the help." Bunny also adds, "Thanks to the elders...They were behind us all the time, they keep telling us that we should have it, we should continue doing it."

However, the yearly services are a lot of work and it takes its toll on the organizers. Maggie Fox says, "It's really stressful. I see my mom, what she does for our community, not only for the candlelighting but just our community in general, and I see her struggling a lot to find out where the funding can come from... I've been helping her out, shopping, getting stuff, making sandwiches, doing what I have to do... There's a lot of work we have to do to have this beautiful night for everybody, and it would be nice just to have our own personal foundation or something for it, because it's a lot of time and work for not only my mom but for everyone else that's helping her." In the first years of the services, Bunny and her family provided all the refreshments. Having more financial support for the services would help lighten the load. Donations along the way have also been helpful. Bunny says, "I thank Colleen [Hemphill] and the treaty [department] cause they helped out with last year's candlelight and that was really nice. It's the funding struggling that we have trouble with... We need it set every year so that we don't have to go looking around for money, that it's there all the time that we need it, for shopping, for all our refreshments... little orna-



Farah Anderson



Preparing plates of food for the
Candlelight Service 2009

ments to put on the tables to make it look nice.” Bunny says, “Last year when we had our candlelight service that it was the elders that provided the refreshments.” Mac Stewart, one of the volunteers, suggests that the community play a stronger role in funding the Candlelight Services on a regular basis: “Trying to get funding ahead of time, so it’s not just

for one or two people to rush around at the last minute and have it all on their shoulders. It’s nice knowing that a lot of people are taking the time to help.” Bunny is thankful for the funding they have received from the Bingo Committee in the past, and she is going to look into having regular funding from the Bingo Committee, having the money raised from a Bingo once a month go to the Candlelight Services. Irene also would like to do fundraising the way that was used to raise money for the elder’s Edmonton trip in 2006, because it was very successful. Letters were sent around to merchants to ask for donations by fax and door-to-door, and many businesses donated money. Irene also thinks what would really help the elders do the fundraising is to have a computer with internet access to do the needed research on fundraising. Bunny says more money needs to be raised this year to be able to by our own lights for the tables, replace the candleholders, and make new ornaments for the talbles. Once the new donations come in for the services, Paula, a committee member, says that opening up a bank account for all the donations will be helpful.

Bunny gives special thanks to the volunteers and the people who are currently in the candlelight organizing committee, Blanche Walkus, Cathy King, Cathy Swain, Donna Williams, Irene Sheard, John King Sr., Maggie Fox, Paula Walkus, and Richard George. Bunny says, “The committee is open doors, there is no limit to the committee, it is open to anyone would like to be involved in it.” Bunny says, “I love our people the way we are, we help out in whatever the way we can.”

Everybody has their own reasons for why they want to help out. Despite the difficulties, Maggie says the reason she stays involved is “to stand behind my mom, and support her in everything she does, and a lot of the stuff that she does do is a lot of positive activity. And it’s teaching me a good way to show my kids when they’re older, you know, to keep this going because it’s very important to our community and healing for our people... I guess not really letting go but learning how to move on, rather than staying on ‘pause’ after they lose someone they love... this is the turning point and a start for other people that need help... after the candle lighting is all said and done... I feel really light, as for myself, I feel happy, healthy, and ready to go on to the next day.” Bunny adds “that’s the reason why I got so involved in wanting to make sure this goes on every year, was to help our people any which way, how to make it better and easier for them to go on with life...”



Left to right: Daisy Coon, Maggie Fox, Bunny Jackson

Although the Christmas season is associated with happiness for many, for others it is a very difficult time of year, which is partly why the Candlelight Service is held near Christmas. Cathy King, a volunteer for the services, is also thankful that Bunny and Ethel encouraged her to join them in the Candlelight Service. Cathy says, “It’s been pretty hard for me too, to think about my mom [Ethel King], when she passed on a couple days before Christmas... Every year I think about her and I cry when I look at

the pictures all the time... It’s just that I miss my mom a lot. I didn’t get the chance to know my dad [Tom King] when I was a young girl. I sure miss him. The only memories I got of him is when he made oats and everything for us.” Irene Sheard also encourages her partner John King, Cathy’s brother, to join in the services because, she says, “It’s really hard for him, a



The George Family, Candlelight Service 2009

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lot of times he doesn't want to celebrate Christmas, he feels alone, he feels lost, he doesn't want to be part of any celebrations at any time, but I try to encourage him." Irene adds, "This is the hardest time, around Christmas, cause some of the things that my mom [Jean Walkus] and my dad [Charlie G. Walkus] did I keep in my heart every year... We didn't have the fancy trimmings, the fancy turkeys or anything like that, but they brought us together and did things for us, made things happen for us... It's still here, in my heart. I remember, as little as I was, I remember what my parents did for me. And it's so hard for me sometimes around this time, because I wasn't here when they passed away, and my other family members, I wasn't here. That's why I'm involved." Bunny adds, "When we do these candlelights, it's opening doors for other people out there to come and share how they feel and not to be, you know, embarrassed about it, not to feel dumb or anything... And for our younger generations, to see what's going on, it's opening doors for them, also how to let go, how to express your feelings... It does help... It makes it easier for you to talk to someone about how you're feeling, to another person that is hurting."

Richard, Bunny, Maggie, Irene and others have learned many lessons since starting the services. Richard says, "In doing something like this, I think one of the main messages is for our people, all of our people, is to stay together as one." Maggie adds, "As of last year, I know someone did a headcount and I can't remember how many people were there... it was very impressive and very good to see people from other reserves coming to our candle lighting... It would be good for one year, if the three bands unite... and have a big one, and just mourn together..." Bunny encourages more people in the community to get involved with planning and helping out with the Candlelight Services. Bunny says, "It's always open for suggestions, like what you [Irene] were talking about, putting things in the river and letting it go, doing it with balloons, doing it with fire, burning... there is always different ways of dealing with



The Williams Family & The
Band of Brothers

it, and you're so right about the elders, that's who you need to talk to, that's where you need to get your words from their wisdom, their knowledge, because they know it all, they got it all up there. That's who you need to talk to about what to do... how to move ahead." So, just as that one candle passes on a flame to hundreds, hopefully the community can continue to come together for these Candlelight Services and pass on the love and support, one person to another, to light up our community and work together to chase away the darkness.

Lessons Learned

- **Gatherings are supportive and healing for community members**
- **People each have their own way of grieving and letting go**
- **Committees help to bring in new volunteers and make collective decisions**
- **Consistent funding for events helps to ease the workload**
- **Uniting with the three local bands to mourn would be a good way for the communities to support one another**
- **The candlelight services provides an opportunity for the younger generations to learn by example**

We would like to thank Bunny Jackson, Eva Walkus, Irene Sheard, John King Sr., Cathy King, Mac Stewart, Maggie Fox, Paula Walkus, and Richard George for sharing their experiences and ideas for this story.

A special thanks to the committee members who were not available to come out to the focus group.

Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw CCP



Jessie Hemphill,
CCP Coordinator

From September 2008 to March 2010, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community members have been working together on the CCP (Comprehensive Community Plan), to plan for a better future for our community. The CCP is a guide for future projects in the community, with community members' goals for culture, the economy, education,

governance, health, infrastructure, lands and resources, and social issues. The CCP reflects the voice of our community. When community members first came together for the CCP, the CCP Advisory Committee was formed, and it was decided that the best way to work on the CCP, was to keep the committee open to all community members. Everybody has been welcomed to the CCP meetings to share their ideas about what they want for our community today and for future generations. At the CCP meeting on September 15th, 2008, Rita Walkus made an observation that the committee is kind of like kindling, and Doug Johnny [Stewardship Program] and Jessie Hemphill [CCP Coordinator] are the fire. She described the kindling's job is to catch everything else (the rest of the community) on



Silena George,
CCP Assistant

fire, so to speak. At the time, Violet Walkus translated 'kindling' as gal'ast'uyu (gal-us-too-yoo) and the committee agreed that would be the new name of the group, instead of advisory committee.



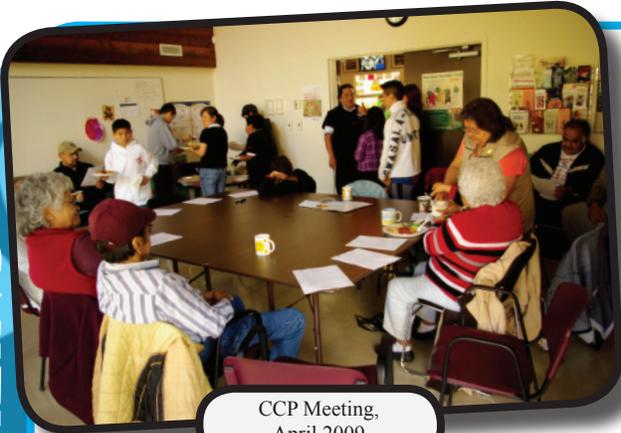
Cathy Swain, CCP
Research Assistant



Left to right: Christy George,
Donna Williams & Natasha Walkus, CCP
Research Assistants

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CCP Meeting,
April 2009

Over the past year and a half, Jessie Hemphill has been coordinating the CCP, with assistance from Silena George, and more recently working with the CCP Research Assistants (Cathy Swain, Christy George, Donna Williams and Natasha Walkus). Jessie shares how she had a positive

experience working with so many people in the community on the CCP, "I think it is cool that at the CCP meetings we had so many ages, and people that might not have gotten together to work on something before, were connecting." With the support of CCP staff and community members, Jessie has been organizing community dinner meetings, family meetings, social events, raising money for new community projects, and writing up the community's goals and dreams for the future, into a CCP document called the *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Comprehensive Community Plan*. With so many community members involved in working on the CCP together, there is an opportunity for community members, leadership and staff, to continue to work together to put the CCP into action.

Elder Irene Sheard describes one of the more memorable CCP community dinners, when 200-300 community members came out to the Wak'as Hall to share their dreams for the community: "The big event that we had at the hall, it really motivated the kids... There was a lot of excitement there with the kids, and they participated, especially with the videotaping that we had up there... I thought that was really good for the kids to get involved with because that's what this is about, I think. When we make changes in our community it'll make changes for our young people, our children. It's our future for our kids. Everything that we talked about was



CCP Launch,
October 2008

geared towards our kids I think and for the future benefit of our kids. That was one of the reasons why I wanted to get involved. I was kind of hesitant at first because I didn't know what I was getting myself into, but I've really enjoyed all the meetings we've had, the discussions, the planning, the process that took place. It just made my days." El-



John King Sr. and
Irene Sheard

der John King Sr. adds, "That's one of the main reasons why I wanted to attend meetings, because it is the planning for the children, and it's not just the children that benefit, everybody does."

The CCP has opened up opportunities for community members to feel supported. There has been a really warm atmosphere created at meetings as people come together around a hot meal and share ideas freely with each other. This approach has worked well to build trust and get everything out in the open. John shares his experience with coming out to meetings: "When we first started the CCP, a lot of us had come out of our shell more or less... I started to speak out a little bit, whereas I never used to speak out before. When there was a few of us that attended a CCP meeting we benefited from everything, we voiced our opinions without having to deal with dirty looks and whatnot after the meeting. Everybody was friendly at a lot of these meetings. They had

a positive impact on people. I left a few times knowing that we had accomplished something." Elder Bob Swain says, "What I liked about it was the positive attitude that people brought to it and everybody was getting together. I think that sometimes before the CCP came around there were things that were decided in



Left to right: Richard
George, Jessie Hemphill, and
Silena George at a CCP meeting,
October 2009

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the community where the community wasn't involved and which I think is wrong. If you want a good outcome for anything you have to involve everybody. You can't just decide on your own, or as Chief and Council, or just certain people in the band office or health clinic, you know. What the CCP brought was it brought positive attitude, and it involved all different people. There was a lot of meetings, there was different people that came. They didn't come to all meetings but at least we had a variety of people that came and they sat and listened." The CCP meetings have been organized to be accessible. Cathy Swain adds, "One of the real benefits that I saw, that enabled everyone to give their all was having a babysitting available so that the kids weren't there to distract us while we were listening and taking part."

Cathy shares a lesson learned from having open meetings for the CCP: "To involve anyone who wanted to take part, and that's something I see happening... if people know they had a hand in doing something, then they'll feel a greater sense of ownership." Another well-known



Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Band School

example of the community feeling a sense of ownership with a project is the building of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Band School. Bob and Cathy remember that the community got together to design the school. At the time, notices went out to the community to ask for input into the design. There were design workshops that people participated in. Bob says, "The community got together as the school was being built... They

asked everybody's opinions." Cathy remembers there was a committee that she was on, that did research into how other schools were designed. Cathy says, "The committee did go to different schools, they just met and worked together." Bob says, "The school is one of the most well-respected buildings and I think it's just because of all the community input."

Irene remembers how people used to come together to celebrate and work together back in the homelands: "Before we moved here... our people worked really hard. They worked together. If there was

an event going on people went out to gather food, they gathered traditional food. We never had the food we get today from the stores. There was always traditional food... our community members learned how to cook and bake... they learned how to make the kind of food that our people from the church still cook today, and also they learned how to sew. The young people learned how to sew. These were all taught to by the church members that were in Smith Inlet. What I want



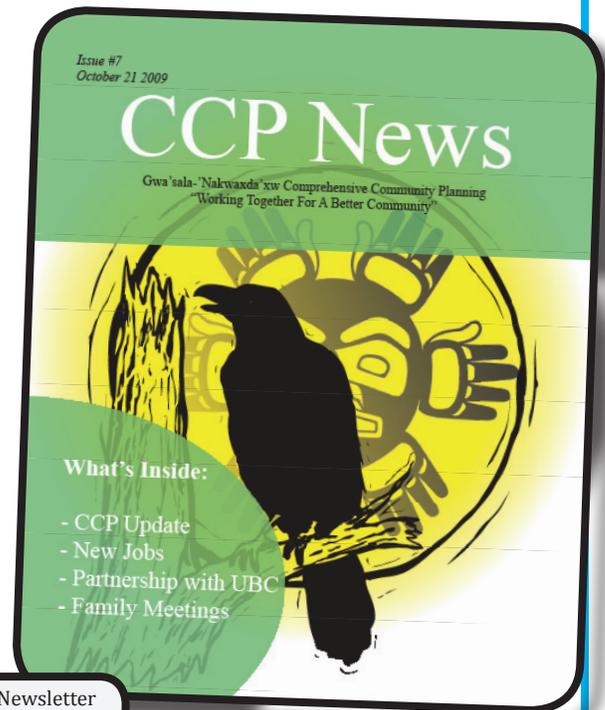
Cathy and Bob Swain

to say too, is that in the past, whenever there was something going on either in Alert Bay or in some of the communities around Alert Bay or up in Bella Bella or Bella Coola. People opened their doors to us. If there was a wedding going on in Alert Bay people would come to the boats to invite us to weddings and I didn't know who they were. I was just a kid and but I remember quite well that we were invited to weddings, or whatever, potlatches, or we would go to the church gatherings that they had in their homes. These things were going on and even in Blunden and all our little communities. We were invited off our boats. People would race to our boats to come invite us, so we'd be eating all day long and we'd be invited to go sleep in their homes. And you don't see that much today. So much changed, but I can't say it's not happening now, but it's very rare now... There's still a few people who will open their doors when there's a need. When there's something going on people do come together and help out with community events."

Although not all community members support the CCP, some people who are involved with the CCP are sharing their positive experience and encouraging people to get behind it. Irene shares her views of the CCP, "A lot of the things that are happening today, I think, are happening today because of the CCP, a lot of positive things. And also, there's been some discussion that the CCP might be, might have come out of the treaty process. We've tried to tell our people that, to my knowl-

edge, it wasn't, just part of trying to make a better community, better communication between the community members and the staff members. That's how I saw, that's how I learned it, and that's the way I see it today." There are a lot of lessons learned about community organizing from doing the CCP. Jessie says that one thing that was learned from working on the CCP, is "when the community is upset about something, even if what they're upset about isn't true, there's a reason people are upset, right? Cause they don't have enough information and can't get in touch with someone or something is going wrong or whatever... I think one thing we learned in the CCP, is that when you address those issues or put information out there then it really does help people to feel more positive about what's happening. The lesson is that it's so important to be transparent and to address people's issues when they have them so that they don't keep going."

A lot has been learned through the CCP about getting people involved community planning. The lessons learned about keeping the momentum going for a long project, is keeping people informed and having regular meetings. When there is a long time period between meetings or if the meeting changed days of the week, some community members found it difficult to keep track of what was going on with the CCP. The solution that people talked about at the CCP meetings, is to have regular meetings on the same night of the week, and to let people know why breaks in the planning schedule are being taken. With the advice of gal'ast'uyu (gal-us-too-yoo), the CCP advisory committee, Jessie has done many different things to keep community members informed about the CCP, so people know that they are welcome to participate and know what has been accomplished. To get people out to the meetings, posting and getting notices out to people has been helpful. The committee



CCP Newsletter



has also come up with creative ideas to attract new people to meetings, like having prize draws, telling a friend to come out to a meeting, house-to-house reminders, notices in newsletters, on TV and radio. To report on the CCP accomplishments, Jessie has been publishing colourful CCP newsletters that were delivered to people's homes, and the CCP Research Assistants have been taking around the draft of the CCP to explain it to community members and get their feedback. Since Facebook is widely used in the community, Jessie also made a Facebook group and has been using Twitter. Cathy says, "I in-

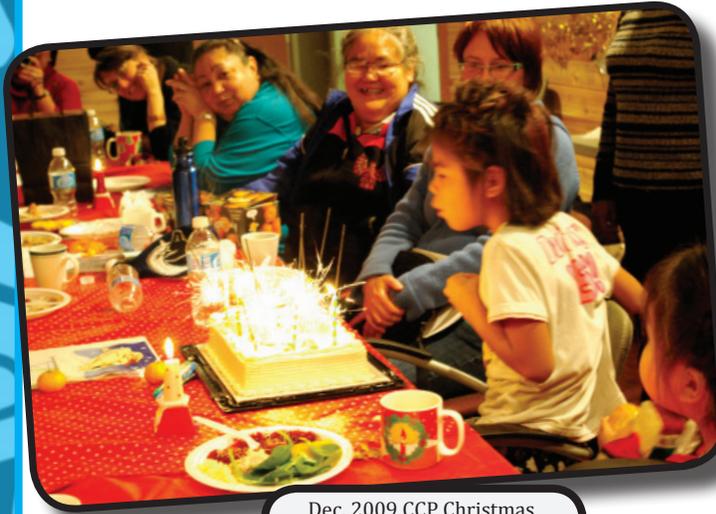
invited a bunch of my Facebook friends to join and they have, and we're able to write to it and people will go to it." Jessie adds, "I think one of the things that we learned is that it's important to be creative when you're trying to involve people in things, like having different ways for people to get involved, like the DVD and those posters with the stickers [dot-mocracy] and the questionnaires at the meetings, the suggestion box, the discussions, and having different ways for people to contribute so there's a way that works for most people."

There has been a positive shift that has been happening in the community these days that people have started talking about. Jessie says, "In the last year and a half it seems like a lot of different things have started coming together, and I wouldn't claim that's part of the CCP but its good timing... like the culture nights that have started. There's a few other community-wide things that are happening and they all seem to be happening to support each other."

Cathy says, "I was thinking about the past, the way it was, you know, I was seven when we moved but I still remember how everyone seemed to get along and worked together... I see that being able to happen now... there's more hope now. That's why I got involved. We need to work together and it's so good to see



that happening more... I remember our people going to Blunden and everybody just got along... So that's my hope and dream because my children, my grandchildren are from both nations... We need to show them the example by working together, no matter what." John has



Dec. 2009 CCP Christmas Dinner

also seen things starting to change. He says, "In the past, when I first moved here I noticed that a lot of people, everybody got along. There was no hassling each other, nothing. When there was something brought up everybody chipped in... In the past few years, I noticed that when an idea was brought to certain people on the rez that they

were bickering... This past year I've noticed that... there's more us that have, you know, jumped in and helped out whenever we're needed, even when we're not needed we just go there and get in the way more or less but we're there to help. I noticed that since CCP has started up everybody is trying to get along."

In addition to the many lessons and values that have come from the CCP elder John King speaks of his grandpa, the elder that inspired him to reach out in the community. John says, "My grandpa was the one who taught me how to be helpful and do whatever I can to help the fellow person. He is the one who inspired me to be more or less, the way I am today. And I sure loved him for what he did for me." Jessie also talks about the elder that inspires her. Jessie says, "One person would be my late grandma Lucy, she did a lot of neat things, she wasn't afraid of anything, at the same time she was a very noble lady. She always believed in visiting and getting together with family. That inspires me to not be afraid of different things and not to be afraid of hard work either." Bob shares his connection to his late father in law. Bob says, "He was always doing something you know, and when he was doing something, he was always singing or humming away, or you know, just

Lessons Learned

- **Good outcomes come out of involving everyone in the community**
- **A positive attitude towards people builds trust and openness**
- **Being transparent and getting information out keeps things positive**
- **Regular communication can help keep the momentum going**
- **Creative ideas help keep people involved in community meetings**
- **Getting together around a meal makes people feel welcomed**
- **Respecting and honouring traditional knowledge can carry forward the teachings of our elders, past and present**

We would like to thank Jessie Hemphill, Irene Sheard, John King, Bob Swain, and Cathy Swain, for sharing their experiences and ideas for this story.

CCP meeting minutes have also been referenced for the story.

A special thank you to all of the community members who took part in the CCP.

Other Community Activities

These are the other positive activities that we heard about while we were doing research for this project. We acknowledge that this is not a complete list of all the people doing positive things and activities that benefit our community. We hope that this list will encourage you to share your memories and honour the people who are working hard for the community.

Ginguenanum School

Lillian O'Connor (non-band member and teacher), Jane McGrath, Mary Henderson, Doreen Walkus, Chuck and Frances Newman, Cheryl Scow, Annie Brotchie, and others, helped to keep the school going. The school ran from 1968 until the mid 1980s, to provide a good start to education for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten-aged children on the reserve. Harry Walkus and elders were hired to do Kwakwala legend stories and language. The reddish-brown school building was a float house towed from a logging camp, given to the band from Lillian O'Connor and her husband.

Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Playground

Mary Johnson was the main push behind the creation of the first community playground. The playground was next door to the old community hall by Richard George's house. Mary led the fundraising, through bake sales and asking around for donations. She saw the project through until its completion in the 1980s. The main drive for the playground was to provide a healthy and safe place for the children in our community to play. Easter Egg hunts used to take place there.

Easter Egg Hunts

Besides the Easter egg hunts organized by the Walkus family, Ernie and Dorothy Henderson had a hunt one year in our community for the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw children. Some of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw children went to both places. Lucky!

Fundraising and Organizing for the Elders

Willie Walkus and Bunny Jackson organize the volunteers for the Elders' annual trips, and help raise money for the elders' trips and Christmas gifts. They devote a lot of time, year after year, helping with the flea markets and other fundraisers.

Recently elders of this community recorded their CDs for sale for a fundraiser.

Fundraising and Organizing for Youth Trips

Bingo committees, such as TYRA Bingo, would raise money and organize trips away for our young people, to places such as to Expo 86, the PNE, Qualicum Beach to swim, etc. The main committee members included Christine Johnny and Doug Johnny and Bunny Jackson. Irene Sheard and late Dusty Cadwallader volunteered to take our youth on field trips and sports activities. These trips provided opportunities for youth to travel, which developed hope and made being away from home less daunting.

Youth Activities

Laura Burns, in her capacity as the Youth Alcohol and Drug Worker, organizes volunteers to do crafts and other activities with youth. Sue Walkus and others volunteer their time for these activities.

Lahal

Late Harry Walkus, his daughter Betty Walkus, and other community members organized Lahal for our community. One of the Lahal events organized was during the preparation for our Kwakiutl Summer Games, hosted by the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community in 1994. Lahal is a time for families to come together and have a good laugh. Lahal is kind of a tricking game, where one team tries to trick the other team with humour, singing, dancing, fast or slow hand movements, causing the other team to lose track of the sticks. Women sometimes try to distract the men by taunting them with their bodies. Lahal has mostly been played by people in the island area, like Guilford, Quatsino, Alert Bay, Fort Rupert, etc. In the past it was known as the bone game. Now it is played using sticks instead of bones.

Indian Baseball

James Charlie was one of the organizers of this mostly impromptu sports event. This was a prime example of Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw community coming together to have fun, as there was always lots of laughter, teasing and joking. The little ones would be running around, taking all the camaraderie in. This activity brought older participants back to the olden days, when they played with a stick and rolled up socks as their bat and ball.

Sports Tournaments

There have been many tournament organizers over the years, for both floor hockey and indoor soccer. There are so many teams that have formed over the years, to name a few, the Oilers, Voodoos/Rebels, Louie G. Walkus Memorial, Henderson Memorial, Harvey, Hooney Memorial, Simon Walkus Sr. Memorial, Robert Walkus Memorial, Shandelle Memorial, Robb Swain Memorial. Organizing these events take a lot of people hours to set it all up, including booking the venue, finding teams to enter, fundraising or finding sponsors for the trophies, getting first aid supplies and sports equipment.

Volunteer Coaching of Sports Teams

Darryl and Ravena Coon coached children's soccer in our community to promote more involvement in sports leagues in town. They were teenagers themselves at the time. In 2008, Corey Swain coached the senior girls soccer at the high school. They made it to the provincials. He also encourages his brothers and cousins to excel in sports by training with them. Lowena and Gilbert Walkus were sports coordinators for the children in our community and did a lot to promote sports within the community.

Trips to the Homelands

Willie Walkus and Colleen Hemphill have organized trips to the homelands for the elders. The trips are part of our Treaty process, since they help strengthen our connection to our Home Lands and the elders can help identify places that are most important to our people.

Gathering Traditional Foods

There have been field trips that took place to Blunden Harbour to harvest some traditional foods. James Walkus, Doug Johnny, Robert Walkus Sr. and late Andrew Walkus went out with elders and youth on their boats to gather traditional foods when in season.

Preparation for Cultural Occasions

Families have helped make Button Blankets, aprons, capes, and vests for different occasions, including potlatches and Indian weddings. For example, Irene Sheard and Janet Paul, along with her daughters (Agnes Wallace, Rose King, Dorothy Henderson, Linda Henderson, Sandra Charlie and Tina Henderson), have made wedding dresses, bridesmaid dresses, wedding cakes and flowers for different weddings. We acknowledge that there are many other community members who help out with these preparations who are not mentioned here.

Hunting and Fishing for Our Community

Chris Andrew, Dennis Walkus and Darryl Coon Sr. go out and hunt. They then donate whatever they get to community members, mainly elders. This occurs every year during the hunting season. Deer is and was one of the staple foods for our people, along with foods caught from the sea, halibut, sockeye salmon, crabs, clams, etc. James Walkus and others go out and fish every year. They devote a lot of their time, from their jobs and family, to do this each and every year. The fish they catch is provided to community members. We acknowledge that there are other community members who hunt, fish and gather food for the community who are not mentioned here.

Food Preparation and Preservation

Martha Walkus encourages her whole family to assist and learn together in food preparation and preservation for the community. Late Annie Brotchie and late Annie Walkus did tons of fish preserving of many kinds. Many elders have taught their children and grandchildren how to prepare the fish for winter months.

There have been many community members that have come together to help out with dinners, feasts, potlatches, services and weddings.

Cooking and Donating Food to People in Need

Gertie Walkus, Kathy Walkus, Blanche Walkus have been cooking and donating food to people in need on an ongoing basis in our community.

John Charlie fed people that couldn't feed themselves. He brought food to a family living on the boats. He would go to the big stores and get things donated to feed people by explaining what he was doing. He would often go with his white van to the park and on the road to hand out food to people. You would see him on the road and the park giving things away from his Van. He talked about opening a food bank before the Harvest Food Bank was started in town.

Bob and Cathy Swain host Soup Nights in their home on a regular basis for people in need. Many children and families come out to enjoy soup, bannock and each other's company. Many community members volunteer their time to help prepare the meals.

Coffee House

Late John Charlie Sr. and his wife Marion [now Wamiss] provided church services, meals for many people and a place to stay for homeless people. The coffee house ran for many years in the past, located where the Memorial park is now. His family contributed to the well being of our community. Anyone in need knew that they could find support of any kind here.

Cleaning our Community

Lou Walkus kept the reserve very clean. When he was around you would never see the reserve the way it is today. He made a box with a rope on it and pulled it around the community to pick up garbage. Willie Walkus got the idea for community clean up as a fundraiser for children's Carnival bracelets from Lou Walkus' example.

Fundraising for Children's Carnival Bracelets

The fundraising for the Carnival started in the 1980s, so the kids from the community could go. Every year, there is a community clean up that kids do. If they pick up garbage in the community, two garbage bags full, they earn their bracelet for the Carnival rides.

Singing for our Community

Singers Ed Walkus, Willie Walkus, the late George Walkus, and the late Charlie G. Walkus translated songs from English to Kwakwala. They sing the Kwakwala hymns at comfort services, funeral services and home services.

Cultural Day

Elders and ABE (Adult Basic Education) students exchanged traditional teachings of dances and sewing, with the youth who taught reading and writing.

Pool Tournaments

Eddy Walkus, Simon Walkus and Paula Walkus organized pool tournaments, which was a great social event at the Maternal Health Office, before it was shut down.

Family Nights

Eddie Walkus, Rachel Harry, Blanche Walkus and Bonnie Wright (non-band member, and band employee) organized games and movie nights at hall upstairs. Many community members went every week, and out of that, many ongoing friendships were formed. Family Nights also took place at the old receiving home in the big room.

Movie Nights

Eddy Walkus and Jeanine Johnny organized movie nights at the old Receiving Home.

Mothers' Day Breakfasts

Mothers' Day breakfasts have been hosted annually by Bob and Cathy Swain at their home to honour mothers of our community. They were inspired to organize the breakfasts to honour their mothers who have passed on, as well as to honour the memory of the men who first did this at the Receiving Home. Irene Sheard has also been helping with organizing this event, with support from John King Sr. Fathers who attend also come to help cook for their partners. One year Christine Charlie sponsored the event, who paid for everything to feed the moms, apart from the flowers which were purchased by the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Band Office.

Fathers' Day Suppers

Fathers' Day suppers have been hosted annually by Bob and Cathy Swain at their home to honour the fathers of our community. Even if many of our community members were attending Alert Bay's June Sports, there were still fathers in Tsulquate who may not have otherwise celebrated this due to financial reasons.

New Year's Eve Celebration

Bob and Cathy Swain, Jack and Sue Walkus, Don and Linda Felkley, and Paula and Simon Walkus have taken up organizing this celebration. This event provides an opportunity for people who do not want to drink, and for children, to celebrate together. The New Year's Eve celebration at the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Seventh-day Adventist Church each year was first done for the sole purpose of surrounding the young people celebrating in prayer. Many adults come to help supervise children whose parents are out celebrating New Year's Eve elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

A HUGE thank you to Johanna Mazur, who completed this project as part of her studies in the School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) at the University of British Columbia. She has put endless hours of work into this project and even moved to Port Hardy for several months to work on it!

A HUGE thank you also to Jeet Chand, another SCARP student, who also moved to Port Hardy for several months to offer training for the research assistants and tons of support for the CCP.

Other UBC students who committed time and effort to the CCP include:

Stephanie Manson who put much time and effort into the glossary, and;

Aftab Erfan who did graphic recording and is working on a Deep Democracy initiative with us.

Also thank you to Nora Angeles, SCARP faculty member, who advised Johanna & Jeet on their work for the CCP and offered much mentorship and support to Jessie.

Finally, thank you to Penny Gurstein, SCARP Chair, for supporting what has turned out to be a very fruitful partnership.

Appendix 2 - UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board Certificate



The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Leonora Angeles	INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT: UBC/College for Interdisciplinary Studies/Community & Regional Planning	UBC BREB NUMBER: H09-02947
INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:		
Institution		Site
N/A		N/A
Other locations where the research will be conducted: Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Band Office, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Community (Subjects' Homes - TBD), Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw School, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Elders Centre, Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Wak'as Hall.		
CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Johanna I. Mazur		
SPONSORING AGENCIES: N/A		
PROJECT TITLE: Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation Community Planning: Stories and Best Practices		
NOTE: The apostrophes in the spelling of the Nation are all left facing.		

CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE: January 4, 2011

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:	DATE APPROVED: January 4, 2010	
Document Name	Version	Date
Protocol:		
Research Proposal	1	November 25, 2009
Consent Forms:		
Subject Consent Form - Focus Group	1	November 25, 2009
Use of Name and Photograph Consent Form	1	November 25, 2009
Subject Consent Form - Interview	1	November 25, 2009
Letter of Initial Contact:		
Letter of Initial Contact - Focus Group	1	November 25, 2009
Letter of Initial Contact - Interview	1	November 25, 2009
Other Documents:		
Community Meeting Poster - Validation of Draft Handbook	1	November 25, 2009
Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation Band Council Resolution	N/A	May 20, 2009
Invitation Letter to UBC-SCARP Researchers	N/A	February 6, 2009
Other:		
N/A		
The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.		
<p>Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:</p> <hr/> <p>Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair Dr. Ken Craig, Chair Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair</p>		

Appendix 3 - Focus Group Schedules

“Family Activities” Focus Group Questions

1. Can you tell us about the history of the Family Activities, specifically the Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Fireworks and the Sports Tournaments?
2. What was done at the beginning to get people involved in the Family Activities?
3. What are the things that need to be done each year to put on the Family Activities?
4. What are the ways that the Family Holiday Activities have impacted the community?
5. What are the reasons why you are involved with putting on the Family Activities?
6. What have you learned about organizing in the community that you would like to pass on to other community members and future generations?
7. Can you give us an example of something you have learned from an Elder that inspired you to take positive action in your life?

“Candlelight Services” Focus Group Questions

1. Can you tell us about the history of the Candlelight Services?
2. What was done at the beginning to get people involved in the Candlelight Services?
3. What are the things that need to be done each year to put on the Candlelight Services?
4. What are the ways that the Candlelight Services has impacted the community?
5. What are the reasons why you are involved with putting on the Candlelight Services?
6. What have you learned about organizing in the community that you would like to pass on to other community members and future generations?
7. Can you give us an example of something you have learned from an Elder that inspired you to take positive action in your life?

“Christmas Dinner” Focus Group Questions

1. Can you tell us about the history of the Christmas Dinner?
2. What was done at the beginning to get people involved in the Christmas Dinner?
3. What are the things that need to be done each year to put on the Christmas Dinner?
4. What are the ways that the Christmas Dinner has impacted the community?
5. What are the reasons why you are involved with putting on the Christmas Dinner?
6. What have you learned about organizing in the community that you would like to pass on to other community members and future generations?
7. Can you give us an example of something you have learned from an Elder that inspired you to take positive action in your life?

“Tla tla tlo nam Singers” Focus Group Questions

1. Can you tell us about the history of the Tla tla tlo nam singers?
2. What are the ways that the Tla tla tlo nam singers have impacted the community?
3. From your experiences with the Tla tla tlo nam singers, what are some examples of what you have learned about your culture that you would like to pass on to other community members and future generations?
4. What are the reasons why you are involved with the Tla tla tlo nam singers?
5. Can you give us an example of something you have learned from an Elder that has inspired you?

“Comprehensive Community Planning” (CCP) Focus Group Questions

1. Please describe the process that the community has gone through with the CCP.
2. Why did you decide to get involved in the CCP?
3. What are the ways that the CCP has impacted the community?
4. What are the lessons learned from the CCP, that you would like to pass on to staff, leadership or community members starting projects, activities or programs?
5. What are examples from the past, when people have worked together to plan for the community?
6. Can you give an example of something that you have learned from an Elder that inspired you to take positive action in your life?
7. What is something you would like to pass on to future generations?

Elders Focus Group

The RAs decided that it would be best to leave the elders focus group open ended to provide a space for elders to share what they felt was important. For this reason we did not have questions prepared for this focus group, but instead explained the research goals and process to set the context, and invited them to contribute anything they wanted to share through the booklet being created as an appendix to the GNCCP.