

An Inquiry into the Stories of First Nations Fathers and Their Path to Fatherhood: A Narrative  
Analysis Conducted with Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers

by

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Bachelor of Social Work University of Victoria, 2011

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the other works that have been done in the area of Fatherhood in hopes to cause a shift in child welfare practice. Moving child welfare away from mother-centrism, and towards equitable parent involvement. It is my hope that this piece encourages social workers to strive for the inclusion of Fathers in their daily practice and to hold themselves to a high level of accountability in regards to the Ministry of Children and Family Development's (MCFD) goal of supporting all children and youth in British Columbia to live in safe, healthy, and nurturing families. (MCFD, February 2018) This thesis is a qualitative study which was approached using a Storytelling methodology to answer the question "What reflections do Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers have when asked about their journey of coming into Fatherhood?". Three conversations were held with Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers to listen to their stories of their experiences along their paths of Fatherhood. Thematic analysis was used to highlight commonalities within each of the Father's stories. These themes were used to look at the various challenges that Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers face today and to create recommendations for social workers when their files were involving Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers. Through the support of a literature review, this thesis concludes with looking at what a Kwakwaka'wakw Father is and makes recommendations for change for the future work between frontline social workers at MCFD and our Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers.

*Keywords:* Ligwilda'xw, Kwakwaka'wakw, Father, First Nation, Protective Factors, Child Welfare

## Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Dedication.....	vii
Definition of Terms.....	viii
Chapter One: Self Location.....	1
1.0 Laqwalaogwa – the Researcher.....	1
1.1 The Cultural Principles of Researching.....	2
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	5
2.0 Criteria.....	5
2.1 Current State of Father-Inclusion In Canada.....	8
2.2 Health, The Ghosts and Education.....	10
Chapter Three: The Work.....	15
3.0 Protocol - Ethical Considerations.....	15
3.1 Story Telling – a Methodology.....	17
3.2 The Question, The Purpose, and The Reason.....	18
3.3 The Fathers – Recruitment.....	21
3.4 Listening - Data Collection.....	23
3.5 Kwakwaka’wakw Data Analysis.....	26
Chapter Four: Stories & Findings.....	27
4.0 First Conversation with a Kwakwaka’wakw Father.....	27

4.0.1 Second Conversation with a Kwakwaka'wakw Father.....	42
4.0.2 Third Conversation with a Kwakwaka'wakw Father.....	50
4.1 Thematic Review .....	61
4.1.1 1st Theme and Literature Review – <i>Grandparent Roles</i> .....	62
4.1.2 2nd Theme and Literature Review – <i>Men in Culture</i> .....	65
4.1.3 3rd Theme and Literature Review – <i>Salmon</i> .....	68
4.2 Challenges to ‘Modern’ Day Kwakwaka'wakw Fathering.....	70
4.3 Personal Learning from Listening and Summary of Findings .....	73
Chapter Five: Conclusion.....	74
5.0 Defining Fatherhood.....	74
5.1 Recommendations from Findings and Experience .....	75
5.2 Final Words.....	78
Bibliography.....	80
Appendices.....	89
Appendix A: Wordcloud.....	89
Appendix B: Professional Key Informant Recruitment Letter .....	90
Appendix C: Key Informant Questions for Conversation.....	93
Appendix D: Key Informant Consent Form.....	94
Appendix E: Ethics Approval.....	97
Appendix F: Ethics Modification Approval.....	98

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**Dedication**

This research is dedicated to creating change in our systems of care. Change that recognizes and supports the value of our Fathers, sons, brothers, and uncles in our communities by the systems that impact these roles.

This work was instigated and inspired by a friend and colleague, Mark. Who in a conversation about services and supports, challenged me to seek out those same opportunities for males and to acknowledge that although patriarchal society favors my male counterparts, this is not the case in many of our First Nation communities. Our men are trying to thrive without many of the supports and programs that are available to our sisters, mothers, daughters and aunties. I told him I would change that, and this is my step to doing so. Rest peacefully Mark, I'll try to make waves.

## **Definition of Terms**

*First Nations:* First Nation does not have a legal definition. In this work, First Nation is used to describe an individual person that self-identifies as being First Nation and/or belonging to a First Nation; First Nation can often refer to a band, reserve-based community, or a larger nation. Many First Nations are status Indians under the Indian Act, but many are not, and in this work the term First Nation applies to both; on and off reserve, status and non-status.

(Terminology, 2009)

*Father:* This word is purposefully capitalized. We capitalized persons, places and/or things and these Fathers are people and this work is aimed to uphold them in every way possible, even when it comes to their representation in the English language. Father, for the purpose of this work, is defined as a Kwakwaka'waka individual that carries or acts as a parental figure to a child and/ youth of their own biologically or of another.

*Our:* As a First Nations woman belonging to a sister nation of the Kwakwaka'waka, the Ligwilda'xw, when I use the word 'our' I'm speaking to this relationship and belonging to families that are interconnected between these two language and family groups.

## **Chapter One: Self Location**

### **1.0 Laqwalaogwa – the Researcher**

This introduction is an essential piece of giving context to the researcher behind this work and to strive for thorough transparency.

My name is Laqwalaogwa and I'm from the Ligwilda'xw people of the We Wai Kai Nation. I had been living and learning on the lands of the Coast Salish and Straight Salish people for over ten years until my move in 2016, back to my traditional territory where I was born and raised. Although there is no grounding like being home, I am very grateful for the opportunities that the South Island has given me.

I was born and raised in the city of Campbell River on Vancouver Island. Although I lived off reserve, I grew up very much a part of our Quinsam Reservation community spending my after-schools at my grandparents' house. I've always been diligently independent and always kept my schedule very full. I was raised with a solid sport and work ethic. I sought out inspirational mentors through my elementary and middle school years and looked to those people for guidance and encouragement. I knew who my family was, but I also saw how differently we functioned compared to other families. My Dad parented through critical 'constructive' feedback of my choices and actions, and my Mom supported at a distance knowing that I was very much opinionated, ambitious and had my bull by its horns. Having two parents who worked full time and being caught up in numerous extracurricular activities didn't really afford us the same family centered lifestyle that some of my friends had. At the age of seventeen I moved to Nanaimo and started the next phase of my life. My parents separated that year, my brother remained living with our Dad, and our Mom moved into her own place; things were definitely changing. It wasn't until I was about twenty-one years old and living in Victoria that I identified as being

First Nation. I didn't tell kids at school about my ethnicity because I heard how they spoke about 'Indians' and I had no interest in being the topic of that conversation. At twenty-one I had been living out of my community for four years and I decided that it was time to dig in and figure out who I was. I stepped into the Native Student Union at the University of Victoria, was elected as the Advocacy Liaison Councilor and never looked back. Today I'm very open about where I come from, my beliefs, and that being First Nation is something to be proud of and something that I am very much thankful for. The journey of learning who I am and where I come from has given me so many answers to why I am the way I am, why I think the way that I do and ultimately how I practice as a Social Worker and researcher.

### **1.1 The Cultural Principles of Researching**

“Indigenous people are at a stage where they want research and research design to contribute to their self-determination and liberation.” (Rigney, 1997, p3)

Our people have been inappropriately researched and represented for centuries. My dedication to completing research in a good way comes from a place of wanting to contribute to the pool of other First Nation writers that are pushing for our stories to be recognized as legitimate forms of knowledge. My rationale or purpose for this work is to cause a shift in child welfare practice from mother-centrism to equitable parent involvement, accountability and opportunity; social workers striving for the inclusion of Fathers and doing away the with the 'dead beat Dad' stigma.

For research to be welcomed by Indigenous communities the work must be done in a delicate and culturally appropriate way. For me, my ethical considerations are all drawn from the four corners of the Big House. Through my time working as a Guardianship Social Worker at Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services I had the honour of working alongside the

agencies Elder in Residence, Alex Nelson. Often when conversing with him for support and guidance he would encourage me to reflect upon our Gukzi (Big House) Protocols and ensure that the choices I was making and work I was doing aligned with those teachings. The four poles of the Gukzi are representative of Respect, Integrity, Honesty and Trust (RIHT), they guide how I walk through life and in this case, what I carry through this research.

As a researcher, my research follows Gukzi Protocols, with the 'RIHT' way of being at the forefront and includes the following guidelines:

- The research that is being done will aim for results that will contribute to the well-being of those that will be participating. Participants may be whole communities, individuals, families, etc. Participants will come away from the work with a feeling of meaningful contribution to the research (Baskin, 2011 & Wilson, 2008).
- Participants will have an opportunity to be acknowledged individually in the research product if they wish to have themselves named as a contributor or if they wish to have themselves represented/acknowledged in a different capacity in the work; i.e.: an alias (Baskin, 2011, p224-225).
- Social, political and economic factors will have their roles and influence acknowledged in the finished product of the research. This allows space for the acknowledgement of historical circumstances, such as residential school, that have had a great impact on individual lives in present day. "All things, all persons and all actions and reactions are considered inextricably related, interconnected, and interdependent" (Duck, 1997, p6).
- All those impacted by the research will be treated with dignity and respect (Wilson, 2008, p. 60).

- Participants will have their input held in high regard and will have their contributions acknowledged as legitimate forms of information (Wilson, 2008, p. 60).
- The finished product of research will be amended to meet the needs of the various communities of readership that will be receiving copies of the document. The information collected through the research will be disseminated to all parties acknowledging that they wish to receive the finished product. The reasoning for dissemination should also be identified within the finished product and be supported by the participants (Episkenew, 2009). “Nothing belongs to you, of what there is, of what you take, you must share” (Chief Dan George, Unknown)
- Indigenous ways of knowing and being will be respected as legitimate forms of knowledge. This includes traditional and cultural practices (Wilson, 2011).
- The researcher is required to have a strong connection to spirit, dignity, reflexivity and culture. They must be able to acknowledge how they impact the work, Wilson (2008) calls this “checking your heart” (p.60). The researcher must also acknowledge how they’ll support the participants in an individual and culturally appropriate way (Baskin, 2011).
- The collection of information is primarily done through verbal communication; methods for this would include community forums, workshops, interviews, storytelling sessions, family meetings and other important processes (Brown & Strega, 2005).
- The researcher will ensure that participants will have an opportunity to see their contribution in the work for editing and interpretation purposes. This is to ensure that the translation from conversation to data is not recorded or used incorrectly (Baskin, 2011)

These guidelines were created through personally acknowledging my culture and our Ligwilda'xw protocols and searching through methodologies that aligned with these. I pulled together methods of researching that supported respect for all persons, places, things, and actions involved in the research; that created a feeling of trust; that aimed to uphold the integrity of the topic; and that embraced honesty, self-in-research.

I reflected upon the way the research has historically been done and applied guidelines that actively worked to not only not recreate that way of researching but looked to establish a new positive relationship between a researcher and First Nations.

This way of research would not fit for an individual who is not committed to transparency within their research. It would not suit a researcher that is not committed to learning the cultural and traditional practices and guidelines of the person(s) or community that is involved in the research. It could be applied to a quantitative study but does have a minimum requirement of verbal communication being included as one method to data collection. RIHT is critical in nature and supports Wilson's philosophy of research "not (being) worthy or ethical if it does not improve the reality of the research participants" (2008, p. 37).

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.0 Criteria**

The following search strategy was applied to the title search field for each database and search engine:

1. Father\* OR dad OR male OR men OR man OR Fatherhood
2. Aboriginal\* OR Indigenous or First Nation OR Metis OR Inuit
3. Child OR infant OR baby OR son OR daughter OR adolescent OR teen
4. Involvement OR parenting OR support OR guidance OR family

5. Ministry\* OR government OR welfare

6. 1, 2 AND 3

7. 1, 2 AND 4

8. 1, 2 AND 5

9. 1 AND 3

10. 1 AND 4

11. 1 AND 5

Criteria for inclusion of research in the review were as follows:

(1) it focused on an aspect of a Father's involvement or role with a child or within a family or community in North America; and/or

(2) it identified barriers to Fatherhood or a male role; and/or

(3) it provided recommendations for future research, government or community work.

In this review I did not explore literature outside of North America as the child welfare system that is being explored is specific to the province of British Columbia (B.C.). The traditional territory of the Kwakwaka'waka People is also situated within this province's borders. Non-refereed, non-published "grey literature" was also examined. This included publications from government, non-profit, and other institutions and reports by persons not indexed in peer-reviewed literature databases, online resources, magazines, and news publications. Government, First Nation and family-based websites in North America were reviewed for content relating to defining parenting and/or Fatherhood and identifying barriers involved in the act of parenting and/or Fatherhood for First Nation men.

Key informants were consulted in an effort to find ongoing research or research evidence on First Nation Fatherhood and the barriers involved with the act of Fathering in North America.

I reached out to Paul Kershaw who is a professor in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of British Columbia who does research on Fathers and public policy. I asked Dr. Kershaw if he had any works that reference First Nation Father's defining how they became Fathers, unfortunately he did not have any research to contribute to this area at this time (P. Kershaw, personal communication, April 01, 2016). I met with Jessica Ball who is a professor at the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. She has been leading researcher in the area of Fatherhood in Canada for the past decade. She encouraged me to conduct research that would let Fathers share their stories (J. Ball, personal communication, June 26, 2015). At the end of our conversation she provided me with a copy of *Father involvement in Canada: Diversity, renewal, and transformation* which highlights numerous works from various researchers who have all focused-on Fatherhood (Ball & Daly, 2012). I also met with Leslie Brown who is a retired professor of the School of Social Work, University of Victoria. Her research interests include Aboriginal governance and community practice, liberatory research methods and child welfare. She is a Principal Investigator with the Indigenous Child Welfare Research Network and was previously the Associate Dean of Research for the Faculty of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria. She encouraged me to seek out other Masters students who are looking into research with Fathers to combine efforts and to have a group of researchers to share ideas and findings with. She challenged me to be reflexive throughout this phase and ask myself 'what is different in my research, what am I doing that hasn't been done?' (L. Brown, personal communication, July 6, 2015).

## 2.1 Current State of Father-Inclusion in Canada

Research into the challenges for Fathers in child rearing and what supports are in communities for them has become an agenda item for Canada over the past 15 years. Studies involving interviews with Fathers about their roles, struggles and needs; reviews of child protection files for the representation of Fathers; literature reviews and questionnaires all directed at Fathers in Canada have begun to reveal the barriers that are fixed in the lives of our Fathers whilst trying to fulfill their roles as a parent.

For over a decade Jessica Ball has been delving into the world of Fatherhood and looking at Fathers as an asset to childhood. Ball advocates for change in “how we measure, interpret and conceptualize Father involvement” (Ball & Daly, 2013, p. 5). She refers to Fathers as an untapped resource and puts forward a goal of harnessing the potential that lives within them (Ball, 2012, p. 373).

One of Ball’s larger pieces of research results from 80 conversational interviews with Indigenous Fathers in Canada. Ball used community partnerships to bring together Indigenous Fathers to talk about Father involvement. In this piece of research, she included an analysis of census data, a demographic questionnaire, a Father involvement questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews to collect her data. She concurrently collected and analyzed data and used line by line coding to break down the interviews (Ball, 2010). In this piece of research Ball summarizes that these 80 Fathers identify struggling against the ongoing colonization through the *Indian Act* (1985), the mother centrism prevalent in the child welfare system, the gender biased justice system, and a lack of exposure to positive parenting in their childhood (Ball, 2010). It should be recognized that these Fathers also were rarely heard putting blame on mothers for these circumstances. Ball (2009) states that Indigenous Fathers are “arguably the

most socially excluded” persons and that the intergenerational disruptions, residential school, incarceration, and racism, are the key influences on men’s ability to successfully parent (pp. 29-30).

The outcome of this work led Ball to identify six key factors that are major contributors to positive Father involvement with their children: personal wellness, opportunities for learning Fathering, socio-economic inclusion, having social supports, creating legislative/policy support for Fathers, and cultural continuity (Ball, 2010). Ball’s later works also resulted in similar findings, in her 2012 article, *‘We could be the turn-around generation’: Harnessing Aboriginal fathers’ potential to contribute to their children’s well-being*, she derived that in order to fulfill the ideal of our Fathers being seen as assistance to our children’s well-being there must be efforts in policy reform, patience, positive media representation, programs, and paternity testing (2012). Ball (Ibid) used a sociohistorical lens to focus on the understanding of the historical significance of the Father’s cultural group. It’s important to highlight that although there are numerous similarities between studies completed with non-Indigenous Fathers, a key difference was found in the dedication to the transmission of care and culture. Indigenous Fathers spoke to the importance of *generativity*, the notion that their impact is not only on their children, but their children’s children and the future generations to come (Ball & Daly, 2012).

In her chapter, *Indigenous Fathers in Canada: Multigenerational Challenges*, Ball (2013) asks some important follow up questions about how we can effectively use policy and legislation to reduce barriers to positive Father involvement and what work can we do to strengthen community programs, so that they are able to reach, support and sustain connections with Fathers. She acknowledges that there is little information out there that can provide opportunities for the construction of a mentorship program for Indigenous Fathers. She also adds that the

current work that has been completed is not yet having much influence on the policy development and program creating the needs to happen to make change for Fathers (Ball, 2013, p. 212).

Ball partnered with Kerry Daly to write *Father Involvement in Canada: Diversity, Renewal and Transformation* (2012). This article recognizes that the majority of the research out there has been conducted through the lens of “Direct Care” to children and the importance of this care for a child’s health. Ball and Daly (2012) compare the contributions of direct care and indirect care for their importance to a child’s upbringing through Bronfenbremer’s (1986) systems of care onto system/micro/exo/macro/meso. As Fathers are typically in the home as indirect caregivers their involvement should be viewed from the importance of that role. Ball & Daly examined individual Fatherhood experiences and attempt to remove Fatherhood from the androcentric (mother centric) model of citizenship that it’s been framed within. They suggest that to step in this direction there should be no single image of Fatherhood (Ball & Daly, 2013, p. 12). Images, programs and support services need to move beyond the dominant portrayals of western normative heterosexual Fatherhood and participate in the diverse culture of Fatherhood and its various forms and representations (Ball & Daly, 2012). This work needs to be less about gender and more about loving adults. “It is the presence of caring adults in a child’s life and the attributes of the primary caregiver(s), rather than their gender, that are critical to child outcomes. (Ball & Daly, 2012, p. 17).

## **2.2 Health, The Ghosts and Education**

Positive Fatherhood involvement is linked to better health outcomes for children and better determinants of health for Fathers (Ball, 2009, p. 126). *Father's Involvement as a Determinant of Child Health*, completed by Ball, Moselle, & Pedersen, looked at the theoretical

and empirical foundations for investing in and reinforcing positive Father involvement as indirect investment in children's health (2007). Through the application of ecological systems theory, a social aggregation model, and viewing children's health as a social context, this research assessed the benefits of Fathers providing indirect care to their children. Using an ecological perspective, *indirect care* was defined as generating family income, providing transportation, social networking and role modelling (Ball, J., Moselle, K., & Pedersen, S., 2007). Although this piece of research did not have an individual focus on Indigenous Fathers, it did highlight benefits of positive Father involvement not only for children, but for other Fathers as well. Positive outcomes were seen in cognitive function, academic progress, psychological-emotional stability, and social-interaction by children who had Fathers who were positively involved through indirect care (Ball et al., 2007). Reciprocal benefits were seen in Fathers giving care. Fathers who were positively involved were benefitting in areas of capacity for attachment, self-confidence, they presented with lower distress levels, were suffering from fewer accidental and premature deaths, had less substance abuse, greater marital stability and happiness, and fewer hospital admissions. (Ball et al., 2007)

Strega et al. (2008), completed a study entitled *Connecting father absence and mother blame in child welfare policies and practice*. The goal of this study is to reframe practice, policy and discourse in ways that are more inclusive of Fathers and reduce mother blame. Interviews were conducted with Fathers of children from adolescent mothers. For this project Fathers were defined as someone that identifies themselves as a social, community, or financial support to a child(ren), a biological or step-parent. This study also reviewed 282 child protection (CP) files belonging to Mothers that were 19 years old and younger. The results of this work acknowledged the overrepresentation of mothers involve with child protective services, the label of “failure to

protect” for mothers and the mystery of the Fathers who were left out of all types of assessments documented in CP files. This research also highlighted the discourse of the workers involved with each of these files, the generational impact of care, lack of social assistance funding for families, and need of strength-based approaches, education, and employment factors for parenting (Strega, Fleet, Brown, Callahan, Dominelli, and Walmsley, 2008).

Fathers missing from child welfare files was also found in Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsley, & Dominelli (2009), multi-method review of 116 child protection files covering a period of three years. By analyzing gender, class, race and culture represented in these files, Brown et.al, revealed that the ‘uninvolved’ Fathers in these files were commonly labeled as deviant or simply noted as absent. Brown et al, claims that failing to work with Fathers is not only ignoring potential risk but potential benefit (Brown et al., 2009). They advocate that Fathers need to be visibly recorded and given consideration as resources for their children. Brown et. al, echoes the sentiments of other researchers by stating that the child welfare system is mother-centric, and that workers often rely on mothers for taking on various social worker responsibilities when it comes to engaging with Fathers (Brown et al., 2009). The authors emphasize that these Fathers are not “absent” they’re ignored. They state that child welfare is eurocentric western middle class white and heterosexual with an obvious gender bias (Brown et al., 2009, p. 25-34).

A study was recently completed by Caroline Mniszak (2018) in which she examined the lack of resources appropriate for young Fathers. Her work explains that very little research has been done in the area of young Fatherhood and that there are extremely “disproportionate amounts of services and information resources available for young mothers compared to young Fathers” (p. 2) Mniszak defined young as 14-24 years of age for the purposes of her research and

her work echoes that of previous studies by Ball (2010), Brown et al. (2009) and Strega et al. (2007) and again calls for appropriate programs and services designed for the Father population.

With “no resources to offer” workers, they are unprepared to work with Fathers (Brown, 2009). This lack of education for front line workers in the area of serving our Fathers is also spoken to by both Ball (2010a; 2012b; 2013c) and Strega et. al., (2007). These authors all urge change in the way that workers are trained and supported to do their job. Education and practice directives on involving Fathers in child protection would be a key starting point for the front line in the case of the ‘ghost’ Fathers (Ball, 2012; Strega et al., 2007).

Workers need to understand the history and the practical barriers that are active for Fathers (Ball, 2012; Mniszak, 2018). Barriers would include the huge gap in appropriate services and programs, the mother centrism of the child welfare system, the lack of acknowledgement of Fathers as being meaningful contributors to child safety, minimal understanding of Indigenous culture and culture as a protective factor.

First Nations men, our Fathers, are amongst the most socially excluded population in Canada. Research has shown that in comparison to the general population, Indigenous men experience higher unemployment, higher rate of injuries, are three times more likely to live in poverty and commit suicide, and are nine time more likely to become incarcerated; they are also more likely to become a Father in their teenage years. (Ball, 2011) To compound on this, the Indigenous populations of North America, which in British Columbia represent roughly 200,000 of the provinces population, have a very high level of low-quality housing, education, unemployment and poverty (Ball, 2010; Blackstock, 2019; Brittain & Blackstock, 2015; Province, 2019). These are also the key indicators seen in families that become involved with the Ministry of Children and Families. There is no doubt that our Indigenous populations are

extremely overrepresented in the child welfare system. Although these indicators are the mechanism for how families become involved, I truly believe that one of the indicators for the length of involvement, and separation of children from their families, is the lack of involvement of both parents in the processes of the system. It has been very well demonstrated through previous research that Fathers are not valued or recognized as worthy in the child welfare system.

The child welfare system literature leads its readers to believe that this system is in place to work with families to create safe and supportive environments for our next generations. However, in practice, it has been demonstrated that ‘family’ seems to be defined as a Mother and her children. It has historically neglected any and all contributions to family that a Father could make by ‘ghosting’ them and diligently focusing on mothers (Ball, 2012; Brown, 2009; Mniszak, 2018; Strega et al., 2008). Through this literature review I can summarize that a large part of the either inability or disinterest in front line workers to include Fathers is a lack of understanding of the role of a Father not only to their children, but in their community. This lack of understanding may perpetuate a stereotype of absentee Fathers or create a fear of reaching out that may inhibit them from striving to include Fathers in their cases. Perhaps, through education and relationship building, front line workers can begin to see the Fathers as an asset and even protective factors versus neglectful and absent. In the following section I will describe my methodology and the importance of oral history research which supported the important role of adding Fathers’ voices to parenting and child welfare. Following this section, I will describe my Methodology that invited the inclusion and Fathers as a very important voice to add to the literature on First Nation Fathers and child welfare.

## **Chapter Three: The Work**

### **3.0 Protocol - Ethical Considerations**

There are numerous considerations that were made when looking at completing this research with First Nation Fathers. Research has historically been an unwelcome, invasive and disastrous act forced upon the Indigenous populations. First Nations people represent the most studied culture in Canada and potentially North America. This means that generations of our people were unconsented subjects of information appropriation. Researchers would come into community, without permission, without acknowledgement, without transparency and take what they were looking for and leave. Previously, information that was collected was used to belittle, misrepresent and shape the view of Indigenous people as being an inferior 'other' (Smith, 1999). As I am playing the role of a First Nation researcher in this thesis, it is my utmost responsibility to ensure that the way I work does not replicate that invasive and destructive history and comes from within the RIHT walls of the Gukzi.

I believe that in order to complete research in a good way I need to look to our traditional governance structures to guide me; this is where the RIHT methodology discussed above came into application. Trust is a virtue that I hold very dear to my heart. I believe that trust is the ultimate connection you can have with a person. It requires vulnerability, dedication and transparency. It requires the presence of the other three virtues in the Gukzi; Honesty, Respect and Integrity. These four corners of the Big House have been with me throughout this work and have been reflected upon with each phase of research. The following is a summary of the ethical considerations that were made and that structured this researched.

As I thought further into specific ethical considerations several challenges came to mind. Re-traumatization is a paramount consideration when conducting research involving Indigenous populations. It was important to be reflexive and transparent about the way this research was approached. It was important to be consulting with persons that can advise on content, approach and language as to be as safe as possible while conducting this research (Baskin, 2011; Episkenew, 2009; Kovach, 2009 & Wilson, 2008).

The methods used for gathering participants and data were through the least intrusive measures. Participants were supported to guide data collection by being given space to speak to how they would like to be approached (physical space, time of day, etc.), how they would like to receive information/data, how they would like the document or findings to be disseminated and how they would like to be represented in the work. Community leadership consultation was key for the development of appropriate questions to guide conversations with the participants. It was important to have community support for these questions because if they were not developed sensitively, and through an informed lens, they could cause re-traumatization for the participants as they reflect on potentially very difficult times in their lives. Supports for the participants were in place after the conversations. These included access to support lines, myself, and/or an Elder if requested. I made sure that the participants were in a good place at the end of the conversation and that they had a solid support system to go to if the conversation was triggering for them and they needed that support.

Recognizing the power differential was important. Although I am a First Nation woman myself, there was still a power imbalance. As a female, I have not personally gone through the experiences that these Fathers shared, and I did not have many of the same challenges in my life as they have had in theirs; although there was definitely some overlap in some themes of their

stories with my own journey in life. As the researcher, I worked hard to be very diligent at being mindful of this power imbalance and check in with myself regularly to reflect on how I was presenting myself; appearance, tone of voice, body language, eye contact etc. With this power also comes privilege. I was and am conscious of the privilege that I carry, not only for the reasons above, but for the fact that I've been able to live independently, attend post-secondary education, travel, and live a very full life with potentially little challenges or barriers in comparison to many of my relatives and this privilege sits with me at all times.

### **3.1 Storytelling – a Methodology**

There was once, for all of us, a fire in the night... To talk, to tell our stories, to teach each other, is as necessary to our growth as water. We're all storytellers. We always were. But most of us have forgotten that... (Schorcht, 2008)

Using a storytelling approach to this research was a glaringly obvious path. It is a commonly known, and well recorded fact, that First Nation's cultures are oral. (Cajete, 1999) And that the history of our people lives within that oral history which is represented through stories. Further to this "through the retelling of stories, First Nations represent their identities and societies" (Fraser, 2004, p. 180) making this approach all that more appropriate to begin to define and identify what it means to be a Kwakwaka'wakw Father (Isaac, 2000; Schorcht, 2008).

I would like to note that using this approach to create new literature is also tied to a personal and political agenda that seeks to validate storytelling as a legitimate resource for fact gathering and ignite a dedication to spoken interaction in research (Kovach, 2009; Lavallee, 2009; Thomas, 2011). In western methodologies relationship is labelled as biased and something that is outside of a methodology versus imbedded within it (Kovach, 2010, p. 42).

Historically research has been a colonial method of data collection. A storytelling methodology creates space to honour the traditional way of knowledge sharing in First Nation communities (Kovach, 2009; Thomas, 2005). A conversational method of research is a relatively new way of researching and aligns with an Indigenous paradigm which is arguably less invasive than other methods of research (Kovach, 2009; Thomas, 2005; Wilson, 2001).

My use of a storytelling approach is also passively influenced by other methodologies committed to social justice and decolonizing as they are a natural piece of my day to day work as a social worker through my dedication to equity and equality for all First Nation, Metis and Inuit persons (Baskin, 2011, Brown & Strega, 2005; Ladson-Billing, 1998; Smith, 1999, Wilson, 2008).

The following will outline participant specifications and recruitment, data collection and the ethical considerations that align with this methodology and that were used for this research.

### **3.2 The Question, The Purpose, and The Reason**

My main research question for this study was ‘What reflections do Kwakwaka’wakw Fathers have when asked about their journey of coming into Fatherhood?’ I’ve chosen to use this question to guide this process of looking into the stories of Kwakwaka’wakw Fathers and beginning to define what this role is in a family and in a community.

The primary focus of the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) is to support all children and youth in British Columbia, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to live in safe, healthy, and nurturing families and be strongly connected to their communities and culture. (MCFD, February 2018)

In its 2018/2019-2020/2021 Service Plan, MCFD states that its “approach is to deliver inclusive, culturally respectful, responsive and accessible services that support the well-being of

children, youth and families” (MCFD, February 2018). If this statement was fulfilled then we would see culturally appropriate programs and services in place for Indigenous families that respectfully supported our children, youth, mothers, Fathers and their extended families. To date, MCFD is a system that has molded itself around the role of the mother in parenting and removed emphasis and opportunity from the other parent, our Fathers (Ball, 2006).

The significance of this study is the opportunity for our Fathers to give voice to their stories of being and becoming Fathers. This work is meant to contribute to the decolonization of the role of our First Nation Fathers. These stories of Fatherhood are provided to give context into what it means to be a Father to change the way their roles are seen by the public and by MCFD. Also, the pictures that the stories create allow these Fathers to become relational images for those who are walking in the same steps. This work is adding to the growing research that is being done on Fatherhood in Canada. The results of this research include highlighting themes from the gifted stories, and through the process of using the stories for context, conducting a literature review to provide recommendations to MCFD and its service providers to aid relationship building between frontline workers and Fathers, help frontline workers develop an understanding of the Father role in community, and create a sense of value of that role as a protective factor for children and youth.

I want to acknowledge that although this work may project knowledge that reflects the thoughts and feelings of other Indigenous and non-Indigenous Fathers, my research has been done specifically with Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers as I am a family member of this community and this relationship has allowed me to conduct research in a safer space; amongst family (Wilson, 2008).

It's important to also state that this work isn't to negate or take away from our mothers. Our mothers have very much played pivotal roles in the successful men that we have in our communities today. This research into Fatherhood is aiming to support our Fathers to have the same opportunities, programs and services available to them that are available to so many mothers in order to provide them with an opportunity to catch up with the mothering roles that have been the primary in child development work for so long. Taking on this role is not only for themselves but for the benefit of the many generations to come (Ball, 2013).

The Fathers represented in this work have been very open to the use of the findings and their stories for this purpose. They have been supportive of my goal to disseminate this thesis and it's results to Provincial bodies associated with the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development, conduct presentations with staff of organizations that work with First Nations Fathers, and to produce materials that can also be sent to these agencies to support their work with Fathers. One of the Fathers has also been very keen on attending presentations along with me to share his story. This work has been about honoring these Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers and that remains the most important result. As reciprocity is a moral and cultural guideline for my research, I acknowledged the Fathers' contributions to the work through a small culturally appropriate gift that is representative of their role as a Kwakwaka'wakw Father. I was given many gifts throughout this process and would like to be able to give back in thanks for those gifts. I would like the Fathers who I've done this work with to feel valued, honored, sacred, and that their voices are held up and represented in a good way

What prompted my interest in Fatherhood was a conversation that was had at a staff meeting when I worked at Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services. One of our two male bodied employees acknowledged the privilege that some men hold but spoke to the huge deficit

in services to support our First Nations men and boys. He pointed out our own organization and the various opportunities that we had provided for young women and that we did not have a similar option for our young men. This struck me. I had spent so much of my career as a student, and then as a professional, advocating and creating space for women, but I had never stopped to look at doing that work for our young men. I told him at that meeting that he was right, and that I would do something, I wasn't sure what at the time, but that I would do something to help bridge that gap and raise up our young men.

### **3.3 The Fathers – Recruitment**

“We could be the turnaround generation”. (Ball, 2012)

Previous research in this area has been very specific about the sample of Fathers who would be chosen for participation. Fathers were recorded by age, family size, race, and other specific characteristics. As this project is looking for experiential information and is not a quantitative study, I did not narrow the selection of Fathers by numerous characteristics. This project considered Fathers who self-identify as being of Kwakwaka'wakw ancestry, and had experience being in a Father figure role. Self-identifying as a Father included persons who feel that they have acted as a substantial Father figure in a child or youth's life. Identifying as being of Kwakwaka'wakw ancestry included those of First Nations culture that may be non-status and live off reserve/out of their cultural community. Age, cultural background, and age/number of children will be recorded for curiosity purposes only, this information will not be analyzed within the research.

In order to begin the recruitment process, I reached out to community leaders to review the materials that I was planning to put out to places of gathering for families. It was important to have all materials approved by Kwakwaka'wakw community leaders prior to dissemination to

assure that they were not triggering or insulting through their appearance or through the language chosen. Community Leaders included Executive Directors of health and social service organizations, Chiefs (elected and hereditary), as well as my cultural oversight committee; Alex Nelson and Seneca Ambers. My cultural oversight committee was in place for me to be able to consult on an ongoing basis as my work progressed. They were consulted throughout the creation of the questions that I was hoping to ask, they supported with recruitment and dissemination of materials, and they were there for me to check in with along the way whenever I felt stuck, or confused, or wanted to ensure that I was making a safe step. They were a big part of the move from a focus on Fathers specifically involved with MCFD to just focusing on the Fathers and their stories of Fatherhood and having those stories naturally guide the rest of the work. This shift in focus was also enforced through aligning with the RIHT methodology.

Advertisement of the research was sent through email and community presentations to allow Fathers to come forward without the knowledge of other community members witnessing their curiosity in the work. Posters were placed in areas frequented by families that contained information about the research and about how to reach out to participate. The call for Fathers was not limited to Kwakwaka'wakw Territory as our people live all over the Island and Mainland. My contact information (cell phone number and email address) was provided with all recruitment materials and to all local service providers that were approached for support with this recruitment.

The recruitment process fell over an eight- month period and three Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers came forward. It was a goal that these three Fathers would each be from different generations; Ages 19-29, 30-49, 50+. The Fathers that came forward did differ in age, however not to the extent as previously hoped. The intent behind this was to see if their stories were

similar or if there were distinct differences between them and whether the generational gap was a factor.

I met with each of the Fathers prior to each Father agreeing to take on their role as a participant in this research in order to go through the work, give opportunity for them to ask questions, and for myself to give more context as to why I've chosen this topic and my goals for the end product.

I met with them individually and provided them with my research question, 'What reflections do Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers have when asked about their journey of coming into Fatherhood?'. I explained that I'd like to have a conversation with them about what it means to be a 'Dad' and record it. I walked through the plan of completing this process with a couple other Fathers that would then allow me to look at the similarities to start piecing together what it means to be a Kwakwaka'wakw Father. I further detailed that the purpose of doing this is not only to generate this conversation of 'what is a Kwakwaka'wakw Father' but to use this information to make recommendations to the Ministry of Children and Family Development's social workers on how they can do better at including our Fathers, to teach them about the role of Fathers in our communities, and to support them to develop better relationships with our Fathers; ultimately, to work to change the stigma of 'dead beat dad' so that social workers view Father involvement as an asset and protective factor. All three Fathers were still interested in being engaged with this research after these preliminary discussions.

When completing community based research, the researcher must ensure that they're engaging their community members, employing local knowledge and understanding of story (protocol) and most importantly, ensuring that there is a reflexive investment in the process and the result of the work for the community involved. (Isaac, 2000) I feel that Isaac's words

describe the type of research that I've aimed to complete here and provide the reminder of the importance of the reflexivity in creating safe, supportive and community enriching research.

### **3.4 Listening - Data Collection**

“...stories as Indigenous knowledge work to not only regenerate Indigenous traditions and knowledge production, but also work against the colonial epistemic frame to subvert and recreate possibilities and space for resistance.” (Sium & Ritkes, 2013, p. 3)

Two formal conversations took place with each Father; with the exception of one who preferred to connect via email post-transcription review. The first of these was our initial recording of their story of Fatherhood. I had created cue cards with various questions that aimed to help guide our conversation and move through their story. These questions were intentionally open ended to encourage storytelling and not be purposefully leading. The same cards were used for each interview, they were placed in front of the Fathers in the same order, but the Fathers were free to choose where to start and where to move next. The cue cards were used as a mechanism to help reduce tension and keep the conversation flowing without me having to remind or interrupt in order to keep us focused. They provided the Fathers something to look at while they were talking so that they didn't have to make eye contact with myself if that made them too nervous or uncomfortable, and they were a reminder of the question that we were currently looking at so that I was not needed to repeat the question verbally which could potentially impact their train of thought. All of the Fathers took the opportunity to pick up the cards as they were working their way through and hold them while they were speaking to that card. Once they felt they were finished with that question, they would place the card off to the side. I believe that this also helped to aid them in being able to know when we were finished and not feel as though the conversation was going to go on for as long as I kept it going, but that

there was a structure for us to follow and they could see the finish line; the longevity of the conversation was in their hands.

The questions on these cards were:

- “Could we start with your name, birthdate, which Community you’re from and a little bit about your family?”
- “How do you identify yourself as a Father?”
- “Where did you learn how to be a Father?”
- “Are there any specific cultural teachings tied to Fatherhood from your community?, anything culturally specific to Fatherhood or becoming a Father?”
- “What challenges did you face as a Father?”
- “Is there anything you would have like to have known or have had available to you along your journey as a Father that you didn’t? Any programs or services that you would have accessed?”
- “How would you define Fatherhood? If someone asked you what it meant, how would you explain it?”
- “Is there anything else that you can think of that would be important for someone coming into Fatherhood to know?”

At the end of each conversation the Fathers were also reminded that there would be a second opportunity to get together to talk about their experience. They were also reminded that they’re welcome to be in touch at any point if they think of something that they want to add or change and that their transcripts will get to them within the next three months for them to review for accuracy and content.

Locations were chosen by each of the Fathers in order to provide the opportunity for each Father to be in a space where they felt most comfortable and safe. One Father chose his backyard, and the others chose space at a local on reserve health care centre where a room was booked to host us. The conversations were recorded using a digital recording device and then transcribed verbatim. After this process, their transcriptions were provided to them for review and a second opportunity for conversation was set up.

Recruitment, first conversations, and transcription with dissemination back to each of the Fathers took place over a roughly a 13 month period. Providing time for each of the Fathers to review their respective transcriptions took place over three months. One Father requested his transcription in a printed format and that was delivered to him. Two Fathers received their transcriptions in a Word Document format through Email. For two of the three Fathers I ended up scheduling second conversations for the purposes of me reading the transcriptions aloud for their review and edits. The remaining Father reviewed via the Word Document format and submitted feedback via email.

From here, I took a step back from the stories that were just gifted to me and began to read the words of other storytellers (authors, artists, community members). I waited until I had accomplished a significant amount of the literature review before looking to acknowledge some common themes that arose out of the Fathers' stories.

### **3.5 Kwakwaka'wakw Data Analysis**

The formal analysis begun through acknowledgement of the common themes that I found between the three Father's stories. After I had identified themes, I connected back with the Fathers to talk to them about these themes for the purposes of getting their feedback and approval. Following our conversations, I used an online tool to create a 'wordle' (Appendix: A).

I was curious to see common language that was used. This piece was completed to inspire me and has been included in the appendices. Moving forward I began to seek out literature that was specific to Kwakwaka'wakw people. Doing this search specific to Fatherhood was too narrow to provide results. As First Nation communities have historically been holistic in nature it was my expectation that literature not specific to Fathers would still contain persons speaking to experiences and/or roles of men, and/or Fathers. As I came upon literature that I was keen to use, I would cross check it with community members. Through posting titles of works publicly on social media, as well as privately within WeWaiKai's closed membership only Facebook page, I would receive feedback on the various titles and what community thought about their accuracy. With the three Father's words fresh in my mind, I made note of any theme, situation, or story that related to their stories from the Kwakwaka'wakw literature. Results of this analysis follow the transcription of the Father's stories; the most important piece of this work.

## **Chapter Four: Stories & Findings**

### **4.0 First Conversation with a Kwakwaka'wakw Father**

Nervous to start, but confident in the opportunity, we started with our first question about who he was, where he came from, and his family. In a traditional way, he went on to introduce himself, and his family.

“My name is Gilbert Walkus, my birthdate is November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1959. I lived in Port Hardy for the majority of my life. I moved there in the early 60s, the government had forced my people to move from our original homeland to Port Hardy, so that's where I lived the majority of my life. I lived and worked and raised my families there. My first set of kids from my first wife, and my family, my Grandfather, my Dad's Dad, his name is Ed Walkus, he is a very well-known man he was a composer. He composed songs for many Chiefs and different potlatches. I remembered as

a young child, my Grandfather, he was blind. But he wasn't born blind, it was one of these things that happened as an accident. At a drinking party he got a bottle smashed in his eye and then eventually he lost his eyesight. But anyway, my Grandfather he was a composer and a Master Carver as well. And he was Chief of our family and he passed that Chieftain ship to my Dad so and now I wear that Chief name now. I'm the Chief of my family now so it's nice."

Gilbert comes from a traditionally sized family of 12. Although many of his siblings have passed onto our next world, himself, two sisters, and one younger brother are still in his life.

"I had my grooming, I had no idea, I just remember at eight years old my Grandfather and my Dad used to always have me inside, even in the summer holidays and out of school, they would sit me with them and they'd be talking, not necessarily to me, they would just be talking to each-other. They were just teaching me and grooming me that way. I had no idea that that was part of their way of teaching me and grooming me that way, to become a strong person, in my heart and in my mind, to be able to stand for my family as the head Chief, that was part of that. I didn't get it for years until my Dad ya know, my dad was a very very good representative for our family as a Chief ya know he'd, the way he approached things, he didn't do it with anger, he did it with, because it was a part of the teaching of my Grandfather. You're not there to represent us as Chief, to hurt people with words, you do it in a way that you can come to a good compromise, a positive compromise, to fix things, in any way that whatever it might be. It could be all types of situations, and I watched my Dad do it lots, lots, of times for my family, protecting us as his children ya know. Some people were very mean, and I believe that all came from the residential setting. The residential school setting, people were mean to us and even some of the people were calling me a Chinese. From my own community, 'you look like a China man' to me and I'm not I'm not a China man, I know I'm not a China man. That's their mean,

it's not so much that I thought they were being racists, it was just coming from that back ground I seen a lot of that negativity coming from them, and that it was all coming from the residential school”

The next part of our conversation took us back to where his roots originated with a question asking about where his traditional home lands were, before him and his family were displaced to Port Hardy.

“My traditional home lands, that I'm very proud to say, that I'm from is my is Smith Inlet. I've been back there a lot of times and I'd love to just move back there. Anything in this world, if I had to move from Campbell River, I would move back to my homeland in a heartbeat. And my Mother, my Dad is originally from Smith Inlet. Well, that's where his dad was from, Ed Walkus, and my Grandmother is from Blunden Harbour. They got married and then they had ya know, so my Dad has that back ground, Smith Inlet (Tak'us) and Blunden Harbour (Ba'as). My brother is from Port Alice, so my Mom's Gwa'sala through marriage but from Rivers Inlet, Awikinux . So I have all that I'm a Gwa'sala / Awikinux heritage in me right. So I was saying my Mom was a matriarch for our family, very high standing Queen in our family, in our traditional cultural ways, that's how we honour our ya know. When I, I'll tell you a story of my Mom and Dad. This is how is goes, my Dad was initiated by his Grandfather to be a Hamatsa at seven years old. So my Mother was five years old and she was the one that carried the traditional copper and danced, ya know, facing my Dad as they were going like this, it's the traditional way when you get initiated. So years and years later as they grew, they never knew that they were going to get together, and get married, and have us. I find that very very unique to me a story because them not knowing at that age, my dad being seven, and my mom being five, I love telling that story.”

At this place in our conversation we move into talking about Fatherhood and looking at how Gilbert identifies himself as a Father.

“Well just being like, my Dad raised us in a good sense of the word, like just with morals and values, ya know integrity, ya know and me particularly. We used, my brother and I, my younger brother who’s next to me 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest, David Jr., we always thought my Dad was being mean to us, but he was building us up for when the time came to face the real world. He made us work hard like hard, cutting wood, chopping wood, packing wood, ya know. He just made us work really hard and then years later as we grew, became teenagers, 16 and 17, that’s when I started exploring, I wanted work, so I got out there and worked. And started developing this real keen attitude of just ya know just wanting to work for me. It was good for me; I like loved it. ‘Cause it helps build your integrity right, so you don’t have this lazy mentality ya know. A lot of my cousins are like that, just don’t wanna work and haven’t worked a day in their lives. I don’t know why it is but I thank my dad for that. My brother, I’m sure if he was still alive, my brother was a really good Father for his children as well. Very very hard-working man who worked for his family and children. My first wife, I had six children with 3 boys 3 girls, and um yeah and um just not only that but being a Father, being a Caregiver like to show your affection, and not be afraid to show, cause it’s an affection. I learned a lot of that from my mom. The importance of loving and caring and nurturing for the kids right, and that’s what I did cause it just came natural. My Mom gave it to me, that taught me that, so I gave it to my kids the same way right. ‘Cause mom always like, she loved me to death, and my brothers, and sisters, but to me she just seemed to like, her and I had a very very special relationship.”

Gilbert is the elder of his siblings. As the eldest he felt that he naturally had a lot of responsibilities, “that’s just the way it was, it just was a given” he said. He felt that there was an

emphasis for him to watch over his sisters, to make sure that they were okay, that they arrived home when they were supposed to. He said that his Mother would say “if they’re not home on time, go find them, bring them home, don’t come home until you bring them home with you.”. Gilbert said that “in the big sense of it, it really taught me how to really take care of everyone in my family, no matter who it was, wasn’t just me, my brothers and sisters, it was my cousins as well ya know, an um its good it was good for me.”

Learning parenting skills can come from a variety of sources and may not be something that we think about very often, but this is something that I wanted to hear from Gilbert about, where did he feel he learned how to be a Dad?

“My Dad, my Mother, my Grandfather, my Grandmother ya know. Just watching ya know, how they went along in their days. My Grandmother had 24 children my Dad’s Mom, 24, so that’s huge that’s huge huge huge family. I could not imagine, well me, I would have all together would have had 11 but I lost my oldest son to a fire accident in Port Hardy in 2010 and that devastated me. Losing my son ya know, being a Father I, I did everything for my kids in a good sense to teach them values and morals. Help them grow up with integrity for themselves ya know. I mean, I never forced anything on them. I just said okay ya know ya just gotta be on your best behaviour and you earn that self-respect by being a good person ya know. Respect is not given, ya earn it and it goes both ways after right. That just teaching them all that as a Father too, that’s what my Dad and my Grandfather taught me, was part of becoming a Chief years later not knowing I was going to be and here I am.”

At this point in our conversation Gilbert had already spoke to values and morals within his family teachings, I followed up with this and asked about what he feels are the most important values he holds as a Father.

“Honour, loving no matter, my parents and my Grandfather and grandmother always said even if people treat ya mean don’t say anything back, just walk away, you’re the better person when you do that, so that was what I taught my children as well, and that’s what I’m teaching Jarrad and Mikayla. The beginning of the school year Jarrad was getting bullied a lot, but I’m glad in the school system the teachers don’t condone bullying so the teachers were meeting head on and everything. They were letting me know, the teachers were letting me know who did this, who did what. Sometimes the tendency for me, I can get very angry, my anger was a real real big issue with me but I took anger management. The things I’ve learned in life, I meditate, I go for walks, I exercise, just blow out all that negative energy in a way that’s good for me cause I know that I won’t hurt anybody with words or physically or whatever right. That’s what I learned in my life, as part of my training in life. Taking karate was one of them, it teaches you that, not so much to use it but, to learn how to stop the fight before it happened, the self-control. You could hurt anybody real bad if you ever needed to, if it came to a life and death situation, that’s when I would use it, but it never ever came to that. I learned how to meditate through that teaching too through my Sensei, as we refer to them, my Sensei taught me that to, meditate go out in the woods and just, ya know, be alone and just just think just go into yourself.”

Speaking about lessons and learning led us into talking about cultural traditions and looking into whether or not Gilbert felt that there were any specific cultural teachings tied to Fatherhood from his Community. Any songs, dances, or Ceremony that are specific to becoming or being a Father?

“What I see is the value of our tradition culture. A lot of it has been lost since the move from Smith Inlet. Ya know with me, I am very very honoured and proud to know that I have all those teachings, our songs, our names, what I own that I hold cause I’m the keeper of our

treasure box. I know what's in there, I know what goes on with all them masks, the names that I can give, the songs that go with those masks, the songs and dances, all those are very vital to our traditional cultural ways. If we don't have those, we're we kinda like seem to be lost. Like it's it's like that they call it the lost generation, I've heard that said a lot of times in big gatherings when I was living in Port Hardy. People would get up and say ya know and then they talk about their lives and say 'don't know my, I don't have names, I don't have any songs, I don't know how to dance, I don't know my language', and all that and that all comes again from the residential school. It's just it's just the way it was, the way it is, that's how I lost, I think a lot of the things were lost through that system. In our other part of our cultural ways was just our feasts, our potlatches, we do them with pride and honour and respect and love. Ya know, I compare a lot to the way the non-natives, no disrespect to them, but we go to their community and there's fees sometimes, a lot of times you have to pay for your meals, but when we have our feast and potlatches all the food is just there, you don't have to give me money for, I'm going to feed you, ya know. I feel very very proud in a big sense of the work cause everywhere I go I'm like wow we do this, to honour to show our honour respect and love, just giving like that, some of the feasts are just amazing I love our traditional foods ya know.

“All I know, yea pretty much, if you're given a name you're given a song and a dance. If you're initiated, that's a given, when you become Chief, that's just a given. Ya know um my aunty did for me a few years ago, before I left Port Hardy, she put a potlatch on and she honoured me that way, being the Chief of the family. That was a really really heartwarming, it just gave me so much ya know, just really humbled me. Ya know and um I'm a really softy, but the way I approach things when I got angry, that was really really vicious. I was very not a nice person and I based that partially on when I was a young boy. I was really bullied a lot I was so

bullied even by our cousins and friends in our community. And uh ya know my dad when he was here not working in logging camps he would come help me some times, to face these other older boys that were bullying me and stuff. My dad would start saying well son you know, I'm not always going to be here, I'm away for a month sometimes you're going to have to start standing on your own, you're going to have to start to fight back. These guys are going to keep doing it to you. They're going to keep doing it over and over and over until you pretty much say hey man up, step up, so that's how I learned how to protect myself. That way as a young lad, then growing up you know. Then I learned how to protect my family. My brothers, my brother wasn't a Father, he tried to fight but he didn't know how so as a young lad I had to have his back, but that's okay, it made me feel good, it made me feel proud of it, ya know, I could do things now without dad."

Gilbert spoke to many of the strong times that he's had within his family and culture. So I asked him if he's ever had any challenges as a Father, anything that sticks out to him as a tough battle.

"Well just the way my dad raised us, if we, as children if we stepped out, especially as us male as male boys we got a good spanking. Just any little thing, just the way my dad handled things. A lot of the time it was painful cause it is painful to get hit, slapped with a belt, that kind of thing, hit with a stick, ya know. I used to question my mom when my dad used to go out to work. I'd question her, why is dad so mean and she couldn't answer it, she didn't know. Anyone that knew anything about anything was my dad, just the way he was. I remember being a young lad and I told my mom, I says you know what mom, if I ever have a wife, cause he used to hit my mom too, hit her around quite a bit and hit us around, I told my mom that if I ever have a wife and I have children I won't be hitting my wife and I never will hit my children. From that

point, when I first had my first wife I never hit her. We had six children together and never hit my children. My second wife had two boys with her, same thing with her, never hit her, never hit my children. Third wife, the one I have Jarrad and Makayla with, same thing never hit her, never hit my children. So, ya know but the challenges are, with my anger, I could almost become my dad. I could almost just, feel shaky, but I went and took positive parenting for myself, to help me understand the difference between how a dad raises their children without having to do that kind of thing. Just ya know, there are ways, better ways, because nobody deserves to be hit, and that's what I firmly believe. When I was going out in community it was way wide right out in the open. You see some mothers slap their kids across the face, push them down, grab them by the hair, whatever, ya know. It becomes like so a part of their lives. It doesn't matter where they are, it becomes, it seems like a natural instinct, how they just do it. I'm like oh god really and it just brings back memories to me and I didn't like it. One time I approached one of my cousins, she was really really bad for doing it and just being really nice I tried to ask her nicely just you know 'can you please just not do that here', and she just started yelling and screaming at me. Telling me to mind my own business and whatever, 'these are my children', and like okay I know but you know what you can't be doing that in a public place like this people will call the ministry or something, 'oh you're going to call', no no I'm not I would just like you to stop hitting your children ya know. But those are the things I seen and those are the things I changed in my life ya know to raise my children. It was a real challenge and it got easier as it went along. There are positive ways to discipline our children but you're the only one that can change that and that is me changing me changing the way my dad raised us, I just never wanted to do that to my own."

Amongst all this growth and change, I was curious to know if there was anything that Gilbert would have loved to have had along his journey of Fatherhood, something that may have helped him, whether it was a program, or a piece of knowledge or anything.

“I don’t know if there’s anything I would change, being a dad, for me, was kind of like just for me, an easy thing, cause I could help my kid develop ya know. Just doing this with them ya know. My oldest son we were more than just a Father and son, we were like really close buddies. My son loved it when I was there with him ya know. I always heard that term, well ya know, especially at soccer, at ice hockey practice, ya know whatever, it’s like a baby-sitting service. Ya, just drop them off and their (parents) not there to watch them develop and get better. Nothing helps to move that along better than just being there and showing your support there all the time. Being there ya know and that’s what I did. Being there and watching them and just helping them a long that way ya know. Helping my son, Gill, not to become an angry person. He developed and got so good at everything he did people got jealous, especially other teams. Non-native teams were running him, especially at ice hockey, he became so skilled at it because he loves to play. There were times that my son would be sitting in tears and be wondering ‘why is everybody so mean to me’ (and I’d say) son it’s just part of the game and sometimes when you become as good as you are you’re always going to face that challenge. People are going to knock you on your butt because you’re better than them and they don’t like that. He says ‘well what do I do then dad?’ Well just pick yourself up and just turn and go the other way, don’t retaliate. I don’t want you to become this mean vicious person. Just understand, yea sometimes you’re going to get angry son, how do you think you’re going to help your team better or yourself better if you’re just going to be angry and wanna get back at them. (Thinking) I’m going to clock him with my stick or knock him in his butt or whatever and that’s gunna be your only thing you’re

going to be thinking about and you're not going to be helping your team. You're going to be put in the penalty box or whatever. You being at the high skill level, and the coaches love having him, how you going to help your team if you're sitting in the penalty box? You're not going to be helping right, 'no', well just skate away, walk away, ya know. A lot of the times he did, and he just got up, smiled, and that pissed off, sorry, peeved the other players off because they were trying to get him off his game, right. But my son learned that, and he developed that all and so he developed really good morals and everything for himself. He earned all that respect, everybody's parents and players on every team he played for as he developed. Everybody loved him, they wanted him so bad cause he moved from team to team every year as he got older right, so coaches especially wanted him. 'Hope I have him on my team' (they'd say), ya know luck of the draw, like ya know teams were picked with different coaches and stuff, so every year it changed for Gill. Sometimes he had the same coach the following year or whatever but just things like that as a dad not only did I but his mother my wife was always there too. If I couldn't be there she would be there, and we always traded off that way. It was a good thing; the communication was so so important to it. Like helping to raise your child to be a good person and that's what I'm teaching Jarrad and Makayla now. This is a good place, good environment to help that along (Campbell River). I know it wouldn't be as good in Port Hardy, I just know it wouldn't be good. Seems like just no matter where it is, it's not an isolated thing, bullying, it's just it's just it happens, it's an unfortunate thing but my older kids faced it in their own school right there, was on the reserve, my son was bullied, Gill was bullied, my oldest daughter, Tania, was bullied. It's just ya know, it's all just part of life, I was bullied."

We returned back again to our topic, and I asked Gilbert, if he had to define Fatherhood, how would he explain it to someone?

“For me, I look at myself now to be a good person. You do whatever you can for yourself, your self-care ya know. As a Father my self-care is so so vital and important to me. Today, now more than I've ever felt in a long long long time, and this is the best I've ever felt about me, as Gilbert Walkus. Just being alive ya know, having that sense of peace in my mind and in my heart ya know, without any without any ya know drama ya know just being. Drama effects your life if you let it. Negativity, always one thing I hate. Right now, well I shouldn't say hate, but dislike, is negativity. I had so much of it in my life growing up. Don't want it, don't need it, been there done it, that's all. I say that all the time, I don't want it, I don't need it. Some people try to get me into their drama and their lives and whatever and I just say, ya know what I respect ya in all, I say but ya know what I'd rather not hear it. I'm not going to feed into it, if that's the way you feel, I'm not going to feed into your, the way you're feeling. I don't feed into anything anymore. I used to, but I don't do that anymore. Waking up every day knowing that I can be as good as I can be as a person, as I can be for Jarrad and Makayla, I can safely say that now. Before, at the beginning of my journey of sobriety, I didn't feel good about who I was I didn't feel good as that person.”

We moved into a conversation about Gilbert's sobriety and what that has meant for him. He will be celebrating four years of sobriety on July 17th, 2017.

“Just having a healthy state of mind. 'Hey I can do this I'm here', I never knew Tanille, I never knew, moving here (Campbell River), my life didn't change right away, I was still drinking. I actually could have said I just lived out there (on the street) because I was out there with all these homeless people. I was drinking with them every single day Tanille, I was, I can honestly tell you that. But I had a place to live, I've been living in the same building five years now. Just knowing I have my own place I can go home to it every day. Sometimes I'd wonder

how I would get home. I'd have these black outs and I'd wake up at my place and wonder 'how did I get home', 'I don't remember getting home'. That's all behind me now, it's why I said one day I would love to be able to make a difference, go home and try to help my people in whatever way I can. It would just be my way of giving back, like I said I would. I would be making a difference giving back as people gave to me in my life and my journey up to this point. Now I can take care of myself and if I need any help my friends are just a phone call away. My sponsor has been sober 30 some odd years now ya know and um he is still my sponsor; he is a really really good guy. I'm a sponsor of some couple young guys out there. My brother Barney who went through the system, he has been sober eight months now. He went, him and his wife went away to treatment. Lost his children to the Ministry. But he's got them back now. It's just being able to help my younger brother if he needs, just to talk sometimes, that's all we need sometimes. Someone that can sit there and listen to you. I know from experience, we have the solutions, but we don't understand it until, cause we think that people can fix it for us. Actually, I was at that point where I thought 'well I know someone that can help me but he never ever told me how to do it', he let me do it. He let me conclude that myself, come to that conclusion and that was a really good teaching. We all, we all have to be able to solve whatever in a good way. I have had my fair share of ups and downs, daily, but I know that I can still take care of me so that I can be able to take care of Jarrad and Makayla. It just feels good, they make me a better person, every day. Jarrad is not afraid to tell me if he hears a little bit of anger in me. He tells me straight out, 'Dad please don't be angry' he just tells me straight out. He's not afraid to tell me cause he has no reason to be afraid of me cause I'm not going to raise a hand to him, I'm not going to kick him, or anything like that. He just has this confidence. My son Jarrad, he does that for a lot of people, and he is so caring and loving already. He was at a relative's a few times and this young

mother was yelling and getting angry at her older son and Jarrad walks up there and says 'are you okay? are you okay?' and she was like 'oh' and she was trying to figure out where he was coming from but he was just helping her to calm down ya know. He's so, he already has that little wisdom in him. That's what I was telling my son, I looked him in the eye, and I said, 'sometimes daddy's going to get angry and you can help me with that anger' and he says 'okay daddy okay' and he understood. I said 'I give you permission, if you hear me getting angry at you or your sister you let me know, don't be afraid and it'll help me to calm down' and he's done that, he's done that for me. He's six, He's six yeah, so it makes me feel good knowing that he done that. This morning he says 'Daddy, you getting angry?' cause I was a little bit, I was getting frustrated normally, it's just with myself, I get a little bit impatient with things I'm doing because I want to get it done quickly, but I'm learning to teach myself self-patience. It's going to get done no matter what, no matter how long it's taking, it's going to get done. And uh I lived alone for the first three years of my sobriety and I had to really really adjust once I got Jarrad and Makayla into my care. I had been already sober two years when the Ministry asked me, asked me if I would step up and take Jarrad and Makayla. I said 'okay yes I would' so I start going to court. Every court date I went, I never missed one court date. So, what they granted was every three months, what they referred to as a TCO, I'm not sure if you're familiar with that term, temporary care order. So that's what they did for almost a year with me, but I never gave up, I just said 'okay, stick with this', for however long it takes, to get my kids out of care. 'I'm going to stick by it', and that's what I did, just positive thinking, keeping my focus on me, and that's what I keep telling myself, teaching myself, keep my focus and stay positive, that's what I tell myself every day. When I tell Jarrad to help me, that's what he helps me to always know, just to keep my focus, stay positive, I'm grateful, I'm thankful for that little man. He is so comical too

that little man. His humour, he uses it like with me he cracks me up. He is very very protective of his sister, they have been together, like when they were in care, when I left that last relationship the mother of them I left the kids with her and said just as long as I can have my visitations I'll let you keep the kids. At first, I was saying 'well if I'm leaving I wanna take Jarrad with me'. She didn't want that; she never wanted the kids to be separated and well I said 'that made sense to me' too right so I said okay I left the kids with her. She messed up and lost the kids to the Ministry and all that but now I have them. I wouldn't change it for the world, especially at my age. Sometimes some people, they think they're my grandchildren ya know and I say 'no, they're my kids, they're my kids'. Sometimes Jarrad, he doesn't get angry, he's just really stern, some people mistake them for my grandchildren, 'no that's not my Grandfather that's my daddy' he comes right now and says it. He just corrects them, it makes me feel good knowing he comes right out, puts a big smile on my face, knowing he does that. Just knowing my kids, every single day, throughout the whole day, how many times will my kids come and say, 'Daddy I love you', that's a non-stop thing. It just really melts me all the time and I just give them a big hug. All the time, I'm just sleeping away and my daughter she tends to get up early, earlier than all us, she just comes to lay beside me and just wants to be cuddled with me. It's just a good feeling, ya know, that I can still be raising my kids, I'm an old pro, I got nine, five boys and four girls right now, they're all living. Jarrad and Makayla's brothers and sisters are living in Port Hardy right now. That was my main goal when I took them there a month ago, was just to go and visit. But also, to be part of that big huge floor hockey tournament they have there. But my main goal was just to get my kids there to visit their brothers and sisters and to meet their other family, cousins, aunts and uncles, just to spend time so that they know they have all their other family over there right ya know. Yeah and I was like 'oh my god' I don't know why I was thinking I was going to

come back home. But ya know it's not so much I condemn my people, or my family, it's just sad, it's still alive and well. The addictions take so much, cause I was there, it controlled my life Tanille, here every day, I was out there on the streets. A few times there were some years when some of them would actually die right there on the street. I wouldn't be there when they would, but I would find out a one or two days later. It's sad, it's a big part of reality there's so many homeless out there young and old. Its, it's just part of reality, I seen its lots when I go down to Vancouver it's just rows and rows and rows of homeless people on the sidewalk, ya know it just really saddens my heart so.

Our conversation came to a close with Gilbert speaking to his desire to help. "just part of my own self, I love helping out when it comes to volunteering whatever it is I'll be there", he said, referring to doing this work with me for my thesis. Speaking this first time with Gilbert was an amazing experience. He has a very colourful and textured story and speaks so well to who he is, where he's come from, and the person that he strives to be every day. A truly dedicated Kwakwaka'wakw Father.

#### **4.0.1 Second Conversation with a Kwakwaka'wakw Father**

The second conversation for this project was with Ray Wilson. It flowed a similar way, with the same order of questions, but was a different and unique story of its own.

On June 15th, 2017, we started with his name, birthdate, identifying which community he was from and a little bit about his family.

"My name is Ray Wilson, Raymond is my given name, birthdate is July 5th, 1975, from the Campbell River community I guess but I grew up in Cape Mudge for 20 years. And then the other half of my life was university, and the other part of that was here in Campbell River my family obviously is from the Campbell River/Cape Mudge area but my dad is from Kingcome

Inlet from the Hax̱wa'mis and my mother's family is from Da'naxda'x̱w and grew up in Harbour Island".

Hax̱wa'mis is the Wolf Clan in Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw (Kingcome Inlet). In ceremonies, wolves can appear in three different ways; as a member of the tribe of the myth people, an ancestor of one of the 'namima or extended family groups, or as a being who initiates apprentices. (U'mista, 2019)

We jumped right in and I asked how Ray identifies himself as a Father.

"I have two kids haha, eight and four, two girls, and they changed my life, I guess for the better really. Yeah, being a parent is difficult, but it's also one of the coolest things in the entire world. I just think there is, I see people that don't have kids and don't want kids and I can see their point of view but there's just so much more. Its, its, yeah, I'm just happy and proud to be a Father".

"Growing up basketball was my life, that's all I knew. I didn't party or didn't do anything like that, then I went to university and played basketball and that all changed. There was a period in my life where partying was up, partying was down, up, down, up, down, and then I met my wife. I was probably into the party scene and even with my oldest when she was born, I was still kind of partying. But then, ya just kind of see them, you kind of recognize for the first time in your life 'wow I gotta be different, I gotta set a better example'. It took work and it took ya know, stuff that I had to deal with actually, as well, to be a better Father".

The conversation was flowing quite naturally, as we moved into talking about where he learned how to be a Father.

"That is a tough one. I want to say my dad cause part of it was I guess, some things he did as a Father were really great, and some things he did weren't so great. You kind of try and, ya

want to take the good, and ya wanna learn from the not so good, the bad things that you're like I don't wanna be like that kinda thing. I would also say my uncles. I grew up fishing with several of my uncles and spent many many summers, two to three months, with them out fishing for an entire summer so I definitely have to say from them as well. Also, one of my Grandfathers, my dad's Father, I grew up with him on the fishing boat as well. So, learned some things from him, my mom's Father not so much, he died at a very young age, so I didn't really know him. I kind of vaguely remember him, but not too much” .

To follow Ray's thoughts a bit further I ask him a follow up wondering if there were any specific moments that he could think of where he could pin point moments where he could identify where exactly he learned a piece of who he is now as a Father.

“Definitely definitely, my dad and part of it, and it's weird how I learned all this, my dad used to yell a lot I guess and the first time I ever yelled at my oldest kid I was like ‘why did I do that?’, kind of blew me away. I went to some counselling through work, it wasn't until my grandmother passed away that I found out she went to residential school. I always thought the way my dad was, and my uncle and aunts thought it was from my Grandfather, ya know. Being the male, I thought he would be the one yelling around. It was actually the complete opposite. My grandmother never told us and I knew her as this sweet little quiet old lady who I played cards with so haha yeah that was just one example, yah that was just one of those things that kind of blew me away”.

We moved to what Ray thought were the most important values to hold as a Father. If he were to give advice to another ‘to-be’ Father, what would that advice be?

“Showing the kids that I care for them, I guess, growing up, again one of the things, I don't remember being hugged a lot and our families saying we love you and things like that. I used to

make fun of my girlfriends back in the day 'cause their families would be like 'oh' and I would kind of snicker and say, 'what is that'. But I always tell my daughters I love them, I always give them hugs and kisses and snuggles, and just try to let them know that they're important to me. That is important. As a teacher there are kids out there that don't get that right, not that I didn't get that. I did remember my parents being around and being super supportive and they're still supportive to this day but again, one of the legacies of residential school, 'cause my dad's side of the family didn't go but his mom did. Whereas my mom's side of the family, her and her younger brother did not go, but the rest of her brothers and sisters did. So again, you always wonder, did they ever receive anything like that where they were? My grandparents feeling bad because five of their siblings were away, sons and daughters were away while the others were at home. So yeah, I just think yeah, that caring and nurturing, and I guess being positive. Ya know encouraging them to do different things and try new things is very important".

I asked Ray if he knew of any specific cultural teachings tied to Fatherhood from his community, anything culturally specific to Fatherhood or becoming a Father.

"Not that I know of, again I've been, I would say, I know about my culture, but I wouldn't say I'm cultural. My little brother, younger brother, is very cultural. He knows the language and can sing. Saying that, when our family has had potlatches I've gone, I've danced, I've done what I had to do, but I would say I wasn't as connected cause I moved away for so long, playing basketball, going to university, and what not. For ten years I was working away. So, I don't know if there's anything specifically tied to our community about Fatherhood just kind of I guess what I've seen, family and friends and other people in the community is all I really know".

This led into asking about what challenges he has faced as a Father.

“Ou, haha, it’s tough, being a parent isn’t easy. I remember my our first born, and this was the first challenge we had, my wife had all the difficulty of the labor right and there’s just me when my daughter was home, she first came home, the first two weeks was a complete nightmare. We got no sleep, she wouldn’t stop crying, we didn’t know what to do! We were calling the nurse line, and calling people we know, I think she kind of fed off our nervous energy cause after a while once we felt comfortable, it was fine. So that was probably the first challenge. I guess, ya know, it was brand new, right. If you have a pet or some sort of pet that’s pretty easy right like whereas you have a newborn baby, to me that was the very first challenge that I faced. I still remember it. Second born was breezy and easy. What else, other challenges, I guess early on, I wasn’t a good Father. I was still kind of in that party mode, part of the reason I had children so late is because I was still in that party mode. I didn’t want to be like my dad I guess so to speak so that’s why I kind of waited so long, and first you need a partner as well. I wasn’t the best partner when I was younger, so I guess over coming that part of my life. To be a good Father, even though I went to school, got a bachelor’s degree, all these big things, that in the grand scheme of things mean very little. And that’s kind of, with these challenges I’ve learned, it’s a piece of paper, trophies, who knows where they are, medals who knows. That challenge I faced from the party phase, realizing I’m just like my dad, to going to counselling, that was to me, that was talking to someone was. Let’s just say that was the biggest challenge I had was probably that. Because, well one, I wasn’t used to talking to anybody, I’m gunna stuff it inside of me and hope it goes away. So to me that was probably the biggest challenge. Then there’s the challenges ya know, you wanna provide for your family, put food on the table, electricity, and I do all that, but I probably work too much as well. I have to try to find that balance of being a

Father and being a husband and not burying my nose in my full-time job and two part time jobs and going away fishing all summer”.

This lead me to ask if Ray felt like any of those roles that he wanted himself to fulfill were more tied specifically to the role of a dad than a mom.

“Not necessarily, not in this day and age. I think you have, in most homes, both parents work now, which is a tragedy in my mind. I think you should be able to switch off and both raise your kids, but things are so expensive now. I think that moms have that same pressure of trying to provide for your children and contribute as much as they can. No, I think in this day and age it’s totally different. Like even with my parents or my grandparents it was the dad. ‘No, you’re providing’ and it was little different as well because they had more children then, as well ya know. Both my grandparents, and my mom and dad both have six or seven brothers and sisters”.

Looking back, I asked Ray if he thought there was anything that he would have liked to have known or had available to him along his journey as a Father, a program or service that he could have accessed.

“That’s a tough one, ‘cause is there anything, I’m a reflector as well like ‘what could I have done’? Maybe gone to counselling earlier, ‘cause again, it took me, it took a long time. I got in through work, I asked the people, the health and safety people, at our school ya know, ‘can anyone go’ and I’d inquire and never go ya know. I probably did that for one or two years, I think. So, I think if I would change something it would probably be something like that. The rest, I don’t know. I just look back at part of life and part of anything is the experience, and learning how to do it really, and me I really, I always try to think ‘how can I be the best at this’. It’s how I’m wired, I guess. ‘Cause it’s like, it’s funny cause I was just out fishing of course, not to long ago, and just thinking there are mistakes in your life that you make, and I was asked would I

change that and I have always said no. Actually, part of the reason, and one of the main reasons is because if I did my life would be different now. Would it be better? Possibly, would it be worse? Possibly. But I wouldn't have my kids and that's, that's how I thought. Yea, it was about two weeks ago fishing at the lake and it just popped into my mind and I thought of that and I just think, no, everything happens for a reason and you either, I guess, strive to get out of those ruts, or you just give up, again I'm not wired that way haha".

We came back around again to look at how Ray would define Fatherhood if someone asked him what it meant.

"I think providing everything necessary for your children, for your partner, wife, whatever it may be to live a comfortable safe life I think. Again, that's part of the reason I work so much, 'cause that's what I want to do. I want them to do things, try new things, go on soccer trips, go do things they wanna do, go on family trips, and do it as a family, not as individual, but as a family. Showing each other that you care for one another, that they're special, and everyone is special in their own way. Yea that's probably the most important thing and what I would define it as, really. Even though we're in a different time, again, it doesn't have to be the Father all the time but that's how I, I need to take care of my own, yeah".

Our last question in our conversation was if there was anything else that he could think of out of any of these questions that would be important to another person to know about being a dad and being a successful Father and the trials and tribulations that come a long with that.

"Well just from my own job, I'm a teacher and I look at kids that don't have dads around, and its, you can see how important it is. Parents in general, but I see like you said when parents split, they're usually with mom, and I see how important dads can be. When you see some students and they don't have that individual, can't talk to mom, 'but if I had a dad, I could say

this to them' and I see it all the time. Whether they are split or where their parents have passed away, you can see the difficulty in some children. They need that male guidance; I think that gets lost in the courts sometimes. I think its lost by families when families break up, the importance of that role. I have a colleague and they split years ago now, and he's a great dad he's always done everything for his kids, and whatever mom said about him, he has always said positive things and he's done a lot, I guess. That's one thing I could say is, learning to be a dad, is colleagues and friends as well, is something where I've learned to be a Father as well. It's not something you, 'kay I got it', it is fluid, or you're always learning, you're always hopefully trying to be better. There is no end like a book. I think it's, you're a dad until you're not a dad, which that's probably when you pass away. That's the cool thing, I look at my parents, they're older, and they're still parents their parents, to their old kids. I remember my grandmother, before they passed away, they were still trying to look after their really old kids. It's just something that goes on and on and I think it's important. Especially being First Nations, I think it's, I think you get the idea of some dads not around or deadbeats is a word people use I don't want to be one of those dads I want to be someone that's always there. Whether I'm with my wife or not, everything's' good don't get me wrong, but again, things can change in life and things can happen, but right now everything's good. Like I said, just being a dad is one of the coolest things in the world. I just went home I had to run home and drop some of the soccer stuff off and both of them run up Daddy and give me a big hug and kiss, dog was there too, but where else do you get something like that from? I've never had that kind of welcome. I don't think you can get that anywhere else, possibly, but I've never had anything else like that, it's just like, yeah".

After thanking Ray for all his time with this and his heart and thoughts I spoke to our second opportunity to get together. I let him know that there would be more time if he ended up leaving our conversation and thinking of other things that he wanted to say, that we would easily be able to come together and make sure we got those thoughts and feelings down. This prompted something from Ray and we turned the recorder back on.

He said “I guess part of learning to be a Father or learning to be a Father or being successful, I don’t like using that word, probably comes from my parents, grandparents and kind of where I grew up, I guess. I always remember big family functions and positive interactions with family, tons of support and tons of push towards education, and I guess so and I guess when we went to that cultural questions I guess I had to sacrifice some of my culture for moving away and being successful and being in the job I’m in right now. But I definitely, I got that push from my dad and my mom and my grandparents when I look back, part of my basketball too. Even though my dad wasn’t there too much he was always the one that needed to be out there shooting, ‘you need to do this, this, this, this’ ya know. He’s out there sometimes, most of the time not, but he did push me. I guess I do the same to my kids. Even though they’re very young, maybe too young to be pushed at times, but I guess I’m trying to ingrain that never quit attitude in them as well, that’s it”.

It was again, an honour to have this conversation with Ray and I was very much looking forward to our second interaction once I had given him time to process and also review our transcript from our conversation.

#### **4.0.2 Third Conversation with a Kwakwaka’wakw Father**

On July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 11:17am, I sat down with this Father to explore the various questions that I had discussed with two other Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers before him. We started off in the

same way with his name, birthdate, acknowledging which community he's from and a bit about his Family. This Father made the choice to remain anonymous so pieces of the conversation was deliberately left out of the transcription of his story and potentially identifying features of his story were altered to support his anonymity.

All Fathers have had the option to move through the questions as they wished, however the previous two Dads chose the linear path that the cards were laid out in, this Father chose to read each card and pick out the one that spoke to him and answered them in such an order.

“I'm going to look at these things, where did you learn how to be a Father? Well, I think, like ya know, I only have one child, I think you just kind of get thrown into it. Ya just go once ya get that call, once I got that call, I was like oh okay, ok ok ok haha. I've always, I think I've always wanted to have kids. I've always wanted to be a Father; I think I've always been good around kids. Previous to meeting my wife and having my daughter I've had friends of mine through high school who've had kids and they consider me their Uncle. So, I think even before I became a Father, I was kind of like an Uncle to a lot of kids and getting prepped that way. There is differences of course. Being a Father is different than being an Uncle. You can be an Uncle and sugar them up and send them home. But if you're a Father you have to deal with that sugared up kid. So that's pretty much how I learnt how to be a Father. Ya know as I look back at it, over these five years of being a Father myself now, I definitely recognize my Grandfather, who along with my Grandmother, for a number of years raised me. He has been kind of my model for Fatherhood. Not necessarily seeing how or remembering how he interacted with me and being that paternal figure, it was mostly just his love and understanding and compassion. That's pretty much what I picked up from him and what I remember”.

He paused and perused the display of questions in front of him.

“What challenges have I faced as a Father? Um that’s a good one, let’s see. I think being more understanding and companionate with myself. Recognizing that it isn’t just, Fatherhood isn’t just about being a paternal figure to your child. It’s also about making sure that you’re healthy and happy so that that way your child and your partner is going to be healthy and happy. I think for me the biggest challenges that I’ve faced is coming to terms with my own mental wellness and seeking help to understand it and to remedy the situation. Yeah I think that’s the biggest challenge I had to face was coming to terms with that mental health and making sure that it wasn’t getting in the way of my parenting”.

Following his train of thought I asked if his promoting his mental health wellness was something that he was aware of prior to becoming a Father and whether introducing Fatherhood added an extra challenge of balancing his wellness with his role as a Father or if it was something that became more pronounced once he was a Dad.

He replied that he thought “it was mostly after I become a Dad. I was going through counselling and stuff I kind of recognized that there had been a number of years that, even before I got together with my wife, that there was instances in my past that I didn’t address and that made me unwell and unhealthy that caused issues around post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. Stuff that I was able to, when I was single, work through on my own and not have to worry about how my partner was being affected by it, ‘cause I was single and I was just dealing with myself. So um, yeah it was really just after becoming a Father, it became, it didn’t become more pronounced it was situational. When I was living on the Eastern side of Canada, I think my time there was difficult because I was removed from one, my home base, and two my connection to my family here in Campbell River. So yeah. So, it was all these things that kind of lead up to that depression which was based on the previous PTSD. But then after becoming a

Father I was trying to maintain that notion of I can do this myself, I can do this myself, um but I couldn't. Luckily, I had a partner that was supportive and helped push me in the right direction. That fundamentally changed my attitude and relationship with both my partner and my daughter. Because now I'm able to fully understand those challenges and not project those hardships or those feelings I may be experiencing on to my daughter or on to my partner. Yeah, that's definitely been a challenge and I've been able to work around that to understand that it's not them, it's something with in me, and I've been able to rectify it".

He moved that card out of the way and made his way to the next question that caught his eye.

"How do I identify myself as a Father? Um, that's a tough one. I guess, I'm just a Father because I have a kid haha that's basically the gist of it. I think that's how I would identify myself as a Father. I am a Father because I have a kid but then it's difficult because well it's not difficult, I am involved with my child's life, I am fully engaged in her daily activities, I am there for her 100% 24/7 365. So ya know, Fatherhood is more than just producing an offspring it's something that you have to commit to fully. To understand your placement as a Father figure as a parental figure because ya, just getting someone knocked up and having a kid doesn't make you a Father it makes you a Dad, no other way, it makes you a Father but I think biologically it makes you a Father but through that interaction with your child is what makes you a Dad. Right, like its, there's a big difference. Like I have a birth Father that I have never met, a biological Father, and I wouldn't, even if I met him today, I wouldn't consider him my Dad because he didn't raise me. My Dad is my Grandfather and I called him Dad. Um so yeah, I think that's, does that make sense does that kind of clarify it?".

Supporting his words, I agreed with him and that there does seem to be more than one type of parental figure known as a Father or a Dad. I also commented that it would be interesting to see, if there were different descriptions of Fathers in Kwakwala, the language of the Kwakwaka'wakw people. Wondering if there were different descriptions offered by language for a biological Father and one that fulfills that role of being a child's 'everything'.

“Maybe there is, maybe in Kwakwala there is two different words to describe those interactions. Um 'cause I mean there definitely is a stigma around it in our modern society. We can see people all over the place who have kids that they know, they have kids, but that they have no interaction with. Then on the opposite you have Fathers that have one to multiple children who are completely engaged in their lives, and they take it upon themselves to place that child first. And I guess that's going back into the challenge question that for me when my daughter was younger trying to find my footing and my placement that balance between my career as an artist and then finding that balance of Fatherhood. Um but ya know, I have a supporting and engaging community for both my artistic community and cultural community where they understand he is a good artist and he does things, but he's got a kid and that kid comes first. That was definitely a challenge to work around, especially when my daughter was younger. But now that she's older and we can actually have conversations and she can hang out with me in the studio it becomes easier. That becomes a part of our bonding process and a part of our time together. Yeah, going back to that identifying question, it's tricky cause it's two fold like you said there is language around Fatherhood that can make it confusing um but I think that that's my stance, yeah”.

He looked down to decide his next stepping stone for our conversation.

“Well I guess this kind of naturally goes into this question, how would you define Fatherhood if someone asked you what it meant? Yeah Fatherhood is, ya know, your child is your everything. They are the apple of your eye, they are the corner stone of your life, if they’re not, it’s, that’s the question you have to really come up with and answer yourself honestly. Yeah if someone were to ask me like, if someone that was going to have a baby, “ah shit yea what is it like to be a Father?” Ya know it’s crazy, it’s chaotic, it’s nuts. But it’s also amazing and beneficial and loving because once your child gets to a certain age where they can express all those things of being crazy, and they can express love, and kindness, and friendship um it’s the best thing in the world. Ya know um yea I think for anyone that asks the question, they’re like “oh what does it mean to be a Father?”, it’s everything, it’s everything. I just I can’t explain it any other way. Ya know there’s the cliché ya know, when my daughter gets a cut, I’m nurse Papa. Right, and she calls me Papa ya know cause she was born on the East side of the Country and that’s the French language coming into there. So, I’m nurse Papa when she gets a cut and I’m chef Papa when I’m making dinner, lunch and breakfast and ya know I’m, it’s everything. I’m fun, but I’m also authoritative cause ya know you gotta keep these little guys in check, these little people in check, cause if you don’t, they’re going to rule your life with an iron fist. So, you have to make sure that they’re comfortable with you, and they respect you, and they respect your authority. Because if you don’t, then it becomes an opportunity for you to be like “I’m checking out” and that’s when you become just a ‘Father’ and not a ‘Dad’ right, so, so yeah”.

Moving on to his next choice in question.

“Are there any specific cultural teachings tied to Fatherhood from your community? Um I’m sure there must be haha. Ya know just living back here for the past year, in the home community, has been really beneficial on multiple levels. Being able to be engaged with

community and culture ya know. It's been a slow roll I'm still lagging behind on being able to find that time to get into those specific cultural practices and language teachings and all that kind of stuff. But I'm sure once I get deeper into it ya know, whether it's through community engagement, or even just in personal research and exploration, those cultural teachings will probably come into effect. When we talk about community it's not just community from a cultural prospective as being Liachwiltach people it's also about the people that are involved in your lives from day one. You take a look at our role models as Fathers ya know, it's your Dad, it's your Uncle, it's your cousins. It's the friends of the family that step up and take those roles. I think for me being back here, that's one of the most fun and engaging aspects of being back in the home community. I am able to fulfill those rolls of being a Dad and being an Uncle. Even though I'm an only child, I've got multiple cousins that have children ya know in and around my daughters's age that we've become close with. Their parents are my cousins, but ya know through community values and teachings, is that those male and female figures are Aunts and Uncles. Which is confusing ya know, when you're a kid, but you get to your late teens early 20s it's like oh yeah, that person I've been calling uncle all my life is actually my cousin. But it doesn't matter because he was around for me in kind of that male role patriarchal figure that helped raise me, and I think that's really exciting. So, when I have my four nieces come and stay with us, and watching them play with my daughter, it's fun and exciting. I'm taking on, I'm their uncle, she's my daughter when they're all together. I'm taking on the patriarchal role to help them understand things. If they're having fun, we're all having fun together or if there's tense times I'm helping calm down those tense times. And ya know that's also extended to, ya know, my other cousins' kids. There are four nieces that are sisters that come here, but there's also my first cousin's daughter that comes here as well, who's also a niece figure to me. That is the role

of Fatherhood in community. It is beyond being a Dad and a Father and a biological person, it's that connect that you have to cousins' kids and all that sort of stuff?.

Rolling with this idea of multiple roles in parenting amongst community, I asked him if he felt there was an extra emphasis on how many roles a Father plays in First Nations communities versus the greater status quo society.

“No, I don't think so. I'm also thinking about my close friends who have kids, ya know that aren't related to me, and aren't from Indigenous communities, and I'm ya know there, there kids consider me their Uncle as well, and vice versa. Like my really good friend, Paige, her son is now 9 months old and I'm his Uncle, and vice versa. My daughter is five now, and she and her husband have been my daughters' Aunt and Uncle since she was born. So, I think it's just interesting how those connections come up and come about. I think I noticed it more when I moved here 'cause it was like right away I got connected with my cousin again after 20-25 years um with his four daughters, and it was just this is Uncle, vice versa also for my daughter. So, I think I became more aware of it cause it was instantaneous as soon as I moved here. Right. Whereas, but I dunno, it's confusing, even with my friends from high school. He has three daughters and ya know they consider me their Uncle. Even though I haven't talked to them, ya know, we've been so far apart for many years, I haven't talked to them in a long time, but I would still assume that I would be considered their Uncle and that kind of figure. I dunno it's tricky. I just feel there's that connection here as soon as you move here. And even when Lauren, when her daughter was born, she's only six months younger than my daughter, um ya know, as soon as she was born 'this is Uncle', and Lauren is like here ya go. So yeah, I don't think there is a really big difference I think it comes down to personal connection and those connections you have with your friends and with your family. 'Cause it could just be easy to say, I guess you

know there are cousins that I have in the community that also have kids around my daughter's age that were not close. So, I don't, we wouldn't consider to say 'this is Auntie somebody' or 'this is your niece' or 'your nephew' just cause we don't have that close connection. But I'm assuming that over time if those connections with me and their parents were to come closer, that then that would be like an automatic switch. Ya know at some point in the future if they start spending more time here and with my daughter and stuff, then it would be like oh ya, ya know, 'this is Uncle' and 'this is your niece' or 'your nephew'. Um yeah, so yeah, I think it just comes down to closeness, I don't think it has anything to do with, with Indigenous versus non-Indigenous communities. I think it just comes down to closeness. So that rambling haha came around to that one simple answer. hahaha".

"No no it's good it's good to talk all this stuff through" I responded to his apology. I explained to him that It's very interesting stuff and that a lot of the time you end up with a lot more because you're thought processing and talking at the same time right. Sometimes you talk about things that you're like 'wow that's actually interesting that I just thought about that'. My hope was to encourage him and reassure him that everything he has to share is meaningful and important.

He browsed the narrowing options for questions to move onto.

"What do I feel are the most important values to hold as a Father? I think I said some of them earlier compassion, kindness, loving understanding, um, objectivity. Ya know, being able to be objective in a situation where you have your four nieces over, and you got your one kid, and your child, who's an only child, is having an only child moment, and is like this is my toy and this is my thing and this is this. And you just gotta sit them all down and say this is how we interact, and this is how we need to objectively look at a situation to be fair. And to not play

favourites ya know? ‘Cause as much as you want to, because it is your child, you have to consider the fact that being a Father is, is finding those, those ways to be objective in those situations”.

I referred to the situation that he was describing as “almost like teaching equity from a like very young age in a very simple way”

“Yeah yeah. Exactly. It’s it’s interesting. Yeah so I think that’s, those are probably some of the best values I have and yeah just and yeah, that stuff, it all comes kind of naturally you can’t teach it, you can’t read that stuff in a book, like it’s. Nah ya some people can. Like some people have no clue whatsoever, or they might not have had a desire to be a Father, but they then were just thrust into the situation because of whatever situation. You have to take those opportunities to learn because maybe they didn’t have those parental figures in their lives, or maybe they haven’t decided to be a Father because of ya know whatever global population, global warming, whatever political aspect they wanna latch onto to not be a Father, but then all of a sudden they are. You might have to reach out to other Fathers or read those books to find out what exactly it is to be a Father. For me, I just think it came kind of naturally to figure out those values and I think those values were based on my interactions with my Dad/Grandfather. And the interactions I had with Uncles, cousins, um ya know, people that I would consider both my Step-Fathers”.

Reflected back on learned skills, I asked him if he had ever had any experiences where something happened and he reacted to it or there was a teachable moment and he had a recognition of “that’s exactly where I learned that from”.

“No, not yet. I’m assuming at some point I will though. Yeah, no, no I can’t think of any specific moments. Yeah, ya know, there’s, ya the thing about teachable moments I think those will come later. Like I’ve got one story in my brain about my Dad and hanging out with him on

the fishing boat and his desire for me to always become a fisherman. I ran into one of his crew members daughters who works up at the shell, and ya know of course I knew her when we were kids, we didn't hang out that much or anything like that, but we knew each other. We were just chatting at the Shell the other day, just catching up, and she's 'like oh yeah what are you up to these days' I'm like 'oh doing this doing that artist blah blah blah' she said 'who would have think 'the artist' when everyone just assumed you were going to be a fishing boat captain'. Right! 'Cause that's what it is. But then I remembered when she said that, this is a story I remember quite frequently, that I was standing on the stern of the boat one day and the net was stopped, and the crew members are doing something. I'm standing back there with my Dad and there's a salmon caught in the net and I just could not get it out, I couldn't get it out. I must have been like 14 or 15 maybe. Yeah just could not get the salmon out of that net. I was trying so hard, couldn't pull it out! It's wiggling like crazy, it's scared, it's going to die, haha, and I get frustrated and I start whip'n this thing around, and its head pops off and the salmon goes flying! And I'm like oh boy! Hahaha! And my Dad had stopped the drum, and he was like, ya know what, you're going to law school. Hahahahaha! 'Cause I think at that, and ya know, I hung out at the boat for the majority of my childhood, and it was fun, it was a good experience. I loved the time on the water. But I don't, there was a point in my life where I knew I wasn't going to be a fisherman. But I think he expected it, everyone else expected it, but at that moment he knew that it just wasn't my calling in life. Of course, I would have never made it through law school. Haha! But I, I know that him, if he saw me today, he would be super proud of what I've been able to accomplish. So, I think, that's, I just know that's going to come up for me at some point. That's going to be a teachable moment. Like, my daughter is super engaged in being in the studio with me now, and hang'n out, and drawing, and painting, and making things. She loves it! I love it!

But maybe at some point she's going to progress away from it. And that's going to be for me, maybe she's, maybe she'll, and I think in my mind as a kid back then I was just trying to do what was expected of me, and maybe she might be thinking that I expect her to be an artist, because that's what I do. And that's what she wants to do right now, but maybe at some-point in the future she wants to be a fisher person or ya know or be a nurse, or whatever she wants to do, or a doctor, or a CEO, or whatever she'll be. I think at that point, it's going to be 'yup you can do this', 'this is your teachable moment' ya know? Maybe she's just going to be in the studio and she just can't draw anymore, and I'm like you can do whatever you want, and that's it".

I commended him on his fantastic fish story and the moment that he's pulled out of that to recognize that that time may come for him in his relationship with his daughter and that he'll likely reflect on that story in that instance.

"Yeah it just went flying! I was like omg, that poor fish".

He picked up the last question in our series.

"Is there anything else you would like me to know about being a Father? Yeah, I can't think of anything. I mean I think for me just the reiteration of Fatherhood as more than just creating another life, yeah, it's everything, it's about being a Dad".

#### **4.1 Thematic Review**

Three themes arose naturally out of the conversations with the Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers. 1) *Grandparent Roles*, 2) *Men in Culture*, and 3) *Salmon*. Once these topics were recognized I reached out to the Fathers to talk to them about these findings and ensure that they felt that the topics represented how they imagined their roles as Fathers in community. It was essential to touch base with the Fathers during each phase of this research. I wanted to make certain that they

guided the work and felt a sense of control as to how it was coming together and how it would be representing their stories and themselves.

Mindfulness had to be at the forefront of the literature review process. The repercussions of referencing colonial reinforcing material are huge and such materials were not going to be supported for use by the Fathers that have been involved, nor by my supervising Elder. Keeping this close to heart, I began to dig through sources and check these sources through community before using information. The scope of literature that was reviewed for this research included anything that referenced parenting, Fatherhood, Fathers, Male figures in Kwakwaka'waka communities, children's story books, thesis works, videos, and anything else that might reference life in Kwakwaka'wakw communities. As sources were going to be limited, I did not hold back based on what date the material was produced. When using dated sources (sources over 10 years old), I would go to the Kwakwaka'wakw community for feedback and their thoughts about the legitimacy of the source prior to reading.

#### **4.1.1 1st Themes and Literature Review –*Grandparent Roles***

It was very evident that grandparents played an important role in the raising of children. Each of the Fathers spoke to their grandparents as being influential in their upbringing and childhood experience, as well as persons to which they acquired parenting skills from.

Grandparents were referenced over 60 times between the three conversations.

When reviewing the literature, it was very evident that this was a community trait and role of Grandparents, to teach and parent their grandchildren. In the *Autobiography of James Sewid* he spoke to his grandmother, Lucy, telling him that whenever he speaks to his children he must do so gently and to remember to always show them love and kindness as that is all they need

(Spradley, 1969, p. 94). “I was brought up a lot of the time by my grandparents...” James said.  
(Spradley, 1969, p. 26)

In the book, *Recollections of a Coastal Indian Chief*, Harry Assu reflects “When I was a young boy, I spent a lot of time with my Grandfather. He told me stories of his lifetime on these waters. I learned many things from him.” (Assu, 1989, p. 25)

Isaac’s (2000) work with *Understanding Ecological Knowledge* also lead to the recognition of the pivotal role Grandparents played in children’s learning and upbringing. She spoke with a number of Kwakwaka’wakw Elders through her research and found that “Traditionally, First Nations did not leave the home to learn what they needed to be successful in life. It was the responsibility of the parent and extended family members to come together to teach essential life skills and to find peoples’ gift.” “It is our family members who shared with us the stories we remember the most. Grandparents, aunties, uncles, and those who were exceptional storytellers...” Donna Cranmer explained as she spoke of a story from her Gran. (Isaac, 2000, p. 47) In Isaac’s work, Elder Vera Newman reflects on staying “...just about every night with (her) grandparents”. She states that her Grandfather sometimes told her and her siblings legends and sometimes danced for them, “always teaching us” she said. (Isaac, 2000, p. 47)

The third Father’s story spoke to recognizing his Grandfather, who along with this Grandmother, for a number of years raised him and has been his role model for Fatherhood.

Gilbert recognized his Grandfather as partnering in parenting with his Father “I had my grooming, I had no idea, I just remember at eight years old my Grandfather and my Dad used to always have me inside, even in the summer holidays and out of school, they would sit me with them and they’d be talking, not necessarily to me, they would just be talking to each other. They were just teaching me and grooming me that way. I had no idea that that was part of their way of

teaching me and grooming me that way, to become a strong person, in my heart and in my mind, to be able to stand for my family as the head Chief, that was part of that”. He pointed out learning from multiple generations, as if his Father was still learning from his Grandfather who was mentoring them both in their roles “Honour, loving no matter, my parents and my Grandfather and grandmother always said even if people treat ya mean don’t say anything back, just walk away, you’re the better person when you do that, so that was what I taught my children as well, and that’s what I’m teaching Jarrad and Mikayla.”

Ray also named one of his Grandfathers as a place of learning, “Also, one of my Grandfathers, my dad’s Father, I grew up with him on the fishing boat as well. So learned some things from him, my mom’s Father not so much, he died at a very young age, so I didn’t really know him” (Willson, 2018).

Western style of child rearing sees the responsibility primarily held by the biological parents. However, in First Nations this responsibility is held by the community with an emphasis on the Grandparents. When parents are accessing their parents, their sisters, their brothers and their partners relatives for support and responsibility of their children, this is not neglect or the ditching of responsibility but a cultural norm of parenting and an important part of child rearing in First Nation communities. It’s with exposure to the village that a child learns to accept help and support of a variety of persons, where they learn about their family tree, delegation, social skills and the ability to be empathic (Rohner, 1970).

#### **4.1.2 2nd Theme and Literature Review –*Men in Culture***

The literature speaks to our Fathers in community being our pillars of Kwakwaka’wakw cultural identity; and our Mothers, our roof. Historically the responsibility of carrying and passing of names, passing of dances, carrying and distribution of secrets, the owners of the

honour of Hamatsa, they were our composers, our singers, the hosts of our potlaches, our fishermen, the ones who chosen the husbands of our women, they are our Chiefs. (Boas, 1897, 1920, 1921, 1925).

James Sewid spoke to a Chief having to conduct himself in a manner which commanded the respect of his position, and failure to do so led to loss of respect and status. The first son in high-ranking families would be taught early the importance of upholding his name. (Spradley, 1969, p. 9) These thoughts and feelings aligned with many of the words from Gilbert. “Well just being like, my Dad raised us in a good sense of the word, like just with morals and values, ya know integrity, ya know and me particularly”. Gilbert spoke to him in particular as he was the eldest of the Sons and in line to be passed the Chieftainship. In also spoke to their unassuming ways of installing the attributes he would require to hold such a title and responsibility, “I had no idea that that was part of their way of teaching me and grooming me that way, to become a strong person, in my heart and in my mind, to be able to stand for my family as the head Chief, that was part of that. I didn’t get it for years until my Dad ya know, my dad was a very, very good representative for our family as a Chief ya know he’d, the way he approached things, he didn’t do it with anger, he did it with, because it was a part of the teaching of my Grandfathers. You’re not there to represent us as Chief, to hurt people with words, you do it in a way that you can come to a good compromise, a positive compromise, to fix things, in any way that whatever it might be.”

Our men have been and are dancers, composers and singers of our communities. (Boas. 1897, 1920, 1921, 1925; Spradley, 1969) Gilbert said “my Grandfather, my Dad’s Dad, his name is Ed Walkus, he is a very well-known man he was a composer. He composed songs for many Chiefs and different Potlatches.” And that his “Grandfather, he was a composer and a Master

Carver as well. And he was Chief of our family and he passed that Chieftainship to my Dad so and now I wear that Chief name now.” (2017) What is interesting to note about the consistency in the literature and Gilbert’s story in particular is that Gilbert is almost 20 years the senior of the other two Fathers. His experience of Fatherhood is a lot different and through reading his story and the literature, is a lot more culturally aligned with the old stories of how our people lived and raised our children.

“What I see is the value of our tradition culture. A lot of it has been lost since the move from Smith Inlet. Ya know with me, I am very very honoured and proud to know that I have all those teachings, our songs, our names, what I own that I hold cause I’m the keeper of our treasure box. I know what’s in there, I know what goes on with all them masks, the names that I can give, the songs that go with those masks, the songs and dances, all those are very vital to our traditional cultural ways. If we don’t have those, we’re we kinda like seem to be lost.”

The Hamatsa is held as the most important dance that can be owned by a Man (Spradley, 1969, p. 107) Gilbert speaks to the role of Hamatsa in his family through a story about his Mother and Father, “This is how it goes, my Dad was initiated by his Grandfather to be a Hamatsa at seven years old. So my Mother was five years old and she was the one that carried the traditional copper and danced, ya know, facing my Dad as they were going like this, it’s the traditional way when you get initiated.”

Harry Assu acknowledges that his Father’s potlach and all the names that he held along with the generosity he displayed through potlach was something to be admired and something he would inevitably have to step up to. “...giving away \$10,000 and 17 canoes” (Assu, 1989).

Not only was the eldest son in line to receive a Hamatsa from his Father if it was held by their family, it was also common that a lot of family responsibilities fell to the eldest to take care

of his family. Gilbert is the elder of his siblings. As the eldest he felt that he naturally had a lot of responsibilities, “that’s just the way it was, it just was a given” he said. He felt that there was an emphasis for him to watch over his sisters, to make sure that they were okay, that they arrived home when they were supposed to. He said that his Mother would said “if they’re not home on time, go find them, bring them home, don’t come home until you bring them home with you.”

Gilbert put a lot of emphasis in knowing who he is, his culture and not knowing where he would be without this knowledge. But Ray and the third Father, both much younger than Gilbert, had very different comments in regard to where they sit with their culture and understanding. “I would say, I know about my culture, but I wouldn’t say I’m cultural. My little brother, younger brother, is very cultural. He knows the language and can sing. Saying that, when our family has had potlatches I’ve gone, I’ve danced, I’ve done what I had to do, but I would say I wasn’t as connected cause I moved away for so long playing basketball, going to university, and what not.” Ray speaks to the distance between him and his culture being an attribute of having to move away to pursue education. The third Father’s story echoed this “Ya know just living back here for the past year, in the home community, has been really beneficial on multiple levels. Being able to be engaged with community and culture ya know. It’s been a slow roll I’m still lagging behind on being able to find that time to get into those specific cultural practices and language teachings and all that kind of stuff.”

There was a very significant generational difference between the discussion of Fathers and culture with Gilbert in comparison to the third Father’s story and Ray’s. What does this mean for our future Fathers? Is the shortage of relationship to culture going to increase through the next generations as our Fathers are pushed to taking on more western ways of working, learning and being? We’ll look at these questions in the coming chapters.

### 4.1.3 3rd Theme and Literature Review – *Salmon*

It became extremely evident that for many of our men (historical and present day) fishing is life. In every book I read through, it only took a few pages before the topic of fishing was integrated into the literature. Whether it was a story about fishing, a description of an act of generosity with giving away fish, or detailed description of an aspect of how to fish; which boats were best for what type of fishing, who was the best at this, salmon distribution. This relationship with fishing was also represented in two of the three conversations with the Fathers involved with this work. They had very naturally incorporated stories of fishing into their responses. (Assu, 2009)

Ray acknowledged in his story that he received parenting guidance from his Uncles and a Grandfather while growing up on the fishing boat. Spending most summers on fish boats for months at a time. The boat becoming a place of not only learning how to fish but learning how to 'be'. Throughout Ray and I's conversation, the fish boat was mentioned regularly and was repeatedly referenced in the context of thinking and/or learning.

"It's how I'm wired I guess. 'Cause it's like, it's funny cause *I was just out fishing of course*, not too long ago, and just *thinking* there are mistakes in your life that you make and I was asked would I change that and I have always said no." And again, "Yea, it was *about two weeks ago fishing at the lake* and it just popped into my mind and I thought of that and I just think, no, everything happens for a reason and you either, I guess, strive to get out of those ruts, or you just give up, again I'm not wired that way haha".

The third Father told a story about his experience on the fish boat with this Dad (Grandfather). The fish that was caught in the net and the charade to get it out and identifying this as his moment when he knew fishing wasn't going to be his life's works. He also spoke to

the assumptions of titles that many of our men once wore; if your Father was a fish boat captain you, the eldest son, were also going to be a fish boar captain. It was a hereditary inevitability but one that he broke out of to pursue a career in the arts. Although he did not take the fishing path, he still very much values the teachings he received on the boat and looks to provide an opportunity for his daughter to be able to access those same teachings and experiences.

Historically the whole village would be a part of harvesting Salmon. Children would go out on fish boats as young as three. Children were involved with every aspect of bringing in the fish, cleaning them and prepping them. (Assu, 2009) It was a way of life.

However, colonialism has had a huge impact on this place of learning for our Fathers. There is now a timeline to this ability to be on the boat and be a learner. In this day and age that we're now in, costs are different, the environment is different, fishing is different, and those opportunities to learn on the boat are becoming few and far between. Ray speaks to this, "I have to try to find that balance of being a Father and being a husband and not burying my nose in my full-time job and two part time jobs and going away fishing all summer." Traditionally it was not uncommon for men to be gone for many months on the boats. (Assu, 1989) But today, that's becoming unfeasible.

#### **4.2 Challenges to 'Modern' Day Kwakwaka'wakw Fathering**

As an outsider to the role of Fathering and to the stories that have been told for the purposes of this work, I felt that its necessary to outline some of the challenges Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers are facing from my perspective. These challenges are not necessarily felt by the Fathers in this literature, but I think it's important to note them for context of the evolution of Fatherhood.

Spradley (1972) defined bicultural adaptation as “a person who has been socialized into one culture may, though migration or some other process, later be confronted with a different way of life and learn to live in terms of the second culture for the remainder of his life.” (p. 277)

I feel as though many of our men are harnessed into this position of bicultural adaptation.

Clinging to and comfortable with many of the traditional ways of Fathering such as mentorship (formal and informal), relying on community driven parenting, and practicing culture (singing, dancing, speaking, fishing). And on the other hand, trying to fulfill the western world achievement of being the provider for the family, academically educated, having many acquisitions, and playing a primary parent role. Our Fathers are trying to do it all.

The impact of colonialism is undoubtedly riddled through our Fathers and is consistently imposed on them. It hurt my heart to see our Fathers trying to do it all, reignite our culture and traditional ways while working, often more than one job, in an attempt to provide for their families in this expense driven world, and be a primary parent. I see colonialism eroding our Fathers through the historical establishment of elected systems of government in communities, and the loss of fishing sovereignty.

The establishment of elected systems of government undermine traditional mechanism of the societal function of a First Nation. Putting in popularity contests to select persons that would then make all decisions for a community circumvented our hereditary system and caused the sprouting of a have and have-nots division in First Nation communities. “No individual who remains in the subsisting-oriented web of interaction within the community can sink too low or rise too high, either economically or socially, because of the patterns of borrowing and sharing” (Rohner, 1970, p. 39). Honour and admiration were traits that were earned through demonstrated generosity and not by winning an election. These governments removed authority from our

hereditary Chiefs who for 100s of years were responsible for the safety and survival of our people, our traditions and our language. Elected systems of government destroyed our ways of being and took power and influence away from our Fathers, our Chiefs. I cannot begin to imagine how our hereditary Chiefs feel, being silenced by western systems of governance.

Historically, “men [would] define fishing – especially salmon fishing –as their most important economic activity”, “many men could earn a great deal more money through logging, but they choose not to.” (Rohner, 1970, p. 30) Today, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) has slowly made fishing an inaccessible trade and thus removed a vital part of Fathering from our men. “In 1995 the number of salmon licenses was 4367, but by 2001 it dropped to 2217. The number of salmon industry jobs dropped from approximately 26,000 to 13,000 jobs during this time as well.” (Assu, 2009, p. 65) The boats where our men were actively learning how to parent, how to be responsible, where they listened to their Elders stories, where they began to step into their parents’ and grandparents’ boots to bring in the next generation, have been arguably taken away. DFO has caused forced economic demise of coastal communities and is nothing short of contemporary colonization. The loss of access to fishing removes not only food security for many First Nations, but financial stability required by the western world, our culture, and severs the intergenerational knowledge transfer necessary to our survival as First Nations people. It’s on those boats that our Fathers learn to problem solve, get creative, learn about sacrifice, hard work, both failure and perseverance. Fishing has served as a vehicle to ground us in our culture and has always been a part of our identity, since time immemorial, and now we are losing that vehicle. Fishing was life, it shaped our male roles in community. It was a highly regarded responsibility to own and/or manage a fishing boat and defined who you were as a person relative to community and arguable self-worth. It created a sense of pride and

belonging, to fish and bring back nourishment for one's family and greater community. To fight for the community title of the top fisherman, to own the knowledge of the seas, the tides, the paths of the salmon, fishing brought much life and pride to those who manned the boats; our men, our Fathers.

Our Fathers have been silenced through the imposition of elected systems of government that moved into communities and took notice of those members that appeared to be the 'haves', which were often those members that were viewed by community as self-serving and of low value to the communities well-being and survival. Whereas in western culture, the 'haves' are those with the power and rank, important persons for a capitalist society. Our Fathers also had their opportunity to learn valuable Fathering skills smothered through the destruction our fishing sovereignty by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

### **4.3 Personal Learning from Listening and Summary of Findings**

After years of sitting with this work and allowing it to impact my day to day experiences and practice, I've come to realize how colonial my question for the purpose of this thesis was. The question "What reflections do Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers have when asked about their journey of coming into Fatherhood?" could be read as imposing that it was only biological Fathers that would have experience with Fathering was colonial; implying a western model of a 'family' to a First Nation community. I should have been coming to the work with the intention to talk to self-identified males in Kwakwaka'wakw communities and to speak to them about their roles in general, and not start from a place of looking at 'Fathers' as singular role. This has been a really hard thought to have on my mind through the final stages of this work. But I also remind

myself that I was intensely colonized for the first roughly 20 years of my life and that I'm still working on recovering from that, and that this mistake is a reminder of the work that I still have to do to decolonize.

Hearing the Fathers speak to their grandparents as being major influences in their learning as children and as parents was reaffirming. This is something that I felt, going into this work, would be a common trait amongst the stories I'd hear. I made this assumption based on my experience of working with many grandparents that were primary caregivers for their grandchildren. This was such a common role for grandparents that there was literature produced specifically to help support grandparents in this role of becoming parents again for their grandchildren. (Bedard, 2019; Read, 2009; Rosalyn, 1990; Thornton, 2012; Whittington, 2008) I felt that this was often the case as the process of healing from the impacts of residential, day and boarding schools would take a lifetime. And through that lifetime the next generation (the parents) would have their own struggles with this recovery and that it would take until coming into grandparenthood to be in a place to be able to positively parent; and they would do this for their grandchildren.

The stories that these Fathers shared offered insight into the reality of the impositions placed on Fathers today, not only through the western world's definition and expectations of a Father, but their commitment to their role to community and to their children. They spoke to the importance of culture generativity, and their lack of personal opportunity for this in the past due to choices that had to be made in life to pursue education and careers and being removed from their traditional territories. It felt as though these Fathers had never really had an opportunity to sit down and talk about their parenting role and what this means to them. This may not be factual, but it was definitely an honour to be able to have an opportunity to praise the role that

they live in our communities. It is my hope that they're proud of the movement that this research will contribute to. The work of raising our Fathers up.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

### **5.0 Defining Fatherhood**

It's important to note, when engaging with defining a specific role in a First Nations community, that we acknowledge that our communities are interconnected webs that do not function in isolation but as a network. Justice Kimmelman's 1998 report summarizes parenting as a communal responsibility with the immediate and extended family carrying the primary responsibility for a specific child. In addition to the input of grandparents, aunts, uncles and other siblings, the parents, it is understood, may select a specific person to assume a special role in the child's life. This person will oversee the child's development, teach necessary skills, and maintain a lifelong relationship with the child. (Carriere, 2005; Isaac, 2000) Defining Fathering is an unnatural process, but one that if done with a good heart and a good mind, may provide a bridge for social workers to be able to build relationships with our Fathers and see them as protective factors for our children.

Through this work, listening to stories and reading books I've come to the following definition of a Kwakwaka'wakw Father:

A Kwakwaka'wakw Father is a person that protects the safety of children and youth; regardless of biological attachment. They're our keepers of our drum log and fire in the big house. They're still our Chiefs, our potlach leaders and big house hosts, our head of families; our Nurse Papa and Chef Papa. Fathering in Kwakwaka'wakw communities is remembering where one comes from and living that for the purposes of passing it on to the next generation. Fathering

is putting the needs of the community before your own and establishing a family through generosity. Fathering is an integral part of our family, communities and nations.

### **5.1 Recommendations from Findings and Experience**

Through personal experience of working for the Ministry of Children and Family Development and practicing as a Social Worker for the past eight years, I can say with affirmation that there is a huge lack of Father representation in Child Protection files. Some of this can be attributed to the frontline workers and their choices to not seek out the Fathers of children, much can also be attributed to the workloads that don't allow this work to happen, and the systems, policies and programs in place that are mother centric. (Ball, 2006; Brown, 2009; Mniszak, 2018; Strega, 2007)

Strega et al., (2007) advocate that change can start today with a change in front line worker mentality, assumptions, and an investment in inclusion of Fathers in the day to day work; risk assessments, family plans, permanency planning, etc. (Ball, 2009; Ball, 2013; Ball & Daly, 2012; Strega et al., 2007). Workers need to believe in the potential benefits of engaging with Fathers and become educated in the diversities of Fathering and Father's contributions to a family and a child's life (Ball, 2009; Ball, 2013; Ball & Daly, 2012; Strega et al, 2007). This change will take great patience in workers, families, support service providers, and the Fathers themselves (Ball, 2013).

Work needs to be done to dismantle the mother-centric focus of the MCFD and open up space for Fathers. It's time for the rights and responsibilities of both parents to be considered by social workers (Brown et al., 2009). Major shifts in policy and practice within the BC Ministry of Children and Families will need to occur to give workers the time and direction to be able to work with both mothers and Fathers (Ball, 2009; Ball, 2013; Ball & Daly, 2012; Strega et al.,

2007). But it's not as simple, or as direct as changing the policies and sending workers off and running. Implementing new and more direct policy that speaks to workers involving Fathers in planning for their children will create a requirement for learning on the front line. Front line service workers need to be trained in working with Indigenous Fathers. Workers need to be given the tools that they'll require to practice in a holistic and supportive way with Fathers. Further to this, those workers need to have access to support systems and programs in the community that are also dedicated to the roles of Indigenous Fathers in families (Ball, 2010 & 2013). Without appropriate services to support Fathers, workers will have little to offer Dads which will only lead to the re-exclusion of Fathers in the Child Welfare System. Creating new policy and practice not only requires the government to make change for Fathers a priority but it requires attention to the training of workers as well as the funding and creation of programs designed for supporting Fathers.

Many Fathers live with the stereotype of being viewed as non-active in their child's life/lives. This stereotype needs to change and practitioners and the public need to learn about the value of Father involvement. The indirect involvement Fathers have through the processes of providing an income, maintaining a home, and role modelling should not go unnoticed and uncredited (Ball, 2007). The act of Fatherhood has a great impact on the social determinants of health in our next generation; what better reason to support Fathers than to improve the lives of the young ones to come (Ball, 2009).

To create such a change for our Fathers is no small task and will not happen overnight. But that is not a reason to forgo this work. Our Fathers need further opportunities to declare themselves and to feel valued and important in their role. Ball states that the current work that has been completed is not yet having much influence on the policy development and program

creating that needs to happen to make change for Fathers (2013, p212; Mniszak, 2018). How much more information do we require to start making major changes that create “safe, healthy, and nurturing families” that are “strongly connected to their communities and culture.” (MCFD, February 2018). Changes that establish programs that are “inclusive, culturally respectful, responsive and accessible” (MCFD, February 2018)

If this is not enough to demonstrate the rationale for a focus on Indigenous Fathers and their stories of Fatherhood as mechanisms for a change in the child welfare system then perhaps the words of an Elder will summarize this better:

Fathers may well be the greatest untapped resource in the lives of Aboriginal children today. If we could understand and support them to get involved and stay connected with their children, that would be a big protective factor for these youngsters as they grow up. (John, 2004)

Although I don't imagine that this research will change policy on its own, or build new supports in communities, or impact frontline workers so greatly that it changes deeply rooted biases and assumptions, I do believe that it will contribute to movement in these areas and add to the research that is actively working to support Fathers to be able to step into their roles supported, informed, and respected. I also believe that this work will help the push for Fathers to be included, involved and seen as not only viable but important resources to children. By collecting further data from Fathers themselves about what works for them, what doesn't work, persons, places or things they wished they would have had for help, it will provide further voice to the types of supports, information and opportunities that Fathers need in order to be able to have an equitable opportunity when it comes to working with MCFD.

This all being said, as long as this work has given the Fathers that participated the opportunity to be heard and share their story, that is arguably what is most important. Even more important than influencing policy change within the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Helping our current Fathers to heal and feel a sense of importance in their role will allow them be those positive and proud Father figures that our next generations will look up to. If this research does one thing, I hope that it re-inspires our Fathers and gives confidence to those who are in need of it; I hope that this honours our Fathers and all that they mean to our families and communities.

## **5.2 Final Words**

“This connectivity that is embodied in storytelling is a continuation of Indigenous existence.” (Sium & Ritskes, 2013)

It’s important to acknowledge the cultural teachings of the Gukzi that have lived throughout this research. It’s important to remind ourselves that conducting traditional research is more than simply identifying as an Indigenous, Aboriginal, Metis, Inuit or First Nations person and then following the suit of the western colonial researchers before us and accomplishing research through undesired solicitation without reciprocity. Carrying respect, integrity, honesty and trust with you and actively answering the questions that the RIHT methodology asks of you will not only create a deeper connection between you and your work, but will ensure that you’re stepping lightly, taking the time that’s needed, and dedicating your work for the purposes of benefiting the subject and not solely an institution.

Although this research will assist me to obtain the credential of a Master in Social Work with an Indigenous Specialization, this is not my primary motivation for doing this work. As I’ve stated throughout this process, my motivation for this research comes from a place of wanting to

make ripples in the child welfare system of British Columbia that will ultimately result in Fathers far and wide being brought into their children's lives. Success, through my eyes, will be a result that validates the Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers involved in their role as Fathers; providing them with a sense of importance and acknowledgement. Success has been to do to this work in a good way, as a First Nation woman, with and for First Nation communities, using Indigenous methodologies that affirm Indigenous knowledge's and ways of being. I hold my hands up to the Fathers that have been with me through this process and thank them for all they have offered me and hope that this work has given back.

Gilakas'la

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## Appendix B

Tanille Johnston, MSWI Student  
University of Victoria

### *Professional Key Informant Recruitment Letter*

#### **Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers – Fathers' Defining Indigenous Fatherhood**

Dear Potential Participant:

You are invited to take part in a research study about the experiences of Indigenous Fathers that have been called into question by the Ministry of Children and Family Development of British Columbia (BC) that is being conducted by Tanille Johnston, a member of the WeWaiKai community and Master of Social Worker Graduate Student at the University of Victoria.

The team for this study includes Alex Nelson (250.383.2990 ), Seneca Ambers (250.383.2990) and Tanille Johnston (250.286.7591) . If you have any questions or concerns about the project, you may contact Tanille Johnston. This research is not being funded by any public or private body.

Previous research indicates that there are significant disparities between the representation of Indigenous Fathers and Indigenous Mothers when the Ministry of Children and Family Development of British Columbia is working with families as a response to a child protection report. **The purpose of this study is to have conversations with Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers to help define what it means to be a Kwakwaka'wakw Father; the beliefs, traditions and language that surrounds this role. It's hoped that this information will then be disseminated to the Ministry of Children and Family Development of British Columbia to inform Social Workers about Indigenous Fatherhood so that they're able better serve Indigenous Fathers of the Kwakwaka'wakw community.** The intention of the research is to contribute to improving the outcomes for Indigenous children that are coming into contact with the child welfare system of BC by supporting Frontline Workers to be able to better connect with and support Indigenous Fathers in their role as a parent.

You are being asked to participate in this research because of your knowledge or and experience as a Kwakwaka'wakw Father. Your initial individual conversation time will be given the time that it needs but is expected to take about 60-90 minutes. This meeting will take place in a space of your choosing. Following this conversation, after Tanille has had time to transcribe the recording, she will set up a second opportunity for you to come together to review the transcript and add any further comments that you wish and make necessary corrections.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will consist of one audio-recorded conversation in person with Tanille for about 60-90 minutes and a second meeting to review this conversation after transcription. The focus of the conversation will be on your experiences related to being a Kwakwaka'wakw Father, your definition of your role as a

Father, and the culture that surrounds this roll.

We do not anticipate that involvement in this research would involve any substantial inconvenience for you other than the time to participate in the conversations, and possibly to travel to the meeting space of your preference.

There is the potential of emotional discomfort involved with this study. Emotional or psychological discomfort, stress, and potential incidental findings, could all be factors of being a participant. The conversation will be talking about a very difficult time in your life. You will have to reflect on your challenges and struggles and this could very well cause discomfort or stress. It may also reveal new information that you were not aware of previously. These types of conversations sometimes like to the history of child welfare and cause reflections into the deep history of Indigenous peoples in Canada; residential school, colonialism, the 60s scoop etc. There will be information provided to you about the local support services in your area, as well as contacts for Elder support if you require additional support after our talks.

It must also be made clear that, as a community member, if incidental findings lead to a duty to report under the Child, Family and Community Services Act that Tanille will need to follow through with a report to the Ministry of Children and Family Development of British Columbia. Examples of what meet the criteria of a duty to report will be explained further to clarify upon our initial meeting, before signing the consent to participate. If necessary, Tanille will direct yourself to a qualified professional to discuss the possible implications of the incidental findings for their welfare. Under the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA), it is required that a person whom has reason to believe that a child or youth has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, and that their parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child or youth, must immediately report the suspected abuse or neglect to the Ministry of Children and Family Development to ensure the safety of that child.

The potential benefits include contributing to improving outcomes for Indigenous children that come in contact with the Ministry of Children and Families of British Columbia, influencing a shift away from the current mother-centric practice of frontline social workers, and beginning to create more space for Indigenous Fathers in community supports and programs (e.g. creating Dad's support groups).

The data collected from this research will be used to create a finished Thesis product and copies will be given to participants. With your consent to do so, the data may also be used to create other forms of information (pamphlets, power-points, presentations and DVDs) as well as may have its results published in peer-reviewed journals, in various scholarly publications, and potentially presented at professional and/or scholarly conferences and community meetings; this includes within the Ministry of Children and Family Development of British Columbia..

In addition to being able to contact the researcher (Tanille) and/or recruitment assistants as above, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria, 250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca). You may also contact the supervisor for this research, Dr. Jeannine Carriere: email [carriere@uvic.ca](mailto:carriere@uvic.ca) or 250-721-6452

Gilakas'la,

Tanille Johnston and Recruitment Team

Contact: Tanille Johnston

Tanille.johnston@gov.bc.ca

250.203.2446

## Appendix C

Tanille Johnston, MSWI Student  
University of Victoria

### *Key Informant Questions for Conversation*

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#### **Kwakwaka'wakw Father's Personal Definitions of Fatherhood.**

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this research project. For confidentiality purposes we would like to ask that you please not refer to other individuals by name in your story.

1. Please tell me about yourself and your family.
2. What challenges have you had along your journey of Fatherhood? Are there things that would have been helpful during these times of challenge? Can you give examples?
3. How do you define Fatherhood? What are key elements of being a Father? What are some values that are extremely important to you as a Father? Where did you get these ideals/definitions from?
4. Is there anything else you would like to say or that I should know your thoughts on key elements of Fatherhood?

(Prompts such as, “can you tell me more?” or “can you give me an example?” will be used to facilitate the conversation)

Thank you. We appreciate your time.

## Appendix D

Tanille Johnston, MSWI Student  
University of Victoria

*Key Informant Consent Form*

### **Kwakwaka'wakw Father's Personal Definitions of Fatherhood.**

You are invited to take part in a research study about the experiences of Indigenous Fathers that have been called into question by the Ministry of Children and Family Development of British Columbia (BC) that is being conducted by Tanille Johnston, a member of the WeWaiKai community and Master of Social Worker Graduate Student at the University of Victoria.

The team for this study includes Alex Nelson (250.383.2990), Seneca Ambers (250.383.2990) and Tanille Johnston (250.286.7591) . If you have any questions or concerns about the project, you may contact Tanille Johnston. This research is not being funded by any public or private body.

Previous research indicates that there are significant disparities between the representation of Indigenous Fathers and Indigenous Mothers when the Ministry of Children and Family Development of British Columbia is working with families as a response to a child protection report. **The purpose of this study is to have conversations with Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers to help define what it means to be a Kwakwaka'wakw Father; the beliefs, traditions and language that surrounds this role. It's hoped that this information will then be disseminated to the Ministry of Children and Family Development of British Columbia to inform Social Workers about Indigenous Fatherhood so that they're able to better serve Indigenous Fathers of the Kwakwaka'wakw community.** The intention of the research is to contribute to improving the outcomes for Indigenous children that are coming into contact with the child welfare system of BC by supporting Frontline Workers to be able to better connect with and support Indigenous Fathers in their role as a parent.

You are being asked to participate in this research because of your knowledge or and experience as a Kwakwaka'wakw Father. Your initial individual conversation time will be given the time that it needs but is expected to take about 60-90 minutes. This meeting will take place in a space of your choosing. Following this conversation, after Tanille has had time to transcribe the recording, she will set up a second opportunity for you to come together to review the transcript and add any further comments that you wish and make necessary corrections.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will consist of one audio-recorded conversation in person with Tanille for about 60-90 minutes and a second meeting to review this conversation after transcription. The focus of the conversation will be on your experiences related to being a Kwakwaka'wakw Father, your definition of your role as a Father, and the culture that surrounds this roll.

We do not anticipate that involvement in this research would involve any substantial inconvenience for you other than the time to participate in the conversations, and possibly to travel to the meeting space of your preference.

There is the potential of emotional discomfort involved with this study. Emotional or psychological discomfort, stress, and potential incidental findings, could all be factors of being a participant. The conversation will be talking about a very difficult time in your life. You will have to reflect on your challenges and struggles and this could very well cause discomfort or stress. It may also reveal new information that you were not aware of previously. These types of conversations sometimes like to the history of child welfare and cause reflections into the deep history of Indigenous peoples in Canada; residential school, colonialism, the 60s scoop etc. There will be information provided to you about the local support services in your area, as well as contacts for Elder support if you require additional support after our talks.

It must also be made clear that, as a community member, if incidental findings lead to a duty to report under the Child, Family and Community Services Act that Tanille will need to follow through with a report to the Ministry of Children and Family Development of British Columbia. Examples of what meet the criteria of a duty to report will be explained further to clarify upon our initial meeting, before signing the consent to participate. If necessary, Tanille will direct yourself to a qualified professional to discuss the possible implications of the incidental findings for their welfare. Under the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA), it is required that a person whom has reason to believe that a child or youth has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, and that their parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child or youth, must immediately report the suspected abuse or neglect to the Ministry of Children and Family Development to ensure the safety of that child.

The potential benefits include contributing to improving outcomes for Indigenous children that come in contact with the Ministry of Children and Families of British Columbia, influencing a shift away from the current mother-centric practice of frontline social workers, and beginning to create more space for Indigenous Fathers in community supports and programs (e.g. creating Dad's support groups).

The data collected from this research will be used to create a finished Thesis product and copies will be given to participants. With your consent to do so, the data may also be used to create other forms of information (pamphlets, power-points, presentations and DVDs) as well as may have its results published in peer-reviewed journals, in various scholarly publications, and potentially presented at professional and/or scholarly conferences and community meetings; this includes within the Ministry of Children and Family Development of British Columbia..

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you know the researcher from previous work or research, this should not influence your decision to participate. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, or refuse to answer certain questions without any consequences or any explanation. If you withdraw from the study partway through, you will be asked if you want the data you have contributed to be part of analysis. If you agree, your data will remain in the study, if not your taped interview will be erased and the transcript and all field notes or data associated with you will be destroyed.

If it is your choice to remain anonymous through the research to preserve your anonymity, your name will not be recorded on the transcribed data -- a code or pseudonym of your choice will be assigned and used in place of your name. To protect others' anonymity, you will be asked not to identify other individuals by name during your interview. The key to the coded names will be kept separately from the interview data. Signed consent letters will also be stored separately from any data.

Your confidentiality will be protected by storing interview audio-files and transcribed data in a locked filing cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the data. The interview files, the transcribed data, and any notes taken during the interview will be destroyed after five years.

If you are agreeable, the summary research findings will be communicated to participants, community members, and interested professionals through posters, brochures, newsletters, and interactive workshops. Potential in-service workshops, resources, curriculum, manuals, and policy briefs may be created with the data collected. The results of the study will be published in peer-reviewed journals, in various scholarly publications, and will be presented at professional and/or scholarly conferences, as well as community meetings. This process is what will drive change in the child welfare system of British Columbia.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and/or recruitment assistants as above, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria, 250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca). You may also contact the supervisor for this research, Dr. Jeannine Carriere: email [carriere@uvic.ca](mailto:carriere@uvic.ca) or 250-721-6452

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Do you have any questions?

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

---

Participant Name (please print)

THANK YOU!

A COPY OF THIS CONSENT WILL BE LEFT WITH YOU, AND A COPY WILL BE  
TAKEN BY THE RESEARCHER

## Appendix E

### Ethics Approval



Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board  
 Administrative Services Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada  
 T 250-472-4545 | F 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

## Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: <b>Tanille Johnston</b>	<b>ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER</b> <b>16-356</b> Minimal Risk Review - Board members
UVic STATUS: <b>Master's Student</b>	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 07-Nov-16
UVic DEPARTMENT: <b>HSD</b>	APPROVED ON: 07-Nov-16
SUPERVISOR: <b>Jeannine Carriere</b>	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 06-Nov-17
PROJECT TITLE: <b>An Inquiry Into the Stories of Indigenous Fathers and Their Path to Fatherhood: A Narrative Analysis Conducted with Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers of Children That Have Been Involved in the Child Welfare</b>	
RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER Alex Nelson (Elder and Recruitment Support), Kathi Camilleri (Emotional Support), Seneca Ambers (Recruitment Support)	
DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: <b>None</b>	
<b>CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL</b>	
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.	
<p><b>Modifications</b> To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.</p> <p><b>Renewals</b> Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.</p> <p><b>Project Closures</b> When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.</p>	
<b>Certification</b>	
This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.	
 <hr/> Dr. Rachael Scarth Associate Vice-President Research Operations	

Certificate Issued On: 07-Nov-16

16-356 Johnston, Tanille

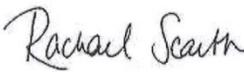
## Appendix F

### Ethics Modification Approval



Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board  
 Administrative Services Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada  
 T 250-472-4545 | F 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

## Modification of an Approved Protocol

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: <b>Tanille Johnston</b>	<b>ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER</b> <b>16-356</b>
UVic STATUS: <b>Master's Student</b>	Minimal Risk Review - Board members
UVic DEPARTMENT: <b>HSD</b>	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 07-Nov-16
SUPERVISOR: <b>Jeannine Carriere</b>	MODIFIED ON: 03-Mar-17
	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 06-Nov-17
<p><b>PROJECT TITLE: An Inquiry Into the Stories of Indigenous Fathers and Their Path to Fatherhood: A Narrative Analysis Conducted with Kwakwaka'wakw Fathers</b></p> <p>RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER Alex Nelson (Elder and Recruitment Support), Kathi Camilleri (Emotional Support), Seneca Ambers (Recruitment Support)</p> <p>DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: None</p>	
<b>CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL</b>	
<p>This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.</p> <p><b>Modifications</b> To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.</p> <p><b>Renewals</b> Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.</p> <p><b>Project Closures</b> When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.</p>	
<b>Certification</b>	
<p>This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Rachael Scarth Associate Vice-President Research Operations</p>	

Certificate Issued On: 06-Mar-17

16-356  
Johnston, Tanille