“We Are All Different, Still Living Under the Same Culture”
A Kwakwaka’wakw Perspective
on Dispute Resolution and Relationship Building

by

Dale Hunt
B.A. First Nations Studies
Malaspina University College
2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Dispute Resolution, Faculty of Human and Social Development
Institute for Dispute Resolution

© Dale Hunt, 2005
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part by photocopy
or other means, without permission of the author.
Abstract

This research was developed as a result of all the family and community conflicts that I have witnessed within Kwakwaka’wakw societies. From growing up in a Kwakwaka’wakw community, I get the message that one family against another, internal family feuds, conflict of interest, bands separating, drug and alcohol abuse, etc. are all starting to play a role in the Kwakwaka’wakw way of life. Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine whether there are traditional approaches for resolving conflicts that can help in the present day situation. Through an Indigenous based methodology and interviews with Elders, I identified six Traditional Dispute Resolution Approaches (TDRA), which are lecturing/teaching, storytelling, shaming, humor, *digitah* (cleansing rituals) and the Potlatch. Through a complete analysis of all ten interviews, I outlined 5 short little steps that can be taken to return to those traditional approaches. These little steps are: acknowledging and recognizing anger; respect; identity; collectiveness; and communication and the Potlatch. The message I received from the Elders was that it is our legacy as Kwakwaka’wakw people to continue incorporating these TDRA’s and little steps into today’s societies. Through these, relationships, peace, balance and harmony may be maintained in all areas of life. A deep understanding and respect for who you are and where you come from, and sharing and showing appreciation towards your family and community can be some of the answers to all the complications and complexities that are part of the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation today.
## Table of Contents

Abstract

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments and Special Dedications

Chapter 1, Introduction

Chapter 2, Literature Review

Chapter 3, The Research

Ethical Considerations

Chapter 4, Acknowledging and Recognizing the Anger

Chapter 5, Little Steps to Affect Big Change

Conclusions and Recommendations

Bibliography

Appendix A

Appendix B
Acknowledgements

There are many people to acknowledge here who have helped me along this enriching and challenging journey. First of all I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all of the Elders that I have spoken with throughout my research and shared in my learning process, especially, Sarah Sampare, Julia Nelson, George Hunt Sr., Rupert Wilson Sr., Peter Knox, Mabel Knox, Dorey Brotchie, Evelyn Voyageur, Paul Willie and Alvin Sewid. The knowledge that I have acquired is huge and has made me realize how important Elders are to Indigenous people and how important it is to get as much information as possible from them as they fear the knowledge will be lost.

I would also like to thank my thesis committee. In particular, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Leslie Brown for always being there for me and for her positive and empowering energy about life and (of course) research. Dr. Nancy J. Turner, who was the first and foremost faculty member to join this committee, thank you for all your knowledge and interest in First Nations people and issues. Pat Mackenzie, for your positive comments and assistance throughout my thesis process and Freda Shaughnessy for joining this committee as an external advisor and for her knowledge and wisdom of the Kwakwaka’wakw culture and traditions.

Three particular friends I would like to acknowledge here. Jessie Sutherland, Jennifer Shade and Elaine Prince. Each of these three remarkable women provided me with the moral and educational support when I needed it the most. Each of these women had a chance to read my work and provide great feedback and analysis and have contributed to this thesis in more than one way. Thank you to the three of you for your time and energy, I really appreciate it.
I would like to acknowledge the Kwakiutl Indian Band and its financial support in my pursuit for education, for if they had not supported me with my education I would not be where I am today.

Gilakas’la!!

**Special Dedication:**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my most immediate family. Louise, my beautiful wife, who I am completely devoted and committed to, I would like to acknowledge all her unconditional love and support throughout this whole journey. Her beauty and grace contributed in many ways. My pride and joy Justin, whose life has given me all that I can ask for and more. He is such a blessing in many ways and has given me the power to be all that I can be. Last but not least, my mother, Margaret Bernard, who is vital in my life and is solely responsible for instilling the strength and confidence that I possess today, has strived and pushed me to pursue my goals and put my dreams into action.
Chapter 1- Introduction

As an Indigenous researcher, I am dedicated to Kwakwaka'wakw matters, and impassioned about Indigenous people, concerned for the well-being of Indigenous communities, and committed to support with the survival of Kwakwaka'wakw Nations. My intention behind this thesis is to bring awareness to two of the most important aspects of my life, family and community. I see an enormous amount of conflict in Indigenous communities and it has been a slow process for indigenous people to re-identify with their own ways, but for the last decade some of the key elements that have become one with the lives of the Kwakwaka'wakw people are revival of culture, heritage and environment. As members of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation, we continue to fight a battle against the Canadian government to overcome the destruction that has been occurring in our communities for many years and continues to threaten to drown the family unit, our social structure, and our environment. We have been overly tolerant of colonial influences imposed on us for too long; it's time to transform the harsh realities of conflicts that exist in ourselves, families and communities, in large measure because of these outside pressures.

From living in a Kwakwaka'wakw community, I have run upon increasing incidences of inter- and intra-family disputes, nepotism, conflict of interest, etc. occurring in our communities. This thesis speaks to those issues from a dispute resolution perspective. I believe that through learning about conflict and the dynamics of conflict resolution in our own traditional ways, the Kwakwaka'wakw communities can restore the peace, balance and harmony back into our communities through the way that we were taught as Indigenous peoples. At the present time, our communities are divided. It's
almost like we've all become different people, but we still live under the same culture and reservations. By “different” I mean that we are not identifying with each other as a solid and unified culture. Not to say that we're not a community, I just think that our differences as individuals and families have become a major barrier in identifying with each other as a united Kwakwaka’wakw Nation. One of the questions addressed in doing this thesis is: How can Kwakwaka’wakw people restore and maintain peace, balance and harmony into our communities?

As I am adopting an Indigenous research methodology, it is important that I identify myself in this thesis. Cora Webber-Pillwax (1999) in an article called *Indigenous Research Methodology: Exploratory Discussion of Elusive Subject* states that, “It is important for me as a writer to notify you that the words I am speaking are mine and that I accept full responsibility for their impact”¹. I agree, and in saying this, my knowledge of Indigenous issues comes from both a lived-experience and an academic experience, meaning that I grew up in an Indigenous community, as well as educated with a Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies. In addition, as an Indigenous researcher, I also belong to a big extended family and community system, and the choices I make will not only affect myself, but my family and even my community as well². Therefore, I will identify the families and communities that I am connected to. It is important that I express who I am and where I come from so that people can identify with my identity, my heritage and my worldview as an Indigenous person. My name is Dale Hunt and I am a member of the Kwakiutl First Nation. My maternal grandparents are from the Wuixinuxw Nation (Rivers Inlet) and the Axwamis Nation (Wakeman Sound). My

paternal grandparents are from the Kwakiutl Nation (Fort Rupert) and the Wei Wai Kai Nation (Cape Mudge). I identify most with the Kwakiutl First Nation because this is where I grew up and this is where I learned about reality as an Indigenous person.

I will first provide a brief historical overview of the Kwakiutl First Nation, which is located in Fort Rupert, on northern Vancouver Island, and is also part of a collective group known as the Kwakwaka’wakw (Kwakwala speaking peoples) Nation. Historically, the term “Kwakiutl peoples” was used in a general sense instead of “Kwakwaka’wakw peoples” because of an anthropological misunderstanding3. Nowadays, the term “Kwakiutl people” is restricted to the people who come from Fort Rupert and “Kwakwaka’wakw” is the appropriate term to encompass all the Kwakwala speaking tribes and clans. Traditionally the Kwakiutl people of the Fort Rupert area were known as the “Walas Kwakiutl”, which means “the mighty Kwakiutl” in the Kwakwala language, and is the highest-ranking Nation out of all the Kwakwaka’wakw Nations. I learned from doing research with the Kwakiutl District Council as an Assistant Resource Planner that, historically, the Kwakiutl people achieved this rank because they were known for their distinguished political stance inside the Potlatch as well as their economic status for having the best fort on the Northwest Coast of Vancouver Island. Throughout colonization and the laws that banned the Potlatch, the Kwakiutl prominent political, social, economic and spiritual position changed and so did the people. There has been a significant gap in between the surviving generations where some of the oral history, language, teachings and traditions have been lost. This thesis aims to revive some of these traditions from one particular position, that of dispute resolution.

2 Ibid. pg. 40.
3 The U’mista Cultural Society Website. February 5, 2005. www.umista.org in The
One of my major motivations for doing this research is to revive my family’s oral history because, as a result of the Residential Schools, there is a two-generation gap in our teachings. First of all, my paternal grandparents were deceased when my father was a young boy and in turn my father did not pass any of his family traditional knowledge onto me. Second, my maternal grandparents went to Residential School; my mom and three of her younger brothers and sisters went as well. Consequently, language and culture was almost completely removed from my mother’s family. Only my maternal grandfather knows how to speak his native tongue fluently. It is good to say that most of my grandfather’s children, grandchildren (which includes me) and even great grandchildren are learning more about our language and culture. I have been on a journey to try and learn as much about my culture, traditions, teachings, knowledge, and numerous Indigenous issues as I can. This journey has led me to attain a Bachelor of Arts degree with a Major in First Nations Studies and then to furthering my education with a Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution.

By taking a dispute resolution program, it gave me the desire to learn about the traditional approaches of resolving the conflicts both within myself, and within my home community so that I can, in turn, teach my community some traditional approaches to dealing with all the band separations, family feuds, family against family, and the anger that reveals itself in all of those issues. I also want to remind my fellow people that there are traditional dispute resolution approaches to turn to when conflicts rise to build and maintain the relationships in our communities. Hopefully, after this research, Kwakwaka’wakw people can learn more about what dispute/conflict resolution means and how it can have a huge benefit for Indigenous communities, enabling the learning of

Kwakwaka’wakw. Alert Bay, BC.
more positive ways to deal with the anger and resentment that comes along with the loss of traditions in our communities. There are four things that I have learned about conflicts/disputes through classes and lectures. First, that the concept of conflict/dispute is about opposing (opposite) goals, objectives, standards, attitudes and expectations, and we all know how difficult that can be. Secondly, conflicts/disputes are everywhere (omni-present); thirdly, they are episodic, habitual and multi-layered, and fourth they are either acceptable or desired. With these four statements defining the concept of conflict and/or dispute, one of the first tools I have learned in Dispute Resolution is that even the ability to define conflict is a tool.

There are many approaches, sources and styles of conflict and its resolution. First, the manner in which we approach conflict will determine how the conflict will proceed. There are different approaches to conflict, ranging between “fight” and “flight” to identify with the theoretical approach I am taking in this research. The following approaches to conflict will be called “The Conflict Resolution Continuum”:

- Violence (fight)
- Non-Violent Direct Action (roadblocks, protests, etc.)
- Litigation (3rd party or judge decision)
- Arbitration (3rd party decision)
- Mediation (3rd party decision)
- Conciliation (3rd party decision)
- Negotiation (multi-party decision)
- Peace Building (multi-party decision)

---

Informal Problem Solving (multi-party decision)

Avoidance (flight)

I do not wish to attach my research with one particular approach here, but this research will speak to similar concepts of peace building, negotiation, informal problem solving and mediation, albeit from a traditional Kwakwaka'wakw perspective. I will speak of concepts such as building peace, balance, harmony or relationships throughout this thesis. The word "peace" in this context will mean a state of harmony within oneself, or within relations between people or groups; the state of non-war. The word "build" will mean to establish, increase or strengthen and my definition of relationship is a connection between people or things maintained through mutual understanding and respect. Therefore, throughout this thesis when you come upon the concepts of relationship building and/or building peace, balance and harmony, these will be considered as the vision I am striving for in this research, and the dispute resolution and relationship building approaches will be the pathway through which we can attain the vision of peace. Not only does every culture have its unique understanding and pathway to righting relationships, but individuals within the same culture can also have radically different notions about resolving conflicts and building relationships. Personally, I do not feel there is a need for violence, blockades, 3rd party assistance, or avoidance because I have faith that the Kwakwaka’wakw culture has the solutions we want to our problems and can help rebalance the peace in our communities.

Victoria, BC. Pg. 16.


6 Ibid. pg. 60.
Through combining a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in First Nations Studies, and then a Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution, I wish to work towards the betterment of my community. I found that the academic approach to dispute resolution and the Kwakwaka’wakw tradition of dispute resolution corresponded in many ways, almost too many to write about in one single thesis. Therefore, I needed to focus myself on one particular aspect, but I also wanted to figure out a topic that worked for me as well as for my family and community.

I found the focus of this thesis while reading a book called "Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus", by John Gray. It dawned upon me that I would like to focus on rebuilding the relationships in my community, for two reasons. The first comes from my own personal journey in that my marriage has been one of the most rewarding and challenging relationships in my life; therefore, I wanted to find a way to maintain this relationship in a positive way. Second, it seems that many of the relationships within the Kwakwaka'wakw communities, as well as between and among them, have been broken down. We've lost the ability to act as a unified people. Currently, there are various rebuilding efforts and programs occurring in our communities, such as the Ha'sa project, the Aboriginal Headstart program, and the Kwakiutl dance group, to name a few. Building healthy relationships after over a century and a half of colonial and neocolonial impacts tends to be a slow process because if we are not acting as a unified people then the process becomes a cycle of no solutions. This study focuses on the vital need to return to our traditional ways to guide us in the right direction for future cultural integrity, balance and well-being. We have to listen to our Elders and remember that through our

---

7 *Ha'sa* means spiritual breath and teachings in the English language and is a program that was initiated by the Kwakiutl Band in 2003 to promote language, culture and heritage to the Kwakiutl members.
culture, we can count on each other to be respectful towards one another in all aspects of life because we have all identified with the same worldview. Economically, politically, socially and spiritually there are historical unwritten protocols socially accepted and adhered to, as well as rituals, values and belief systems that acted as a medium for all the cooperative relationships in our communities. The intention behind this thesis retains and documents all those positive elements from that old system and applies them to our contemporary system through an alternative dispute resolution lens.

Family feuds, one family against another, band separation, alcoholism, drug addiction, and many different types of abuse are all leading to a breakdown of some of the cooperative and respectful relationships not only in my community but in all the Kwakwaka'wakw communities. The peace, balance and harmony in the community have become distorted. As of now, with minimal change in the past decade, if positive action to restore our traditions doesn’t start to happen soon, I fear that we will soon spiral down into a vortex of anger, resentment and segregation, which will only lead to a further break down of relationships even worse than they are now. The knowledge and wisdom of how to do this is available from our leaders and Elders who have received this from their ancestors. Oral history is a constant cycle of information, passed on from generation to generation, waiting to be re-discovered and applied in a contemporary context.

My way of “giving back” to my family, community and Nation for their continued support throughout my education was to determine how Kwakwaka’wakw people used Dispute Resolution from a traditional context because many of us, as caring Kwakwaka’wakw people, find ourselves in situations of conflict. That conflict can be within ourselves, with our family, our neighbors, other communities, or even with the
environment and the difficulty is trying to deal with conflict in a manner that respects our cultural system. Menno Boldt (1993) describes a major cause of the conflict I am referring to here. He states that, “They (Indians) have had an alien leadership system imposed on their communities. For more than a century the Canadian government has purposefully aimed its policies and practices toward the goal of replacing traditional Indian leadership systems, philosophies, and norms.”

As a result of the Canadian government system interfering with the traditional system, the Kwakwaka’wakw have gone through cultural assimilation. The Canadian policy (Indian Act) sought to protect and 'civilize' Indians, in the belief that their survival lay in the “Christianization” and the acceptance of European culture. Strangely enough, the protection of Indians was seen to lie in their assimilation into the dominant Western European culture, non-Native societies values, beliefs, ideologies, languages and other systems of symbols of the dominant culture. This thesis offers the present and future Kwakwaka’wakw people the opportunity to reconnect with our culture and customs to learn, through one particular lens, how to resolve present and future conflicts from a traditional perspective and hopefully (someday) also learn to apply them to our contemporary situation so that we can reclaim the positive elements of our traditions, practices and protocols that are rightfully ours as Kwakwaka’wakw people.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) speaks to peace, resolutions, and conflict through many different lenses and can be applied using either traditional or contemporary approaches. In Alternative Dispute Resolution, the key word is “alternative”. In today’s

---


society, ADR has become widely known for its cheap and effective processes as compared to the expensive and long-drawn out legal or legislation system because the law has also been known to be one-sided, unfair or highly adversarial. James Smith states that, "what we have seen historically is a shift from tribal justice systems, to non-Native, European systems, and back again. Native peoples are returning and reclaiming more traditional forms of dispute settlement"\textsuperscript{10}. Alternative in this research means that there may be different alternatives that can be used to resolve conflicts and in my experience, it is necessary to develop carefully planned approaches of reducing or preventing conflicts relative to your own way of life.

One of the main objectives of this thesis is to recognize a need for more research on developing "alternatives" that reflect Indigenous conflict settings. If conflict is to be resolved in an efficient manner, the resolution process needs to respond to cultural background as well as individual needs. However, "culture is as invisible as the air we breathe"\textsuperscript{11}. As a result, "it is often easy for us to overlook the critical role cultural norms and practices play in creating conflict"\textsuperscript{12}. Therefore, an exploration of dispute resolution approaches from a cultural perspective is important because one of my first recommendations in this thesis is that the Kwakwaka’wakw people learn the traditional ways of relating to one another so that they can go back to the way their ancestors lived, as a proud and happy people. But there has been no research that looks at what Kwakwaka’wakw traditional dispute resolution might look like. Therefore, my goal is to identify the traditional dispute resolution approaches that are both applicable and


understandable in today’s society. This is similar to what Taiaiake Alfred (1999) describes in his book *Peace, Power and Righteousness: an indigenous manifesto* with his concept of “self-conscious traditionalism”, where Indigenous people can “begin to make traditional values and principles the foundations for governance. By abstracting core values and principles from the vast store of our traditional teachings, and selectively employing those aspects of their tradition that are appropriate to the present social, political, and economic realities, the community has begun to construct a framework for government that represents a viable alternative to colonialism, and that respects their tradition.”  

This “self-conscious traditionalism will manifest itself in many ways throughout this document and although it may start sounding repetitive and colloquial, it’s only because I am passionate about this topic, but I lack the opportunity and experience to put these words into action. The gap between theory and practice will be bridged the more I share this document with Kwakwaka’wakw communities, but my hope for this thesis is that the words will carry on helping one person at a time.

The following chapter (Chapter 2) contains the literature review, drawing on a collective knowledge base. It starts with a discussion of how colonization broke down all the collective relationships in Indigenous communities and then identifies the need to search for approaches relative to our own communities and Nations. Even with respect to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) there are many inequities that came along with the ADR approaches used with Indigenous people; therefore, it is necessary to look to our own cultures, and do our own research for our own purposes. There have been various traditional Indigenous ADR approaches developed in the past decade, and I want to add

---

12 Ibid. Pg. 71.
to the list. Through an extensive literature review along with my own knowledge of Kwakwaka’wakw culture, I identified six traditional approaches of resolving conflicts or building relationships. The six Traditional Dispute Resolution Approaches (TDRA) are as follows:

1. Lecturing/Teaching,
2. Storytelling,
3. Humor,
4. Shaming,
5. The Potlatch
6. Digitah\textsuperscript{14}

Chapter 3 describes my research design. My particular approach was hard to create because I had to blend two completely different worldviews together, the Indigenous protocols and the University of Victoria’s (UVIC) ethical protocols. It was difficult but I managed to find a way that honored my background and heritage as well as being respectful of the University of Victoria’s standards of research. This research design has three phases or components that flow from an Indigenous methodology. My methodology was a combination of oral history and Indigenous research methodology, and my data collection methods were interviewing, along with some literature analysis. My data analysis occurred in phases, starting with the transcribing the interviews, then finding common themes throughout the interviews, identifying what resonated within me (as the researcher) both negatively and positively, and finally analyzing the data to yield a collective knowledge base integrating concepts drawn from the literature in combination with those from my interviews and my own cultural perspectives.

\textsuperscript{14} The term Digitah is translated as “to make things right” and is a process of singing, dancing, speaking and the giving of money within the Potlatch to wipe away any wrongs that had been done. In doing so, the crowd validates this process through their presence.
Chapter 4 presents some of the data from interviews with the ten Elders and leaders from the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation. One of the first practical steps that emerged out of the interviews was “Recognizing and Acknowledging the Anger”. Through the interviews, I heard the Elders tell me about certain changes within our communities, and that these changes have also changed the people and that there is a need to let go of our anger and bitterness about past issues and learn to deal with them effectively. The past is gone and there is nothing that can be done to change it, so the responsibility lies with the Kwakwaka’wakw people to recognize and acknowledge the losses suffered from colonization and the pain, anger, frustration, and resentment that it has left behind. From the teachings of the Elders, it became evident to me that there is a need for Kwakwaka’wakw people to address their latent anger, as individuals and as a people if anger is to subside and relationships are to be maintained. It is okay to be angry, it’s a natural emotion, but it’s not acceptable to direct this anger towards each other in the meantime. I believe that individuals, families and communities have the ability to recognize the latent anger that is a negative legacy of colonialism and losses occurred and start taking the necessary steps to reconciling with the past through reconnecting with our identity as Kwakwaka’wakw people, proud and united and in control of our own destiny.

Chapter 5 presents the rest of the data collected from the interviews and incorporates the next steps to rebuilding the relationships in Kwakwaka’wakw communities, which are called, “Small Steps to Affect Big Change”. There were four common themes woven throughout the interviews: respect, identity, collectiveness and communication and the Potlatch. It was evident that these elements or themes are what the Elders talked about most and they still practice and teach these everyday. There were
three major phrases that sparked my interest through the interviews. These three dichotomous phrases are shifts that I have witnessed through these interviews and direct experience, which are returning to “the power to love versus the love of power”, “speaking from the mind versus speaking from the heart” and “working with the people versus against them”. Plus, I believe that Kwakwaka’wakw people can grasp that concept of “self-conscious traditionalism” that I spoke about earlier and become more aware of our culture and traditions and start to apply our teachings in the context of today’s society. The Elders taught me that it is more important to care for one another, to help each other and to cooperate. They taught me that these positive actions may overcome fighting amongst one another. It is far more valuable to be a cohesive family and community because that provides a solid foundation for the youth to experience. Now it is time to find out what the traditional approaches to conflict are according to Kwakwaka’wakw culture. The next chapter will outline these approaches and their relation to dispute resolution and relationship building.
Chapter 2- Literature Review

Questions: How have traditional systems changed with respect to resolving conflicts and relationships building? Are there specific traditional approaches of dispute resolution according to Kwakwaka’wakw teachings? Where can you find them? Can they be implemented back into Kwakwaka’wakw society today? These are questions I sought to address in my study.

Taiaiake Alfred in his book (1999) book, *Peace, Power and Righteousness: an indigenous manifesto* states that, “it is precisely when the traditional social system has broken down that individuals skilled at manipulation wield the most influence. The erosion of traditional community values opens the door to abuse of power; an unstable social and political system invites corruption of the traditional ideal”15. Menno Boldt (1993) states that, “traditionally, Indigenous leaders were the servants of their people. But under colonial political and administrative structures, which are based on hierarchical authority delegated by the DIAND (Department of Indian Affairs Northern Development), Indian leaders, without choice, were cast in the role of managers of their people. In effect, traditional systems of Indian leadership have gradually been transformed into a ruling class system”16. The implications of this situation have been evident in Kwakwaka’wakw communities as well as others. With our traditional worldviews being severely shadowed by Canadian government policies and procedures regarding Indigenous peoples, the entire traditional system (not only with the leadership)

that once governed their entire life has been eradicated. This is only a small piece of the changes the traditional system has been through.

An editorial of the Catholic New Times (Sept. 1996) describes the terrible breakdown of family and community values First Nations people have endured as a result of residential school, which demonstrates a substantial need for more research on traditional concepts of achieving balance. The editor wrote, "the schools broke the continuity of many Native families so thoroughly that young adults, institutionalized all through their youth, did not know how to assume the role of parents or community leaders when their turn came. Parents and grandparents were so effectively poisoned against their own cultural heritage that they could not pass on a healthy respect for what it means to be an original person of this country". This breakdown of family and community values is due in large part to the residential school system, which has almost led to the loss of our connection to language, spirit, parenting skills, family and community values and beliefs. Many Indigenous people no longer know how to relate to one another because their traditional spirit has been crushed and there has been very little restoration of traditional aspects of family and community incorporated back into our societies. "Now it is time to look to Native peoples largely as teachers rather than pupils. They have much to share with Christians and other citizens, especially when it comes to restoring traditions of spirituality that have become confused and impoverished". I believe it is important to take these statements and use them as a means to do more research in our Indigenous communities, especially with respect to restoring the balance.

---

18 Ibid. Pgs. 6-10.
in our communities. There has been a great deal of research done on Indigenous communities, but not from an Indigenous perspective. As Maori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, “indigenous research is about centering our own concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes”

In relation to dispute resolution, there is a long history of non-Indigenous people mediating or negotiating on behalf of Indigenous people. James Smith (1996), a conflict resolution practitioner, indicates in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Canada’s First Nations: Defining a New Path* that inter-cultural disputes are approached with one of two attitudes. “He (the conflict resolution practitioner) has useful techniques which can be applied in any cultural setting. He can (also) use the techniques, which exist already in this culture, and not bring any of his own techniques into play. Both approaches have their problems.” I would have to agree with using the latter technique because the resolution model would be developed from inside the community rather than applying a general model that contains cultural elements. In this way, the pathway towards peace is determined mutually and thus more effectively. I will be using the above statement, as a starting off point to say that any conflict resolution processes used for Indigenous people should be developed from within the community. Therefore, the process of resolution will be based on appropriate values, beliefs and protocols.

A Mohawk woman, Patricia Monture-Angus (1995), makes a powerful point in *Thunder in my soul: A Mohawk woman speaks* about where to find the traditional knowledge and wisdom that we are seeking for this research. She states that, “in the

---

Aboriginal way, truth is internal to the self. The Creator put each and every one of us here in a complete state of being with our own set of instructions to follow. Truth is discovered through personal examination, not just through systematic study in state-sanctioned institutions. This statement rings true because it highlights the importance of looking within ourselves and our own cultures to find the answers to our questions. Every person and culture has something offer conflict/dispute resolution because cultures are made up of an entire web of relationships, so there had to be a way of maintaining the peace in all those families and communities. Therefore, what are the traditional approaches to resolving conflict and how can they be implemented into today’s Kwakwaka’wakw societies?

Smith highlights (1996) that “serious study of native techniques of conflict resolution is rare and highly underdeveloped.” In spite of being rare and underdeveloped some of the major efforts in this area that have been applied come from Indigenous peoples themselves, who are “...aiming at revitalizing and reworking traditional systems in order to deal with modern problems. This is certainly encouraging and worthwhile, but more can be done, for their [Indigenous peoples] techniques offer a way forward not only for their own communities, but for others as well.” This statement provides some reassurance that this research is worthwhile and that the Kwakwaka’wakw traditional ways of life prove to hold some value in today’s society. But how can we apply it?

---

22 Ibid. Pgs. 65-72.
In a book called *White Buffalo Teachings*, by Chief Avrol Looking Horse (2001), the 19th generation keeper of the sacred white buffalo pipe of the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota Great Sioux Nation holds the strong belief that Aboriginal Day (June 21) should be an international day of peace and prayer. With a history of genocide and assimilation of Indigenous people, Chief Looking Horse is modeling a good example of what peace can look like if we all learn to contribute to the Indigenous healing experience. “We are at the Crossroads. We face chaos, disaster, and endless tears from our relatives’ eyes, or we can unite spiritually in peace and harmony. It’s time to bring the Message of the urgent need for Peace, or creating an energy shift throughout the world”\(^{23}\). He also makes this an individual choice because “whatever you decide is what you’ll be, to walk in honor or to dishonor your relatives. You can’t escape the consequences of your own decision”\(^{24}\). The aim behind these statements is towards peace and responsibility. As Indigenous people we are not only responsible for ourselves, we have an entire family and community that stand behind us. “We carry a message that has been handed down to us from Elder to Elder through the generations, a sacred Message of a “Way of Life” that *Wakan Tankan*, the Great Spirit, the Great enveloping Mystery, has blessed us with. Each generation has an obligation to pass this Message down to the next”\(^{25}\). Therefore, we must move toward peace within ourselves, and learn to let go of anger, hatred, jealousy and everything that is holding us back from growing spiritually. This healing ride has since been continued by youth\(^{26}\). This is our responsibility as Kwakwaka’wakw people, to carry forward a positive message of peace, and also learn to model this


\(^{24}\) Ibid. Pg. 9.

\(^{25}\) Ibid. Pg. 10.
example as a positive experience for our people to follow. That is the purpose of Chief Avrol Looking Horse’s words. Thus, what are some of the traditional Kwakwaka’wakw teachings that can be practical and useful?

David Neel (1992) wrote a book called *Our Chiefs and Elders: Words and Photographs of Native Leaders* and reveals that the basic meaning behind traditional teachings is respect. He says that, “Respect is the foundation for all relationships: between individuals, with future and past generations, with Earth, with animals, with our Creator (use what name you will), and with ourselves. Respect is both simple and difficult, small and vast. To understand and apply it to our lives is an ongoing process”\(^ {27}\).

Dr. Richard Atleo (2004), a former instructor of the First Nations Studies program at Malaspina college and a respected hereditary Chief in one of the Nuu-chah-nulth communities, strengthens this statement in *Tsawalk* with, “there are two relational values that form the core and heart of the Nuu-chah-nulth way: love and respect. Little of love can be described on the printed page, but its active ingredients are an experience of the heart, of one’s soul and life essence”\(^ {28}\). He characterizes respect as well: “respect (isaak) necessitates a consciousness that all creation has a common origin, for this reason isaak is extended to all life forms. The mystery of creation has created a network of relationships characterized by isaak”\(^ {29}\). The message I get from this statement is that respect is complex and difficult to explain or “put into words”, but its application into everyday life can be very beneficial in maintaining any relationships. I will draw on these statements

---

26 Ibid. Pg 14.
29 Ibid. Pg. 15.
as the foundation from which conflict resolution can start. I believe that the first step in having respect for others is having respect for self because if you do not respect yourself, how can you respect others? For example, I've learned that one particular Kwakwaka'wakw teaching is to respect all of creation, to appreciate the land, resources, and to also give thanks everyday for our family, friends, food, clothes, etc. As human beings, we are all connected here on earth in maintaining life together. So it is important to practice collective values, positive belief systems, and respectful protocols for the younger generation because my Elders taught me that respect starts in the home. It is because of the importance of respect that I will place it as the philosophical underpinning behind traditional Kwakwaka'wakw dispute resolution.

Conflict Theorist Jean Paul Lederach (1995) argues in *Conflict Transformation in Protracted Internal Conflicts: The Case for a Comprehensive Framework* that the uses of traditional mechanisms of dispute resolution are "fundamental in a comprehensive transformative approach to peace building as a principle in building a peace constituency." A focus on local knowledge and systems, he argues, "offsets the tendency for those in conflict to look to the outside for solutions, and makes space for the transformation of the conflict to take place through the resources found within the setting. This type of approach encourages the growth of infrastructure and capacity needed in a peace constituency" to support a long-term approach to peacebuilding. Therefore, I will utilize this explanation to support the importance of looking inside each culture so that when the time comes for Kwakwaka'wakw people to confront the family and

---

community conflicts that exist, they can do so in a cohesive and unified manner and under their own circumstances.

The remainder of this literature review will be divided into six distinctive, yet interrelated approaches of traditional dispute resolution, which I have identified in combination with some literature and my own collective knowledge of Kwakwaka’wakw culture and traditions. I call them my Traditional Dispute Resolution Approaches (TDRA), which I identified through literature that supports these approaches as well as some that relate to them, but are not entirely the same. I will also refer to practices of other Indigenous groups as an example to relate back to the Kwakwaka’wakw teachings, traditions and culture.

**Lecturing/Teaching**

One of the earliest and most basic forms of confronting or avoiding conflict is through lecturing and/or teaching. As human beings, we are lectured and taught everyday and in every way. Neel states that, “an Elder is to talk to the new generation and tell the people how they are to live – to live the right way of living”\(^{32}\).

The following section will give more meaning to the word and process of lecturing/teaching. Here are a few examples of the teachings and lecturing that is used amongst Chiefs and Elders in the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation. They are taken from Neel’s book and come from some Kwakwaka’wakw Chiefs, leaders and Elders:

“I enjoyed the life growing up the real Indian way. They used to tell us stories when we were little, teaching us how to behave, how to be honest, and to be brave. Never to disgrace the family, that was the upbringing – we had really strict rules…that was the upbringing I remember. I always tell young people, the

---

way I was brought up was to be honest, gracious, and to respect my elders. That’s very important”33.

“We used to get teachings from the elders. When I was a child at Blunden Harbor, they had a group of girls and a group of boys and a man went and lectured to the girls and told us how we were to behave and how we were to act at all times”34.

“They had to follow rules, in the early days, in everything that they did. We were all taught – you had to be careful. They would lecture us. In the olden days we were taught everything, starting when we were young. Today’s children, you should gather them together and tell them what is right. Tell them what our elders used to tell us. Tell them the correct way to do things, talk to them. ‘Don’t do that,’ – that is what you call talking to them”35.

These statements are displaying the lecturing/teaching that occurs within a Kwakwaka’wakw community. There is a cycle of teachings that goes back centuries. Even in everyday life we are told, “don’t do this” or “don’t do that”. So in terms of conflict resolution, to lecture/teach someone would mean to teach them right from wrong, and to teach them the correct way to do things from a very young age. For example, the Elders taught me that in a Kwakwaka’wakw community, if family members were arguing amongst one another and the argument was long and drawn out, the leaders, Chiefs and Elders would take those individuals aside and lecture/teach them that what they are doing is wrong and is shameful towards your family, and to take the necessary steps to make things right, as well as prevent them from doing it again. Lecturing is a form of communication, which may not always be effective. In the book The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution: A Practitioners Guide, Bernard Mayer (2000) uses the concept of the “communication loop”, which speaks to the interaction that is necessary for lecturing to be effective. “As listeners, we have to help speakers deliver their messages so that we

33 Ibid. Pg. 31.
34 Ibid. Pg. 25.
can understand them and so that we can remain present in relation to these massages. As speakers, we have to help others listen so we feel heard. This means that we have to listen as we deliver the message and deliver feedback as we listen.36

In the Nuu-Chah-Nuulth culture the term “haahuupa” means to lecture. “This is how the child grew up because they stressed it. They had a way for them to go the right way. If he went wrong, all the more they took him and haahuupa him, (taught him, counsel him, advised him). This is what you are headed for growing up...”37. With each of these oral accounts you get a better understanding of the meaning of lecturing as a way of teaching people right from wrong and thus avoiding conflict or putting a quick end to it when it does occur. In my understanding, the Chiefs, Elders and leaders in the community are taught from birth that they have to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors and thus, uphold a collective set of values and beliefs passed on from many generations. This is what lecturing/teaching is all about. There is a certain “truth” and a way of life that goes along with lecturing/teaching that gives it a prominent role in most Indigenous societies. Lecturing can be understood and practiced in everyday life and I consider it to be used as the most basic form of maintaining balance at an individual, family and community level.

Lecturing may include a mild and lenient form of punishment and focuses on healing rather than punishment, and as such is a beneficial method for resolving conflicts. In Kwakwaka’wakw communities, a leader’s role in resolving conflicts is similar to that of a “mediator” or “arbitrator” where they place themselves in the middle of the conflict

37 Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribes. 1995. The Sayings of our First People. Theytus Books
and attempt to put an end to the imbalance. Generally in mainstream society, when someone commits a wrongful action, the normal resolution is to punish the individual(s). Rupert Ross (1996), a restorative justice researcher, argues in *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* that lecturing is effective and beneficial because, “the focus must be shifted towards the teaching of and healing of all the parties involved, with an eye on the past to understand how things have come to be, and an eye on the future to design measures that show the greatest promise of making it healthier for all concerned”

To guide an individual through dialogue and interaction with the collective group of Chiefs, leaders and Elders means that they are there healing individual(s) according to the protocols, traditions and belief systems of the Nation and are following what is known as a restorative justice approach. In dispute resolution terms, Ross supports by noting, “a peacemaking process tends to be viewed as a guiding process, a relationship-healing journey to assist people in returning to harmony”, and therefore, in my approach to dispute resolution lecturing will be used as the easiest form of teaching right from wrong in any family or community because of the focus on healing rather than punishment.

**Stories, Legends and Myths**

Another related form of preventing or resolving conflicts is through the use of stories and storytelling. Within Indigenous communities, stories are told at all times and in everyday. On APTN, the Indigenous television station, there is a commercial that tells...
about stories and the actor states that stories contain four main elements, seeing, listening, remembering and sharing. Indigenous people use stories as a method of explaining their point of view. Monture-Angus (1995) states that, “storytelling is the way in which knowledge is shared in traditional Aboriginal relations”\(^{40}\). Therefore, stories can engage our attention, bringing us into connection with each other and our ideas. Greg Sarris (1995) supports this in *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts* when he says that, “storytelling is a fundamental aspect of culture, and stories are used in a multitude of purposes. Stories can work as cultural indexes for appropriate behavior. They can work to oppress or to liberate, to confuse or to enlighten. So much depends on who is telling the story and who is listening and the specific circumstances of the exchange”\(^{41}\). This statement holds a great deal of truth with respect to resolving conflicts because as Michelle LeBaron (2002), a conflict resolution author, states in *Bridging Troubled Waters: Conflict Resolution from the Heart*, “some cultures prefer a circular, narrative way of speaking to a direct, linear approach”\(^{42}\), meaning that stories carry facts that can sometimes be shared in a safer way than by directly relaying them. When people tell their stories as a way to teach a lesson that needs to be learned, they tend to go in a circular fashion tying together many different points all in one story. Richard Atleo (2004) states that, “there is wonder and magic in stories that tell of the exploits and foibles of animal characters. There can be no resistance to lessons found in them because they are indirect. Little boys or girls are not apparent subjects or objects of


lesson⁴³. Because of the indirect lessons embodied in stories, storytelling is not always the easiest form to understand. However, for the purposes of this research, I will use the method of storytelling for sharing different perspectives in a conflict situation. There has not been much written on the use of storytelling as a method of conflict resolution, but I wanted to express what is already known and accepted about how storytelling can be a positive method for bringing people together on the same level and providing non-threatening lessons about behavior that can lead to conflict avoidance or can settle conflict that has already developed.

**Humor**

There is very little written on the use of humor as an approach to dispute resolution. However, humor is a universal healer and as Readers Digest says, “Laughter is the Best Medicine”. For Indigenous people, humor is a medium through which we communicate and which we use as a method for coping with stressful situations. Karen King (1988), a conflict resolution practitioner, wrote an article called *But I’m Not a Funny Person... The Use of Humor in Dispute Resolution*. King talks about how humor can be both beneficial and harmful. She states that, “humor can reduce tension, as well as create social cohesion among parties. It can also encourage creativity, thereby resulting in positive effects of the session”⁴⁴. However, on the other hand, when using humor to exert social control, it can be termed wit or sarcasm...and the difference between humor and wit is that humor is basically good-natured and directed towards

---

oneself but wit is aggressive and almost always directed towards others\textsuperscript{45}. I will use these statements as a starting off point to discuss the uses of humor to reduce the effects of conflict in certain situations because I believe that humor has been a major method to keep conflicts at a minimum in traditional as well as contemporary Kwakwaka’wakw societies. King concludes by saying, “One does not have to be a funny person or the “class clown” to utilize humor to aid the process of dispute resolution. The effective use of humor is a communication skill that can be learned like many others, such as active listening and artful questioning”\textsuperscript{46}. And to confirm this, in today’s media, the use of “Indian” humor is becoming prevalent. Movies such as Thunderheart, Medicine River, Windtalkers, Whale Rider, Dead Dog Café and Smoke Signals (to name a few) have become widely known for their “Indian humor”, a good indication that humor can be both funny and beneficial in tense situations, it just depends on when and how you use it.

\textbf{Shaming}

One of the harshest forms of suppressing conflicts for the Kwakwaka’wakw people is shaming. To shame a person means to embarrass, humiliate and even dishonor them. There is not much literature on the use of shaming as a form of resolving conflicts.

Irvin Goldman (1975) argues that, “people who are shamed take to their bed and sulk, usually as a prelude to a series of adventures, which will bring them salvation through the gift of supernatural power. The Chiefs are the links with the myth world, the original source of supernatural power”\textsuperscript{47}. This statement assumes that the Kwakwaka’wakw people are susceptible to connections with supernatural powers and

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. Pgs. 119-122.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. pgs. 199-122.
these connections relate to the hierarchy of the Potlatch, within which shaming was done. Therefore, this displays that shaming was done in front of the entire family and community to show that what they had done was wrong and needs to be made right. Whether it worked or not, I have not heard of any consequences of shaming as of yet.

Shaming once existed and helped to balance society and I will use this statement as a starting off point to the concept of shaming in Kwakwaka'wakw society and that there are spiritual and social responsibilities tied to the use of shaming.

John Braithwaite (2000) addresses the concept of shaming with respect to crime in *Shame and Criminal Justice*. He says that shaming can either be reintegrative or stigmatizing. The difference between the two is the approach. “Reintegrative shaming communicates disapproval within a continuum of respect for the offender; the offender is treated as a good person who has done a bad deed”\(^{48}\), whereas stigmatizing shaming is disrespectful shaming, “the offender is treated as a bad person. Stigmatization is unforgiving - the offender is left with the stigma permanently”\(^{49}\). I use these definitions in my research to identify the different approaches to shaming as well as the benefits and damages of those approaches. Braithwaite goes even further to say that “societies that are forgiving and respectful while taking crime seriously have low crime rates; societies that degrade and humiliate criminals have higher crime rates”\(^{50}\). In this way, I conclude that shaming is a positive, yet tricky approach to resolving conflicts with a potential risk to harm the individual forever through humiliation and embarrassment.

---


\(^{49}\) Ibid. Pgs. 281-299.

\(^{50}\) Ibid. Pgs. 281-299.
Shaming is closely related to lecturing, but stricter. Shaming has the ability to create humiliation within individuals, and thus can damage their spirit as a person. In Kwakwaka’wakw culture, the only people who have the right to shame others are Chiefs and Elders. In a phone conversation, my father-in-law told me that, “when the Chiefs shamed someone, they would do it in the Potlatch. By giving money and a place of authority, Chiefs have the power to say whatever they want inside the Potlatch”\(^{51}\). As a result, the people who witness the Potlatch have collectively acknowledged, recognized and validated this process. By putting an individual “on the spot” you potentially hold them responsible to their families and the entire community for their wrongful behavior. In Kwakwaka’wakw tradition this would be the lightest form of shaming, to stand the people in front of the entire community and force them to take responsibility for his-her actions and requiring them to make the necessary changes to make things right\(^{52}\). I’ve been told that the harshest form of shaming would be to reject or expel that person(s) from the tribe or community for a long period of time, or in some cases, forever.

For the Kwakwaka’wakw people shaming has been a socially acceptable form of punishment. Shaming can create a feeling of worthlessness inside the individual and consequently can make things worse by instilling rebellion against the rules or by committing another “wrong”. As noted, shaming is a powerful tool and is used with respect to a larger cultural system (Potlatch). It is a risk that the Kwakwaka’wakw Chiefs and leaders must sometimes take. Through their shaming they may humiliate and damage a person’s spirit, but in the long run, it can uplift and empower a person. It’s kind of a

\(^{51}\) Alvin Sewid told me in a telephone conversation about the concept and process of shaming on January 17, 2004.

\(^{52}\) Alvin Sewid told me in a telephone conversation about the concept and process of shaming on January 17, 2004.
“catch-22” because it’s an influential approach to resolve conflicts, but it can be potentially damaging as well. Nevertheless, shaming worked traditionally, so hopefully it can be applied in a contemporary context as well.

Digitah (Cleansing Ritual)

Digitah is a Kwakwala language expression meaning “to make things right”. It is a concept that an Elder from the Kwakiutl First Nation shared with me. The Elder told me that Digitah was used if someone had brought shame or dishonor towards your family. Digitah means they do a cleansing. We call it a cleansing program today, but “ceremony” is probably the proper word for it. It would be carried out publicly with everybody present during a Potlatch. The Digitah would appease the family, especially the parents of someone who had committed a wrong. That’s how they dealt with such a situation, if you did anything that brought dishonor to your family or even to your community.

The concept of “digitah” is very similar and related to the shaming process, but is enacted without the ridicule and embarrassment of shaming. Traditionally, digitah was used only within the Potlatch when someone would fall or make a mistake within the Potlatch process. It is a process, within the potlatch, made up of speeches, feasting, singing, dancing and the distribution of wealth all mixed together to make up the process of digitah. Metaphorically, digitah is like a “Potlatch within a Potlatch” or a process within a process. Nowadays, this ceremony is used for most forms of disobedience or

---

54 Ibid.
misconduct, to remove or “wipe away” whatever wrongdoing was caused. It is a concept used to “lift” whatever wrong had been done. In conflict resolution terms, digitah would be related to similar concepts of restorative justice where Indigenous people who commit wrongful actions are appeased through traditional approaches.

Contemporarily, digitah proceeds with the individual(s) who needed their wrong “to be made right”, who stood behind his/her family and community to go through a process of removing the wrong. My father-in-law told me that digitah involved four steps. The first step was to hold a Potlatch. Since a Chief was the only person who could hold a Potlatch, his role in this process is very important. The second step involved the Chief making a speech to acknowledge and pay respect to all the people there to witness, and recognize the wrong that had been done. By doing this, the Chief becomes accountable for the wrongdoing and has the power to “make things right” through ritualistic practices. This step also involves “showing the family way” as my father-in-law would put it, which included singing and dancing. The third step is to feast. Sharing food is a great medium to cultivate strong relationships and share in brotherhood with surrounding communities. And the final step of digitah is the distribution of wealth, in the form of gifts to all the guests witnessing the event. There is more research needed on the concept of digitah and what it means to the Kwakwaka’wakw people, as there is no research documentation that explains exactly what digitah means, the process it goes through to make things right, and the effectiveness of its application for dispute resolution.

A comparable term and concept, parallel to Digitah and described by Emily Mansfield in an article called Balance and Harmony: Peacemaking in Coast Salish

---

55 Alvin Sewid told me in a phone conversation about the concept and process of Digitah, which means “to make things right”. January 17, 2004.
*Tribes of the Pacific Northwest,* is the Coast Salish tradition of brushing. Traditional brushings “help individuals deal with their disputes by lifting the trouble or calming things down rather than by intervening directly with both parties”\(^{57}\). It is rituals such as these that keep conflict in traditional societies to a minimum. Through spirituality, we are lifted to a different level, a level at which we can be at peace with ourselves, and thus with others. The similarities between brushing and *Digitah* are in their focus, which is to lift, to calm, or to make things right, all revolving around keeping the community in a state of peace. The Coast Salish have other rituals and practices for peacemaking, but here I will use their brushing ceremony as a means to support the Kwakwaka’wakw process of “digitah”, “to make things right” in their communities.

**Role of Potlatch in Resolving Conflicts**

The aim of this section is to highlight the intricate elements of the Potlatch that help resolve conflicts at an individual, family or community level. The Potlatch and its role in maintaining balance are immense. The word “Potlatch” is a Chinook jargon word meaning “to give” and is based on a Nuu-Chah-Nulth concept. It has become the heart and soul of many Indigenous people on the Northwest Coast.

Dr. Atleo (2004) states that, “there is no generic equivalent to the English word “potlatch” in Nuu-chah-nulth. Not only is ‘potlatch’ not a Nuu-chah-nulth [or a Kwakwaka’wakw] word; it also has become a general classification that refers to every ceremonial form of feasting. Therefore, if someone gave a potlatch, it cannot be

\(^{56}\) Ibid.

persuaded from this statement whether the ceremony was a tlo-o-qua-nah, a yax-ma-thlit, a memorial, a rite of passage, a celebration of life, a marriage, an adoption, or a transfer of a Chieftainship seat. During pre-contact times each ceremonial occasion has a very specific name that left no doubt about its purpose and meaning. The purpose of this statement emphasizes that the concept “Potlatch” has become highly generalized in the English (Chinook Jargon) language, whereas there are many different traditional words that convey what specific kind of Potlatch is being held. Just like respect, a Potlatch is hard to describe unless you’ve actually attending one because it involves so many different processes, families and communities all adhering to the same protocol, value and belief system.

From a non-Indigenous perspective, John Steckley and John Cummins (2001) say in *Full Circle: Canada’s First Nations* that the simplest and easiest way to understand the Potlatch in its entirety and with all its intricacy is to think of it as: “...a combination of Christmas, a christening, a confirmation, and the Bible, a country’s constitution, and a legal contract, a movie based on a true story and live theatre, a drug-and drink-free rave, the ballet and an art exhibition, an old-style storyteller and a mandatory course in local history”.

As the central institution of civilization to the Kwakwaka’wakw people, the Potlatch was and is vital to all aspects of life. The Potlatch is a central method for bringing entire communities together under ritualistic circumstances to honor the host’s

---


Potlatch. It is also a unique institution among Northwest Coast Indigenous cultures. People come from all over to witness and thus validate all that occurs within the Potlatch.

"Potlatches were used to restore peace between villages if a murder or violent act had taken place"\(^{60}\). And Stanley Walens (1992) also states in *The Kwakiutl* that, "the potlatch served as a means of bridging these conflicting impulses by casting a solemn face on what might have been seen as extravagance"\(^{61}\). These statements show how much influence the Potlatch had on maintaining peace and harmony amongst the Kwakwaka'wakw people. It had a latent power to control how the people behaved and carried themselves on a day-to-day basis. It also restored peace at the same time, and therefore, I have included the Potlatch, as a whole, as playing a vital role in minimizing and resolving conflicts.

---


Chapter 3- The Research

At the beginning of this research journey I wanted to identify traditional approaches of dispute resolution according to Kwakwaka’wakw teachings. It was exciting that I had the opportunity to study a tiny piece of history from a dispute resolution lens to bring forth some valuable and interesting information that could possibly help with all the family and community conflict occurring throughout the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation. I identified six Traditional Dispute Resolution Approaches through a collective knowledge base. My supervisor gave some great insight, which gave me the inspiration to call my literature review a “collective knowledge creation”, which means that through a review of the literature and my lived Kwakwaka’wakw experience, I have managed to develop this set of traditional approaches that relate to Kwakwaka’wakw teachings and practices. The literature ranged from published materials referring to traditional forms of dispute resolution concepts, to government documents relating to dispute resolution from various First Nations organizations and libraries across Canada. I also drew on examples of Indigenous communities researching and developing their own dispute resolution mechanisms according to their own traditions. I ensured that there was not an overlap in representation of Nations. This collective knowledge was already presented in the previous chapter.

The next step was to design a research paradigm that allowed me the opportunity to speak with Elders and leaders from the Kwakwaka’wakw tribes. In deciding upon methodologies, data collection methods and data analysis, I wanted to walk the path that respected the journey and struggles of my ancestors. The study of knowledge (epistemology) and how it is to be attained (methodology) has evolved. Most commonly,
there are three broad research models to choose from, the positivist/empirical, interpretive, and/or critical/emancipatory social sciences\textsuperscript{62}. I determined that my research could possibly fit within the interpretive social science model, but mostly fits within the critical model. I decided this when I read Cora Weber-Pillwax's article called \textit{Indigenous Research Methodology: Exploratory Discussion of an Elusive Subject}. I agree with her that an Indigenous Research Methodology is elusive and I had the hardest time trying to pinpoint why I chose an Indigenous approach to my research, besides the fact that I was an Indigenous person. But when I read her article, it was all put into perspective when she laid out 6 principles that will encompass this research venture. They are as follows:

1. The interconnectedness of all living things,
2. The impact of motives and intentions on person and community,
3. The foundation of research as lived Indigenous experience,
4. The transformative nature of research,
5. The sacredness and responsibility of maintaining personal and community integrity, and,
6. The recognition of language and cultures as living processes.\textsuperscript{63}

Critical research models can be best understood in the context of the empowerment of individuals. David Newman (1997) states that, “research thus becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label ‘political’ and unafraid to consummate a relationship with an emancipatory consciousness”\textsuperscript{64}. In my research


design I will take a critical approach because it reflects a commitment to change, as does my interest in dispute resolution for Kwakwaka’wakw peoples. It also goes beyond surface details of Kwakwaka’wakw culture to uncover the real structures in our world in order to help our people change conditions and in turn build a better world. My methodology follows oral history and is Indigenous-based, with interviews and storytelling from individuals from the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation forming the core of my data. These methods reflect an Indigenous way of knowing (epistemology) that my people have been utilizing for centuries.

Why use oral history and an Indigenous methodology? In *Voices: Being Native in Canada* Esther Jacko (1995), an Ojibwa woman, says that “stories and legends [oral tradition] are used, as they have been from time immemorial, as teaching tools that help to impart our particular history and practices”\(^6\). Indigenous cultures all over the world are collective societies and are also governed by the oral tradition. It is a natural way for Indigenous peoples’ lives to be guided. The oral tradition is relational, it is collectively experienced and shared and it allows me (as a researcher) to use interviews and storytelling as a method to find the answers I need in order to change the impact of conflict in my community. Researchers from the Provincial Archives of British Columbia (1984) supported the use of oral history because, “its use of actual words and voices of those who lived and witnessed history and its ability to document people and subjects previously absent from the historical record, have made it one of the most exciting recent developments in the field of history”\(^6\). Shulamit Reinhartz (1992) also

---


believes that, “the use of oral histories enables the author (and others) to “hear” individuals and to “see” patterns derived from the study of a number of individuals”\textsuperscript{67}.

Why not use ethnography, critical ethnography or phenomenology as a process for this research? Ethnography is a description and interpretation of a cultural group of social group of system\textsuperscript{68}, while critical ethnography does not stand in opposition to conventional ethnography, it offers more direct style thinking about the relationships among knowledge, society, and political action, and it also offers a dual scientific and critical role\textsuperscript{69}. Historically, ethnography has had a negative impact upon Indigenous communities and implies that I am researching from the outside in. In the book \textit{In the Words of Elders: Aboriginal Cultures in Transition}, by Kulchyski, McCaskill and Newhouse eds. (1999), it states that, “the anthropological view (ethnography) tends to search for cultural ‘purity,’ to assume that this purity existed only in the past, and therefore tends to treat Aboriginal cultures as ‘dead’ cultures. It uses the past tense in describing Indigenous peoples. It also tends to emphasize the material aspects of culture, ignoring the spiritual world-view so central to Aboriginal people”\textsuperscript{70}. Even though there have been major, and generally positive, developments in the field of ethnography (given critical ethnography) today, my overall intention is to produce something different, something unique. I am an Indigenous person and want to stay true to my roots and my heritage and conduct research according to those values and beliefs of the

Kwakwaka’wakw Nation. I also want to maintain my insider perspective because I am a living member of this community. I belong to this community.

Phenomenology is another methodology that I could have used to attain the type of information I needed for this study. It also utilizes interviews and storytelling as methods, but like ethnography, phenomenology fits within the interpretive social science model and does not have an overt transformational element attached to it. Creswell (1998) states that a phenomenological study “describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon”71 (e.g. conflict and its resolution). For example, phenomenology only focuses on the conscious meaning of the phenomenon of conflict from several individuals, but I wish to go even further towards the role of culture in conflict, what it means to the people, as well as ways to incorporate this culture into conflict resolution approaches used by the people (transformational). I chose to utilize a methodology that was all encompassing and holistic, as well as simple and relevant. Oral history with an Indigenous methodology was the most effective approach to attain the information I needed.

In this study, one of the foremost responsibilities was to develop relationships with the Elders, leaders and Chiefs in the community to ensure that they felt comfortable enough to speak their minds and share any information that would be of value in this study. Being a member of the Kwakiutl community gave me a step-up in the process because I grew up in this community and know each of the participants on a personal basis.

One important point made by the University of Victoria’s Ethical Review Committee was that because I was a member of this community, my membership would act as an inducement for all of my chosen interviewees to participate; therefore, they felt that I needed to clarify my dual role and that I needed to emphasize this in my research, in that I would (somehow) have to separate myself as being a researcher from a member of the Kwakiutl community while doing this research. I responded assertively that separating myself, as simultaneously the researcher and a member of this community, would be unethical in an Indigenous based approach and I would be dishonoring my history and heritage. However, I also asserted that knowing each of the interviewees since I was a baby would not put pressure upon any of the participants because they have their own voice and could say “no” at anytime of their own will. Further, I included a statement in the consent form that dealt with their voluntary participation in this study (See Appendix B). As a result, I established their voice right from the start and continually reminded each of the participants that there was no pressure to participate and that there wouldn’t be any changes in our relationship before, during and after the interview was complete.

In an Indigenous based methodology there are certain protocols that need to be acknowledged and observed before doing research with Indigenous people. Not only was I responsible to the Elder I was interviewing, but there was a whole web of relationships that needed to be acknowledged. To Indigenous people there are three levels of society: the self, family and community. Our relationship to the land and the other life forms needs to be acknowledged as well. In my experience, Elders (and all of creation) are treated with great sensitivity and respect according to the position and role they play
within Kwakwaka’wakw societies. Tutty, Rothery and Grinnell (1996) state that an oral history approach “expects that a close relationship between the researchers and the participants will develop and will have a reciprocal influence on each other”\textsuperscript{72}. This statement means everything to my research because, for example, the relationship I have developed with each of the Elders I interviewed became stronger to the point where we are not just fellow band members anymore, we have come to the mutual understanding where I value their contribution to this research and they were honored to provide me with the information I needed for this study.

All in all, oral history and an Indigenous methodology encompassed the breadth of information I was looking for in this research. The relationships alone were unique and meaningful and required valuable time and energy to make them work. The interviews were fluid and flexible and all ranged in the depth of information given. My responsibilities (as a researcher) were complex and involved respect and appreciation for those who shared their knowledge with me. However, by making informal visits and creating a respectful tone and environment through confirming and validating the information with each participant prior to its use, taking the time to build understanding and mutual trust between the interviewee and the interviewers, and maintaining personal integrity by having the courtesy to give thanks (to the interviewee, the family, community and the land that was occupied) at the beginning and end of each visit were essential elements that made each interview part of an Indigenous way of life.

The second aspect of my research design entailed the specific methods used to attain the knowledge I am looking for. In this case, I decided to use interviewing and

storytelling as a primary method to retrieve information. In total, I interviewed 10 Elders, all from the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation. I chose the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation because I grew up in the Kwakiutl community, a member of this Nation. Secondly, I wanted to become more aware of the past, present and future situation so that I might make a well-informed hypothesis on how conflict and/or dispute resolution in a traditional context can help the Kwakwaka’wakw people reconnect with the teachings of our ancestors. A total of seven Elders, leaders and Chiefs from the Kwakiutl community, two from the Musgamagw-Tsawataineuk Nation, and one from the Mamalillikulla Qwe-Qwa-Sot Em band were interviewed. Originally, I wanted to honor the traditional hereditary system, which allowed me to interview the hereditary Chiefs from the Kwakiutl community. Unfortunately, not all the people were available to be interviewed due to bad timing issues on my behalf; therefore, I asked those Chiefs whom I should interview and they gave me the names of other Elders in the community. Nonetheless, I had the opportunity to speak with a great bunch of Elders on a one-on-one basis to ask them questions that lead them to telling me stories about their past, the teachings they learned, and how they thought those teachings could help make our communities a conflict-free place. Their contributions to this thesis are just as valuable.

In choosing to focus 70% of my research on the Kwakiutl First Nation, 20% on the Musgamagw-Tsawataineuk tribes and 10% on the Qwe-Qwa-Sot-Em I was not sure what to expect. I realized that it was a risk of sounding bias towards other Kwakwaka’wakw Nations that I was taking because 70% of my participants are from one particular tribe and the remainder represents the rest of the member tribes of the Kwakwaka’wakw, but it was a risk I was willing to take. I realize how complex Kwakwaka’wakw culture is and
thought I was ready for anything. I decided my choice would make for a compelling study and would be educational for the entire Nation. The information I received was enmeshed in culture and I believe that this is because the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation traditionally potlatches and it was in this hierarchical system where the values, beliefs, traditions and protocols determined how family and community conflicts were to be resolved, along with the Elders and leaders from each family and tribe. These people have played a key role in the resolution of conflicts at all levels of society, including the individual, family and community levels.

The final aspect of this research design was the data analysis. This occurred in three phases: self-reflection, transcription, and teachings learned. The first step after completing each interview was to record in a research journal reflections on the initial reactions to the process, acknowledging and understanding what resonated most with me, and stating some personal context as well. Once each journal entry was done, after every interview, the transcriptions began. The interviews took place in four consecutive weeks leaving time in between interviews to transcribe the ones already completed. I wish I could have interviewed all the Elders in one particular time frame (e.g. one week), but time constraints and travel were major barriers to this expectation. However, each interview flowed naturally to the next, so that in the end, I had a whole myriad of teachings, stories and experiences. I thanked the interviewees all individually and told them I would give them a copy of my thesis once it was completed. The basic interview guide (see Appendix A) stayed the same throughout the whole process. However, there were some questions added or taken out because I was interviewing many different people and each contributed uniquely to this research. If something struck me, then one
or two questions were added, altered, or changed. This made for a natural, fluid
interview process and it came together like a story did, in a multifaceted web of
information. Once each interview was transcribed, I brought each transcription back to
the individual so they could verify that the information they gave me, and my
transcription of it, was complete and accurate. All of them confirmed this and I gave
thanks again for their contribution.

Once all of the interview data was collected and transcribed I started to analyze
the material as a whole. First, I looked for common themes that threaded themselves
through all of the interviews. I expected that there would be a few important topics that
stood out from the majority of the information that I collected. Second, during the
interviews there were many moments when I had (inside my own head) “ah-ha’s” or “oh-
no’s”, where a teaching occurred, whether it was a new teaching (one that I have never
heard before), a validation of a teaching (one that verified as already known), or
information that caused conflict inside me. As the researcher I thoroughly examined the
information and deciphered key concepts to be implemented into the proposed traditional
dispute resolution approaches developed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Based on all of the
collected data, I developed a set of practical steps that reflected the six TDRMs,
identified in the collective knowledge base (literature review), and also incorporated the
interests of the Kwakwaka’wakw people.
Ethical Considerations

As a researcher doing interviews with Indigenous people, I had a great deal of challenges, responsibilities and ethical considerations to think about. In order for an interview to take place there were certain elements that needed to be followed. The number one element was confidentiality. The Faculty of Human and Social Development (2003) created a document called Protocols and Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context, and this document states, “the researcher must ensure the protection of Indigenous participants and Indigenous resources in the research process, including as far as possible protection from any negative impact that might result from the findings of the project being made public”\(^73\). In this case, I have developed an elemental framework that I call “The Five R’s of an Interview”, which have been paraphrased from a combination of First Nations Women Studies and Oral History classes, lectures and discussions at Malaspina University-College. These five (interrelated) R’s include:

- **The Responsibility** of the interviewer to follow proper protocol. “Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviors as an integral part of methodology”\(^74\). Protocol is just a set of rules that need to be adhered to in order for the interview to be justifiable. For example, I (as the researcher) needed to set up an agreement, such as a Consent Form and Terms of Reference (See Appendix B) with the interviewee that sets the parameters of the interview. Since we are taking someone else’s information, confidentiality, language and appropriation are some major issues to

---


consider. I needed to ensure that the interviewee’s words were recorded, confirmed and respected according to the agreement. There is also a distinctive responsibility for Indigenous people doing interviews with their own people. There is not only the responsibility towards the individual, there is also the family, community and land that needs recognition and acknowledgement. For confidentiality purposes, I kept each of the interview tapes and transcriptions in a locked drawer so no one could have access to them.

- **Respect** for the interviewee’s thoughts, feelings and words. “In First Nations and Native American communities there are protocols of being respectful, of showing or accepting respect and reciprocating respectful behaviors, which also develop membership, credibility and reputation”\(^\text{75}\). For example, I used concepts such as active listening, taking time and showing appreciation, which were all respectful ways to perform an interview. One example of Kwakwaka’wakw protocol is to give thanks if you have received the gift of knowledge to show respect and appreciation towards the interviewee and their words (ie. I brought a gift to each of the participants to acknowledge their contribution to my research journey and gave thanks for the knowledge that they have passed on to me).

- **Remembering** to include full statements of the interview so that the interviewee is fully represented. Using “all” of their words is necessary as it is their words we are using and representing. Therefore, it is important to remember some of my initial feelings before, during and after the interview and record it in my journal of interview

reflections. This is to put a little piece of myself and the interviewee into the final analysis.

- **Relationship** is also very important. It was important for me to develop relationships with the participants to ensure that the trust, honor and integrity are maintained and that the participants feel completely comfortable telling their story. The protocol around relationships is that they require nurturing. Paying the interviewees informal visits to establish a respectful tone and to honor them at the same time was important. Giving gifts and embracing the relationship was an important element in maintaining the relationship. Sometimes it’s not all about doing the research, but rather about strengthening the relationship instead.

- **Representation.** "Representation is important as a concept because it gives impression of the truth"\(^{76}\). As a researcher, I needed to learn about respectful representation because the information I was using is not my own and because misinterpreting their stories is easy to do. However, with a great deal of collaboration between the participants and me, the stories were continuously examined and reviewed so that all the information was accurate. There was a back and forth process of making sure the information was accurate and that each individual approved of his/her words and my representation of them. Nothing was processed without his/her full consent. In this way, I was honoring their words and telling and conveying their truths.

By adhering to these five R’s of interviewing, which change from person to person and from interview to interview, proper protocol was being taken into consideration and there was a respectful tone set throughout the interview process. From discipline to

discipline, these concepts change, but the underlying rule to remember is respect. These were fundamental considerations that were taken to ensure that I did my interviews properly according to the culture and traditions of my people as well as the standards and principles of the University of Victoria. It was a hard job, but I managed to get it done. The following chapter presents my results, the knowledge and wisdom of my ancestors. These teachings have been passed on from many generations of ancestors and I ask that they be received with respect and honor.
Chapter 4 - Recognizing and Acknowledging the Anger

Here I will begin to analyze the information received from the ten interviews throughout the research process. First, to honor the interview participants I will introduce you to: Julia Nelson (Kwakiutl), Sarah Sampare (Kwakiutl), Dorey Brotchie (Kwakiutl), George Hunt Sr. (Kwakiutl), Peter and Mabel Knox (Kwakiutl), Rupert Wilson (Kwakiutl), Evelyn Voyageur (Musgamagw-Tsawataineuk), Paul Willie (Musgamagw-Tsawataineuk), and Alvin Sewid (Mamalillikulla Qwe-Qwa-Sot-Em). With the help of these ten Chiefs, leaders and Elders, I was able to ask them questions that led them to share their stories, experiences, teachings, traditions, rituals and anecdotes with me about the way they view conflicts and/or disputes and their resolutions from a traditional Kwakwaka'wakw perspective. The information drawn from the interviews was interesting because each of my interview participants was unique and each understood the culture from a similar yet distinct point of view. I will present each point of view as the next two chapters unfold.

Throughout the interview process, one of the questions I asked was “have you noticed any changes in the way conflicts are resolved since you were young? If so, what are those changes?” I asked this particular question because I wanted to find out if there have been any colonial impacts evident through their words and experiences. They all responded instantly with, “Yes!” One of the things that struck me throughout the Elders’ stories was the effect of government policies and procedures (or colonization) woven throughout Kwakwaka’wakw communities, which has caused many family and community conflicts within the present situation as Kwakwaka’wakw people. For instance, I myself have witnessed a small number of inter- and intra family feuds, conflict
of interest, nepotism and bands separating (to mention a few), and have observed that such changes have affected the entire web of relationships of our society, the intimate ones, social and professional ones, and the one we have with our environment. Even though it’s only a small number of families and communities that are in conflict, the impacts of these conflicts have become damaging to our collective and inherent way of life.

Following are statements from the Elders that reveal certain changes within the Kwakwaka’wakw society, which have affected the relationships between families and communities. There will be two separate sets of stories taken from the interviews where for each, I felt the need to share long answers because they reveal so much more of what the Elders wanted to say and respects their unique voice. It also allows them to share more of their story. The first set of stories reveals the effects of colonization on our Indigenous communities and the social impacts of government policies and programs ranging from the banning of the Potlatch in 1884\(^77\), loss of our children into the Residential School, to the one-sided results of the Canadian legal system. Each of these enforced governmental practices had an enormous impact in Kwakwaka’wakw communities, and these Elders would like to share their story regarding each of these. Their story goes as follows:

“Oh, yes there have been many changes. We’ve lost our ways of dealing conflicts. The momentum was broken when families were separated and put in schools, the Residential Schools. We’ve lost the ability to communicate with one another. Even today, I see families they don’t know how to go about resolving issues and conflicts by themselves. Or, even with each other in the communities, family against family today. They’ve lost the ability to be able to do that. They haven’t been taught. They’re not being taught anymore about resolving issues, the way it was in the old days, where there’s really been a lot of changes\(^78\).”


"There have been many changes to our communities ever since the banning of the Potlatch because that was our place to exercise these things. And when they banned the Potlatch, after they put them in jail because of when Dan Cranmer gave his Potlatch in Village Island and then they were arrested. Yes, so it's not as severe as it used to be. And whether the copper became very dangerous, they were used, it was broke every time they were offended about something, they would break a copper against that person. It was just like cursing a person. And they saw the damage that the Tlakwa was doing to the people. It's a very dangerous thing to hold. It's like a curse against your own favor. Jimmy Sewid spoke up and said, do away with the copper, don't use the copper anymore. He said it is too dangerous. It's caused a lot of bad things/bad feelings between the people. So he said, don't use the copper anymore, throw it out. After that the people listened to him because they did see the damage. It was like witchcraft, it was so powerful. But because of Christianity, they saw the need get rid of it."

"We're not going by our rules as Indians/Natives. We're going by the white man way. They're backing off on our culture. They're getting into...or going the wrong road. They're mixing. Yes, you can't mix white culture with our culture...The government couldn't explain to the Chiefs, why do they treat us like dogs. They had no answer for that. When they did their two months in jail, half the people that went to jail just died because they felt so bad because they were shamed. And they couldn't explain why they treated us like dogs, and they had no answer for that. Because nobody could explain why they went to jail. It was Christianity that claimed we worshipped the totem pole."

"A lot of changes happened because of the white legal system. The legal system doesn't work for our people because RCMP they have their hands tied by lawyers and the prosecutors. The charges that are laid don't work anymore. They whole legal system doesn't work like many other things that are imposed by the government. There are too many changes in a short time, by the government, trying to impose new regulations everyday that can't be followed."

From listening to these stories, it sounds as if nothing is the same anymore. The old ways of our ancestors have been completely shifted by a force not our own. These statements describe only of some impacts the Canadian government has had on Kwakwaka'wakw culture, traditions and spirituality. One interesting point about each of the Elders' answers was that there was no anger behind their voice while they were sharing; their voice sounded more proud and hopeful. I heard their voices and it made me want to pursue this project even more because I believe that there needs to be some recognition of those changes and some necessary approaches to dealing with the conflicts.

---

79 The term Tlakwa is the word for copper in the Kwakwala language, which is the highest and most prominent symbol of wealth to the Kwakwaka'wakw people.
81 Interview with Peter and Mabel Knox. September 15, 2004. Fort Rupert.
on an individual, family and community level. Before I do this, the following set of stories reveals even more issues of change, but the difference is that these relate to internal community issues that definitely stemmed from the government of Canada’s influence on Kwakwaka’wakw communities. Again, I have shared long answers with you because they give more depth to each response and you can hear much more of the Chiefs’, leaders’ and Elders’ stories:

“Nowadays, I don’t see much of anything in the way of dispute resolution. Traditionally, they don’t settle things now. The change of time is, they haven’t tried to understand how to do it. They weren’t taught. You have people here that are in their thirties and forties have learned nothing about their culture. Haven’t learned anything about how to settle things anymore. It’s not done in the open anymore. It’s starting to get around to it, but slowly. But, it has had a big impact on our people because there is so much conflict between families and inside of families. And it shouldn’t be like that.”

“A lot of the problems we have today never get resolved. Especially in the band business. I think there’s too many people controlling and just think they’re the only ones who are right. And the rules and regulations are just done by one person who thinks that they are the boss, or they are the Chief or elected Chief and what they say goes because they are the one in power.” I’ve heard people say that, “I’m in power”. Whereas long ago, the leaders were the hereditary Chiefs and they never thought of themselves as higher than the others. They were equal, if not they were the workers of the tribe. They were the leaders and they took care of the people. And I think a lot of the conflict comes from the power and controlling. The love of power instead of the power to love. See the difference? The power to love was the way of our leaders of long ago, and they looked after everybody. The band things, how they ran the tribes was for the benefit of the entire community. But now we have the love of power, so conflicts never get resolved because people talk about one another and it just gets worse and worse. So the conflicts are not resolved because of the power and control, instead of working it out. And I’d like to see the day when all of our leaders are healthy.”

“And basically, is comes from the loss of respect and honor, from the heart. Now we thought about respect and honor from the mind, and that creates the need to be right at any cost. So I usually ask people, “tell me about respect.” And they say, “it has to be earned.” Traditionally no, you give it. You give honor and respect because everything you did, even respect for creation. So you give honor and respect openly and don’t expect anything back. It’s when we demand honor and respect from the mind that creates conflict. It’s one of the biggest conflicts I have with some of our own processes with the Potlatch. Like we teach our children that the Chiefs and Elders and the Hamatsa go first. But what message is that sending to our kids because we are basically speaking from our minds and not from the heart.”

82 Interview with Rupert Wilson, Sr. October 1, 2004. Fort Rupert.
“Well Mr. policeman is supposed look after that. They don’t seem to. The police. You know there is so much drugs and everything, it’s gone haywire in reserves with our young people, even some of the old people are smoking too much dope... the drugs have gone crazy in our villages. I try to tell my daughter Sherry, we need a cop right here in the village to straighten it out...the people are losing their respect. They don’t respect each other like they used to. I think those land claims (Treaty) screwing us up. You know, it’s that money that’s screwing us up. I really don’t like the, I don’t know if I should say, I’ve been a counselor, sometimes it seems like we make decisions, the wrong decisions because we’re counselors, hey? We don’t go to the people because you’re supposed to go.”

After hearing and reading these stories, I have to thank each of these Elders for sharing their words with me, as I know how difficult it can be to talk about negative issues. Within their stories, I hear the Elders talking about power imbalances, high-mindedness, loss of resolution skills, and the spread of drugs and alcohol in Kwakwaka’wakw communities, which has eventually led to the reality of constant power struggles, and the lack of capacity to work things out as a people, and as a result of this, outright anger and bitterness. As Kwakwaka’wakw people, I asked the wise teachers of our Nation to share with me that there is hope to build better relationships in our communities through our own traditional ways because I want more peace, balance and harmony in Kwakwaka’wakw communities, and I found out that there are many teachings in our culture to help with this situation. I think Kwakwaka’wakw people are strong and resilient people so it should not be too hard to change our ways of relating with one another before the conflicts get out of hand. Now I can use the interview information to recommend certain steps that need to occur in order to bring about a change in Kwakwaka’wakw families and communities.

To begin with, I wanted to identify some of the thinking and feeling words associated with anger because personally, I have had many experiences with anger and know exactly how hard it can be to transcend it and communicate effectively. I think it

will be a life-long process to learn. But, following I have identified some primary feeling/emotion words associated with anger, which I received from my counselor. In alphabetical order, the reactions from anger are abandoned, alienated, annoyed, anxious, anxiety, belittled, challenged, cheated, confused, cornered, defeated, disappointed, discriminated, disrespected, distrusted, dominated, divided, embarrassed, fearful, guilty, greed, grief, hate, helpless, hopeless, hurt, ignored, imposed upon, inferior, jealous, judged, left out, lonely, manipulated, miserable, nervous, overwhelmed, panicked, paranoid, pity, powerless, pressured, pride, rejected, resentful, sad, scared, skeptical, stingy, stressed, stupid, tested, tense, threatened, tired, trapped, troubled, unappreciated, unloved, used, violated, vulnerable, worried, or worthless. With such a debilitating list of words, the reason I wanted to mention them was because as I went through the list, I realized that I would probably react with anger if I felt any of these feelings too, but by simply recognizing that you have felt annoyed or threatened can make a difference. For myself, once I have realizes that I feel anger, annoyance or frustration, I try to be more aware of my actions and behavior because, as you can see, anger can be revealed in many ways, but if I know myself, I can try not to damage anything while I am angry. So, my first recommendation to the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation is to recognize the anger and resentment in Kwakwaka’wakw communities, acknowledge and come to terms with the affects of anger and resentment, and then take the necessary steps to make things better in a mutual way so that everyone comes out feeling better about the conflict situation.

Sarah Sampare, who is a noble woman in her 80’s from the Kwakiutl First Nation and also the daughter of the great chief Spruce Martin or N’kapinkum (ten times chief),

---

87 The handout was called Feeling Words Associated With Anger and it stated numerous words that were
shared a story with me about Abraham (from the bible) and his servants who were fighting over land and a well. The story goes that because Abraham wanted peace so much, he gave the land and the well to the servants to hold the peace. After that story she said, “Peace is very important. We’re very unhealthy people if we don’t have peace or if we don’t have love, care or understanding. It ruins us, it ruins our personal and collective system if we have anger, hatred, resentment, jealousy, greed and all of that. It ruins us. And if we get rid of those things and try and solve it peaceably, that’s how we are going to bring more harmony to our people.” This statement rings true for anger and resentment because it does get in the way of maintaining peace. It can block a person from communicating in a positive way and can also damage relationships. For example, if a certain family is having a family feud and people are not on speaking terms, the longer the feud goes on the more the tensions and fears build to prevent reconciliation of the feudal mess. But if each person simply recognizes that there is some anger or resentment there and then acknowledges and takes responsibility for that anger, it can make a world of difference. Keep in mind that “blood is thicker than water” and that your family will always be your family no matter what goes on in the relationship. In my experience, I have found that relating with my wife has become better since we have been able to recognize and acknowledge issues inside our marriage and get down to the core of what is really bothering us, which eventually frees us from the burden of anger and we feel much better and safer to share our stories because there is no anger or resentment barrier there. It doesn’t make things instantly better, but we can sure communicate more effectively. So, by simply recognizing and acknowledging our fears, angers and

associated with the feeling of anger. My counselor gave this sheet to me while I was receiving the service.
resentments, we can see more clearly and get down to the bottom of what is really going on. This is what recognizing and acknowledging the anger is all about.

Going back to the original question at the beginning of this chapter, of whether or not there have been any changes to way conflicts were resolved traditionally, we have found out that the answer is “yes”. As the Elders stated earlier, there have been many changes evident in Kwakwaka’wakw families and communities. In short, they talked about residential schools, the policy banning the Potlatch, the Canadian legal system, and the overall Canadian government’s assimilation over Kwakwaka’wakw peoples and their culture. Therefore, my next question is, what can we do to transform all the negative relationships in Kwakwaka’wakw communities?

Peter Knox, a hereditary Chief from the Kwakiutl First Nation, shared with me some words of wisdom when he told me a valuable teaching on the importance of culture. He told me that if Kwakwaka’wakw people can “hang onto their culture, never forget it and listen to their Chiefs, maybe we can go back to our own ways because we’re not going by our own ways anymore as Natives. But if you keep hanging onto your culture, there will be nothing wrong. Never leave it behind. Take that first before you take the white man ways”\(^89\). For the purposes of this research, this statement speaks loads of truth because I am trying to establish a need for more traditional ways of life through dispute resolution and Peter is saying hang onto your culture and don’t forget it because it will be better for us. So I will foster this statement as a need to do more research in our own Kwakwaka’wakw ways. What happens if our culture is forgotten? If that does happen, Peter also emphasizes, “don’t be scared to ask questions. For example, if I have

\(^89\) Interview with Peter Knox. September 15, 2004. Victoria, BC.
a question that I can’t answer, I won’t beat around the bush, I’ll get the answer to it. But, if I can’t answer it then I’ll say “no”.90 So for future reference, these Elders are putting themselves out there for people to retrieve information. My advice to the Kwakwaka’wakw community would be to make use of it while the information is still there. I have myself been inconsistent of not visiting the Elders enough, but will do so whenever I get to Fort Rupert. Though for future reference, I now know that I can go to Peter and Mabel Knox (or any of the Elders I interviewed) whenever I have a question about culture and Kwakwaka’wakw people and the traditional way of life.

90Interview with Peter Knox. September 15, 2004. Victoria, BC
Chapter 5- Little Steps to Affect Big Change

After identifying with what many Kwakwaka’wakw people have felt and the changes to families and communities that have occurred in society, I recommend that the next step be to try and reconcile those negative changes and learn from them. I asked the Elders to reveal some knowledge and wisdom about traditional approaches that Kwakwaka’wakw people may apply to their current conflict situations. The first question I asked them was if, to their knowledge, there is a Kwakwala word or phrase that means conflict? The Elders informed me of many words or phrases that meant conflict. Here are the Kwakwala concepts (spellings may vary) and their meanings according to each Elder:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kwakwalam</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kis-Namis-Nokayi-Ka-edai-Waldam</td>
<td>They did not come into agreement about a subject or they did not have the same mind or same thought about a certain subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is-Isookwisa</td>
<td>Opposing to what one is saying because you do not believe in that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dada-Kola</td>
<td>Fighting, not agreeing with one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Katapa</td>
<td>Go back and forth with words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oo-jah-goolah</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Elders described many words that can be used for the process or approaches of peace, or working through conflicts with families and communities. They are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kwakwalam</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nina-’ka’kala</td>
<td>Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digitah</td>
<td>Cleansing ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dadu-Kwal-Giwala</td>
<td>This is what Elders teach/lecture about to younger people to foresee the future, to be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Nanwakola     | -Come together to talk about it.  
|              | -Butting heads, but after we go in the  
|              | same direction.  
| Ninaxsola    | -Try to straighten it out.  
| Awakwis      | -Place to discuss.  
| Mayaxala     | -Respect each other.  

Through these words, the Elders have provided a foundation for which we can begin analyzing and learning to work through some of the conflicts that exist in Kwakwaka’wakw communities. They also help to determine how conflict was traditionally looked at and dealt with.

The other set of questions I asked are as follows:

1. How was conflict resolved traditionally?
2. How did Kwakwaka’wakw people build peace, balance and harmony?
3. How did Kwakwaka’wakw people build or mend relationships?
4. Why do you think culture is important?

In reviewing the research it came to my attention that many of the stories the Elders had told me entailed little practical themes or teachings that can be valuable in dealing with conflict in Kwakwaka’wakw families and communities. The four common themes that were expressed by the Elders in interviews were: respect, communication, collectiveness and identity. Each of these sub-themes provided little steps to affect big change. The interviews also validated the Six Traditional Dispute Resolution Approaches (Lecturing/Teaching, Storytelling, Humor, Shaming, Digitah and the Potlatch) I found through my literature research. It was empowering to hear the Elders
confirm the knowledge that I had gathered throughout my thesis journey. One particular example arose while Peter was telling me a story about Kwakwaka’wakw culture. At the end of the story he said that, “it (culture) makes us stronger as people, Native people. Our culture, our language, in our Potlatch system, these are all our way of life”91. I will finish illustrating how they confirmed my research as the chapter progresses. As I go through each of the following common themes that emerged throughout the interview process and display how each of them connects to relationship building, I will be discussing how they can be useful to Kwakwaka’wakw people.

Now I will begin with the four short little steps that can affect big change if they are applied in contemporary Kwakwaka’wakw society.

Respect

Respect is the central philosophy and teaching behind resolving conflicts to Kwakwaka’wakw people. In one of the interviews with George Hunt Sr., the hereditary Chief of the Kwakiutl First Nation, he told me what the concept of peace meant to him. When I asked him about peace, he responded with “that’s easy, it’s Mayaxala, which means respect each other. If we could bring that back to respect each other, it would help our community”92. Mayaxala was taught from a very early age. Each of the Elders confirmed this teaching as a requirement in dealing with conflicts. For example, Evelyn Voyageur, who is a well respected Elder from the Musgamagw-Tsawataineuk tribes and also just wrote her Ph.D dissertation on identity and did interviews with some of the Kwakwaka’wakw Elders, leaders and Chiefs, was giving her statement about the changes

91 Interview with Peter and Mabel Knox. September 15, 2004. Victoria, BC.
she has seen in the way conflicts were resolved since she was young and she was sharing with me about the conflicts that occur within leadership and the different power dynamics that play out in Kwakwaka'wakw communities. She stated that most of the conflicts in our communities come from,

"The love of power instead of the power to love. See the difference? The power to love was the way of our leaders of long ago where they looked after everybody. The band things, how they ran the tribes was for the benefit of the entire community. But now we have the love of power, so conflicts never get resolved because people talk about one another and think they are somehow higher than one another so it just gets worse and worse. It never gets resolved. If it is to be resolved, then more of a focus on love and respect will help."

It was fascinating to hear Evelyn say this because when she said it, my mind sparked and I realized that traditionally, the power of love did come before the love of power and somehow there has been a shift in the other direction. This is not to assume that all people have lost the power to love, but in terms of respect, when power becomes an issue, there is an entirely different set of dynamics that would need to be explained. For the purposes of this thesis, the power of love (and love of power) will relate to concepts such as respect and how to carry that out in accordance with Kwakwaka’wakw traditions. The question is, how can we return to the power of love vs. the love of power? The answer appeared to me when Paul Willie shared his personal perspective on Kwakwaka’wakw people, stating that if they learned "to speak from the heart rather than the mind, then respect can take place. In the beginning it was more about honor and respect. This is how conflict was resolved because if you come from the heart, honor and respect are there." This statement was another huge spark that occurred through the interview process because I remember hearing that the furthest distance in the world is from the mind to the heart, so it would be interesting to do a little more research on the
dichotomy of speaking from the mind vs. the heart. I really enjoyed talking with Paul Willie because he was a hereditary Chief and son of the late Billie Sunday Willie from the Tsawataineuk and Kwiksutaineuk tribes. I also found out that he holds a Master’s ticket and can facilitate in Neuro-Linguistics Programming, which sounds fascinating. From speaking with Paul, I have realized from my own life that when I speak from the mind, there is no emotion or feeling attached only thinking words. But if I can speak from the heart, then that’s where I can find love, respect, caring, sympathy, etc. From my point of view, it is so much easier to speak from the heart when talking to people because (depending on the person) there are genuine feelings involved. My marriage therapist told my wife and me that when you say, “I think” in front of your sentences, you’re using your mind and not speaking with the heart where all the core issues can be resolved, but if you start a sentence with “I feel”, then you know the person is speaking from matters of the heart. This helps us cultivate respect, which engenders a mutual desire to give from the heart, and allow our natural compassion to flourish.

One of the unique characteristics of an Indigenous community is that there is an entire web of relationships that need to be respected within the communities, not only the ones we have with our immediate family and friends. Evelyn talked about her mother in Kingcome and told me that her mother would say “hello” to anyone walking down the road. No matter who they were, she would always approach them. And someone told her, “your mom sure knows how to show respect”94. I would have to agree with that community member because that’s how life is on a reservation, everyone acknowledges

93 Interview with Paul Willie. September 17, 2004. Nanaimo, BC.
94 Interview with Evelyn Voyageur. September 17, 2004. Lantzville, BC
and says hello to one another, even if it’s just the “Indian nod”. In this way, you create a space for respect to occur and take place. Evelyn also says that,

“It wasn’t just respect for your fellow man, but it was respect for the universe and knowing how you are related. Like everybody was related someway, somehow, someway and they brought it up, we knew our family origin and we knew that if we call our own family down, then you’re calling yourself down too because you belong to that family too. People will know who you are just by your actions”.

In Kwakwaka’wakw communities, especially my own, it seems like a small population of people do not fully respect themselves, and as a result, have difficulty respecting others because I truly believe that in order to respect others, you have to respect yourself first. Respect works like a ripple effect. First you respect yourself, then you spread it out to your family and friends and from there it spreads out to the community. We know the ripple effect of trauma, now let’s experience the ripple effect of healing, change and transformation. Traditionally, respect was given at all times, but that has changed in today’s society. For example, if you were to ask several Kwakwaka’wakw people about respect and what it means to them, a common response would be, “well, respect has to be earned”. I do not agree with this. In fact, the golden rule is, “Do unto others as you would have done unto yourself”. If this rule holds truth then a relationship can be reciprocal; if you show respect, then respect will be returned to you.

“To me culture is people living together, doing things together, caring about one another, respecting one another, and being taught all those things”. During our interview Julia didn’t stop once to think about her answers, she was very fluent and confident in her responses. I appreciate that confidence about Julia because she speaks

95 Interview with Evelyn Voyageur. September 17, 2004. Lantzville, BC.
96 Interview with George Hunt Sr. September 30, 2004. Fort Rupert, BC.
with strength of character and she shared a great deal of teachings with me. I will use Julia’s explanation of culture as a teaching of relationship building because respect means being able to live amongst one another while still having the strength of character to work with one another with respect and honesty.

Respect to Kwakwaka’wakw people is to always respect your extended family or relatives. When I asked how our people built relationships in the old days, one of the Elders said that respect for all Kwakwaka’wakw people, “was something that was promoted among our people, the teaching was to always respect and acknowledge each other. Always acknowledge, especially your relatives. You weren’t allowed to not know who your relatives were and how you became related to them. Know who your people were. That’s how they built relationships. It was something that was mandatory. You were taught about it from the time you could start talking”98. Listening to these teachings, it has become evident that for Kwakwaka’wakw people, it doesn’t matter who you are, it is mandatory to acknowledge your relatives and your family because what you do reflects on your entire family. We are all related in some shape, way or form as human beings so we might as well learn to live with each other. In terms of relationship building, equality and humbleness emerge from these teachings, to always see others as equal, neither above nor below one another because once you begin to see someone as above or below you, then the relationship dynamics change. In my opinion, to respect is being humble enough to say, “It doesn’t matter who you are, I will always acknowledge you”.

Rupert Wilson Sr., the younger brother of the late hereditary Chief Thomas Wilson, emphasized on the importance of honesty in our interview and that honesty is mandatory for any conflicts to be resolved. Throughout the entire interview he reiterated that, "you never ever lie or cheat because it will always come back to you. It seems to be a way of life. As long as you have honesty you will be respected and don't lie about other people because somehow they will find out about it and you'll be the one that's in trouble"99. I really appreciated Rupert saying this because to me honesty is always the best policy as well. It goes to show that everything in life needs to be undertaken with respect and honesty because if you lie or deceive, it reflects on yourself, your entire family and your community, so in terms of building relationships, if one person lies or cheats, the relationship will not be based on aspects of respect and as a result not only you, but the whole family will look dishonest and disrespectful. However, if you are completely honest and trustworthy from the beginning, then genuine respect exists and true relationships can be created and maintained.

In terms of conflict resolution, respect, whether it be traditional or not, Indigenous people have always fostered the art of respect as a necessary component to culture and well-being. And I know that each one of us as members of Kwakwaka'wakw Nation knows what respect is and what it requires, so I leave these teachings with you, from our Elders, leaders and Chiefs, as a safe foundation for which respect can be expressed and applied in today's society. By showing respect to our fellow Kwakwaka'wakw members everyday and in little ways, conflicts should be prevented assuming that the respect is well given and well received.

The Potlatch and Communication

As one of the most prominent Traditional Dispute Resolution Approaches (TDRA) identified earlier, the Potlatch was and still is a method to resolving conflicts in Kwakwaka'wakw communities, as explained by each of the Elders stories in turn. Even though the Potlatch has changed in some ways, the meaning of the Potlatch will always be to bring people together under ritualistic circumstances. Metaphorically, the Potlatch can be seen as the *Awakwis*\(^{100}\), as a place to discuss issues because communication is at the heart of the Potlatch with its processes of speeches, singing and dancing, feasting, and gift giving\(^{101}\). Dorey Brotchie, who is a hereditary Chief from the Kwakiutl First Nation and has held his own Potlatch, describes how the Potlatch is a method of resolving family and community conflicts:

"Traditionally, any big dispute of any kind was done by the Potlatch, bringing the two families together, and bringing the other Chiefs together to have a Potlatch to straighten that out. If it wasn't straightened out, then it will carry on and you have a big scar that should have been dealt with right away and that's how they did in the old days. They didn't sit around and build up their retaliation. But in the old days they were taught how to handle situations where it did harm to the family, between a human and a human. It takes a lot of love and care and you have to take into consideration the whole family.\(^{102}\)

From being at a Potlatch, I remember someone I was sitting beside telling me that if something troublesome were being dealt with inside, it stays inside the bighouse and soon disappears. And vice versa, anyone with bad feelings leaves it at the door before they enter, which to me, means that the Potlatch offers a positive environment through which communication and the use of traditions can bring families and communities together to reconcile conflicts. As mentioned previously, one specific element within the Potlatch is the process of *Digitah*, which is another one of the TDRA's. An Elder told

\(^{100}\) George Hunt Sr. told me that the *Awakwis* means "a meeting place". A place to discuss issues. It also used to be the name of a newspaper that was created by the Kwakiutl District Council and would share news about North Vancouver Island.
me that Kwakwaka’wakw people promoted peace, balance and harmony through the Potlatch and Digitah. She followed this with, “if people have been hurt or something bad happens then they digitah here, they give a Potlatch and feast, to cleanse away that. You’re not supposed to hold onto to it after its been cleansed away. No, you forget about it, and try to move on again. You make peace with the past and move forward”¹⁰³. I really appreciate this process because when two of my closest cousins did this at a Potlatch, it felt really good to get up in front of the whole crowd to show support to my relatives in their choice to cleanse whatever mistakes happened in their lives. Through the Potlatch and Digitah they were able to reconcile with the past in a traditional Kwakwaka’wakw manner and I believe that it helped them to move on without having to look back.

Paul Willie shared two traditional concepts as potential elements in conflict resolution in the Kwakwala language, Ninaxsola and Nanwakola¹⁰⁴. Both ideas articulate relationship building elements with Ninaxsola meaning, to come together and talk about it to try and straighten it out”, and Nanwakola meaning “butting heads, but after we go in the same direction”. In maintaining any relationship there are going to be good times and there are going to be bad times, and hopefully you can make it through the bad times without damaging the relationship. In terms of communication and the Potlatch, Ninaxsola and Nanwakola can be considered as the functional principles behind Kwakwaka’wakw communication, because getting together and talking about conflicts

---

¹⁰⁴ Paul Willie told me about Ninaxsola, and that it means try to straighten it out. Paul, Evelyn Voyageur, and George Hunt Sr. told me about Nanwakola, and that it means come together to talk about it. Or, Butting heads, but after we go in the same direction.
and then afterwards going in the same direction is a much better approach than avoiding one another and allowing the conflict to fester and become deep-rooted.

I asked Peter and Mabel Knox about the Potlatch and they both understood that the Potlatch is to be performed under positive terms, its overall outcome being, “it gives the people a good feeling when its finished”\textsuperscript{105}. We now know that the Potlatch can be useful in communicating issues in a traditional way, and it also gives a good sense of belonging because the communication occurs in front of your people and their entire purpose is to witness it and thus confirm the event. It doesn’t go any further than that. Alvin Sewid of the Qwe-Qwa-Sot-Em tribe and son of the late Chief Jimmy Sewid articulates that, “the bighouse laws ensured that people had to watch what they were doing or they would be liable for any negative actions and by talking out the issue and finding a solution”\textsuperscript{106}. The Potlatch is the central institution for bringing entire communities together and it also maintains relationships between families and even individuals by communicating through conflicts in the bighouse in an honorable and beneficial manner. For example, I know from experience that by confronting a family or community member before anger and resentment builds up is the first (and hardest) step to resolving conflicts, but once that first step is taken, the rest becomes easier. To Kwakwaka’wakw people, communication is imperative to avoiding and resolving conflicts, which means that communication should be maintained in all areas and environments of Kwakwaka’wakw life.

However, communication is not easy to accomplish. As human beings, we all communicate, behave and perceive everything differently. As a result, gaps in

\textsuperscript{105} Interview with Peter and Mabel Knox. September 15, 2004. Victoria, BC.
\textsuperscript{106} Interview with Alvin Sewid. October 12, 2004. Qualicum Beach, BC.
relationships occur and communicating across those gaps can be emotionally, mentally, spiritually and even physically draining. However, there are many different communication approaches that can be taken from Kwakwaka’wakw teachings, for example, through the Potlatch’s speeches, singing, dancing, feasting and gift giving. If there is a conflict within the context of the Potlatch, the communication within the Potlatch engages people on the same level. On this level, the beat of the drum, grace of the dancers, compelling speeches, mouth-watering display of food and the generous gift giving at the end truly engages people to communicate in a traditional way. From attending Potlatches, I really enjoy the use of humor that occurs in intermissions, breaks, or between songs and dances. There is usually one man, Heber Webber, who behaves like a fool just to make people laugh, which balances the seriousness and strictness of the Potlatch with a little good spirit. The use of humor as a form of communication within the Potlatch is satisfying because it provides another source of entertainment during the quiet times. Humor is also one of my TDRM’s, which confirms what I stated previously in my literature review about the use of humor to resolve conflicts. I will use this experience with humor and its use inside the Potlatch as a beneficial method of communication because like I mentioned earlier, according to Reader’s Digest, “laughter is the medicine”.

Identity

Identity is a complex and confusing concept because you can go many different ways with it, but I will narrow this definition down to the individual and collective identity of the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation. The Oxford Dictionary defines identity as who
or what someone or something is\textsuperscript{107}. But the Kwakwaka’wakw definition is knowing who you are and where you come from, which is a fundamental teaching in our culture. For example, at the beginning of this thesis I mentioned that “my name is Dale Hunt and I am from the Kwakiutl First Nation…” and with those words I displayed my true identity as a Kwakiutl member.

Dorey Brotchie states that, “…identity is a big thing for all the families, how they stress themselves as who they are. And when we always state who we are. Where we come from. What you have in your background. What you got in your history”. This statement reveals that Kwakwaka’wakw people need to reconnect with that identity and history with pride, courage, strength and determination. Evelyn told me a story while she went to interview people for her Ph.D dissertation and she found that,

“I went back to speak to some of the people who are now healthy, who have gone away from those dysfunctional ways. It seems like when they found their identity, when they found who they were, they began to think differently, they began to get along with people, they began to see that its not all about them, it’s about everybody. Finding your identity, reconnecting with who you are, with the ways of long ago. I truly believe, and learning to forgive is the answer of how we can go back to the way it was.”

I will use this fundamental teaching that knowing who you are as a Kwakwaka’wakw person, what you stand for and what your/our collective vision of peace is will presumably create healthier relationships, as another requirement to Kwakwaka’wakw people. And with the concept of forgiveness, which can also be an important teaching because as the bible says, to err is human to forgive divine. Through Evelyn’s story above, along with some of the other teachings from the interviews, I learned that identity and forgiveness could be excellent steps towards positive change. I think that with the right circumstances everyone and everything deserves a second chance. Although we cannot change the past, we can certainly learn from it.

In the book *Guests Never Leave Hungry: The Autobiography of James Sewid, A Kwakiutl Indian*, edited by James P. Spradley, James represented James Sewid (or as everyone knew him, Jimmy) spoke about what it was like to be a good Kwakiutl Indian. To be a good Kwakiutl, I learned that I should respect the land and kinship ties, obey my Elders, give away my money (Potlatch), but also that an important function of every human culture is to structure interpersonal relationships so that interactions between members of the society become predictable as a result of the shared definitions of cultural roles. When I read this statement, it spoke about the elements of identity I am trying to express here. Concepts such as family and community form the greatest understanding of Kwakwaka'wakw identity. The understanding that we are all profoundly interconnected and interdependent in some way; that our well being depends on the entire Nation; that the quality and mutuality of our relationships is what matters most because we are all in this together. That's what family and community means to me. Therefore, the previous statement from a well-respected Kwakwaka’wakw Chief, also the father of Alvin Sewid (one of my interviewees), who always worked hard towards the betterment of his people through maintaining relationships within his family, community as well as with the outside culture means a great deal to me. From listening to stories from my father-in-law, it sounded as if Jimmy was a great man to have around because he always held and passed on positive values and beliefs to his children. Alvin was also in a video production on ATPN and during the interview he reminisced about teachings he learned from his father (Jimmy) when he was a little boy. His remark goes as such, “He [his father, Jimmy] didn’t look at a man as someone greater or less than he was. He looked at

---

them as equals, in both societies. I guess that’s what made him what he was.” My interpretation of the story speaks to the importance of Indigenous people to see any man or woman, from any background, not as above or below them, but as equal. I think humbleness is a good-natured characteristic to possess, and this statement highly emphasizes on the concept of humbleness to me. When we allow our leaders to weave a story for us that creates some hope and courage in our lives, peace, balance and harmony can be our spiritual birthright. We will also remember that like any large-scale change, it happens one person at a time.

All in all, having a good understanding of what it means to be a member of Kwakwaka’wakw Nation is one little step that can bring us closer to a collective vision of peace. We are a culture inherently meant to live together in complete interdependence with each other and nature, and personally, that is what a community means to me. Of course, peace cannot be maintained at all times, but at least there can be an overall awareness of what peace means and how we can achieve it through our collective Kwakwaka’wakw identity. That is our fate and destiny as Kwakwaka’wakw people, to have the ability to coexist in this world with minimal conflicts and/or disputes as well as the capacity to manage and resolve our own issues whenever they do arise. In this way, I envision that road towards self-determination relatively conflict free with our communities at ease.

Collectiveness

The term “collectiveness” came from a list of words drawn from the interview process. The Elders’ repetitive use of words such as get together, acknowledge each other, gather, generosity, helping each other and unity that led me to believe that there is a certain collective identity for Kwakwaka’wakw people. So how can Kwakwaka’wakw people actually accomplish collectiveness as a people? What struck me the most about this question was that Kwakwaka’wakw people need the capacity to work with one another rather than against one another because that’s what collectiveness is all about.

All the one family against another, inter-family feuds and bands separating works against the whole concept of collectiveness. However, stories about cooperation from each of the Elders highlighted concepts such as helping each other, working together for a common goal, family and community, giving, sharing and generosity. One story from Julia Nelson encompasses all the stories and messages about collectiveness:

“Everything was done in a community effort. People worked together for everything. When they went to gather food, they would take care of their community members. Just gathering wood, or going out to tow wood and bring it and then cut and chop it and pack it up. You would see people going down to help them pack it up. You know they help each other. That was how they kept the peace and harmony. Everything was a community effort. They were always doing things together. It was something that was promoted among our people too, to always acknowledge each other, always acknowledge, especially your relatives. Know who your people were. It was something that was mandatory. And then Nina-ka-kala can be achieved—it means you just don’t worry about what’s going on. You just have assurance that everything is going to be Okay.”

Atleo uses an interesting metaphor about family and community that I would like to mix in because it displays unity, cohesiveness and togetherness, which is all part of the collective identity of Kwakwaka’wakw people. He states that:

“Metaphorically, each Nuu-chah-nulth home can be seen as a bunch of berries on a single branch. Each one could have been differentiated in size, shape, color and condition of growth from every other grape or berry, but they all belonged to the same branch. By

extending this analogy from a home to a community, the branches can be seen as a bunch
of different branches put together to make a bush where “each bush, moreover, might
have shared a common ancestral seed that stretched back to the time of creation”\textsuperscript{111}.

I really appreciated this metaphor from Dr. Atleo because this is the way I feel
about my own family and extended family. I hold them very close to me. Two very
important aspects of collectiveness are family and community because there is an entire
web of families and communities that make up the Kwakwaka’wakw Nation. Maintaining healthy families and communities’ does not happen naturally, but they
require continuous cooperation and teamwork because I stand by the analogy of Together
Everyone Achieves More. Paul Willie states that, “It’s certainly traditionally, the whole
community, the way our culture is based on group versus individualism. So that’s where
harmony was made. So a lot of times we have to look at the greater good of the all, and
the bigger picture versus the individualism. So that’s how we promoted, and shared”\textsuperscript{112}. Throughout the interview process the Elders have been emphasizing that it is up to the
current generations of Kwakwaka’wakw people to listen to the words of these Elders, not
as a prophesy but as a contemporary teaching. The time is now to start teaching the
young about how the people once coexisted\textsuperscript{113}. I realize that conflict is inevitable, but I
see this as a cause and effect situation where if the current Chiefs, leaders and Elders
believe and value the Kwakwaka’wakw traditional system, the youth will have those
tools and knowledge passed onto them, and as a result, the little gaps in oral history
would be filled. Therefore, the youth as a part of the entire community can see how
family and community conflicts are resolved, and in return have the potential to start
learning and practicing them as well.

Vancouver. Pg. 29.
Sarah Sampare shared two very important concepts that speak to the teaching of the young. They are “dadu-kwal-giwala”, which means to foresee the future, to be prepared, and “tliksala”, which means to counsel or direct. It appears that the concept of “dadu-kwal-giwala” is what the Elders “tliksala”.

“Tliksala-counsel, from your family, from your parents. Tliksala, listen to them when your parents or grandparents counsel you, to direct you. When you are young, you don’t know everything. You grow. It is very important for parents and grandparents to tliksala. They are preparing you, they are like sharing with you what dadu-kwal-giwala is, to be ready, to be prepared for it. To foresee, this time the consequences, the consequences of what we do. Everything has a consequence, it could be good or it could be bad.”

I was excited when I heard Sarah mentioning these two concepts because they represent and confirm the lecturing/teaching as a TDRM as well as provide for a philosophy behind lecturing or counseling in the Kwakwaka’wakw society. It is because the Elders’ experience and a lifetime with conflicts and issues that they are trying to forecast their experiences onto the next generation so that they can be prepared if anything ever happens. It is also evident to me that it is very important to start to Tliksala the Kwakwaka’wakw youth about loving, caring, respecting and honoring the culture as it will provide a good foundation towards building a better future for the people. I truly believe that if youth learn to listen to the Elders and leaders, who share positive teachings and live healthy lifestyles, families and communities will have the capacity to maintain better relationships in their lives. As Alvin Sewid told me, “culture is important because we can all learn from the methods of the past. Our ways worked for us in the past and they should work now.” Through each of the interviews it was fascinating to hear them talk about how conflict was resolved traditionally because there are so many

---

115 Interview with Alvin Sewid. October 12, 2004. Qualicum Beach, BC.
elements to consider when dealing with cultural conflicts. There are many dispute resolution processes to use, however I am striving for something based on traditional Kwakwaka’wakw worldviews.

The questions I posed at the beginning of this chapter were around how conflict resolved traditionally. More specifically, I wanted to know about how our people build relationships, peace, balance and harmony as well as Kwakwala concepts to support the answers of those I interviewed. Overall, the material I was able to obtain was both useful and informative to myself and it will be informative to anyone who is interested in looking for information or options when dealing with family and community conflicts. The Elders I interviewed knew exactly what I was looking for and they all contributed to this research in a gratifying and rewarding way. They told me a range of ways in which conflicts were dealt with in our traditional Kwakwaka’wakw ways. Out of the 10 Elders, three of the individuals were hereditary Chiefs of their tribe and one was the Chief’s wife who moved to her husband’s tribe. The others were considered respected Elders of their tribe. It was fascinating to find out that each of the Elders held such an important and similar knowledge about our people’s traditions. Their answers were so interrelated that I had a hard to time analyzing the interviews. In the end, I hope that I have used their words with the respect and honor that they deserve because I truly respect each and every one of these Chiefs, leaders, and Elders.

This has been an educational experience for me and for most of the Elders that I worked with. All of them were honored to share their knowledge and wisdom with me. I wouldn’t know where to begin to explain the enormous teaching experience I have had during this process. In doing the research I realized that most of the Elders in the
Kwakwaka’wakw Nation know how our people resolved family and community conflicts traditionally. Most people also knew how our people promoted peace, balance and harmony through cultural means.
Conclusions and Recommendations

This project allowed me the opportunity to explore some of the impacts of colonization on Kwakwaka’wakw people and their communities and to interview Elders from this Nation to learn more about conflict resolution from a traditional perspective. At the beginning of this thesis I asked a question about how Kwakwaka’wakw people can begin to restore and maintain peace, balance and harmony in their respective communities. Through a collective knowledge base, which includes a literature review and my experiential knowledge of the Kwakwaka’wakw culture, I found that there were Six Traditional Dispute Resolution Approaches based on Kwakwaka’wakw teachings, which I have identified as: Lecturing/Teaching, Storytelling, Humor, Shaming, Digitah and the Potlatch. Each of these approaches were confirmed and validated by the Elders throughout the interview process as approaches for maintaining and restoring relationships, peace, balance and harmony. However, many of these approaches have changed or have been obscured due to the effects of colonization. As a result, some Kwakwaka’wakw people have lost the connection with our culture, traditions and spirituality, along with our ability to work together in mutually beneficial ways, causing a huge break down in the cooperative relationships both within and between the families and communities. In Canada, within the past decade there has been a huge initiative on behalf of Indigenous people to healing the past and working together as a people, but there is still valuable work to be done and will continue to be a complicated and complex battle because of the overall anger and resentment that still exists on our Indigenous communities from colonization. Generally, it is surprising that almost all of Indigenous research involves some sort of revival of culture and this particular research comes from
However, I believe that this research barely scratches the surface of Kwakwaka’wakw approaches of dispute resolution. I am sure that there are plenty more approaches, sets of approaches, and processes, that can assist with conflicts and their resolution in our culture.

By learning “alternative” approaches of building relationships based on Kwakwaka’wakw teachings, individuals, families and communities can reconnect with the traditional ways that their ancestors had passed down from many generations. Once the people can (in some cases re-) learn what it was like to honor the Kwakwaka’wakw worldview and apply the positive elements to today’s society, feuds between and within families, conflicts of interest, drug and alcohol abuse, and related problems will hopefully diminish. One way for us is to learn about it is through the Kwakwaka’wakw oral tradition and another would be through research thesis such as this one. I have heard about three Kwakwaka’wakw people who have been working towards a Masters degree and have been researching on issues related to Kwakwaka’wakw people and it makes me proud and happy to be from a Nation where we are all looking out for one another and are working towards to betterment of our fellow people. Generations of Kwakwaka’wakw people have continued and maintained passing on knowledge and information orally through the use of stories, lecturing/teachings, legends/myths, singing and dancing. This is my legacy as a proud Kwakwaka’wakw member, to reclaim that knowledge in a powerful way and apply it to today’s society through research.

I developed a research design that respected both the Kwakwaka’wakw worldview and the University of Victoria’s ethical standard, which was called an Indigenous based methodology, and also used Indigenous systems of data collection.
method, and data analysis. The most important elements within this thesis and research design are respect, relationship, representation, remembering, and responsibility. I truly believe that respecting the words and needs of the Elders interviewed, through developing a mutual and honorable relationship (based on respect); representing and remembering their words with truth and honor, as well as taking the responsibility to follow proper protocols while performing the research, can assist in completing interviews in an effective and constructive way. My methodology was an Indigenous based methodology that focused on aspects of relationships and respect; also, I chose to do interviews as my form of primary data collection because knowledge and wisdom is passed on through oral history in Kwakwaka’wakw culture. I analyzed the data by finding common themes that emerged, deciphering out any “internal sparks” (whether they were negative or positive) that resonated from within myself. In this way, I was able to explore dispute resolution from a truly Indigenous place to find out that Kwakwaka’wakw people really do have effective approaches of maintaining peace as well as little steps that can affect big change within their culture. The questions I asked the Elders in open-ended interviews allowed them the opportunity to express their stories about their past and their experiences with dispute resolution. I developed a relationship with them in a professional and respectful manner through informal visits and continuously reminding them about my appreciation, as well as their completely voluntary participation in this project.

Meeting the ethical standards mentioned earlier about respect, relationship, responsibility, representation and remembering was not that hard to accomplish. My responsibility to the Elders was to approach them in a nurturing and sensitive manner
because they are providing me with a foundation of information. Accordingly, the interviews proceeded with a certain grace and natural fluidity, which was revealed as they shared knowledge and wisdom with me without barriers or fears, which proved that each of the participants were comfortable and at ease with my approach and interest in this research. I was able to recall initial reactions as well when there were certain emphatic responses from the Elders, which gave the stories a bit more background and context on each of the interviewees so the reader can get to know them a bit better as well. In the end, I feel that my relationship with the Elders is now stronger than it was before and there is a mutual respect that has grown as a result of this journey.

The primary Kwakwaka'wakw teaching is mayaxala, “to respect each other”. If Kwakwaka’wakw people truly understand what respect entails, the practices, behaviors, communication skills, attitudes, values and beliefs will all come from the same place, a place of genuine reverence. The Elders shared with me that through caring for one another, helping each other, coexisting and cooperating are all little steps that can build relationships in Kwakwaka’wakw families and communities. Also, knowing who you are and where you come from is another step that can help in reconnecting with the people because identity is a powerful concept when we understand that it helps to build the family and community connections and because let’s face it, we as Kwakwaka’wakw are all related. Speaking of family and community, a common practice of Kwakwaka’wakw people is collectivity or togetherness. The first step is always the hardest, but if it is a small step and it’s done together, the togetherness will become a bit easier. Our people need to be able to work with one another rather than against one another because everyone has a place in this culture. No one needs to be above or below
anyone else because true cultures exist as one. It is more about “the power of love rather than
the love of power”, “the speaking from the heart rather than speaking from the
mind” and the negotiation rather than negation that will help to achieve unity, respect,
honor, trust, and integrity as Kwakwaka’wakw people.

It became evident to me that the stories and teachings the Elders have provided
and are now passing onto the next generation through the oral tradition and as a
Kwakwaka’wakw form of documentation. As we can see, the six TDRA’s in Chapter 2
are still alive and functioning in our communities today and it is inevitable that there will
be many changes because a lot has happened in the past century, but it’s how we deal
with that change, which I believe is the key to our problems. Throughout the interview
process, it was evident that the words of the Elders came in many forms, such as stories,
teachings, statements, knowledge and wisdom. Their use of stories provided an amazing
background to each of the participants and allowed me to get to know them a little better
than I already did. In addition to this, the teachings they shared were revealed in a
lecturing/teaching form. For example, “do this”, “don’t do this”, “you have to”, “it is
important to”, “know who you are and where you come from”, “know your relatives”,
“get together and work it out”, “in the old days”, etc. Through these phrases there were
teachings that followed that pertained to promoting and maintaining relationships, peace,
balance and harmony in Kwakwaka’wakw communities. Throughout the interview
process, I really appreciated the humor that each of the Elders displayed because it made
for an interesting dialogue between the two (or in one case, three) of us. We were able to
talk and laugh at the same time, which made for a fun and rewarding bonding time with
each of the Elders. Also, the use of humor inside the Potlatch offers the balance of a humorous and positive environment with such a serious and strict ceremony.

When it comes to the Potlatch and dispute resolution there were many elements that I could look towards but overall the Potlatch provides Kwakwaka'wakw people with a centralized form of governance. All the major transactions occur within the confines of the bighouse, including the resolution of family and community conflicts. We can’t always go to the bighouse or throw a Potlatch because they are just too expensive\textsuperscript{116}. However, we can take away the positive elements that the Potlatch provides, such as rituals, cleansing ceremonies, feasting, singing, and dancing. The point is we can take all these elements and incorporate them in some other way where it can be inexpensive and beneficial. For instance, McGuigan & Associates came out with \textit{The River Project Report}, which analyzes the conflict between the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and First Nations communities along the Fraser River (otherwise known as the Sto:lo Nation). One of the ways McGuigan & Associates got the two groups together was over food. Feasting is a great way for anyone in conflict to share in fellowship and mutual interactions in an informal setting\textsuperscript{117}. People in conflict can relate to one another over food and if the menu is traditional foods, people are definitely even happier.'

Through the Potlatch and in the past through our everyday life, people were consistently giving and sharing, working together and helping each other no matter what the situation. It is a community value to help out when someone needs help, to share when you have something to share, and to work together rather than working against the

\textsuperscript{116} Mabel Knox gave an approximate amount of how much a Potlatch would cost. She said it costs approximately two hundred thousand dollars to throw a good one today.

people. By incorporating these little steps into everyday life, change will surely occur because it shows respect and humbleness when the older generation displays to the younger generation what it’s like to live in an equality-based Kwakwaka’wakw culture.

This is our legacy as Kwakwaka’wakw people, to work together for the common good of all the membership. The membership has a customary privilege to know that their Chiefs, leaders and Elders help to promote respectable individuals, families and communities so that change will be positive and reassuring rather than dishonoring and unsettling. I believe that it is up to the current leadership to make the right decisions for good of all the people because their work (or lack of) will reflect the entire community in the end and that example will be there for the youth to witness, absorb and later experience. Therefore, I recommend that there be more research done on leadership because I have very little cultured knowledge of what true leadership entails from a Kwakwaka’wakw perspective.

The results of this research were a part of what I was looking for throughout this journey, but I could have gone far deeper and found out more about dispute resolution from a Kwakwaka’wakw perspective. Concepts of justice, leadership, treaty and health are among the many facets of Indigenous life here in British Columbia that are still waiting to be discovered. Conflict is inevitable, but if Kwakwaka’wakw people are to survive in this world, we need to learn how to deal with the conflicts both within our Nation and without. Cross cultural research is the next step up because I’m sure that there are many ways that Kwakwaka’wakw people maintained relationships with outside members that can be useful in bridging cultures. For now, we can utilize the approaches I
have developed here as a starting off point for learning much more about conflict and the many different ways we can effectively deal with it.

This reminds me of some words of wisdom that Julia shared with me at the end of our interview. She emphasized that,

"We have a really rich heritage. We have inherited something that is special that has been passed on to us from generation to generation. And I’ve said this when I get up to speak in gatherings, usually they are memorials or church services, for people to realize how important we are as human beings, that each one of us is created special and we are very unique, especially us as Native people. We were predicted to have become extinct by the turn of the century. We were supposed to have become extinct. But here we are, we’re still here, we’re still very strong and we’re still going, and we’ll keep going. No matter how many times we get knocked down, we get up and keep going. We have that ability to do that. You know if anything ever happens, any catastrophe hits this planet, we’re going to be able to survive because we’re survivors, we’re tough and we’re able to keep going no matter what comes our way. We’re very unique and very precious people’s.

I really appreciated this statement and felt the need to share this at the end of this thesis because it provides the positive reinforcement and empowerment that is needed to learn about culture and traditions from a Kwakwaka’wakw perspective. My hope for this research is that it spreads like wild fire through Kwakwaka’wakw communities because there are a great deal of teachings and lessons to be learned from the information gathered throughout this research process. I am committed to backing up this research and hopefully pursuing a broader search for more elements of Kwakwaka’wakw Dispute Resolution. There is an infinite amount of information to be drawn from this culture and I recommend to Kwakwaka’wakw people to find out as much as possible because much of it may be gone someday and we will have very little people resources to talk with. It’s all there for us to discover, and then to apply in our lives today, to avoid and resolve strife.
Bibliography


92


**Interviews**

Alvin Sewid, Mamalillikulla Qwe-Qwa-Sot-Enox Band. October 2004.


George Hunt Sr., Kwakiutl Band. September 2004

Julia Nelson, Kwakiutl Band. September 2004

Mabel Knox, Kwakiutl Band, September 2004


Appendix A
Proposed Interview Questions

1. What is your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. What is your age?
4. Where were you raised?
5. Where did you learn about culture and tradition?
6. To your knowledge, have you noticed any changes that you’ve known about/observed or heard about in dispute resolution or cases of wrongdoing?
7. To your knowledge, can you describe any examples where conflicts were resolved in a positive way?
8. Through teaching or lecturing?
9. Shaming?
10. Storytelling, Legends or Myths?
11. Digitah?
12. The Potlatch?
Appendix B
Consent Form and Terms of Reference

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled “We are all Different, Still Living Under the Same Culture: A Kwakwaka’wakw Perspective on Relationship Building and Dispute Resolution” because of your knowledge of the history and traditions of the Kwakwaka’wakw/Laich-kwil-Tach Nations. My name is Dale Hunt and I am a member of the Kwakiutl Indian Band as well as a Graduate student in the Dispute Resolution program (HSD) at the University of Victoria. If the Elders have any questions or concerns, I can be reached at home everyday @ (250) 754-1545. I can also be contacted by email at dlhunt17@hotmail.com or dhunt@uvic.ca. If I am unavailable or you would like to speak to my supervisor Dr. Leslie Brown, a faculty member in the UVic Department of Human and Social Development, she can be reached at (250)-721-6275 or email her at lbrown@uvic.ca. As a Graduate student, I am required to conduct this research as part of the requirements for a Masters of Arts degree in Dispute Resolution. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Leslie Brown. You may contact my supervisor at (250)-721-6275.

The purpose of this research project is to identify traditional approaches of determining dispute/conflict resolution and examining how these approaches could be incorporated into today’s Kwakwaka’wakw community. I am also going to examine the impact that colonization has had on our communities as well steps that are needed to grieve the losses to which Indigenous people have been subjected.

Research of this type is important because currently most of materials available on traditional approaches of dispute resolution are too few and far between and needs to be done by Indigenous people for their own purposes. Therefore, you are being asked to participate in this research because I chose to determine the traditional dispute/conflict resolution approaches used within the community and since the traditional Kwakwaka’wakw way of life was based on the hereditary system. The Chiefs, Elders or Ninogads would gather at the Awakwis (a place where people would share or spread news and tell their stories). One analogy of Awakwis is a newspaper, it shared information and knowledge about the world around them to make people more aware of the events and decisions that were made within the community. This is why I chose to interview the hereditary Chiefs.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will involve meeting with myself in your home, your Band office or somewhere that you feel comfortable on two different occasions, perhaps for as much as two hours or more. Therefore I will remind you on each occasion that your participation is voluntary and that you can withdraw at any time without any question. The first occasion will be an informal visit with you to set the respectful, reciprocal tone of our relationship and then the actual interview will last for approximately one to two hours, and the second occasion is to meet again to review my interpretations for clarity on our meeting and to give you an opportunity to ask any questions.
Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the loss of a couple of hours of your time. I realize that many Elders have very busy lives and would appreciate any time that you could give.

The only known or anticipated risk to you by participating in this research is that discussing the issue of dispute resolution may be upsetting for some people because you have to talk about conflicts in order to bring out the resolution. But, as a way of reducing these risks, you can decline to answer any question, and you can end your participation at any time. If you do become troubled, I will try to help you deal with these feelings and, if requested, I will help you find a counselor in the local area.

Your participation in this research will be used to form a tool for the Kwakwaka'wakw Nations Bands when they are looking at conflict in their community. This research will also provide information on how the current dispute resolution approaches affect our communities today.

Being a member of the Kwakiutl Band and a student at the University of Victoria, I am required to balance two completely worldviews. First of all, I would like to say that in indigenous research, if I separate myself as a researcher from any other roles I have within the community, would be very unethical because I would be dishonoring and disrespecking my history and heritage to please a different worldview. However, knowing each of the interviewees since I was a baby will not put pressure upon any of the participants because they have their own voice and can say "no" at anytime at their own will. Plus, I have included a statement in the consent form that deals with their voluntary participation in this study. I will establish their voice right from the start and will continually remind each of the participants that there is no pressure to participate or will be no changes in our relationship before, during and after the interview is complete. Additionally, since I am trying to determine "traditional" dispute/conflict resolution, the traditional Kwakwaka'wakw way of life was based on the hereditary system and it was the hereditary Chiefs (which I am interviewing) that decided what was best for the community at large. I do not wish to exclude anyone from this study, but for the purposes of heredity, I will only interview those already mentioned. If the chosen people refuse, I will ask them, as the hereditary Chiefs, for a recommendation on whom I should interview. I do not wish my study to be overwhelmed with information and for organizational purposes, I have chosen to focus and honor the hereditary system in my community.

It appears that because of my long-term involvement in the community I anticipate that the people I have listed will consent to participate. If these people do not choose to participate in this study, the research will not change because I will ask the same set of questions, but with different people within the community. As each family has a different understanding of the way conflicts were resolved within the community, the fundamental elements (or teachings) such as respect, peace, balance and harmony will be similar. Therefore, the context will be different, but the teachings and the meaning behind those teachings will be the same.
I will be interviewing each of the participants using an audiotape. The audiotape will be for transcription purposes as it is easier to transcribe using a Dictaphone than a video recording. Your responses in the discussion and interview will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be revealed, unless you request. In the case that you do not want your name revealed, I will provide a pseudonym. Individual responses will not be shared without consent.

It will be difficult to completely protect your anonymity. If you choose to participate, others in the community may know that you are part of the study. Also, since I will be gathering information from just four Elders in your community, other persons may recognize from whom I got the information in my thesis. I will not be reporting any information damaging to you or anyone else, but you need to be aware that the information you provide will be included in a document that will be available to the public. If you wish, I will provide you with a written copy of what I have written about you in that document, for your approval. But if the problem of anonymity and the use of the information you will give me is especially troubling, you may prefer not to participate.

As part of my Masters of Arts in Dispute Resolution I am required to do an Oral Defence of this research study. Other planned uses of this data may include publishing portions or results of this research and I may also present portions or results from this research. I may display portions of my research or the results of this study on the Internet.

Data from this study will be kept in my possession solely for purposes of my research and I will continue to protect your anonymity and confidentiality by storing this information in my locked safe until the study is finished. Once the study is finished, I will burn the transcription and return the interview tapes to you. A final copy of my thesis will be available at the University of Victoria.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in conferences or through publications.

In addition to being able to contact me and my supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250)-472-4632.

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 researcher.

Name of Participant ____________________ Signature ____________________ Date ____________
A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researchers.