Súwh-tš’éghèdúdinh: the Tsínlhqút’in Nímính Spiritual Path

by

Linda Ruth Smith
B.A., University of Victoria, 2004

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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MASTER OF ARTS

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Abstract

As Tsínlhqút’in one’s connectedness comes through the ancient stories, influencing one’s interactions with others in the community, respect for ancestors, and sustainable interaction with environment. The most powerful of these stories is the “the Bear Who Married a Woman” and the concept of nimính is central to its theme. Told by one Tsínlhqút’in elder, the story is full of the richness of ancient words, terms from the bear’s language, and vivid illustrations of ancient ways. This period, set out originally by mammals and fish to ensure that people continue to prosper and maintain respect for all life forms, is preserved in the term súwh-tséghèdúdính. This documentation sets out to partially shed light on the Tsínlhqút’in concept of an energy called nimính which manifests within individuals at the onset of a life transition (namely at birth, puberty, and death) lingering for varying durations from one week to an entire lifetime, and influencing subsistence items, places, and vegetation. Maintaining balance amidst a web of other lifeforms is an ancient lifeway which now seems a complex undertaking.
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First and foremost I wish to acknowledge the ancestors who have given us much to be grateful for. There are many other people who have assisted me on this path. I am grateful to my mother, Helena Myers, who was raised by her great grandparents, and it is their knowledge which fill a major part of this document. Her great grandparents were deeply rooted in their traditional ways of life, and in the short time she lived with them as a child, she absorbed their many gifts of wisdom. Although she humbly tells us that she knows nothing, she is one of the few left who has experienced the ancestral traditions in the way it was practiced in generations past. I am indebted to Chief Ivor Myers, who has shared freely of his collection of audio recordings, especially those of the late Charlie Quilt, a Tsínłhqú’t’ín elder and a gifted storyteller. It is Quilt’s stories which have inspired me to study narratives.

With deep gratitude to those who have supported me: my husband and three sons, Carson, James, Jeremy, and Jeffan and my sister Elsie who has come to my assistance to care for my children during my studies. To Dr. Nancy Turner whose passion and energy I could never match, which has sustained me through the dark times. I thank my thesis committee who have all been insightful, positive, and encouraging. I am much indebted to Dr. Leslie Saxon for her friendship, guidance, and editorial assistance; to Dr. Lorna Williams for keeping me faithful to my traditions; and to Dr. Suzanne Urbanczyk who has always been enthusiastic and full of inspiration. Financial benefits for this research came from the Yunešít’in Government Council and additional monetary dividends came through the help of Dr. Leslie Saxon.
Dedication

My mother has had a powerful hand in my cultural education, and this study is based on her personal experiences and her knowledge. I am deeply grateful for her strength, her faith, her respect, her gentleness, and her unconditional love. She is truly the most spiritual person I know.
PART ONE: THE RESEARCH SETTING
CHAPTER 1

PRESERVING TSİNLHQÚT’ÍN KNOWLEDGE

My own experiences have shaped my views and assessment in respect to this study. Taking part in the annual camps of the seasonal round has given me a deep appreciation for nature and has instilled in me a great respect for the ancestors, the land, the vegetation, the wildlife, and the streams. I recently made a trip on horseback to the mountains near my mother’s birthplace, and I immediately understood why her mother loved the mountains so much. In her old age, she went through intense grief when she could no longer travel on horseback to go to the mountains. The landscapes literally become an intimate part of us and going out on the land is a source of delight, like greeting distant family members or seeing old friends. On film, a man from Nunavut described a visit to his homeland as being, “…like coming home after forty years in the desert” and said, “I love the memory of this river…I see the rocks along the shore. I spent the best part of my childhood on this river…”(Kreelak and Gjer 1999).

I grew up in a large family, taught by parents who were steeped in the traditional ways of our people. Fortunately, my parents were both monolingual speakers of Tsınlhqút’in, so I was richly blessed with a cultural immersion in the language. Tsınlhqút’in is my first language. I have voluntarily collected Tsınlhqút’in oral history, plant use, genealogical data, technological data, and photographs of the people. I see my present course of study as the perfect fusion of my longstanding love of cultural ways of knowing. I feel almost a
sense of panic when I realize how little research has been done; the enormity of what needs to be done, and in so little time.

1.1 Methodology

For this thesis, I interviewed one Tsinhqüt’in elder, my mother Helena Myers (hereafter Ínkél ‘mom; mother’), who is a veritable walking library of Tsinhqüt’in culture and still there are hundreds of more hours of her knowledge that should be recorded. She is 91 and in failing health, nearly blind and very deaf, but with a remarkable memory for her age. Her knowledge base has obviously been significantly enriched as a result of being raised traditionally by her great-grandparents. Her knowledge goes back to the early 19th century. She was born into a large family, married into another community, and attended numerous social gatherings throughout her life. Her mental capacity is incredible and she had the advantage of mentally preserving everything she heard during her lifetime. She, being the oldest living Tsinhqüt’in is a walking library holding accumulated Tsinhqüt’in knowledge.

Ínkél speaks only her ancestral language, a language handed down from the voices of her parents, great-grandparents, …. In soft gentle tones, choosing her words carefully, she hints, warns, and sways us through stories, allowing us to make our own choices. Her strength as teacher comes from her love and respect.1 The fact that she is a monolingual Tsinhqüt’in speaker sets her apart in that she has remained relatively uninfluenced by

1 This is an excerpt from my paper, Memories Frozen onto the Landscapes, Writing 336, University of Victoria, 19 November 2002.
technology and most of the other modern intrusions of mass culture. She thus has a "pureness' of knowledge.

Ìnkél and I have a very respectful mother-daughter bond as well as a co-researcher relationship. I learned about the concept of nímính from her and I had recorded her on the topic previous to coming to University of Victoria. When it came time to begin this research, she was the only Tsínlhqút’in I knew who had a wealth of knowledge on the topic of nímính. Knowledge on nímính is minimal among the younger generations of Tsínlhqút’in, and this narrowed down my choice of participants to Tsínlhqút’in elders, and Ìnkél being one of the eldest and the most knowledgeable and revered elder of the Tsínlhqút’in nation made her an ideal participant. She is a creative artist and dedicated teacher of Tsínlhqút’in traditions. In fact, she has given me more data than is required for this thesis.

I, on the other hand, have been disadvantaged, growing up in this time period, because I was not raised traditionally in the sense Ìnkél was, with exposure to rituals, story-telling, oral teachings, and other personal cultural experiences as a part of my daily life; so out of necessity, I rely on second-hand knowledge – Ìnkél's experiences. I am versed in both English and Tsínlhqút’in, with a dedication and meticulousness about keeping a written record of Tsínlhqút’in traditions. In comparison to my elders’ resourcefulness and mental capabilities, my modern education has left me mentally incapacitated in the sense that I lack the ability to recall information. It is difficult for me to mentally accumulate, retain,
and summon up oral teachings effortlessly, so unfortunately, I rely on recordings and hand-written notes.

This qualitative study is based on two recorded interviews; one taped previously in 1987 on a range of topics; a more recent audio cassette in 2006 entitled Ts’ènimính. For the reason that Ìnkél neither reads nor writes, the format of the interview were oral questions and answers which were audio-recorded. Both interviews on nimính were arranged in her home, and these recordings were transcribed and translated. Ìnkél and I benefited from obvious research advantages unshared by non-Tsínlhqút’in researchers; namely my awareness and understanding of the culture, protocols, and values, all of which facilitated respectful relationships between the group of study, Ìnkél, and myself. My doing this work in my community together with my fluency in the language allowed me the freedom to report, consult, and discuss my work at any time. Tsínlhqút’in elders in general are more comfortable being interviewed by members of their own family, as outsiders are not usually well-known, thus are seen as potential threats within the community. There is a long history of mistrust of outsiders among Tsínlhqút’in, which makes it difficult for researchers from outside the community to elicit proper responses. This study is about definitions and explanations of nimính and about ancient narratives, and there will be references to others’ personal experiences of nimính in the recordings, therefore, the unstated protocol to protect the anonymity of other Tsínlhqút’in members has been respected. So in the accounts herein, the identity of individuals and terms for places have been removed.
Ancient stories, terms related to nímín, and ceremonial knowledge were all common knowledge several generations ago. It was expected that all Tsinlhqút’in, including those who are nímín, would know about nímín, how to conduct themselves, use the ceremonies, and pass this knowledge down to new generations. In Tsinlhqút’in culture, the only sacred knowledge held in secrecy are those shared in confidence to shamans by their spirit powers. All transcriptions will be shared with the Tsinlhqút’in communities and for this reason have been left in the language using the present Tsinlhqút’in orthography.

I originally proposed to focus my thesis on describing the Tsinlhqút’in concept of nímín, and I wanted to look at the historical events which shaped and enforced nímín, and document how the effects of nímín energy is dealt with in ceremonies today. My immediate question was: What linguistic features or terms are present in ancient Tsinlhqút’in stories which relate to nímín or to transitional ceremonies? This proposal expanded after I transcribed the audio-recordings. The whole range of transcriptions on the principles of nímín extended to include eight related themes: (1) ancient Tsinlhqút’in stories, (2) categories of nímín, (3) preserving one’s wellbeing and those of others by observing nímín restrictions, (4) nímín proscriptions for subsistence resources (hunting, fishing, and trapping resources and the related gear), (5) respect for wild animals (6) respect for domestic animals, (7) preventative care of plant food, and (8) nímín ceremonies. Each of these divisions is conveyed in now rarely used terms and systematically arranged according to particularized circumstances and historic events. Initially, making the final decision on the direction and content of this thesis meant
omitting large chunks of my research and I placed some of my research in the appendices. On my final revision, however, seeing how all my research on *niminh* was so interconnected, I ended up including the data from all my transcripts. I realize that to weave *niminh* to all its origins and document this huge collection in its entirety is a massive project, however this initial documentation is purely a preliminary study. Ínkél knows much on the topic, and my suspicion is that there is a great deal more to gather on the topic from other *Tsinlhqüt'ín* elders.
1.2 Tsinlhqút’in orthography

The Tsinlhqút’in have used an orthography featuring 47 consonants and six vowels since 1976 developed by Eung-Do Cook. The Tsinlhqút’in sound system does not include the letters /f/, /r/, and /v/. There are a number of back vowels and diphthongs which are not included in the vowel chart. These vowels are distinguished from regular vowels by the placement of the diacritic *// over consonants (s, w, and z) preceding vowels; the back consonants /gg/, /gh/, /q/, /qw/, and /x/ also affect vowels in the same way. There are five Tsinlhqút’in characters which do not appear on standard keyboards and these are: the glottal stop /*/, post-alveolar voiceless fricative /*̌/, labio-uvular voiced fricative /*̠/, post-alveolar voice fricative /*̓/, and the close central unrounded vowel or high front short vowel /*̳/. In this paper, I use these Tsinlhqút’in characters, but omit the glottal stop /*/ before all initial vowels and substitute an apostrophe */ between word syllables. I parenthesize the consonant /*/ found in the standard orthography and place the symbol in brackets when used as a diacritic indicating a vowel modification rather than as consonant sound. That is, I place the post-alveolar voice fricative /*̓/ in brackets (˘) to show that there is pharyngealization or a flattening effect on the vowel in the syllable but no consonant. The bracket indicates that the post-alveolar voice fricative /*̓/ is silent. In this thesis, I also marked for tone, which is not generally done among Tsinlhqút’in, and this is simply to avoid any ambiguity.
CHAPTER 2

THE PEOPLE

The following essay is based on my cultural education learned while living among Yùnèşî́t’in ‘people of the south’; ‘Stone’. The process through which I arrived at the University of Victoria has been an evolutionary journey, which began with my life on a Tsínlhqút’in² (also pronounced Tśínlhqút’in, Tśiłhqút’in, or Tsilhqút’in; and the standard spelling is Tsilhqot’in; Chilcotin) Native community in a remote area of the Interior of BC. The Tsínlhqút’in people are part of a large language family group of Dene (also known as Athapaskan, Athabascan, and Athabaskan), whose neighbours are the Ènày (Nuxalk; Bella Coola), Nînchát’î́n (Dakelhne; Carrier), Qâjû (Kwakwaka’wakw; Kwakiutl), Homalco, Klahoose, Sliammon, Èná (Secwepemc; Shuswap),³ and Èšch’éd-dènì (Stl’atl’imx; Lillooet) (First Nations of British Columbia 1994). To a wider audience, Tsínlhqút’in refer to themselves as nènqàyní ‘person\people of the earth’ (more commonly translated as First Nations, Native, Aboriginal, or Indigenous) and “nènqàyní” decoded by syllables can be translated as follows:

² Tsínlhqút’in is my mother’s pronunciation of the term and I will use this spelling throughout. It seems that the nasal has been dropped by the more recent generation of speakers. It is odd though, that she articulates the term for river as tśiňlhqóx rather than tśinlhqóx, changing the close front vowel /i/ to a diphthong.

³ The Tsín lhqút’in neighbours Ènày (Nuxalk; Bella Coola) and Èná (Secwepemc; Shuswap) are distinctly differentiated from Ènåtsél ‘little enemies’. The Ènåtsél are described as “semi-mythical people” by Robert B. Lane (1981) in the Handbook of North American Indians (402) and to my knowledge, these people were living in Tsín lhqút’in territory in the past, but no longer exist today. Edward Sapir (1936), an anthropologist, elaborated on the cognate terms for “ena” and gave the English gloss ‘enemy, foreigners’ and this makes historical sense. The Dene cultures in his list having the closest cognates to the Tsín lhqút’in term are Chipewyan ē-nà ‘enemy, Cree Indian,’ Loucheux ø-ne ‘enemy, Eskimo,’ and Navaho ø-à-ná’ (230).
There is a possible cognate for the term nènqàyní in Berard Haile (1943:65), a priest said to have a natural aptitude for learning Navajo documented “Soul Concepts of the Navaho”. He was known among the Navajo people as Yazzie ‘shorty, or “The Little Man Who Knows All”. He gives naxoká · dine’é the same translation as the Tsìnlhqút’in term nènqàyní ‘earth surface people’ (78). In reference to the spoken language, Tsìnlhqút’in indicate their language as being “nènqàyní ch’íh” ‘in the Native way’ and not “Tsìnlhqút’in ch’íh” ‘in the Tsìnlhqút’in way’. Generally, in greeting strangers, one may introduce oneself as Tsìnlhqút’in ‘person of the river,’ sometimes pronounced as Tsìnlhqút’in by some speakers. The name is interpreted in several ways:

1) tsì(n)lhqóx t’ín
‘river’ ‘person of’

2) tsìlh qóx t’ín -qóx < yèqóx
‘red ochre’ ‘gorge’ ‘person of’ ‘gorge’; ‘river’; ‘large stream’

3) tsì lh qóx t’ín
‘rock’ ‘gorge’ ‘person of’

4) tsìnlh qóx t’ín
‘axe’ ‘gorge’ ‘person of’
Tsínlhqút’in greetings or self-introductions typically include the presentation of details about one’s genealogy; names of one’s parents and grandparents including the area or name of one’s community; indicators which give a sense of the history of one’s background to the greeted. People know one another or at least know the generations which they are a part of, and youth are generally known by their parents and grandparents.⁴

In the year 2002, Roger William, Chief of Xèní Gwét’in First Nations Government forwarded to Tsínlhqút’in members the Tsilhqot’in Nation population. Roger is Ìnkél’s nephew and my first cousin. The Tsínlhqút’in nation is comprised of seven communities with a total of 4,100 people:

- Èšdilàngh ‘Alexandria’ (‘peninsula’; 150 members)
- Tl'ésqóx ‘Toosey’ (250 members)
- Tl'étinqóx ‘Anaham’ (1,500 members)
- Tshídélédél ‘Alexis Creek’ (lit. ‘red rock’; 600 members)
- Yunèšít’in ‘Stone’ (also known as Gèx Náts’énághinlt’i ‘where one clubbed a rabbit’; 350 members)
- Tágwédísdzán ‘Towdystan’ (a community in Èlhk’áchúgh ‘Ulkatcho’ (Carrier); 100 members)
- Xèní Gwét’in First Nations Government (Xèní; formerly Nemiah; 400 members)

⁴ The information on self-introductions is an excerpt from my paper, The Right to be Dene: Restoring Ancient Concepts, Linguistics 596, University of Victoria, 19 November 2004.
CHAPTER 3
THE LAND CONTAINS A WEALTH OF THE SACRED

Historical terms for the landscape give flavour to Tsínlhqút’ín history and their respect for natural landscape and wildlife. This is also supported by the work of a lawyer, Kwesi Baffoe, in his introductory comments of “Profile of the Sayisi Dene Nation of Tadoule Lake in Northern Manitoba”. He noted that “Dene have a profound respect for the land. For them, the land is alive, full of supernatural beings that formed the land and the spiritual creatures that continue to inhabit it” (2005). This is also true for Tsínlhqút’ín.

The following are names of places given to convey a sense of how Tsínlhqút’ín themselves give meaning to their culture and history via their landscapes.

*Lhín Nits’én Nánayídásh* ‘a dog who courts someone’, also known as *Lhindèsch’ósh* ‘miniature dog’, is a story narrated by Charlie Quilt, Ïnkél, and George Myers; all southern Tsínlhqút’ín elders. The historical figures in this story remain alive through story, and the main historical figures are tied to the landscapes via placenames. They sit in their final fossilized forms along the Chilcotin River, near *Tšèlyú Ts’ílhèd* ‘where smoke fled down a cliff’. It is told that in their search for beaver, they carved ditches using their feet, creating *Tšínlhqóx* ‘a river; Chilcotin River’ and they finally caught up with the beaver below *Tílín* ‘where it flows’. *Lhindèsch’ósh*, at the end of the story, planted *súni’tíny*

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5 I studied versions of *Lhín Nits’én Nánayídásh* for several years while taking courses at the University of Victoria. Rather than recreating what I already wrote, I chose to use excerpts from my coursework to include in this thesis. Part of the second paragraph above is from my paper, *Storytelling: The Power Of Voice In Lhin Nits’en Nanayidash*, Linguistics 505, University of Victoria, 21 April 2005.
‘spring beauty corms’\(^6\) \((\textit{Claytonia lanceolata})\) and \(\textit{ěsghùnsh} \) ‘yellow avalanche lily bulbs’\(^7\) \((\textit{Erythronium grandiflorum})\) along mountain slopes in the western, more mountainous part of the territory, in places like \(Èlági Šeqân\) ‘where (a field of) flowers sit (in a container or plate)’ and \(Èsgàny Ànx\) ‘chickadee’s den’. Neither placename refers to the \(súnt’îny\) ‘spring beauty corms’ which are harvested seasonally in large quantities. Before the availability of garden vegetables, wild root vegetables formed a considerable portion of \(Tsinlhqút’in\) diet.\(^8\)

\(Tí(\textit{ž})lín\) overlooks a traditional fish camp where spring salmon, sockeye, and humpback go to spawn each year. In one ancient \(Tsinlhqút’in\) story, a boy witnessed the migration

\(^6\) \(Súnt’îny\) ‘spring beauty corms; Mountain potatoes’ are harvested from mid to late May and early June depending on the weather on the south facing slopes of Nemiah, and later in the summer or fall, they are harvested in the mountains. In former times, people camped near wild potato fields to harvest wild potatoes, and played lehal and other games. When the \(súnt’îny\) are ready for harvest, it is said to be \(gwé\textit{lín}\) ‘it has matured’ (while berries are said to be \(nízhân\) ‘mature’). \(Súnt’îny\) is boiled for half an hour, and were flattened, then strung together with thread and placed on tree branches to dry. Sometimes, my maternal grandmother would dry them on a table, or leave them on a tarp out in the sun to dry. She would then add them to soup or cook them in a pit. \(Súnt’îny\) are placed in \(k’èlés\) ‘pit-cooking pits’ to steam-cook for at least three hours, and were usually placed in cooking pits in the morning and taken out in the evening. in the morning, and taken out in the evening. Layered into the pit over red-hot stones with \(súnt’îny\) are: \(èsts’ìchèn\) ‘Whitebark pine’ \((\textit{Pinus albicaulis})\) bark and boughs, \(gún\) ‘fireweed’ \((\textit{Epilobium angustifolium})\), \(úndzíny-\textit{chèn}\) ‘wild strawberry plants’ \((\textit{Fragaria Virginia})\), and this includes \(úndzíny-tùl\) ‘wild strawberry runners’. There is one unidentified plant included for the layers, and these are all sealed using bark and covered up with soil. In one version of the story, \(Ts’iqi Sès Ghàghìndá\) ‘the Woman Who Married a Bear’, roots and eggs were pit-cooked together. (Excerpts from two of my University of Victoria course papers: \(Lhindesch’osh\) Said, "Become Spring Beauty and Yellow Glacier Lily", Linguistics 403, 18 Dec. 2004; and Life in the Meadows: The Seasonal Round of the \(Tsilhqot’in\), Environmental Studies 490, 7 January 2002.)

\(^7\) The plant stem of the \(\textit{ĕsghùnsh}\) ‘yellow glacier lily’ is called \(\textit{ĕsghùnsh-łàlčéz}\), and the pod has stamens which stick out from the top of the “pod” and this is called \(bètl’eqwéz\). After the plant finishes blooming, it has \(làlchős\) which looks similar to the mature heads on dandelions. When the plant loses its stem, it is then called \(zàčhéłhíád\) which describes the appearance of the remaining leaves. \(Ěghùnsh\) is a unique term, and interestingly, its word root matches the Koyukon word \(-dzo\) ‘curled object’; ‘claw’, which is an accurate description of the plant’s bulbs. The \(Tsinlhqút’in\) verb stem of \(ts’èdèghùn\) ‘it is cut into cubes’ is similar to this word root. The \(Tsinlhqút’in\) term does not appear to be borrowed, but the name for the plant is not listed in other Dene dictionaries, except for Ul'gatcho term which seems to be a contracted form of the \(Tsinlhqút’in\). (Excerpts from my University of Victoria course papers, Life in the Meadows: The Seasonal Round of the \(Tsilhqot’in\), Environmental Studies 490, 7 January 2002; and \(Lhindesch’osh\) Said, "Become Spring Beauty and Yellow Glacier Lily", Linguistics 403, University of Victoria, 18 Dec. 2004.)

\(^8\) The last sentence on this page is from my paper, Life in the Meadows: The Seasonal Round of the \(Tsilhqot’in\). Environmental Studies 490, University of Victoria. 7 January 2002.
of salmon and said that the salmon were excited when nearing the mountain of their
destination and as they flipped out of the water, they called out, ‘Tî(z)lin guyèd’ ‘where it
flows is near’. This story comes to life with each storytelling and each fall with the return
of the salmon.

Subsistence is a theme which runs throughout this document and there are placename
expressions incorporating names of mammals, fish, and birds. Sès Ânx ‘bear’s den’ is a
placename and is also a setting for the story Sès Ts’iqi Ghàghìndá ‘the bear who married
a woman”. Names like Dèk’ànì Chùh Gùlin ‘there are rainbow trout too’ and Šèbày Tàlgóg ‘where a mountain goat walks into water’ add colour to the landscape.

The events in the forthcoming discussions, for the most part, took place in domestic
settings and the terms for homes are ancient expressions such as Etsì Beqiìxèx
‘grandfather’s fish camp.’ Qiyèx /qi-yèx/ literally means ‘foot under’ but previously it
likely meant ‘village’, and today, it means fish camp. Kwesi Baffoe, in his opening
remarks described the connections to one’s dwelling place stating among Dene saying,
“to the Dene, the camp is the centre of the universe and the climate, the topography, the
whole cosmos and its organisms are connected in some way to the territory in which they
live” (2005). Generally, Tsinlhqút’in favoured locations were along lakes and since the
people seasonally camp near lakes to fish, the term qiyèx is still in use. It is clear that the
people who named these places saw the landscapes to bestow them with vivid names as
in the following names around Eagle Lake: Nêghátálchúz ‘it spreads across (like a
blanket)’; Dàndzèn Ch’ihâts’énéhtâsh ‘where one occasionally gazes at loons’; and
Ts’ù ṭs’išét’i ‘lake at the end of a row of spruce trees’. The latter ṭs’išét’i describes spruce trees as forming a long strip right to a clearing. As a younger speaker of the language, I find it remarkable that such a term was coined with reference to a landscape and vegetation in view of the fact that I associate the term ṭs’išét’i only with ropes, strings, and wires which are strung far in a straight line by human hands.

The ancestors are continuously present today on the landscapes. They have left us ancient names, hand tools, and trails. We bring them to life in singing their songs and telling their stories. We continue to use their language and we are acquainted with their cherished places. The past and the present merge together into the future.

The distance of time away from my community and the remoteness of the meadows have allowed me to better appreciate the ways our ancestors respected and tended our homeland. In 2002, in “Memories Frozen onto the Landscapes”, I wrote about my childhood memories of fishing.

In the crisp 1975 May morning, my mother and I step onto a log raft made by my father, and push away from the bank. The blanket of water ripples as we move smoothly along. The waves behind swish-swash against the pine logs, and a trail of dimples follow behind. Further out on the lake, my mother drops rocks into the water, one by one. “Bel-limp! Bel-limp!” they respond behind me as I keep the craft moving. The fishnet whispers as it slithers into the swirling holes and slices through the deep water, forming a long mesh wall.

The sun illuminates the yellow aspen floor, while my mother takes the rainbow trout from her net. Later, I watch her against a mural of reeds and a serene lakeshore, as she ritually untangles the wet algae-covered nets on her lap. The rock-weights click and echo as she piles them on one side next to the gleaming fish. The waves slosh against the log raft and the birds sing their cheery tunes. She’s
contented only when she’s busy. She drapes the nets over a line to dry. I help her string the rainbow onto wooden poles, and we carry the slippery, dripping load to the drying rack, where she will smudge them from underneath. A smoldering fire of rotted wood and aspen preserves, flavours the fish, and deters flies. On hearing the quacking voices of mallards, she looks up briefly and comments *nat’i tedlux* ‘the ducks are laughing’. The calls of the loon, she describes as *dandzen qedelnhih* ‘the loons are yahoo-ing’. My mother personifies everything in nature: *dechen tšilghelh* ‘the trees are shaking their heads’; *belh senax ghinlh’az* ‘drowsiness has crept into my eyes’ as if sleep crawls on insect-like legs;” and she refers to rivers and mountains as *Yeda-Denilin* ‘ancient ones; ancestors’.

I cherish this childhood memory, my last visit to *Nik’ex-hum Beqiyex* ‘*Nik’ex-hum’s Fish Camp*’, a small lake 106 kilometers west of Williams Lake. I treasure the annual strands we wove onto the ancient patterns of my ancestral homeland. I understand now, how the traditions of my people are re-imbedded through memories and storytelling.

Our ancestors left a rich and diverse landscape for the future generations of living creatures and people, a time-honoured tradition that has been heedlessly ignored in present forestry and land use practices. Our meadows are no longer as I remember them.
CHAPTER 4
CHALLENGES TO THE STUDY

The Tsínlhqút’íin and their ancestors derived benefit from their diverse landscape of mountains, plateaus, valleys, and semi-arid areas. Within our territory, there is ongoing natural subsistence harvesting, ranching, tourism, forestry, and mining. The pristine wilderness where Tsínlhqút’íin imprinted their history no longer exists as such; much of the subsistence area is clearcut and overgrazed. The ancient resource sites and campgrounds are for the most part riddled with roads, tree stumps, and cattle - unrecognizable according to Tsínlhqút’íin who once lived there. Hence it will certainly not be easy for youth to visualize the stories within this present topography and environment without knowing what existed previously. The stories somehow seem to belong to another time and it is only the older generations who retain knowledge of this Tsínlhqút’íin past. It is within this context that the present research project has begun.

With adaptation to lifestyles in communities rather than on land and adjustment to changes to their landscapes, Tsínlhqút’íin traditional teachings have become more challenging to pass on to younger generations. Current lifestyles and modern institutions have displaced many of the old traditions to the point where younger Tsínlhqút’íin individuals must learn about their culture in words rather than through practices, but this can change quickly at this point in time. Knowledgeable elders are accessible and willing to pass on what they know. Native people have often criticized researchers and museum curators for “preserving” culture for the sake of preservation, but this now seems
necessary, not solely for preservation’s sake, but in order that collections may be available for future Tsínlhqút’ín generations.

Among my own people, there has been a noticeable trend where, during the transitional period after European contact, when grandparents and parents, whether they attended residential school or not, have “chosen” not to pass on their stories, language, and culture. This means there is now a generation who no longer speak their language nor practice their culture. This generation is now realizing the importance of language and culture and wish to learn their ways, but there are few places to go to learn their language, and there are no Tsínlhqút’ín cultural collections to seek out. Our elders are rapidly passing away, and the loss of each is like the burning of a library. Learning about Tsínlhqút’ín culture and language has been my life long passion; so, it is with great respect to my ancestors, and a belief that it is their wish to pass on this knowledge which has encouraged me to pursue this topic on nimính.

It has been a difficult task to gather and organize the research on nimính for a number of reasons besides its breadth and extensive terminology. This study is purely an overview of Tsínlhqút’ín terminology, and a partial one at that, and being such, is somewhat fragmented in the Tsínlhqút’ín sense because it excludes much of the existing knowledge on nimính. Perhaps one might say that the document also fails as a linguistic paper because detailed discussions of linguistic features and analyses are limited.
My modern traditional training did not give me the advantage of familiarizing myself with the topic during my youth; hence, a lot of energy went into discerning the relevancy of various closely related themes. Distancing myself from my topic has been almost impossible, so examining the research data from different points of view has been difficult. The table of contents was the most difficult to structure, since there is no instructive cultural model to follow. There were many ideas to think through as possible themes to follow, and at times it was not easy to make decisions as to which to choose. In the final stages of my research, I opted to use the cultural Tsínlhqüt’in categories which I had already organized within my transcripts. Generally, Tsínlhqüt’in references are scarce and Dene terms relating to nímính (transitional ceremonies and cultural traditions) are seldom listed in dictionaries; so further historical and comparative analyses of Tsínlhqüt’in terms was not a sensible option.

The terms for nímính and all its inclusions are culturally learned principles, hence are distinctly Tsínlhqüt’in, and the concepts are not entirely understood except by some Tsínlhqüt’in elders. As a result, some expressions evade concise Tsínlhqüt’in definitions and have no English equivalents. The demeaning term “superstition” which has been applied time and again to refer to our way of life, has given me the motivation to continue my search, allowing me the opportunity to uphold my history and to honour my ancestors. While there are cultural belief systems which are similar across cultures including the mainstream culture, perceptions have changed considerably making it so that what used to be respected with great awe in the past is now looked upon as primitive.
In fact the cultural views presented and terms used in English desecrate the Tsinlhqüt’in appreciation of niminh, so in this document I rely heavily on transcribed translations.

This thesis is somewhat structured in the traditional Tsinlhqüt’in manner except for the liberal overview of niminh and the tables. In oral tellings, for example, elders generally only tell what is necessary for immediate tasks or simply transmit what is required to answer specific questions. I have organized Ìnkél’s transcriptions, and arranged tables to provide outlines for sections. The tables may seem odd to Tsinlhqüt’in readers, for the reason that this is not done orally by elders. Boxes create rigid structures around concepts and time when there is no such thing in the mind. For the most part, I have integrated Ìnkél’s knowledge into the body of this document, and in some cases, where she explains significant terms or practices, I have given excerpts with interlinear translations. I have left many of her descriptions, critical to the discussion of niminh, within the text with English glosses. In other cases, as a way to avoid repetition, I have summarized a number of similar stories to include all Ìnkél’s contribution to the topic. By no means is this document an overall account of Native ways nor is it a complete report on the Tsinlhqüt’in understanding of niminh. This thesis is purely knowledge learned by Ìnkél and experiences she retained throughout her lifetime. In addition, I need to point out that I have very limited knowledge about niminh and about Tsinlhqüt’in stories in general. Many of the competent Tsinlhqüt’in elders who were more knowledgeable about niminh are no longer with us. There will likely be errors, misunderstandings, insufficient clarification, etc. in this thesis. I have merely expanded upon some concepts, clarified
where necessary, analysed terms, marked for tone,\(^9\) and have added supplementary insights to the discussion of \textit{nínímh}, primarily from my fluency in the \textit{Tsinlhqút’in} language and thirty years of field research among \textit{Tsinlhqút’in} elders. It is with great honour that I have been the recipient, of my generation, who has been exposed to such extensive information. My thesis tries to draw together multidisciplinary views about \textit{nínímh}; first and foremost through a \textit{Tsinlhqút’in} lens, and secondly from anthropology and linguistics. Citations from other documented texts and excerpts from my previous course papers give support to this study.

\(^9\) As a side note, in marking for tone, I had to choose one voice for consistency. \textit{Tsinlhqút’in} tone is influenced considerably in context; the high tones vary as well as the low tones. So I had to go through the transcribed sections while focusing on one voice, and I used the voice of Charlie Quilt. He was my mental guide and I chose his voice because his voice is loud and expressive. Inkel’s voice is too low and subdued to mark easily for tone. Some words with low tone become high tone in sentences following high tone words, so I could not rely on “find and replace” to speed up the process. The orthography has one vowel which I could not mark for tone and this is a high fron lax vowel, the barred \textit{i/i/}. 
CHAPTER 5

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an existing small collection of well documented translated Tsinlhqút’in stories, written in standard storytelling form from the late 1900s to 1950s. Livingston Farrand’s Traditions of the Chilcotin Indians (1900) and Robert B. Lane’s (1953) Ph. D. dissertation Cultural Relations of the Chilcotin of the West Central British Columbia contain many translated Tsinlhqút’in stories. Farrand did exceptional work in documenting a number of stories and his translations are remarkably accurate, except for his omission of character dialogues and details. Lane provides a broad overview of Tsinlhqút’in traditions from elders who were present in the 1950s.

There are Dene and Native stories about transformations and these were useful in drawing parallels between stories. I was somewhat disappointed with literary sources, mainly at the brief overviews of subsistence practices and the limited mention of the different energy-carriers and their restrictions. I searched almost frantically to find something to guide me in my study. I mention below some documented sources which were useful in the analyses of nímính.

Elders are meticulously honest and thorough in their telling of oral accounts, and this appreciation is also documented in Make Prayers to the Raven: A Koyukon View of the Northern Forest (1983) by Richard Nelson, an anthropologist who studied the Koyukon culture. Richard’s book is packed with Koyukon knowledge on respectful subsistence activities, and reverence for nature and mammals. He has numerous examples which
parallel with *Tsinlhqūt’in* traditions and much to add to the discussion of *niminh*. His book is eloquently written and is truly a valuable resource.

A *Tsinlhqūt’in* elder said that šṯàdànx ‘during an ancient time period’, all creatures were human and all spoke the nęnqàyní language. Following the transformation of the landscapes and the creation of creatures, all were made to speak different languages. This was one way to quell the conflicts which led to the disintegration of harmony during this period (Solomon n.d.). Richard noted the same events of this period:

…All things human and natural go back to a time called *Kk’adonts’idnee*, which is so remote that no one can explain or understand how long ago it really was. But however ancient this time may be, its events are recounted accurately and in great detail through a prodigious number of stories. The stories constitute an oral history of the Koyukon people and their environment, beginning in an age before the present order of existence was established. During this age “the animals were human” – that is, they had human form, they lived in a human society, and they spoke human language (16).

…After the Distant Time people and animals became completely separate and unrelated (20).

Richard translated *Kk’adonts’idnee* as literally meaning ‘in Distant Time it is said’ and the cognate expression in *Tsinlhqūt’in* is šṯàdànx ts’èdènísh which is the time period in which the *Tsinlhqūt’in* stories likely took place.

June Williams’ (1982) *Chilcotin Stories* contains transcribed *Tsinlhqūt’in* stories, including *Lhin Nîts’en Nànàyídásh* ‘the dog who courts (a woman)’ (also known as *Lhindèsch’ósh*) told by Charlie Quilt. June is *Înkél*’s niece and my first cousin, from Xèní (Nemiah). Charlie Quilt is related to me through my paternal grandmother whose maiden
name was also Quilt. Part 1 of the story features Lhindësch’osh marrying a young woman who is in puberty seclusion, and this is the first mention of one carrying niminh energy; the woman was bèghetsʾèʾin. This story (also in Farrand 1900; and Myers 1977) is likely the oldest Tsinlhqút’in story and is shared by most Dene and by other language groups in British Columbia (Wakashan, Coast Salish, and Interior Salish) as well as the Quinault, Cree, and Cherokee. Among Apache in the United States, a similar story is re-enacted in puberty ceremonies, and in the Northwest Territories, the Tlîchê (Dogrib) believe themselves to be descendants of the people in this story.

Charlie Quilt’s version of Lhin Nits’ën Nânâyidâsh is very formal and he related the story cheerfully. There is something about storytelling which brought Quilt to life. It was as if this was his life-purpose, and when I recorded him, I brought in two elders and found that he was sick in bed, yet, he told us four stories, Lhin Nits’ën Nânâyidâsh being one of them. Quilt seemed to savour his stories as he told them, and he used emphasis in multiple ways to convey Tsinlhqút’in wisdom and truth. His narration lacks some additional details found in another version by my paternal grandfather, George Myers. Throughout the story, my grandfather chose an empathetic and perceptive approach in telling the story to his listeners (young granddaughter and a Euro-Canadian woman). In his telling, he filled in background details and described cultural knowledge; teachings he had acquired, realizing these were no longer part of general Tsinlhqút’in education. Ênkêl’s account is uncomplicated, moderated for a contemporary audience, yet her story requires supplementary clarification for modern readers.10

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10 This page is from my paper, Storytelling: The Power Of Voice In Lhin Nits’en Nanayidash, Linguistics 505, University of Victoria, 21 April 2005.
Part 11 of *Lhin Nits’én Nänàyídâsh* in the *Tsìnlhqút’ín* version centers around its main characters setting out on a medicine journey to bring about new creatures, to modify existing giant mammals and birds, and to change landscapes. The Apache, the Navajo, and the northern Dene have documented that twins, who exhibit spiritual powers, transform giant mammals during this era when mammals preyed upon people. These narratives match the stories about Yamoria in George Blondin’s three books: *When the World Was New: Stories of the Sahtu* (1990), *Yamoria the Lawmaker: Stories of the Dene* (1997), and *Trail of the Spirit: the Mysteries of Medicine Power Revealed* (2006); as well, these books each contain a collection of stories. The twins of the Northern Dene were born with powerful medicine and were known by names translating as ‘One Who Circled the Earth’: *Yamozha* (Tłı̨chǫ; Dogrib); *Yamodezhaa* (South Slavey); *Yamoreya* (North Slavey); *Ehtachohka’e* (Gwich’in); and *Yabathey’*a (Denésoliné or Dënesułiné; Chipewyan) (Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment 1993). These individuals not only created harmony in the world between mammals and people, they also “changed the way we lived and worked with each other. [In fact, Yamoria is known as] ‘The Great Lawmaker’ and he brought a way of life to the Dene based on these laws” (Blondin 2006: 24). *Tsìnlhqút’ín* twins are born with spiritual power and have the ability to create, transform, and heal. To some extent, these abilities has been carried down to this present day.

The bear is featured in the last part of *Lhin Nits’én Nänàyídâsh* where he escapes being transformed like the other mammals. Mammals were not only made smaller but their eating preferences were changed from eating humans to surviving on small mammals and
plants. Hence the bear retains its ancient nature – that of killing human beings (Farrand 1800; Myers 1977; Williams 1982). Today, the bear is greatly respected for its ancient powers and its human-like qualities - attributes which are brought out in several other Tsinlhqút’in stories. These stories include, Sës Ts’iqí Ghàghìndá ‘the bear who married a woman’ (Farrand 1900; Myers 1977; Williams 1982), Dèyènê Sës Ghàghìndá ‘the man who lived with a bear’, and Sës Dèyènê T'ásé’íz ‘a bear whose gaze caught up with a man’. Contained in all these stories are allusions to Tsinlhqút’in culture, ancient lifestyle, technology, philosophy, customs, as well as their spiritual and natural resources, in general illustrating a worldview from which the concepts of nìmính have emerged. The conflicting powers of bears and women led naturally to the development of laws or proscriptions from this point in time for women, twins, and the treatment of the dead. These form a large part of the present Tsinlhqút’in rituals, some of which are briefly described herein. The most interesting features about bears in these stories are their intuitive and spiritual abilities, and it is clear that bears have enforced both hunting prohibitions and the respectful treatment of their relations.

Georgina Loucks’ The Girl and the Bear Facts: a Cross-Cultural Comparison bear has been crucial to the study of nìmính. Her work contains an assortment of bear stories from the Tagish and Inland Tlingit (Catharine McClellan 1970), Eastern Cree (Alanson Skinner 1911), Bella Bella, Blackfoot, Cherokee, and others. Loucks outlined general particulars from bear stories, and most valuable were ancient instructions handed down by bears, in particular, how to respect bears and their remains, as well as bear rituals and menstrual taboos.
As examples of the options I grappled with in creating an outline for my table of contents, I found in my research, two models illustrated in two books which were possible options. One in Richard K. Nelson’s (1983:23) “Make Prayers to the Raven: a Koyukon View of the Northern Forest” which is a remarkable synopsis of Koyukon traditions related to my study. He listed three categories:

Proper treatment of natural spirits involves hundreds of rules and taboos (*hutlaanee*), some applying to just one species and others having much more general effects. The rules fall into three main categories – first, treatment of living organisms; second, treatment of organisms (or parts of organisms) that are no longer alive; and third, treatment of nonliving entities or objects.

The *Tsínlhqút’in* concept of *nímính* is basically about respect for lifeforms, but the understanding of *nímính* is also about the energy of *nímính* and its effects on lifeforce. Jarich Gerlof Oosten’s (1976:65) headings in “The Theoretical Structure of the Religion of the Netsilik and Iglulik” in Chapter 5, “Ritual Injunctions”, is an example of an alternative way to organize ritual observations. He organized his work under three headings:

- Ritual injunctions relating to childbirth and menstruation
- Ritual injunctions relating to death
- Ritual injunctions relating to game

In this chapter, Jarich Gerlof Oosten summarized similar restrictions to those which are observed by *Tsínlhqút’in níminh* individuals, specifically for menstruants, mourners, and ones who have had physical contact with the dead. It is amazing how alike the Netsilik
and Iglulik traditions are to *Tsinlhqút’in* in this respect. He relied mainly on the work of K. Rasmussen, and judging from this chapter, Rasmussen was a very productive researcher and he provided valuable records on these cultures.\(^\text{11}\)

I also struggled with the translation of the *Tsinlhqút’in* term *dé’åts’èt’ìnsh* ‘causing ritual obstructions to (subsistence resources)’. It was difficult to explain a term so all-inclusive. The detailed definition of *dé’åts’èt’ìnsh* took up a whole page. So many of the terms used in the discussion of *niminh* are terms for wide-ranging occurrences. I skimmed through Jarich Gerlof Oosten’s section referred to above. In his explanation for rejecting the term taboo, Jarich noted the following definition for the term ritual injunction which he said was “introduced by van Baaren” (1973): “This particular injunction is a standardised rule, part of and based on the religious framework of a culture” (64). It was much later that I made the decision to borrow his term “ritual” and this made perfect sense for the reason that *niminh* individuals are described by Înkél as “walking rituals” - almost everything they do is a ritual.

In another book, I have found valuable knowledge regarding the traditions of the Southern Tutchone, Tagish, and Inland Tlingit in Catharine McClellan’s *My Old People Say: an Ethnographic Survey of Southern Yukon Territory* Part II (2001), particularly on comparable data on menstruants, widows, and fresh meat. Catharine McClellan, an anthropologist and former professor, devotes a chapter on “The Round of Life” in which she covers over 50 pages of knowledge on phases of life from the three cultures. Of

\(^{11}\) Jarich Gerlof Oosten’s main references for his chapter “Ritual Injunctions” are F. Boas (1888), K. Rasmussen (1929; 1931), and Th. P. van Baaren (1973).
particular interest to the study of niminh, she dealt with the topics of puberty, old age, and death for each of the cultures. She documented extensively on the culture of each nation consecutively. The total number of pages for her two-volume work comes to approximately 611 pages.

Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters’ *The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge Sources of Life* (1977) is a college textbook on North American religions, citing documents about Natives who reside from Baffin Bay to United States and to the far east. Anna L. Walters is a Pawnee and Otoe-Missouria writer who lives in Arizona. The book has an excellent section entitled *Ways of Thinking About the Sacred* in the first chapter, covering spiritual belief, interdependency, and reverence for life sources. This text contains detailed definitions of terms, for example, in Chapter 1 “Seeking Life: Definitions of Religion and the Sacred”, the term “worldview” which is useful to explain for this study is defined at length quoting Alfonso Ortiz (1973:91), a Tewa anthropologist:

>The notion “world view” denotes a distinctive vision of reality which not only interprets and orders the places and events in the experience of a people, but lends form, direction, and continuity to life as well. World View provides people with a distinctive set of values, an identity, a feeling of rootedness, of belonging to a time and a place, and a felt sense of continuity with a tradition which transcends the experience of a single lifetime, a tradition which may be said to transcend even time.

In my own lifetime, my early exposure to seasonal camps, and later as a teen, learning the stories which are situated on the land have given me the sense of traditional continuity and a deep connection to the land and to my ancestors. It is unfortunate that I did not experience the puberty ritual as have the Dene women in the north, the Apaches, and
Navajos. Of most interest to my study in Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters is Chapter 9 “Girl’s Puberty Ceremonies” which contains excerpts from many documented sources, including the traditions and the origins of menstruation.

Kwesi Baffoe’s *Profile of the Sayisi Dene Nation of Tadoule Lake in Northern Manitoba* (2005) is an important document because it lays out traditional Dene laws. Kwesi Baffoe, a former dentist, now a lawyer, cited from his personal interviews, and among others, from Joan Ryan’s *Traditional Dene Justice Project* (1983) which was documented for the *Tlíchǫ* (Dogrib) people, and from the unpublished thesis of Ron George, *The Indigenous Law of Aboriginal People: Restoring the Foundation of Justice* (2001). He also referred to various court decisions. In terms of usefulness for the study of *nínính*, his sections on Traditional Laws, Hunting Rules, Rules Governing Trapping were most valuable.

Lorna J. Marshall in *Nyae Nyae !Kung: Beliefs and Rites* (1999) documented surprisingly similar cultural data to the *Tsinlhaq'it'in* knowledge in *nínính*. She gathered information on food avoidances and said this custom was observed “for the protection of health, strength, and skills” by “boys and girls and young adults, pregnant women, women in childbirth, parents of newborn babies, hunters, and healers”. She stated the reason for noting these individuals is that they “are in their procreative years or in states of life when their functions are vital to the life of the group” (92). A !Kung hunter must not have contact with his baby, wife, and including her breast milk, and in addition, the !Kung have a plant remedy to deal with menstruant contact with hunting equipment.
The *Koyukon Athabaskan Dictionary* (2000) is unlike general English dictionaries. The main entries contain elaborate descriptions of Koyukon and Ten’a culture, and this is what is exceptional about it. The author, Jules Jetté, besides being a Jesuit priest fluent in the Koyukon language, was a linguist and ethnographer. After his arrival in Alaska in 1898, he accumulated a massive data base on Koyukon and Ten’a history, culture, and language. James Kari, a linguist who works primarily on Dene languages, edited Jetté’s work with the assistance of a Koyukon cultural and linguistic expert Eliza Jones, and they transformed the collection into a 1118 page dictionary. This is a tremendous piece of work. Eliza Jones began this project in 1973. Of the most interest to this study were cultural specifics on the menstrual restrictions and their food avoidances, and hunting violations and the subsequent aloofness of animals. As well, this is an excellent resource for historical and comparative investigations of Dene languages. This documentation consists of maps, sketches, a comprehensive dictionary beginning with Koyukon headwords, topical listings, English-to-Koyukon index, and a Koyukon word-initial index.
PART TWO: REFERENCES ABOUT NÍMÍNH IN AN ANCIENT STORY

In the beginning of all things, wisdom and knowledge were with the animals, for Tirawa, the One Above, did not speak directly to man. He sent certain animals to tell men that he showed himself through the beast, and that from them, and from the stars and the sun and moon should man learn... all things tell of Tirawa.

Eagle Chief (Letakos-Lesa), 2004
Tsìnlhqút’ín elders were exposed to many stories told by their elders who lived in the eighteenth century, therefore are well-versed in traditional Tsìnlhqút’ín culture and terminology. I worked on one Tsìnlhqút’ín narrative a few years ago, and I attempted to portray the storyteller’s voice on paper but I found this inefficient. Storytellers rearrange scenes, delete and shorten some, and others they elaborate on as they tell their stories. Storytellers use voice and expressions to effectively validate the authenticity of their stories and also to give stories meaning. In Tsìnlhqút’ín, the oral citations, "they say" or "it is said" connects listeners to ancestors and validates the story as being factual. In retelling the stories in English, these constant phrases become too repetitive and somewhat awkward, so much that such phrases may be omitted by the writers. Stories which are read at bedtime for children may generally be misunderstood as fiction. In Tsìnlhqút’ín, the authenticity of stories is never questioned in regards to ancient knowledge passed down orally.¹²

I provide an interlinear version of Sès Ts’iqí Ghàghìndá, one of the longer stories, which provides the second earliest contribution to the knowledge of nîmînh and its related prohibitions. Sès Ts’iqí Ghàghìndá is a šàdàn story and this version was told by Ênkél in 1977; recorded by her daughter (and my sister) Maria Myers and subsequently

¹² This paragraph is an excerpt from my paper, Storytelling: The Power Of Voice In Lhin Nits'en Nanayidash, Linguistics 505, University of Victoria, 21 April 2005.
transcribed by her niece (and my cousin) Maryann Solomon in 1985; and finally translated by myself for this thesis.

*Sès Ts’iqí Ghàghìndá* ‘the bear who married a woman’

   silverweed roots someone began harvesting it is said
   *It is said that someone began harvesting silverweed roots.*

2. *Xèdìnt’áh* egúh nànètish, gún ts’iqih.
   she alone there she kept going to bed that person the woman
   *The woman bedded down alone there each night.*

3. *Chìnśdàd* hèsèn ghìnlhghìl hìn’kàn chìnśdàd béd dílhtsìn.
   silverweed roots she is harvesting it became dark and then silverweed roots meal
   she prepared for herself
   *She is harvesting silverweed roots and when it became dark, she cooked roots for herself.*

4. *Chìnśdàd* béd hélhtsì egú xéná yáx k’í
   silverweed roots meal she is making then finally over there willow(s)
   ts’égwèdènághìnlhìyàh egùn qwén ts’álht’àlh dènì hínhtsàn
   one had parted (branches, there light one is moving a light the person she saw
   creating an opening)
   *While she was cooking, she looked toward an opening in the willows and she saw a person shining a light.*

5. *Gú* qwén dzànìh sú ts’álht’àlh gázt’in dènì hínhtsàn.
   there light only well one is moving a light one is doing that the person she saw
   *She saw someone, a man, shining a light.*

   and then carefully the person she looks at him
   *And she observed the man carefully.*

7. *Nínk’èd* dènì bànàghìnyà.
   in fact the person he comes upon her
   *It is actually a man who comes upon her.*

   bear only he was doing that his eyes light it becomes
   *It is only a bear; his eyes naturally light up.*
9. Dènì-t’ày nitl’ádindàh ts’èdènish, gun etizán.
a person’s back down he sat it is said then he began to eat
It is said that he sat behind her and began to eat.

10. Güyì chínśdàd ts’ètàyínlh hínk’àn chínśdàd inlí
that silverweed roots one is going to eat it and then silverweed roots one
bèts’én ts’ètíž’ án.
to him one hands it over
She hands him a bundle of roots which she had prepared for herself.

11. Èyì, “Nènlh gánt’i hèsàn hángwánt’in?” yèlhnih,
that “in your presence that kind I am eating the reason you’re doing that he told her
gúy béd hénlin i.
that meal it is that one
He complains to her, “Have I eaten this kind of food in your presence before?” in reference to the cooked roots.

12. Egúh hán güy lhà béd hilíh éyì
then (emph) that (neg) meal not that one
bèghéchòz éyì nànàyèdí’ án, éyì yínlhchúd.
it had been tied that she replaced it with that he took
Then she replaces her former offering with uncooked roots which he takes.

13. Nèndúwh ts’iqih gùghíntén egúh gwèghé’ezán ts’èdènish,
right here the woman there (area) he didn’t eat it is said

ts’ègùghíntén ègúh lhà güyín.
where it was held by someone there (neg) (area) he didn’t eat
It is said that he left uneaten those parts of the roots she had touched.

right there perhaps “Let’s live together” he said possibly
It might have been at this point that he said, “Let’s live together.”

15. Ch’ilh’áz gwèch’ająên’áz sághini
lastly they left on foot (dual) possibly.
Then they must have finally left.
16. Lhà  séx hílh, gwèghénn xéyánh, nilh gúixínyáh,  
(neg)  long  not  near  since  with one  she walked under there  
yáx  é’ànì  égùn.  
over there  den  there  
They must have been in close proximity to the den because it was not long before she entered the den with him.

him  the man  (emph.)  he said  it is said  mat  you will get  he told her  
It is said that the man said to her, “Get some bedding.”

18. Gú  él, tsintsén-i-èl  dèqád-tsèl  nèzùn  jinil’ìn  éyì  
those  bough  Douglas-fir boughs  flat ones  nice  it looks  ones  
áyédéníghin  
she packed it in from outside  
She packed in flat, fine-looking Douglas-fir boughs.

19. “Nènàlh  gánt’ì  yùh-dézésyáh  hángwànt’ìn?”  
“in your presence  that kind  underneath - the bedding I use  the reason you’re doing that  
“Have you seen me use this kind of bedding? Is that why you’ve done this?

20. Àn  xèdèd  gánt’ì  qátízáh.  
so  himself  that kind  he went to get  
And he goes to get bedding himself.

21. Gú  xwés  bèlh  tl’ùgh  niwíshi-tl’ùgh  bèlh  chéyéghèdilhqéd,  
those types  prickly rose  with  grass,  pinegrass  with  he pushed it into a pile  
dèlghùngh  gúh  yádish  àyúlh’ìn  lin  yélh  
he is growling  there  up there  somehow  (emph?)  with it  
tl’ágúvèyálh  sánìh.  
he walked backwards  possibly  
Growling, he likely piled together pinegrass and rose bushes and somehow brought them up the hill backwards.

22. Hīnk’àn  qùnh  néndávéndénìláh  hà.  
and then  home  he brought them in  (emph.)  
And then he brought the (bedding) into the den.
23. Àn ts’iqih in gáyéníżèn “Dínin húnlht’i béch’èd tásdálh hence the woman (emph). she thought that, it is prickly how will on it hát’in?” I’m going to sit he is doing this yéníżèn. she thought The woman thought to herself, “How will I be able to sit on them when they’re so prickly?”

24. Egúchúh déni-ni égwébiyéníżèn, “Húyénížèn lidânh?” even so a person-mind he knew it What are you thinking? (emph)? dénish. he says Even though he knows her thoughts, he says, “What are you thinking about?”

25. “Dínin, húnlht’i béch’èd tèts’ètásdálh yénéshèn án,” dijàgh. it is prickly how on it one can sit on it I’m thinking” (emph.) she said She said, “I am thinking, how is one able to sit on those when they’re so prickly?”

26. “Nèndânh tl’áladéžínjís hínì, béch’èd tètl’ádéžìntśàd,” here now slide (your garment) over your buttocks (emph.) on it sit on it dijàgh. he said “Here now, slip (your garment) up over your buttocks and sit on it,” he said.

27. Gáts’èjágh ts’èdënísh, gàngú chós dëni bàgágujàgh ts’èdënísh. one did that it is said it seemed as if down (n) the person it seemed to her it is said It is said that one did that [sat on the mound] and it felt like down to her.

28. Chùnchúh, t’sì, bënèn húnlí’tá gútásdálh ègúh again rock month the number of he was going to hibernate that gánlí’t’ih éyì ayédëénihqèd ts’èdënísh. equal to that ones he shoved them in it is said Again, it is said that he shoved in the number of rocks equal to the number of months he was going to hibernate.

29. Èyèd délghùnhg ayédëénihqèd ts’èdënísh. there he is growling he pushed them in it is said He shoved them in growling, it is said.

30. Èyèd án güyì nèndâyëdënílḥàh sághìnì then (emph) that one he carried them inside possibly It is then that he likely brought in those (the stones)
31. Ìyèdáh jéźqih....
right there they sat lived (dual)
There the two of them live.

32. Chùnchùh gün ts’iqh iyên gáyénížen, “Ìkwél
again that person the woman that person she thought this Mother
bélh dig ánášilin yánáh,” yénížen.
with Saskatoon berries I worked on back (west) there she thought
Again, the woman thought this, “I harvested and preserved saskatoon berries in the west with mom.”

33. Egúhchúh húts’èyènilžen égúh égwíntžen, “Húyénížen lidânh?”
even so what one thought that he knew “What are you thinking?” (emph.)
dénish.
he says
Even then, he knew her thoughts and he asked her, “What are you thinking?”

34. “Ìkwél dig lhàn bélh ánášilin,” ni.  
“Mother Saskatoon berries lots with I worked on” she said.
“I harvested and preserved many saskatoon berries with mom,” she replies.

35. Bètl’ànstíl någwénâghìnqád égùn dig xánághîngúy, éyí
his rump he slapped there Saskatoon berries they came dropping out they
yàldíl ghinlí sàngh.
she ate (past tense) possibly
He slaps his rump and saskatoon berries spill out from his rump and she likely ate these.

36. Égúh gát’ìn chùnchùh ch’íz séx ghinlí sàghìní,
then he was doing that again later for a long duration (past tense) possibly
“Ìkwél ésghùnsh bélh ánášilin ghinlí yánáh.”
Mother yellow glacier lily bulbs with I worked on (past tense) back (west) there.”
It may have been much later, after eating for a time (when she said), “I harvested and preserved yellow glacier lily bulbs in the west with mom.”

37. Egúhchúh gát’însh bètl’ànstíl någwénèqìg égùn ts’én ésghùnsh
and again he did that his rump he slapped there towards yellow glacier lily bulbs
xágósh.
they continuously drop out
And again he does that; he slaps his rump and from his rump fall yellow glacier lily bulbs.
38. Chùnchùh súnt'iny tèsánh ts'édènìsh ts'iyénižèn.
again spring beauty corms perhaps it is said one thought

And again, it is said that perhaps it is spring beauty corms she thought of next.

again one thought that and again “What are you thinking? (emph.)? he says

“Súnt’iny bélh dénìlh ánásìlin hást’i, sè’inkwél, yénéšèn
spring beauty corms with with one I worked on I have my mother I’m thinking

hádèsnìh,“ nih.
I am saying she said

In response to one’s thought once more, he asks “What are you thinking?” to which she replies, “I am thinking that I harvested and preserved spring beauty corms with my mother.”

40. Egúhchùh gát’ínsh ts'édènìsh, égwènz xágwénègòsh,
and again he does that it is said from there out (area) it continuously spills out

bètl’ànstìl nágwénèqìg.
his rump he slaps (once)

And he does that again they say, he slaps his rump and out they spill from there.

41. Nènk’èd ch’íz hán nènk’èd, nènk’èd sánh éghúlhts’èn
certainly later (emph.) certainly certainly perhaps spring (season)

gwés’èn gwážèlh tèsájágh sáts’èdènìsh.
near approaching in time she might have done that since it is said

gádìnìh, gáts’iyénižèn, “Gwédézésdìnìh,” ts’èyènèžèn,
she said one thought that I am greatly aroused she thought

“Gwédézésdìnìh,” yènižèn, yénèižèn gwádànìžèd.
I am greatly aroused she thought she thought she was thinking about that

It was surely later, perhaps approaching the spring (season), since it is said that she thought, “I am greatly aroused.”

42. “Gwédézésdìnìh,” yélhnìh ts’èdènìh.
I am greatly aroused she told him one said

She told him, “I am greatly aroused.”
43. Gâdînh ts’èdènísh, “Èt’ân gwé(ê)lín èt’ân sâqûd
he said it is said leaf/leaves they become leaves in the shade of
hînk’àn.” ts’èdînh dîjâgh.
only then it is said he said

It is said that he answered, “Only when the leaves develop; (only) under the shade of leaves.”

44. Ìyèd ch’îz chûh gûwh sâjâgh xèntsèl
there later too then she must have done that suddenly
ègûh chûh gâts’îyênìjên ts’èdînh, “Sùnâgh
then too one thought it is said my older brother
éch’àn ghêzhélh lhà bèch’â wêlí gûlîh
the first one age (neg) outdo him will be impossible
néntizân,” yênìjên.
he’s growing up she thought

Then, later, she must have done that; it is said, all of a sudden one thought again, “My older brother, the eldest one is growing up, becoming unsurpassed; indomitable.”

45. Egûh dênì-ni nîgébiyênìjên, “Hûyênìlèn lidàngh?”
then a person’s mind he knew a person “What are you thinking?” (emph)
dînìsh.
he says

Even then he read her mind but asked, “What are you thinking?”

46. “Sùnâgh éch’àn ghêzhélh lhà bèch’â wêlí
my older brother the first one age (neg) outdo him will be
gûlîh yânâh yênâsèn,” nîh.
impossible back (west) there I am thinking she said

“I am thinking that my older brother, the eldest one who lives in the west is becoming unsurpassed; indomitable,” she said.

47. Hînk’àn gâdînh, “Ìyèn hàlhînh bêdàzàx
and then he said him you are referring to his breath (?)
qîlt’ùgh t’s’èsèl ìyên? nî ts’èdînh.
footwear-grass one is keeping warm him he said it is said

And then it is said that he haughtily retorted, “You mean him, the one whose grass insoles are being kept warm close to his face.”
48. Sùnchùh, sùnchùh, “Sèchèl àtish ghèzhèlh iyèn, again again my younger brother the middle one age him/that one

iyèn lhà bèch’á wèlì gúlíh néntízàn,” him (neg) outdo him will be impossible he is growing up

yènížèn ts’èdènísh ts’íqìh éyèn.
she thought it is said the woman her/that one

And again, it is said that the woman thought, “My brother who is the middle in age is growing up, becoming unsurpassed; indomitable.”

even then he knew “What are you thinking?” he says

He again knew and asked, “What are you thinking?”

50. “Sèchèl àtish ghèzhèlh iyèn lhà bèch’á wèlì
my younger brother the middle one age him (neg) outdo him will be

gúyáh néntízán yánáh yéněsèn hàdíny,” impossible he is growing up back (west) there I am thinking she is saying

eyěnhìh.
she told him

She replied, “I am thinking that my brother who lives in the west who is the middle one in age is growing, becoming unsurpassed; indomitable.”

51. “Iyèn hélnình bédàzàx ch’ixáts’égwèltìsh
him you are referring to his breath one is taking [an infant] out [of a baby basket]

iyèn?” ni ts’èdìnìsh.
he said it is said

It is said that he haughtily retorted, “You mean him, the one who is near an infant who is being taken out of a basket.”

52. Sùnchùh “Sù’éch’ìh ghèzhèlh lhà bèch’á wèlì
again the very last one age (neg) outdo him will be

gúyáh néntízán yánáh,” impossible he is growing up back (west) there she thought

Again, she thought, “The youngest one who lives in the west is growing up, becoming unsurpassed; indomitable.”

again “What are you thinking?” (emph.) he says

Again he asked, “What are you thinking?”
54. “Sèchèl èch ’ih ghéžèlh iyèn lhà bèch ’á wéli
my younger brother the last one age him (neg) outdo him will be

gúyàh nénízán yènèšén hást ’i, ” ni.
impossible he is growing up I am thinking I am she said

She replied, “I am thinking that my younger brother who is the youngest in age is growing
up, becoming unsurpassed; indomitable.”

55. Ìyèd hínk ’àn, “Sènàch’íz nízán,” dijágh yá’ánxw
there and then without my awareness he grew up he said way out there
(lit. my eyes-later)

nèdilhgéd bêtsínsh inághèlgèd ts’èdènísh.
he pointed in a circle his nose he placed his fingers on his nose it is said

It is then that he vaguely admitted, “He grew up without my knowing about him,” and
it is said that he reached out and pointed, moving his pointer (finger) in a circle and
returned it to rest directly on his nose.

56. Bêtsínsh lànè’álgéd nénján déni bàndétén
his nose he pointed his fingers to his nose right here the person his doorway

jígwédištš ’án ts’èdènísh.
there was a noise It is said

He put his finger to his nose and right then, it is said that there was a noise at his door.

57. Gúyèn èlhghà’eyùwh jèdilths ’íh.
them separately they live

They (the other people) live in separate places.

58. Gán lhízqén tèsánh yès jèdilths ’íh sághint ’í,
just underground home possibly under they live were perhaps
(lit. dirt-fire)

ìndidánh lâ gáts’àghint ’í.
long ago (emph.) they lived that way

They may have been living in underground homes as people did long ago.
59. Ìyèd hínk’àn, “Nénján ành bèlh sìnqìh?” ts’èdính, 
him/then and then here (emph.) with you are living (dual) she was asked

ts’èdính, “Hútáséx, bìyèx
it is said I am going to shoot him underneath him

xáxedúghùnl’t’àx,” nih ts’èdính.
you will scramble out from there he said it is said

It is then that she is asked, “Are you in there with him?” and it is said that he added, “I’m going to shoot him and when I do scramble out from beneath him.”

60. Dènì án yèdzìts’àn. 
the man it is she heard him
It is a man and she heard him.

61. Gáts’èjágh bèyèx xèts’èghédàlt’ì ègùn chúh k’ásél
one did that underneath him one scrambled out then too almost

nich’ixédìlt’ì ègùn ts’únìntsí. 
he pounced on top of a person there he was shot by someone

It is done that way; he [the bear] is about to pounce on her when she scrambled out from under him and he shot at him [the bear].

62. Ts’únìntsí yèyèx xáxedàlt’ì.
he was shot by someone underneath him she scrambled out
He [the bear] is shot and she scrambled out from under him.

63. Ìyèd hínk’àn dènìh–àyèlh’ìn tìjìyénìnjèz. 
there and then assisting one with it they dragged it out
And then she helps him drag it out.

64. Gù’ánz iyèd njìyèl’h’èx. 
on the other side there they skinned it
They skin it outside.

65. “Bèqí iyèdáh, bèqí iyèdáh bèlá iyèdinláh
its hind paw(s) right there its hind paw(s) right there its front paw(s) he left them attached

ch’èdúghùnt’ás,” nih ts’ìqi. 
you cut them off she said the woman

The woman asked, “Cut off its hind and front paws and leave them attached to the skin.”

Because of him/it water one told her
(Translation unknown - I am unsure whether this was said by the woman or her brother)
67. Gäts ’inlág bàqí bèlá ts’édághhindzáy, nits’èlh ’èx.
   it was done to it its hind paw(s) its front paw(s) one (left) them attached
   It is skinned that way leaving the paws attached to the skin.

68. “Síd sès-žézh túsgh,“ nih ts’èdính ts’èqi.
   me bear skin I’ll pack it she said one said the woman
   It is said the woman stated, “I will pack the skin.”

69. Gùyèn in èt’sèn tižghin sághiní bèchèl in
   him/that one (emph.) meat he started to pack possibly, her younger brother (emph.).
   Her younger brother must have packed the meat.

70. Ìyèd án lhìndèsch’ósh inhí gùlh náljìd.
   there (emph.) miniature dog one with them it is crawling
   There, a small dog was following them.

71. Èyèn, yániz ních’ih ghéyálh xèdèltísh.
   her/that one way back there behind one she is walking intentionally made herself
   She purposely lagged behind him.

72. Lhin gùbàyétsí, lhà dènì t’ásásh chù.
   dog it barked once at them (neg.) the man didn’t catch up to yet yet
   The dog barked once before she caught up with him.

73. “Húlt’ìn hát’ìn?“ ts’èyènîžên ts’ènùwèl’h in t’ségúšt’in
   What is she doing is she doing one thought one wants to see one one wanted to
   hidden from him t’sèghédált’i.
   He wished to watch her and wondered, “What is she doing?” and she hid from him.

74. Gù lhìn yàtsilh, inlhèsh dêtélyinsh hìnk ’àn
   that dog is barking continuously along very and then
   lhìn nághën ágwèt ’in hántàgwèt ’in.
   dog she is chasing that’s what is happening it is apparent that’s what is happening
   Apparently, the dog was barking relentlessly as she [detelyinsh] and chased it around.
   *[translation unknown: possible making vocal noises while panting]*
75. Néndúwh níghéx gát’ìn gúbélh ts’éghénilch’ágh, “Ántàh here near one she was doing that with them one became angry in fact/so that’s what
ègwáh hánh gánt’ìn á lhìn nàyétšísh. that (emph.) you’re doing (emph.) dog is barking at you
She was doing this near him and he became angry with her and said, “So this is what you’re doing (causing) the dog to bark at you.”

76. Èsdí séx nányáh án!” ts’èdính. much too long (duration) you are walking (emph.) one said “You are walking much too slow!” she was told.

77. Lhà húlht’ih chùh sès-žézh ghéghílh (neg.) nothing wrong with her; innocently and so bear skin she is packing
nážéd hélísh. she is standing she became
She then transformed herself and immediately stood there packing the bear skin.

78. Íyèd gú’én égùh lhá lhìn xèdanàyítsísh there after that then (neg.) dog she didn’t prompt it to bark at her again
ègùn yáx jèdilht’ísh égùn nàjèndísh then over there they lived there they arrived back.
After that, she didn’t provoke the dog again and they arrived at their lodging place.

79. Íyèd dành sès, sès tízbéz ts’édènísh, gún there right then the bear the bear ts’ás it is said her/that one
ts’íqí sès ghàghíndá iyèn. the woman the bear she lived with; married to her/that one
It is said, immediately there, she, the woman who lived with a bear, began to stretch the bear [skin] onto a frame.

80. Sès hèbhèzh, sès hèlhtsásh. the bear she is stretching it onto a frame the bear she is scraping/softening it
She stretched the bear [skin] onto a frame and scraped the skin to soften it.

81. Hink’àn bèdzízh nèndí-tsèlh, lhà hìnàzh-tsèlh hìn ègùn and his younger sister the short one (neg.) not too tall (emph.) over there
nàyélh’á. she sent her about to do things for her
And then she sent her younger sister, the short one who wasn’t too tall, over there.
82. “Yáx inkwél bèts’én sáchén, sáchén diny xághún’álh,”
over there mother to her tiger lily bulb(s) tiger lily bulb(s) four bring over (sg)
yélhníh, egùn gúwélgáy.
she told her over there she walked away to
She [the woman] asked her, “Bring me four tiger lily bulbs from mother,” and she
[the sister] walked over there.

83. Sáchén diny xúšt’in éyi gánt’i bèlàts’ághíndzáy egùn
tiger lily bulbs four she wanted that that type she was given (pl) from there
xánághélgláy.
she walked back from there
She was given four tiger lily bulbs which she [the woman] wanted and she returned with them.

84. Něndíd bèghú yélhtsín.
this her tooth/teeth she made them into
She (the woman) put them into her mouth, and they became her teeth.

85. Yádí yígwédižwés,
up there she bit into [a surface] with them her mouth they fell out it is said
déchén dížwés ts’èdènísh.
wood she bit into it it is said
It is said that she bit into wood up above and they [the bulbs] fell out of her mouth.

86. “Shùnchùh èsghùnsh diny sàxághùnlgásh,” yélhníh.
again yellow glacier lily bulbs four (walk) get for me she asked her
“Again, get me four yellow glacier lily bulbs,” she asked her.

87. Gát’ínsh égùn télgish, égùn ègwènz xánálglásh.
she does that to there she walks from there from that direction she returns on foot
She did that; walked over there and returned again.

88. Èyì bèghú yélhtsín éyì lhà xágósh ts’èdènísh.
these her tooth/her teeth she made these ones (neg.) they fell out it is said
She [the woman] transformed these into her teeth and these do not fall out.
89. Bìsh gwèdèš’i, bèghú lá gàngú sés
inside her mouth it (area) is strong her tooth/teeth (emph.) just like the bear
yàgh èshghùnsh inlhês lhàjìd gádùghùnì gúlìgh
that\um-m yellow glacier lily bulbs very cannot say that cannot
hàn.
(emph.)
Her mouth is so tough that you cannot say whether she has bear teeth or yellow glacier lily bulb teeth.

90. Álh’áyédính háts’èdènísh.
They are speaking the truth as they say
They are speaking the truth (in telling this story).

91. Ìyèd án inlhês sès šèlín yàx bè’inkwél
It was there that (emph.) very a bear she became over there her mother
jèdìlht’sìh egùn gùghèlt’sèd.
where they are living to there she charged away in that direction
It is there that she (the woman) truly turned into a bear and charged in the direction where her mother (parents) live.

92. Nènk’ ègùn gúwèrt’i gájágh ts’èdènísh
in that exact direction she flew it seemed that she did it is said.
It is said that she moved quickly appearing as if flying there.

93. Ègùn yélh sès, gün bèchèlt yélh sès
there with the bear him/that one her younger brother with him the bear
xághinltín èyèn gwàntizáh yàx
she brought it [the bear] out [of the den] him/that one he left over there
tíntèx xádèdàh.
in the forest he is hunting among
Her younger brother, the one she helped take the bear out [of the den], went to the forest to hunt.

94. Èyèn lhàgùl yàx bè’inkwél intléd.
him/that one he is gone over there her mother she attacked and killed
He (the brother) was gone when she [the woman] attacked and killed her mother.

95. Bè’àbá, èsqáx gàts’ìn intléd.
her father the children everyone she attacked and killed
She attacked and killed her father and all the children (family).
96. Gún nádáyédílh’á nènk’iyèn dzánh nináyénínhtìn. her/that one she had ordered about certainly her/the one the only one she spared
She spared only the one she had ordered about.

97. Ègú iyèd yélh gwèch’áni’əz, hink’àn hêtsínsh then there with her she began to walk away (dual) and then when she defecates
èyi gún bèdíz nèntsél éyèn yètsi
that then her younger sister small that one her head

bitšeldèldish.
she wipes her behind with
Then she (the woman) walked away (dual) with her (the girl) and every time she defecated, she used her (the girl's) head to wipe herself.

98. Yètši tèxèłchòg án éyi yitšeldèldish. her head she catches (emph.) with that she wipes her behind with it
She caught hold of her head and used it to wipe herself.

99. Gát’ìn yètsi gágúnlhghén gáyèlh’ìn yád bètsí she was doing that her head very quickly she was doing that to her over there her head
gán séggèn dzánh ájágh ts’édènísh. utterly dried up only; completely it became absolutely it is said
covered

It is said that she continued to do that and the girl’s head quickly became covered with dried crap.

100. Ègú yá’anxw tl’ètsèn dùlzèn yélhni égúh then outside wild onions harvest for herself she told her around
náyèlh’á, “Tl’ètsèn dùghùnlzèn,” yélhdénish. she orders her about wild onions you will harvest for yourself she tells her
Then she (the woman) ordered her to harvest wild onions telling her, “Harvest yourself some wild onions.”

101. Ègúh gát’in hink’àn gún bèchèl bèlhl that she is doing that and then that person her younger brother with her
ts’iyínlhtìn éyèn yànághínyàh gún ésqì. found one with him/that one he came upon her her/that one the child
She, the girl, was doing that when her younger brother, the one who was raised with her, came upon her.
It must have been either a willow grouse or a spruce grouse which he killed and gave to his younger sister.

It is said that he asked her, “Now, what is wrong with your head (hair) - it’s so dry?”

She replied, “She wipes herself on my head every time she defecates.”

And then he pounded some stones to pieces and mixed all of it into her head.

He then told her, “Bring that (grouse) back with you and roast it for yourself, and (the woman) will ask you, “How did you kill it?” say, “I speared it using my digging stick.”

It is said that that’s what she did.
108. Yàgh yànághìnhtin “Húnlhàd jid ch’ádınlágh nì” she brought it to her what did you do to it how you killed it?” she said

yélñí.
she asked her

She brought it (the grouse) to her and she (the woman) asked her, “How did you kill it?”

109. “Ségwèzinlh bid bèghànitézh àn,” yélñníh. my digging stick with I speared through it (emph.) she told her “I speared it with my digging stick,” she explained to her (the woman).

110. Lhà yùdídlán, “Ànk’án yá’án téšìnhtish húnítàsh hínsh,” (neg.) she believed her but over there place it on you spear it (emph.)

nì.
she said

In disbelief, she (the woman) commanded her, “Then, place it up high over there and throw (your digging stick) at it.”

111. Gájágh yá’án téyélhtin yúnítèzh, gùgùn sù she did that over there she placed it on she threw (a spear) at it in that location exactly
gwèghántsi égùn gùghànàntèzh.
where a spear went through it in that spot she speared it through again

She (the girl) put it (the grouse) up there and she speared through it in the exact site.

112. “Yá’án lá àlh’ádı̱nìsh láh dùghùnìt’aś,” nìh ts’èdèñísh. over there (emph.) you are right (emph.) roast it for yourself she said it is said

It is said that she (the woman) admitted, “You are absolutely right – roast it for yourself.”

113. Íyèd án íyèd gù’én ègù inlhés ch’ìnèniyàn ságñí ts’èdèñísh there (emph.) there after that then very she matured possibly it is said
gùn èsqì.
her/that one the child

It is said, following that (scene) perhaps the child grew up.

114. Gùn séx hélish tśél nánàyèdilhtsín ts’èdèñísh her/that one long duration it happens/it becomes behind she transformed her? it is said

há. (emph.)

Then occasionally she (the woman) used her (the girl’s) hair to wipe her behind.

unknown term [nánàyèdîlhtsín] which could mean ‘she transformed her’
115. Ègùn  ìdhèl  nènchágh,  nèn  nènchágh  bid  dílgwènlh  ts'èdènísh.
there  mountain  large  land  large  with  a hill  it is said
In that place, there is a massive mountain.

116. “Èyì  inlhánx  nèndìní gúnísh  gwélàyàx,  yàx,  ègùn
that  one (person)  this way  to the west  s/he is going around  over there  there
ýù’ánz,  ýù’ánz  chùh  nàsít’áz,  ègùn
the other side  the other side  too  we walk (dual) around it  there
èlhîxènághít’áz,  ègùn  èlhghènàghúqí,”  yélhnìh  gún
we meet up (dual)  there  let’s live together;  he told her  him/those
èyìình  yìnlxnlh  ýù’ánz,  ègùn
he is going around  over there  there
èyìình  yù’ánz  ègùn
he is going around  there
èyìình  yù’ánz  ègùn
he is going around  there
diyènìh,  “Sélh  élhnàltšán  hín.
the boy/man  with me  see one another  (emph.)
He said to her, “One will go around at the west end and from the other side, we will go around,
and when we meet up and see one another, we will live together.”

117. Èlhìdížìqì  háyèdìnìh.
they are sisters  they are saying
They are saying this and they are siblings.

118. Gàyèjágh  èlhànìx  jètíz’áz  yù’ánz,  yù’ánz
they did that  in separate directions  they walked (dual)  the other side  the other side
gúyèn  ts’ìqì  dáyèn  dzànìnt  lhà  gút’ín
her/those  the woman  her/who  the only one  (neg.)  didn’t want to
ghìnì  ts’èdènísh.
(past tense)  it is said
They did that; walked in separate directions and on the other side, the woman was the only
one who was unhappy with the plan.

119. Lhà  gávènsñàx  yènìžèn  sághint’ì.
(neg.)  I will do that  she thought  perhaps
She must have been thinking that she would not go through with this.
120. Gù’áñz inlhés yù’áñz èlhdíñájéšdåsh sù inlhés
tfrom the other side very from the other side close to meeting exactly very
one another
èlhdíjést’áz ts’èdènìsh, ègú èlhghènjéšqih.
they met (dual) it is said then they lived together (married)
It is said that they near the central point on the other side and they met one another on the
exact site and then they lived together.

121. Êyèd hínk’àn ch’ílh’áź án séx égúh
there and then lastly (emph.) long duration around
nájéz’áź, èsqì chùh jèt’ìn.
they wandered (dual) an infant too they have
Then a long time after, while wandering around, they had a child.

122. Êyèd èsqì chùh sú-sé’ánlhchúgh şèlín.
there an infant/child too quite big enough s/he became
There, the child grew quite big.

123. Dènì-åd ghàts’ètízáh yénìžèn yáx dénì ch’ílh’áź
the man’s wife one left her she thought over there the man lastly
dènì-åd ghànághìnyàh, dénì-åd intlèd
a man’s wife she came upon her a man’s wife she attacked and killed her
ts’èdènìsh, dénì-åd ch’ądínlágh.
It is said that she (the bear woman) thought the man had left his wife (by herself) and while
he was away, she came upon his wife and killed her.

124. Xèdèd, xèdèd Êyèd èsqì nèlhdåsh bànánáts’ájåh.
herself herself there the infant she is dancing one returned upon
bànánáts’ájåh.
her/him her
He returned to her (the bear woman) and found her dancing the baby (on her lap).
125. Ìyèd hádághiní dënìsh, “Bòtò náyìdlín, bázi
there he was saying s/he says his/her father s/he is his/her nephew
híní dènísh, s/he says “Bètá náyìdlín, s/he is him (?) nèlhdaysh.
hìní básì s/he is his/her nephew nì she said ésqì infant
náyìdlín,” nèlhdaysh. she is dancing
s/he is him (?) nì she said ésqì infant
It is there that she sang as she danced (the baby) on her lap, “He is (the baby’s) father; (the baby) is his nephew.” [the words to the song are unclear]

126. Hínkànì, “Sédánilhtsây, tûnághùnyá,” ts’èdinh, in
and then “I’m thirsty get some water she was told (emph)
tútilhgây.
she went for water
And then he asked her, “I’m thirsty, fetch some water,” and she left for water.

127. Ìyèd bèdzì gù’ân téshél’àn á.
there her heart out there she had it sitting (emph)
And she had placed her heart up over there a ways.

128. Èyì gûn gwéch’ânlgây dânh yáx
that in that direction he started walking away in that moment over there
bùlhyèx yàxágùghînzûgh ts’èdènísh.
in the coals he dug out embers for it it is said
As soon as she left, he dug out a hole in the embers for it (the heart).

129. Yàxágùghînzûgh egûn tšiyédaghtšid yèch’ìnághûnûgh.
he dug out coals for it and then there he threw it into the fire he covered it back over
He dug out a hole in the embers and threw it (the heart) into the fire and covered it up.

130. “Sèdzì élâhwhá!” nì yù’àng nàghèlgish, inlhês
my heart (interjection) she cried from over there she is walking back very
déné bânanághélâgây ègû ègûh nàghèltš’èd ts’èdènísh.
the man she walked upon then there she fell down it is said
him
“Oh, my heart,” she cried as she returned and it is said that she came right upon the man before she fell to the ground.
131. Ègútáh nájégwèlnig. those sort of things they tell about
These are the sorts of things they tell about.

132. Gán gún nènk’iyèn gún bè‘àd, bè‘àd
but him/that one that same one him/that one his wife his wife

iyèn gàngú dèni-nàyélhtsín ègúh jíd
that one it was as if he brought her back to life that is how

gwánàts’ègwèlnish.
one tells the story
It is told that he himself brought his wife back to life.

133. Lhà bèch’á wélí gúyàh téšâghèt’in, dèni-nàyélhtsín
(neg.) outdo him will be impossible he likely did these he brought her

ègúh jíd gwánàts’ègwèlnish iyèd.
that is how one tells the story this one [scene]

He must have been [truly] unequaled/indomitable to have brought her back to life;
that’s how they tell this (part of the story).
CHAPTER 7
GÙBÀGÚJÁN ‘SUCCESSFUL HUNTERS’

In this chapter, specifics regarding menstruants found in Sès Ts’iqí Ghàghindá are combined with present beliefs. Tsinlhqút’in narratives about bears are the only stories which contain the earliest references to nimính, and there are remarks from Sès Ts’iqí Ghàghindá, for which it was necessary to ask what the bear meant when commenting about the woman’s oldest brothers. It is apparent, from Ìnkél’s keen insight, that the bear had indicated that her brothers were gùbàts’ègúdáh ‘a state in which hunters are ritually marked by nimính energy, therefore could be sensed and avoided by wildlife (mammals and fishes)’. The youngest brother held the opposite status, bàgúján ‘a state in which he was untouched by nimính energy’; ‘a successful hunter’.

7.1 The history behind respect for bears

Animals, in general, can hear what humans say and know human thoughts; some examples are shown in four of the passages from Sès Ts’iqí Ghàghindá: ‘Even though he knew her thoughts, he asked, “What are you thinking about?”’ (lines 24, 33, 39, and 45). The same intuitive ability of the bear is mentioned by Georgina Loucks (2003:220-221). She quoted Catharine McClellan (1975) who said “… people believed persons must always speak carefully of bear people, since bears have the power to hear human speech no matter where the humans may be … the bear will certainly take revenge … (127).” There is a Tsinlhqút’in phrase used to warn hunters lhà ch’àn néźìnggìh lit. ‘do not carry
your backpack in advance’ which means that ‘hunters should not foretell a successful slaying prior to going on a hunt’ because the animal may hear him and will avoid him. Similarly, Kwesi Baffoe (2005) remarks concerning the Sayisi Dene: “the Dene people assume human-like qualities in animals. Thus one should not be boastful or arrogant, especially in connection with hunting and the treatment of animal carcasses”. In the north, Jean-Guy A. Goulet’s (1998) findings among the Dene Tha mirror Tsinlhqüt’in experience in that “animals constantly monitor the actions and speech of human beings for signs of respect or disrespect toward themselves. Lack of respect toward an animal is followed by retaliation” (87). Înkél says animals gùbàdzèd hélish ‘they are easily offended’.

Nothing is specifically mentioned in ancient Tsinlhqüt’in stories, to my knowledge, about detailed animal teachings on how to respectfully treat creatures and their remains, so it is interesting to discover such accounts preserved. One instructive passage is quoted by Georgina Loucks (2003:222) who cited from Catharine McClellan’s documents:

In the Tlingit version the bear gives the girl specific instructions as to how his body is to be treated. His head is to be put in the fire and burned. McClellan notes that ‘Tagish and Inland Tlingit hunters sometimes burn the bear's head and then sing to it... It is sung explicitly so that the spirit will go back into the bear’ (1975:128). Jackson included another ritualistic element peculiar to this area in an addition to his story. He said that the bear instructed the girl in this manner, When your brothers kill me, you call for my knee bones. And when my kids are hungry for something to eat, you put my knee bones into the fire. And my knee bones are going to show you where the bears are (McClellan, 1970:21).

Robert B. Lane’s (1953) “Cultural Relations of the Chilcotin of the West Central British Columbia” is summarized in “Chilcotin” in the Handbook of the North American Indians
(1981) and Lane’s discussion about *Tsinlhqit’ín* bear ceremonialism is quoted. He noted that this event involved “special songs while skinning, placing the bear skull streaked with charcoal in a tree, ritual feasting, and other ritual acts” (409). Ìnkél says that long ago, during my grandmother’s youth, when bears were killed, while skinning it, people would sing the following verse:

“*Gághènilh*
you were going to do that; that was going to happen to you

\[
xèyáh \quad nénch’ítéxágwédíséz, \quad ts’ìnâ’
\]

because of the fact that … withered behind you [refrain?]

this was going to happen to you anyway, (because the vegetation) withered behind you

The only clarification given for this verse is that the vegetation withered in all the places behind the bear as it moved and this expression is understood to indicate the bear’s demise and possibly a reference to the termination of any future descendants it might have had. The core element in the above recitation, *díséz* ‘dried’; ‘dead’ is often expressed to indicate dead trees and it could also be used to illustrate how berry bushes wither following the presence of *nímính*. The withering of bushes as a result of *nímính* presence could also be an explanation as to why vegetation withered following the bear’s presence. The withering of vegetation could be due to the bear’s strong spirit, as well as to the immediacy of its death.

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13 While reading many of the ancient stories from the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Alaska, I always wondered why hunters cut off a bear’s paw. Richard K. Nelson (1983:180) explained this custom in his book, Make Prayers to the Raven: a Koyukon View of the Northern Forest. He explained that “before he starts butchering a bear, the careful hunter will slit its eyes so that its spirit will not see if he should violate a taboo. And he may take off its feet to keep its spirit from moving around (180). Among *Tsinlhquot’in*, the eyes of any animal or fish are slit before roasting. As well as showing respect, this is to prevent the eyes from bursting. When roasting animal heads or whole fish over a fire, it could be dangerous for people around the fire if an eye explodes.
After skinning the bear, the bear meat is roasted over a long row of fireplaces built and this meal is offered at a community feast. It is necessary to smudge or smoke a prepared bear hide for a long time before sleeping on it because it retains the spirit of the bear,\textsuperscript{14} hence causes one to dream\textsuperscript{15} about bears. If a campfire is the only method for smudging the hide, the hide should be draped in the direction of the smoke. Bear skulls are dried and retrieved on dry, hot summer days, and placed in a stream to bring rain for hay crops. Georgina Loucks included another passage of additional instructions for bear skulls and bear skins from another bear story (2003:232):

And the man told his wife, ‘Those are your brothers. They are going to kill me, but when they do kill me, see that you get my skull! Get my whole head. You go get it. When they stretch my skin, make a fire right along where they are stretching it, and put my head in the fire and burn it up.’

There are no such detailed accounts in Tsinlhqút’in stories, but it is generally known that bones from beaver, muskrat, salmon, and bears were either burned or thrown into streams or lakes. This was to prevent dogs from chewing on them and Ênkél always says:

\textsuperscript{14} Richard Nelson noted in Make Prayers to the Raven: a Koyukon View of the Northern Forest that “bear skins retain their life, their extreme spiritual potency, for several years. Female contact during this time is strongly tabooed and will bring bad luck to the hunter” (180). He explained as well that bears are skinned and eaten away from the village. Ênkél’s father used to skin fur-bearing mammals outside to keep them from contact with women. In Tsinlhqút’in, a hunter is said to become bāts’égūdāh and this is often translated as bad luck. Ênkél describes bāts’égūdāh as being an ‘unsuccessful hunter; a state in which a hunter is ritually marked by nímính energy, therefore can be sensed by wildlife, thus is avoided’.

\textsuperscript{15} Noted by Wendy Wickwire from Teit’s “Thompson Indians”: Grizzlies “will often appear repeatedly in the dreams of women expecting twins” (2001:204).
bear bones  ones throw them into water  (past tense)  long ago  person/people
it attacks  for the reason that  well  it was treated  (past tense)

the bones of bears were thrown into the water; this was the considerate thing to do because bears attacked people and killed them

not  its bones  dog(s)  chew them  ones didn’t like to do that  its heart

one did not want dogs to gnaw on its bones because (bears) are ferocious

Kwesi Baffoe, on Sayisi Dene traditions, explained that “the Dene believe in the reincarnation of the animals so the bones are carefully preserved under stones for the animal to reclaim in the afterlife, and consequently bones are never fed to dogs or used as fuel” (2005). I have not interviewed other Tsinlhqút’in elders on this topic, and the same understanding could very well exist. I have only heard one statement on reincarnation in my community, but coming back to life is a common theme in ancient Tsinlhqút’in stories. On the topic of life force in regards to bones, Joseph Campbell (1960) discussed at length an ancient Blackfoot story and noted how the bones of a man were used to bring him back to life. He went on to say that there was a verbal contract between humans and animals in which procedures were agreed upon as to how animal remains were to be handled. Within this agreement, he says that hunters must “perform a ritual of renewal, so that herds may be restored to life” (14). He explained this in detail:

The resurrection of the dead man was made possible by the finding of a particular bone. Without this, nothing could have been accomplished, but with it, he returned just as he had been before. We may regard this bone as our token of the hunter’s nuclear idea of the miracle of renewal. The bone
does not disintegrate in the womb of the earth and germinate into something else, like a planted seed, but is the undestroyed base from which the same individual that was there before becomes magically reconstructed, to pick up life where he left it. The same creature comes back by way of an actual fragment or element of his former body (14-15).

It is fortunate that writers have documented so much knowledge about this early era and have preserved the discussions and agreements between animals and people. It seems that this early knowledge, for some reason or another, was not shared with Ínkél. This does not mean that all Tsinlhqút’in are uninformed about such things. There may be Tsinlhqút’in elders who are fully aware about these ancient events. It is interesting, however, that Ínkél’s knowledge is based on the fear of bears, which suggests that bears were instrumental in the preservation of these agreements. Ivaluardjuk, an Igluluk, explained in the chapter “Ways of Thinking About the Sacred” that “no bone of any animal might be broken. To do so would be an insult to the souls of the caribou, and was punished by death or disaster” (Beck and Walters 1977:13). In Tsinlhqút’in, one cannot “make noise upon bones” while cutting or sawing bones; otherwise, the implement used will thereafter be sensed by game. Respectful treatment of bones is further discussed in chapter 9 Dé’áts’et’ínsh. The only indirect Tsinlhqút’in reference about the soul of an animal is in another ancient story in which a bear was killed and its intestines were strung from branch to branch and from tree to tree by a hunter. After death, the bear’s spirit is said to have called out to its relatives to retaliate against the hunter. The bear’s relatives carried out the bear’s wish and after killing the hunter, the bears strung out his intestines through the trees as well.  

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16 A Igluluk Inuit is quoted in the section “All Things are Dependant on Each Other” by Beck and Walters (1977:12) explaining the retributive nature of creatures: “The greatest peril in life lies in the fact that human food consists entirely of souls. All the creatures that we have to kill and eat, all those that we have to strike
Tsínlhqütʼín have noted the bear, the wolf, and the otter to have spirits which alter human health\(^\text{17}\); but generally, all mammals and fish require respectful handling of their remains. The consequence for a hunter who is not respectful is usually alienation\(^\text{18}\) (and as we know this also occurs between the human populations), so this type of mammalian reaction to an offence to their body is not beyond belief. This subject goes beyond the range of what is considered to be niminh, although it is said that a hunter can become bâtsʼègúdäh ‘unsuccessful in hunting’ by causing mammals or fish to suffer. This type of misconduct is explained in chapter 9 “Déʼátsʼètʼínsh ‘causing ritual obstructions’. It is considered disrespectful for anyone to strike a live or dying mammal or fish, and deemed offensive to the spirit of the fresh kill to cut its meat or saw its bones. Tsínlhqütʼín
down and destroy to make clothes for ourselves, have souls, souls that do not perish with the body and which must therefore be [pacified] lest they should revenge themselves on us for taking away their bodies.” This seems to hold true for Tsínlhqütʼín as well. There are many known experiences surrounding the spirits of the dead, including animals. There are vulnerable individuals, mainly children, who have encountered such spirits and others who have been disrespectful to animals have also encounter spirits of animals which they have offended.

\(^{17}\) Richard Nelson (1983:22), talking about the Koyukon tradition, briefly lists some of the mammals which have vindictive natures:

Not all spirits are possessed of equal power. Some animal species have very potent spirits called biyeega hoolaanh, which are easily provoked and highly vindictive. These dangerous spirits can bring serious harm to anyone who offends them, taking away luck in hunting or trapping and sometimes causing illness, disability, or even death. Animals possessed of such spirits include the brown bear, black bear, wolverine, lynx, wolf, and otter. The beaver and marmot have similarly powerful spirits but are not so vengeful.

\(^{18}\) Jules Jetté and Eliza Jones (2000:307) include the term [le+k’aan] in the Koyukon Dictionary and defined this as “[animal] becomes aloof, taboo, offended, elusive, unattainable… [and add further details]”:

Said of game, with respect to the hunter, and expressing the sanction, or punishment, which in Ten’a belief is attached to the violation of the taboos of the hunt, and which consists in this, that the species whose taboos have been disregarded, keeps aloof from the offender and eludes his pursuit. The aloofness may be limited, or may last for the lifetime of the offender. It is caused by the yeege’ or protector spirit of the species. Thus a hunter who lets the bones of a beaver, which he has killed, be given to the dogs, shall be incapacitated by circumstances beyond his control for the beaver hunt. He may hunt as much as he wants, either he shall not find beavers, or they shall escape him.
consider the mere handling of fresh meat and fish to be considerably more “dangerous” if done by one who is nîmính. Kwesi Baffoe (2005) noted among the Sayisi Dene that “there are no special rules for fishing save the general prohibition on gratuitous waste [and in his footnote, included that] some elders claimed that the fish scales and guts had to be buried”. On the contrary, it seems that Tsînlhqû’t’in have more rules and ceremonies for fish than they do for meat.

7.2 Nîmính energy retained by silverweed roots

The fact that the bear left uneaten those parts of the silverweed roots the woman had held (line 13) suggests that the woman may have handled the roots while she was menstruating. There is no distinct Tsînlhqû’t’in term to express the fact that food objects have come into contact with nîmính energy; Ìnkél used the phrase gwènilhmih sâghini ‘it is likely that (the bear) considered (those food parts) to contain the nîmính energy’.

7.3 Human beings retain nîmính energy

When commenting about the status of the eldest brother, the bear said:

47. Hînk’àn gûdính, “Íyèn hâlhîníh bêdâzàx
and then he said him you are referring to his breath (?)

qîtl’ùgh t’s’èshèl iyèn? nì t’s’èdînh.
footwear-grass one is keeping warm him he said it is said

And then it is said that he haughtily retorted, “You mean him, the one whose grass insoles are being kept warm close to his face.”
This remark makes no sense to modern Tsnlhqut’in listeners. The eldest brother is the main subject of this sentence and naturally, it makes sense that it is his wife who must be handling his insoles. The bear likely knew about this brother’s whereabouts and even his personal daily interactions because he is married, therefore is in close contact with his wife who carries niminh energy. In the version of the story that she describes, Georgina Loucks (2003) quoted the woman as saying, “‘My eldest brother will find you.’ But the bear replies, ‘He will not be able to do so, for he does not purify himself and when he sees a woman he turns back to look at her’” (235-236). The latter sounds to be a reference to a lustful or promiscuous man, and there is actually a complete Tsnlhqut’in narrative about a bear’s dealing with such a situation which I did not include in this thesis.

In Sês Ts’iqi Ghâghindá the bear’s subsequent remark about the middle brother is:

51. “Íyên hálhínih bédázåx ch’ixåts’égwèltish
him you are referring to his breath one is taking [an infant] out [of a baby basket]

i’yên?” ni ts’èdinh.
him he said it is said

It is said that he haughtily retorted, “You mean him, the one who is near an infant who is being taken out of a basket.”

In Loucks, “the bear replies, ‘He does not clean the fern roots which he is eating, he cannot see far’” (2003:236). The cultural variation is interesting to see. As a Tsnlhqut’in listener, I would never have guessed what the bear meant by his remarks about the woman’s brothers. To my surprise, when I asked for clarification for these comments, Ênlèl defined at length the term, båts’égúdåh, the state of the woman’s eldest brothers, as

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19 Female bears are known to abort their unborn cubs when a hunter is approaching its den.
an explanation for the bear’s remarks (see below). I translated bàts’ègúdáh as ‘he is sensed by game’ in the following excerpt even though the term means much more.
Égú for instance? (emph.) he is sensed by game cannot game animals
ghánaghúnyá gúyáh, gú nádédáh
you come upon impossible for example he is hunting
sáts’égwédính.
the term is in reference to hunting
one likely meant that (the hunter) was ritually marked by nímính energy (therefore could be sensed and therefore easily avoided); that one in this state cannot come upon any creature while hunting
Nàts’égúdáh jíjégúzìh hädènìsh lhájíd sé
you are sensed by game they call it that that’s what they say cannot bear
dághúnyáh gúyáh lhájíd bèqúngh
you enter its entrance impossible cannot its den
gúghùn’ín gúyáh.
know the whereabouts impossible
(the storytellers) are saying that you are ritually marked by nímính energy – that you cannot enter a bear den – and you cannot even know the location of its den
Èyèn bàts’égúdáh lhájíd yádávëyá gúläh
him he is sensed by game cannot he enter its entrance impossible
dènìsh sádìnì, ègú lhájíd
he says it must be saying then cannot
bèdághúnyá hëgyáh jiýálhtiq
you enter its entrance impossible it must be expressing that
sádìnì.
when it’s saying that
(the bear) is probably saying that because (the hunter) is ritually marked by nímính energy, (the hunter) cannot enter into his den; (the bear) is expressing that you cannot come into his den
Nàts’égúdáh égú lhájíd yáx bè’ànìx bèts’én
is sensed by game then cannot over there its den toward it
ghùnyáh.
come to it impossible
while you are ritually marked by nímính, you will not be able to approach (the bear) in his den
Georgina Loucks (2003) further documented that there were actually four brothers and three of the eldest took turns hunting alone for the bear each day and were unsuccessful and “the youngest one was only a kid” (232). Among Tsínłhqút’in, the term èsqì could include infants, children, and youth. In the Tsínłhqút’in version of the bear story, there were three brothers who were referred to as sùnàgh èch’àn ghêţélh ‘my older brother, the eldest one’ (line 46), sèchèl åtìsh ghêţélh ‘my younger brother, the middle one in age’ (line 50), and sèchèl èch’íh ghêţélh ‘my younger brother, the youngest one in age’ (line 54). The youngest brother was already a good hunter so one could assume that he was a youth, an unmarried youth. The bear in Sès Ts’iqí Ghàghindá had no response about the woman’s youngest brother except to say “Sènàch’íz nìzán” ‘he grew up without my knowing about him’ and at that very moment the brother was at the bear’s entrance (line 55-56). The woman described each of her brothers as lhà bèch’á wëlí gúyàh ‘he cannot be surpassed’outdone’. In other words, she thought they were gùbágúján ‘untouched by niminh energy’; the expression most used today to indicate that a hunter is always successful.

7.4 Hunters’ methods for maintaining success

Success in hunting is mentioned throughout this document, and basically, success, in Tsínłhqút’in culture, implicates having wealth20, youthfulness, and good health, besides

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20 During Ínkél’s youth “wealth” meant simply owning a horse – having ready access to her environment. Nancy Turner (2005: 24-25) defined wealth in The Earth’s Blanket: Traditional Teachings for Sustainable Living:

…Wealth – real wealth – is found among people who have a sound sense of their place in the world, who link their own actions and thoughts with those of others, and who are strong, vigorous and cooperative actors in their communities and ecosystems. Rich are those people who balance the benefits they receive in life with the responsibilities they assume for themselves, their families and
being surrounded by family, and having the necessary food and household possessions.

The ancient guidelines to continual success in hunting (trapping and fishing) is given in the overall *Tsìnlhqút’ìn* term, *súwh-tś’éghèdúdính* lit. ‘preserving oneself’; ‘taking care of oneself’; ‘safeguarding oneself’ and this entails many observances, but for this next section, Part Four: The Care of Subsistence Gear, I will bring together the aspects related to success in hunting. Kwesi Baffoe (2005), in his overview of the Sayisi Dene, noted that “the hunt is replete with proscriptions for correct behaviour, before, during and after the hunt. These include personal initiation ceremonies, ritual offerings and sexual purification”.21 The prescribed *Tsìnlhqút’ìn* methods for achieving success as a hunter and maintaining this status include: cold water conditioning during childhood training; puberty training; treating animals with respect; expressing gratitude and offering choice, fresh food to ancestors; attracting fur-bearing animals to oneself;22 preparing fur-bearing animals outdoors;23 and avoiding contact with menstruants, infants, and dead bodies.24

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21 Kwesi Baffoe (2005) noted that “the most serious offences generally relate to hunting and are dealt with by the gravest of sentences: banishment”. Banishment in this context is not mentioned by *Tsìnlhqút’ìn*; instead, there are other accounts in which humans who have treated animals disrespectfully have seen animals to *nìghà’èts’èn àt’ínsh* ‘often transform themselves outright for hunters in ways which can be frightening and traumatizing to see’. The species which are related to the mistreated animals are also known to alienate themselves from disrespectful hunters.

22 Fur-bearing animals were mainly killed for their fur to trade and and skins for making clothing. There is one restriction mentioned for hunters and that is to refrain from selling fur collections either until the fur season is over or until the decision is made to cease trapping for that particular season. The accumulation of fur is said to attract animals: *nènts’èn nìnt’í gát’ínsh* ‘they pull towards you’. It is also said that *niíh nèrch’àn ánat’ínsh* ‘the animals turn against you’ (and avoid you) if you do not abide by this rule.

23 Concerning the preparation of fur-bearing animals outdoors, *Ìnkél* says that one hunter would always build a fire outside and then would skin his fur-bearing mammals and dress the skins outdoors. It never occurred to him to ask women to help him, because he likely thought they were *gübats’égúdáh*. He did this and when he set his traps, his traps immediately attracted mammals.
The Tsínlhqút’ín principle of súwh-tš’éghèdúdính was enforced by bears. In the distant past, bears killed individuals who did not adhere to traditions of ‘self-care’ and these examples of the hunter’s code of conduct has been passed down mainly through examples in stories. Ìnkél says elders always advised hunters:

*Súwh-tš’éghèdúdính hink’àn jid lhá sèś nitástlèlh.*

preserving oneself only then in that way (neg) bear(s) will not attack you

‘bears will not attack you if one safeguards oneself’

Ìnkél tells another Tsínlhqút’ín bear story, Sès Nít’ásé’íz ‘a bear’s gaze caught up with someone’, in which a hunter is said to have kissed his newborn baby and he slept with his wife. It is said that sès yèt’ásé’íz ‘a bear’s gaze caught up with him’. While in the mountains hunting one day, the man saw bears with cubs on the other side of a field and he went to spear the bear. As soon as he sent his spears flying, the bear attacked and killed him, and ripped out his mouth, genitals, and limbs - the parts of his body which were in contact with his wife.

Along with many other restrictions, a male hunter is prohibited from touching his wife. If a man even does as much as touch his wife, a bear would kill him.\(^{25}\) A hunter is not to

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\(^{24}\) More research is required for suggestions on what a hunter is to do in the case that he is a twin, or becomes a widower. In instances where one must carry a dead body, I have heard that smudging with juniper considerably lessens the duration of the nimính energy.

\(^{25}\) It is also noted that sès, ts’iqí ts’ènz 逼近è ‘bears display extreme dislike for women’s clothing’:

*Yädáw ñinhlèh’èsäh ts’iqí ts’ènz nits’èniläh, sès yînlhšàn án ts’ènz èlhtháh-xásggåñz.* (it was on the news or rumoured) in the west, that in a specific location, a bag of woman’s clothing was placed somewhere, and a bear found the bag of clothes and immediately tore up the clothes.
share a bed with her. A more recent practice is for women to use a blanket to separate herself from her spouse. Jules Jetté and Eliza Jones (2000) noted that “both husband and wife sleep with their blankets over their heads” (563). Ìnkél also says:

\[ Gùbàts‘ègúdáh \quad \text{they are sensed by animals; ritually marked} \quad \text{will become} \quad \text{for this reason} \]
\[ \text{gwèqà} \]
\[ ìnèlx \quad \text{will become} \quad \text{for this reason} \]

\[ ìnèlx \quad \text{will become} \quad \text{for this reason} \]

\[ gùch‘á’ áts‘int‘ìh. \quad \text{one took preventative measures to keep oneself separated from them} \]
\[ \text{one took preventative measures (to keep oneself separated from one’s spouse) as a way to prevent (their spouses) from becoming ritually marked and therefore sensed by mammals} \]

The woman’s part in this event, should she sleep with her spouse, is described as \( děni-yès \ dílhjéd \) ‘she is dispersing it under him’. The expression suggests that there is something tangible which is being circulated underneath him, although the phrase does not imply anything in physical form being spread from one to the other. To clarify the term \( děni-yès \ dílhjéd \) here, it is unlikely that \( děni-yès \ dílhjéd \) refers to the spreading of blood through sexual intercourse. There are many cases mentioned in which plants, mammals, fish, and harvesting sites are affected by a \( nímính ‘s \) mere presence. For one example of the transfer of energy from a menstruant’s touch, line 13 in the story, the bear “left uneaten those parts of the silverweed roots the woman had held”, suggests that the woman may have handled the roots while she was menstruating. Ìnkél says, “Gwènîlmih sághini ‘it is likely that (the bear) considered (those food parts) to contain the \( nímính \) energy’”. She also says:
Lorna J. Marshall (1999) noted the same observation under “Hunting and Hunters” for the !Kung. During a menstruant’s first menses, she wrote that “to touch a hunter would be unthinkable among the !Kung. She must not even look at men or boys” for fear that “animals would see them from afar and run away” (192). In Ts’ihqút’in, a hunter must also refrain from touching newborn infants and from handling or carrying corpses for fear of becoming bàts’ègúdáh.

Returning to the term déžínlhjèd ‘you are spreading it about’; this term is also used to describe smudging (“spreading smoke”) as in ceremonial practice or in curing dried fish and meat. The term híjéd has the same root and could be used in the sentence áy híjéd lit. ‘the fog has dispersed’; ‘it is foggy’. In terms of the acuteness of animal senses, whatever is “dispersed” is obviously powerful enough for animals to sense a hunter who has been subjected to such manifestations and these hunters thereafter become gúbàts’ègúdáh ‘unsuccessful as a hunter’. The term also expresses that a hunter will be ‘sensed by animals’ and ‘avoided by animals’ (also noted in other traditions; Marshall 1999:192), and the hunter will not be able to approach game, and would also be vulnerable to bears.
We can assume from this chapter, that bears consider women to be niminh and her energy seems to permeate everything she touches. In chapter 8: Defining Niminh, the energy of niminh is further discussed, defined, and categorized.
PART THREE: THE CATEGORIES OF NÍMÍNH
CHAPTER 8
DEFINING NÍMÍNH

Nímính is a state of being, a condition in which one is imbued with sacred power, and for the sake of simplicity, one could gloss the expression nímính as ‘energy-carrier’. I use the words ‘sacred’ and ‘energy’ in translations here although there are no such terms in the Tsínlhqút’in language. The description ‘sacred power’ is more fitting than ‘spiritual power’ because the latter can be confused with shèn (also -yèn) ‘shamanistic power’, which nímính is definitely not. In the Tsínlhqút’in worldview, all is considered to be sacred and everything has energy, yet no specific terms are applied to all these forms of energy with two exceptions; we only have the collective noun nímính which is usually expressed using bigwënijèd ‘she\it is dangerously powerful’.

Nímính individuals are called gùbigwënijèd lit. ‘they are powerful’; ‘they are dangerous’. The term “dangerous” is not meant literally in the sense that nímính are feared, but that their energy is so powerful that it is avoided by wildlife. The energy can change the sacred or natural condition of plants, fish, and human bodies. It can cause deterioration to human conditions (health, internal organs), accelerate the aging process (noted in human hair and skin), cause plants to wither, cause the extinction of fish, and even cause the death of humans. The energy can cause imbalances to life forms - conditions which are irreversible and the same energy can also be used to heal people and to enhance plant growth. There are some rituals performed by nímính individuals to undo the effects of the energy. The term gùbigwënijèd is an indicator of the power of this energy; and it conveys
a forewarning and at the same time, it carries a deep respect for the energy. Basically, the term suggests an awareness of the capability of this energy. A possible cognate term in Diné *baha dzid* means ‘dangerous,’ ‘tabooed,’ or ‘sacriligious’ [sic] quoted from Mindeleff (A.R.B.A.E. 17th:488) and the context in which it was used was: “it would be *baha dzid*” to adorn common living quarters as done by the *Divin dine’è* ‘the gods’ (Beck and Walters 1977:293).

The definition of “niminh” has been somewhat elusive because *Ìnkél* in this study clarifies the meaning depending on context. In my experience, speakers vary their definitions using only one example and it is common for menstruants to be the standard prototype for defining *niminh*, and this selection may be because the instruction was for my own benefit. In instructing hunters, for example, elders likely give information on the care of guns. It is rare for *Tsìnlhqút’in* speakers to include all the possible categories when defining the term, however, shown in the following passage, *Ìnkél* describes *niminh*, excluding only twins and mother of twins.

*Niminh* nígwêniįjįd hélish jìts’ègùzh áh.

you are dangerous you become they call it (emph.)

When you become *niminh* they are referring to the fact that you have become dangerous.

*Ts’èniminh* ts’iqi-nâśindlin gûh jìniminh ts’èlish

when you are menstruating when one becomes

When one begins menstruating, one becomes *niminh* in this way

*hâgwêt’insh, sândînîh sînlín чûh, gû*

it happens widow; widower you became too in addition to

the same when one becomes a widow or widower

*dâtságh tâh nâśínqân tâ’ànènjâgh*

dead body as an example you carried you have done such things as this

the same applies to you when you happen to carry a dead body
gú xéncúh nèsqi tāh inlhútāh
in addition to sometimes your child as an example something
and sometimes when something [death] happens to your child

àjágh in ànánásíndlin
happens to him\her him\her; that person you prepared (the body of)
and you prepare the body [for burial]

gútāh, gú ts'ëniminh jégwédính.
and that sort of thing then they call it
these kind of things (which you may experience) are called ts'ëniminh.

Basically, individuals become niminh by means of the following ways (see Table 1), and these coincide with some of the rites of passage: birth, puberty, first birth of child, widowhood, and death. Most of these individuals in the table are passing through a vulnerable stage of life or else are mourning. In the case of mothers, they have demanding schedules and are always busy, so its reasonable to allow them to rest. As for twins, they are simply powerful and special, partly because twins are rare. The birth of twin may also be associated with mammalian births. Mammals are highly respected and know things beyond the capacity of the human mind. I provide a table below with individuals arranged from birth to death, and twins and mothers of twins bear the longest duration of niminh energy.
Table I: Categories of nîmînh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>yûz-tû ts ’înlin</th>
<th>eyùwh-áts ’âghint’î</th>
<th>ts ’iqîh-nânts ’êsdìlin</th>
<th>ŋândînh</th>
<th>dâtsâgh- nânânts ’el-hbìn</th>
<th>dâtsâgh- nânânts ’elhtìn</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) lit. ‘one is amniotic fluid’; a newborn infant’</td>
<td>lit. ‘one was different’</td>
<td>4) lit. ‘one has become a girl\woman again’; menstruating women; a menstruant’</td>
<td>7) ’a widow; a widower’</td>
<td>8) lit. ‘one who has bathed a corpse; a mortician’</td>
<td>9) lit. ‘one who has carried a corpse; a pallbearer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) ‘twins’</td>
<td>3) ’a mother of twins’</td>
<td>5) a new menstruant at puberty</td>
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<tr>
<td>6) after woman’s first childbirth</td>
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**duration of energy**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the entire month after birth</td>
<td>twins’ entire life</td>
<td>seven days normally during first menses at puberty</td>
<td>one entire year after the death of a spouse</td>
<td>three entire months after handling a corpse</td>
<td>three entire months after being a pallbearer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother - life after giving birth to twins</td>
<td>one month after the birth of a baby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**the most potent phases**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| during first menses at puberty | ’a widow; a widower’ | for three weeks after handling dead bodies | |
| after first childbirth | | | |

The wide-ranging categories of energy-carriers in addition to the varying degrees of energy held by individuals make this Tsinlhqût’în paradigm unique, because in other cultural knowledge regarding this same phenomena, only three phases of the Tsinlhqût’în model are perceived to be comparable, mainly menstruating women, widowhood, and

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26 I previously translated the duration of nîmînh energy for both dâtsâgh-nânânts ’elhbin, and dâtsâgh- nânânts ’elhtìn as being one year in this thesis, and also have this elswhere in my notes. For both individuals, though, the duration of the energy can be reduced through ritual and I have heard that for Pallbearers, the one year or three month period can be reduced to one week. With dâtsâgh-nânânts ’elhbin, there is an initial potent phase in which individuals who have prepared corpses for burial must wear gloves while eating, so as not to ingest the energy. More research is required for all the nîmînh categories.
physical contact with the dead (see for example The Old Testament of the Judeo-
Christian tradition). For the rest of this chapter, I will define the nímính categories and
discuss them briefly. I will present more on nímính ritual restrictions in Part 4: The Care
of Subsistence Resources and Part 5: Sùwh-thouse ‘preserving oneself; taking
care of self (and others)’ while carrying the energy of nímính.

8.1 Yáz-tú ts’ìnlin lit. ‘one is amniotic fluid; newborn infants’

The first month of infanthood is described as yáz-tú ts’ìnlin lit. ‘one is amniotic fluid’.
Infants are considered to be nímính in the same way as menstruants or widows, but this
is not firmly stated. Babies are generally protected, and are vulnerable to viruses and
bacteria, because they have weak immune systems, so it makes sense to keep them
somewhat secluded. Infants likely have fewer ritual restrictions since they cannot move
about freely, and this may be reason little is said about them. Ìnkél explains the term yáz-
tú ts’ìnlin to some extent in the excerpt below:

\[\text{Yáz-tú } \text{ jìnlìn } \text{ ságûts'édénish } \text{ àh.} \]
\[\text{amniotic fluid } \text{ they are } \text{ it must be the reason why they’re called that (emph.)} \]
\[\text{it may be that (infants) are actually amniotic fluid, since they are called that} \]

\[\text{Nènch’àn } \text{ át’ìn } \text{ í } \text{ yáz-tú } \text{ hát’ínsh.} \]
\[\text{from you } \text{ flowing out } \text{ that amniotic fluid } \text{ it is that} \]
\[\text{what flows out of you [during birthing] is amniotic fluid} \]

\[\text{Àndzánh } \text{ dénì } \text{ jélìsh, } \text{ in íyèn } \text{ sánh } \text{ jénímìnìh } \text{ sáyët’ìny} \]
\[\text{immediately } \text{ person } \text{ become } \text{ them } \text{ them possibly } \text{ they must be} \]
\[\text{newly born (infants); it is perhaps they who are } \text{jenímìnìh} \]
There is one reference regarding amniotic fluid from an Inland Tlingit quoted by Catharine McClellan (2001) in her section “Conception, Pregnancy, and Birth”. She noted that a ‘‘baby’s water’ is the worst thing for a shaman – worse than menstrual blood. That water is dangerous to the lxt’27 [shaman]” (379). This fluid, she says, is further said to drown the shaman’s spirit power. It seems possible, as well, that the baby’s condition is influenced by the fact that the mother is menstruating for one month, during her post-partum period (her most potent time), and the baby is in close physical contact with her during this time. I include yáž-tú ts’ínlìn lit. ‘one is amniotic fluid’ here as part of the Tsinlhqít’in nímînh classification because hunters must not touch them, lest they become gùbâts’égúdåh. As an illustration for this form of nímînh, İnkél told about a man who was widely recognized as a successful hunter and it is known that he safeguarded this aptitude during his entire life.

27 lxt’ [shaman] (Tlingit) has a dot under the [x] (McClellan 2001;379).
It is said that one man never carried infants for fear of becoming bâts'ègúdáh.

He was afraid for; he suspected that and was careful.

It is said that he touched only his youngest son; when his youngest son passed by in front of him; he would stretch out his arm to briefly hold him against him.

He likely considered it to be dangerous to do so.

He probably did not sleep with his wife when she became that way (menstruating).
8.2 *Ts’iqí-náts’èdlísh* lit. ‘one becomes a women again; one begins to menstruate again’

*Ts’iqí-náts’èdlísh* lit. ‘to become a woman again’\(^{28}\) is a period which is thought to be extremely *gwèniminh* ‘(the subject matter) is dangerously powerful’ (also observed more generally by Starck 1993:38; Wright 2003:4; Beck and Walters 1977:217), particularly more so during the first menses at puberty (see also Marshall 1999:192 on !Kung traditions) and for a month after a mother’s first childbirth,\(^{29}\) which is the first post-partum period. These potent times exist until the end of the woman’s menses.

Most written documents today seem to affirm the *Tsínlhqút’ín* view of menstruants, for example, Lorna Marshall (1999:188) described the potency of menstruants among the !Kung and noted that “menstrual blood is not believed to be unclean or to defile, as it is

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\(^{28}\) *Ínkél* says that it appears that women did not always menstruate; that men were the first to experience menstruation and even pregnancy during ancient times, and later a man transferred this condition to women by flicking his finger at a woman. Beck and Walters (1977:226) quoted a similar story under the section “Havasupai Origin of Menstruation”: “While coyote was skinning it [a deer] he put his finger in the blood and flipped it on the inside of the girl’s thigh” (Smithson, 1971:36-37).

Mary C. Wright (2003:4), a professor at the University of Washington quoted the Shuswap story “Coyote Makes Women Menstruate”, documented by James Teit:

> Formerly the men menstruated, and not the women. When Coyote was working in the world, putting things to right, he considered this matter, and said to himself. "It is not right that men should menstruate. It is very inconvenient, for they do all the hunting and most of the traveling. Women stay more at home, and therefore it will be better if they menstruate, and not the men." Whereupon he took some of the menstrual fluid from men, and threw it upon the women, saying, "Henceforth, women shall menstruate, and not men. They shall menstruate once a month or with every moon."

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\(^{29}\) I provide below loose translations of *èsqi-tší’álh*, an interesting term which *Ínkél* brought up in her discussion of menstruation:

*Sà inlí gu’en hink’án sé’ánats’èt’ínsh, ésqi nènts’úgh hélh’tóg chúh.*

the menses (during the post-partum period) lasts for over a month, even though you are nursing an infant

*Là èch’ilh’áh inlíhés géchúgh ts’iqí-nášìndlín éyi “èsqi-tší’álh” jíd jégúzìh.*

After (the post-partum period), when you have an intense flow; they call that (period) an infant’s pillow
thought in some cultures. Instead…it is strong - a vital, powerful life substance.” Jean-Guy A. Goulet (1998) cited from Joan Ryan’s (1995:29) report, “Doing Things the Right Way: Dene Traditional Justice in Lac La Martre, NWT”. She used “the term ‘endanger’ rather than ‘contamination’ to refer to ‘a woman’s power to affect men’s ability to hunt, thus endangering the survival of the group’” (95).

Catharine McClellan (2001) connected menstrual tabus to those proscribed for widows in her section “Girl’s Puberty” where she noted that among Dene and Tlingit in the Yukon at the start of a girl’s first menstruation “for a period of roughly two years, the girl was considered to be especially ŁAkas (tabu)” (386). She adds that this period “was a condition that characterized her at every menstrual period throughout her life, at the birth of every child (though most especially the first one), and to some degree on every occasion that she became a widow” (359). For this period, Tsilhqút’in have the term níghëts’è’in ‘raised in a sheltered way; unknown to men; kept away from men’, to indicate a girl’s traditional upbringing. Níghëts’è’in seems to be related to the period of seclusion mentioned by Catharine McClellan above. İnkél defines this term in the Tsilhqút’in story, Lhíndësch’ós̓h ‘the girl who married a dog’.
The girl\woman was bèghèts’è’ìn; she was not allowed to look at boys\men.

It is said that she gave birth to dogs and one became angry with her saying,

“You are nèghèts’è’ìn; you are not allowed to go near boys\men;”

That’s how you were raised. .... When girls\women are gùghèts’è’ìn, they are not to look at people in crowds, instead they must turn their backs.

They cannot look towards the entryways;

These individuals are the ones who are called gùghèts’è’ìn.

They are kept away from boys\men.

Charlie Quilt said, “The dog was courting someone without anyone’s knowledge,” specifically, Ìnkél said “they thought that no man had a sexual relationship with her.” Livingston Farrand used the term “virgin” which in the language would be “sèx-náyáh,” a word also understood to mean “single or without child.” Farrand’s choice of the English term eliminates a culturally significant part of the story. The girl was raised bèghèts’è’ìn,
which refers to the fact that she was prepared for life in the Dene custom. She had to yield to ancient laws and adhere to cultural practices from the time of her birth.

8.3 Èyùwh-âts’âghint’i lit. ‘one was different; twins; mother of twins’

Èyùwh-âts’âghint’i lit. ‘one was different' refers to twins and ‘mother of twins' and this term further designates these individuals as being gùbigwënijëd lit. 'they are dangerous; powerful' for their entire lives and gùnchágh jìd jënimì ‘they are exceptionally niminh’. The other expression used to indicate twins is nándính bélh càn jàghìnqí ‘they were in-utero with two’.

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30 In this connection, note that forked trees, forked branches, and forked plant roots are set apart for reasons which are not fully explained. While harvesting pitch from trees, Tsínhkut’in often warn others with them, dèchèn èlhiniłhjes lhà bà dzàx tì’esàn ‘one doesn’t eat pitch gum from forked trees’. Forked branches are mentioned by the Koyukon in Jules Jetté and Eliza Jones (2000:563) noting a term which means:

Abstaining from eating (animal) heads; it (beaver) is abstaining from eating the head (the top forked end) of sticks [and] this refers to the pregnant beaver for whom it is taboo to eat the top forked end or head of a stick. One can tell if there is a male beaver around by the presence of these stick 'heads' which indicate the presence of a pregnant female.

A forked plant is noted by Lorna Marshall (1999:194) among the !Kung:

The women told us that sha [plant root] is especially favored because it grows in soft sand. However, sha sometimes occurs as a double root, forked, and such a one must be avoided by all young girls. A forked !xwa [plant; storage organ] must also be avoided. No one could explain the significance of the soft sand and the forked roots.

31 James Alexander Teit (1900:310-311) noted elaborate twin rituals for the Thompson which are unknown practices to Ìnkél:

A woman about to be delivered of twins was generally made aware of the fact beforehand by the repeated appearance of the grisly [sic] bear in her dreams; therefore twins were regarded as different from other children, and were treated accordingly. They were called “grisly-bear children” or “hairy feet.” ... [and] were supposed to be under the special protection of the grisly bear, and were endowed by him with special powers. [Parents of twins moved away from other people] until the children were four years of age, [and from the time of their birth the twins received a series of ceremonial treatments including bear song rituals].
The main examples Ìnkél brings to the discussion of twins are about their ability to transform events. Tsinlhqüt’ín twins have the ability to manifest events by their actions and thoughts. As an example, it is said that gùžì ’àlh’ágwédính jíd nájéjévísh ’when they speak, their mouths speak the truth’, i.e. if they tell you that you will be healed, you will be healed. They cannot bathe when fine weather is desired because yájégúnhtsén ‘they create bad weather’ (also in Teit 1900:311 concerning Thompson traditions). Their actions, including splashing water while bathing or washing, is believed to influence the weather and cause rain to fall. Twin children are prohibited from playing in water too often during the summer and, as with all who are nimính, must use a cloth to wipe their faces. In addition to this, it is said that in the winter, if a twin sets fire on a specific site where a death occurred, s/he would cause all the snow to melt and bring about early spring weather. These occurrences are called jélh ’élhigwél’íns’ ‘like attracts like’; ‘they copy’; ‘they repeat (human) actions’.32

32 As a side note, infants are said to ijél’íns’ or jélh ’élhigwél’íns’ ‘they copy’ or ‘they mimic’ experiences; and one example, in this context, is if a pregnant woman eats berries during her pregnancy, the berries may attach themselves to an area on her infant’s body and appear as a birthmark. This is also called “nįźt’ań gubits’ílnh” lit. ‘berries are swallowed onto them’. The birthmark(s) look similar in color and shape to the berry eaten. Other ‘copying’ or ‘imitating’ tendencies are given to the weather, to one’s intentions, to fish, and to spring beauty, and to berries (nánátlig ‘berries fall off their bush’ when picked). Ceremonies carried out by nimính individuals are based on this same phenomena: bish-ts’édézōsh ‘putting (fish oil) into (the mouths of fish) to fatten them; and lhúy xánátats’édelósh ‘leading fish upstream’ past a ritual blockage so as to unblock the stream.
8.4 Šándínlh ‘widow; widower’

A widow or widower is perceived as gúbígweníjèd lit. ‘they are dangerous’ inlhèd xì gwèts'en gághènt'ilh; ëlxhènàgwèdindzìd gwèts'en, egú nìmính tághènìáx ‘for one year’.33 Ëlxhèn déžinlt'sìh ‘as a result of living together’, a Tsinlhqút’in couple is considered to àjènilht'id gúdél gánt'ìh hèlìsh ‘become as sharing one-blood’ (also gúdél inlhi dzanh hèlìsh). Šándínlh has the same root as nàndìn lh 'ghost' and this seems significant in light of the Tsinlhqút’in definition which is further supported by the statement: when a spouse dies, the remaining widow/widower chùh bènès ch'ádéjàgh gághúnt'ìh ‘is as if his/her body was dead as well; his/her body is equivalent to being dead’.

Ts'ënìmình gwèch'á nágwèdint'i jìgwàyàjèltìg, Šándínlh more than it is more powerful they say widows; widowers

ts'èlìsh one becomes

it is claimed that (widowhood) is more powerful than nìmình energy [and has the same potency as corpses].34

Likewise, Catharine McClellan (2001) noted that among Tlingit and Tagish “new widows and widowers were subjected to various tabus and most of these observances emphasized

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33 Catharine McClellan (2001) noted “four, five, or maybe 10 days after the funeral” (275) [but] “the formal period of mourning expected was said to be two years…” (399). There seems to be a contradiction in the length of time a widow is deemed to be potent. At one point she wrote that “a widow or widower is said to remain I'Ákas for four, five, or maybe 10 days after the funeral” (375) and later said, “like the new menstruant, the widow could not...eat fresh fish or fresh meat for a year, nor could she eat porcupine or bear for two years, except at the risk of death” (399). There are no such time specifications for Tsinlhqút’in widows or widowers in my transcriptions so far, but this does not mean that the same time periods do not exist. This is an area for further research.
the close link between the lives of the spouses. The bereaved spouse was similarly thought to be in a supernatural state and thus his actions would affect his own future and that of his close relatives” [398]. She also stated that “…the widow or widower is ḨAkas [tabu] in much the same way that the girl is at puberty or as are both parents at the birth of a first-born child. Apparently some of the observances also apply to the mother and possibly the father on the death of a child” (375). I suspect that in the latter case, that the observances are built into the culture to allow time for the grieving process after the loss of a child. It is interesting that among the !Kung “…a widow is washed in the first rain that falls after her husband’s death to cleanse her of his death. She should not remarry until she is cleansed” (Marshall 1999:96).

35 Tsínhlhqút’in elders do not mention ritual washing for widows or widowers except for ones who have handled dead bodies and hunters before a hunt. Some Tsínhlhqút’in hunters cleanse in a sweatbath before a hunt. Catharine McClellan (2001) found so much information on widows, and many of the restrictions she noted are much like those for the menstruant.

A widow could not to touch sharp objects (398) nor “eat fresh fish or fresh meat for a year…” (399) “…does not speak to her children or to others…” (275) a member of the opposite moiety had to comb” her hair, and “washed…the ḨAkas out of the woman’s head” (376).

35 Rojas (2003) compared bathing and scratching to meditation and noted that “the practice of "mindfulness" and the pattern of meditation, bathing, and ritual scratching in Apurowak are foundational for the regeneration and reformation of spiritual and moral action that can then be carried back into everyday life. In Buddhist tradition this is known as meditation in action” (136).
8.5 *Dènì nánáts’èlhtìn* lit. ‘one carried a dead body; a pallbearer’

*Dènì nájéqásh* ‘pallbearers’ *chûh èlxènàgwêdindżid gwêts’én háyt’ínsh, ìnlhéd xî* ‘(are *nîmînh*) for one year’. There is a bit of an uncertainty about the length of time a pallbearer is considered to be *nîmînh*. Some have said three weeks, and this may be in reference to the most potent phase. One advantage of being *nîmînh* is that one has the ability to heal others intentionally and pallbearers also bear this gift. See Part 5: *Sûwh-tš’èghèdúdînh* for more information for *nîmînh* traditions.

8.6 *Dènì nánáts’èlhbin* lit. ‘one bathed a dead body; a mortician’

*Dènì nánáts’èlhbin* lit. ‘one bathed a dead body (for burial)’ are individuals who remain *nîmînh* for one entire year. These individuals undergo an initial potent phase in which they must wear gloves while eating, so as not to ingest the energy. I include much of the information on restrictions for this category and additional anecdotes in Part 5: *Sûwh-tš’èghèdúdînh* ‘preserving oneself; taking care of self (and others)’ while carrying the energy of *nîmînh*, for the reason that much of the observations are shared with the other categories of *nîmînh*.

There is a lack of detailed documentation on the ancient preparation of bodies for burials among *Tsnîlhqît’in*. There is a one to three week restriction for individuals who prepare the dead for burial and these include not handling fresh meat and fish; not touching or
carrying children, and covering the hands with gloves so as not to touch food while eating.

As mentioned already, there are many more observances for nîmînh individuals which will be covered in Part 5: Sûwh-tssh’égheđúdînh ‘preserving oneself; taking care of self (and others)’ while carrying the energy of nîmînh. There are other respectful observances in relation to game animals and fish, including the gear used to obtain these resources. These observances support what has been discussed previously regarding the treatment of animal remains. The sacredness in which these traditional activities are carried out cannot be truly realized without knowing the people’s personal experiences and without knowing about nîmînh energy. Kwesi Baffoe (2005) stated that “traditional religions tend to find the sacred within aspects of everyday life”. There is no Tsînlhqút’ín term for “sacred” or “spiritual” likely because everything is considered to be sacred. The natural environment stimulates an energy of gratitude, and for people who have lived for centuries in one area, nature provides close connections to one’s ancestors. Stones, creatures, and vegetation are sacred, and water from the river\(^\text{36}\) and mountains are ancient ancestors. The yearly journey of salmon, our relationship with everything, and all our activities on the land are spiritual. Tsînlhqút’ín life is full of rituals and ceremonies. A hunter begins the day with a purification ceremony, and makes a request for a successful hunt, and calls upon the ancestors. A successful hunt ends with a thanksgiving ceremony where food is shared with the ancestors. Ïnkél prays all the time. She prays while she is riding a horse, while she is gardening, walking, resting, eating, and traveling in a vehicle.

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\(^{36}\) The Tsînlhqút’ín river is addressed as YèdàDënîlin ‘Long-Ago-Person’ by elders and is known for its healing properties.
Almost anything a niminh individual does is regarded as a ritual including the daily cleansing of self and touching self, others, and hunting items and berry-picking is a ceremony in itself.

The next part, The Care of subsistence Resources (chapters 9 to 14), covers further Tsinlhqút’in ritual avoidances, specifically on subsistence resource. These include, stepping over or touching subsistence tools, handling fresh fish and meat, and walking near fish harvest sites. The ritual treatments to hunting and fishing resources together with gear are also covered.

37 Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters cite from a source on Cheyenne “Menstruation Practices and Belief”, an area which is worth looking into with Tsinlhqút’in elders. They quote G.B. Grinnell who noted, “Young men will not eat from the dish nor drink from the pot used by her; one who did so would expect to be wounded in his next fight. She may not handle or even touch a shield or any other war implement, nor may she touch any sacred bundle or object” (221-222).
PART FOUR: THE CARE OF SUBSISTENCE RESOURCES
CHAPTER 9

*DÉ’ÁTS’ÈT’ÍNSH ‘CAUSING RITUAL OBSTRUCTIONS’ (TO SUBSISTENCE RESOURCES)*

I use the expression subsistence resources in this section to include game animals, fur-bearing mammals, fish, and hunting, trapping, and fishing gear, and this overall, also includes plants and berries. All subsistence activities are prohibited for *nimính* individuals and this chapter covers only mammals and fish.

From the seasonal round table below, one can assume that game and fish are of equal importance. Fish was the reliable source of protein in the past, likely because of their variety and availability. An assortment of food is the general preference in any home whether in the past or in the present. Plant roots are now gathered in smaller quantities with more reliance on garden vegetables. As always, berries are sought after, even if one has to go a long distance to find them.

The majority of boxes marked in this table suggest that fresh food is being brought in every season and each month, therefore, *nimính* individuals are obligated to always note the freshness of incoming food and take the necessary precautions. In the month of September, for example, hunters may bring home rabbits, grouse, fish, or game animals; women may harvest *chinsdàd* ‘silver weed roots’ and garden vegetables, pick a variety of berries, and milk cows.
Table II: The seasonal round - subsistence activities mentioned in relation to *niminh*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
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<td>trapping</td>
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<td>fishing(^{38})</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>hunting(^{39})</td>
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<tr>
<td>root harvesting(^{40})</td>
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<td>berry gathering</td>
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<td>vegetable gardening</td>
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<td>ranching</td>
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\(^{38}\) Fish species mentioned by Ìnkél on the subject of niminh include dëk'âny ‘rainbow trout’ (*Salmo gairdneri*), nìnlh ‘kokanee trout’ (or mountain whitefish) (*Prosopium williamsoni*), and ts'èmân ‘sockeye salmon’ (*Oncorhynchus nerka*).

\(^{39}\) Mammal species mentioned in the recordings on niminh include: chèl'ig ‘coyote’ (*Canis latrans*), nábi ‘muskrat’ (*Ondatra zibethica*), nìsts’ì ‘blacktail deer’ (*Odocoileus hemionus*), nündí ‘lynx’ (*Lynx canadensis*), nìntsín ‘grizzly bear’ (*Ursus arctos*), and sès ‘black bear’ (*Ursus americanus*).

\(^{40}\) Wild plant roots, bulbs, and corms which were specifically mentioned in the recordings on niminh: chinšdâd ‘common silverweed roots, cinquefoil (*Potentilla anserina* L. ssp. *anserina*), èsghùnsh ‘yellow glacier lily bulbs’ (*Erythronium grandiflorum*), and sùnt’îny ‘western spring beauty corms’ (*Claytonia lanceolata*).
The overall *Tsínłhqít’in* term *dé’áts’èt’ìnsh*{41} ‘causing ritual obstructions’ (to subsistence resources) encapsulates all that is outlined below in relation to subsistence resources:

A. the ritual blocking of any item used to catch or kill wildlife (including fish) can be caused by
   a. a hunter who has assaulted the fresh remains of his catch\kill by
      i. clubbing
      ii. sawing the bones
   b. a single offence by *nimín* individuals via contact with the
      i. …the gun, fish net, etc. by means of
         1. touching
         2. stepping over
      ii. fresh remains of the catch\kill via
         1. harvesting
         2. touching
         3. handling
         4. retrieving from a net\trap
         5. cutting
         6. sawing
         7. eating fresh
         8. stepping over
      iii. fresh blood of the remains by
         1. touching
         2. stepping over
         3. walking on
         4. consuming

B. the ritual blocking of any resource site where food is harvested can be caused by
   a. the presence of *nimín*
   b. the presence of a corpse

These offences are known to have historically set outcomes: objects become *èsqwàyàx* ‘sensed by wildlife’, leading to the alienation of wildlife; and in a few instances, *nimín* energy can impair the health or cause the extinction of fish in a particular lake.

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{41} *Dé’áts’èt’ìnsh* is a general term which is also used to indicate a premonition, and in that case, it is defined as ‘one sometimes experiences a forewarning of a future event, i.e. the experience of an odd vision which forewarns an inevitable future event. In addition, *dé’áts’èt’ìnsh* could be used in other contexts, including future events, i.e. *béddé’ásjágh* ‘I caused a halt to his plans’; ‘I experienced a precognition/forewarning about him/her\it (an occurrence experienced by one which foreshadows a future event)’.
Table III: Examples of the effects of níminh on subsistence resources

There are additional Tsinlhqüt’íhn expressions which are used to describe the effects of níminh on subsistence resources and on resource sites and these terms are shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dé'áts’ët’ính</th>
<th>examples of the effects/visual changes caused by níminh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>subsistence gear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) bédéts ’élhfish ‘one ritually blocks (fish) by retrieving them from (a net)’</td>
<td>6) èsqwàyäx ‘state wherein a subsistence gear is ritually marked by níminh energy, therefore can be sensed by wildlife’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) bédáts’èyásh ‘one ritually blocks (subsistence resources) by walking (near butchering site or by walking on blood)’</td>
<td>7) èqèx náts’élèx han ts’ughints’ád ‘they were retrieved from (a net and thus) were ritually treated’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) also gwédáts’èyásh ‘one ritually blocks a resource site by walking (near a waterway, or fishing site)’</td>
<td>8) lhàghèmbínlh nàdísdzáy lit. ‘a net became dry’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) bédéts’èt’ísh ‘one ritually blocks (subsistence tools) by cutting (fresh meat/fish)’</td>
<td>9) èłhín\ lhàghèmbínlh ts’étáltshànax ‘one will ruin the gun/fish net/fish’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) bédáts’èyíns’h ‘one ritually blocks (subsistence tools) by eating (fresh fish/meat)’</td>
<td>10) èłhín dél bixá gàgòsh ‘blood comes out of the gun’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Column A:** All subsistence resources and related gear can be ritually obstructed (No. 1-5), but the terms listed here do not refer to the effects on plants and berries. There are other terms to describe the effects on plants and berries. Generally, any of the activities No. 1-5 can have an affect on fish (7, 9, 12, 13, 14) and fish nets (6, 8, 9) as well as game (11) and hunting/trapping implements (6, 9, 10).

**Columns B and C:** Guns and traps (6, 9, 10), game (11), fish (7, 9, 12, 13, 14), fish nets (6, 8, 9), resource sites (9, 15), and plants (7, 9, 12).

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42 No. 7 èqèx náts’élèx han ts’ughints’ád can be placed in both columns B and C and in the context of handling fish; the visual effects of this activity includes 8, 9, 12, 13, 14. The broad term ts’ughints’ád or rather ets’úts’ád ‘one performs a ritual’ is explained in more detail in Part 5: Sínwh-ti’éghédu’dín. Anything a níminh individual does is said to be a ritual because s/he carries the energy and this energy alters life forms and objects, or balances them wherever s/he goes.
Note above that there is only one reference for game animals in the columns B and C, but there are five for fish. I assume that fish are smaller and so are more vulnerable to the effects of niminh energy. Today, hunting is done more frequently than fishing, but there are more terms and rituals for fish. As already mentioned, the extended vocabulary for fish is likely due to the heavy reliance on fish in the past. The term èsqwàyàx in the table is also used to mean niminh or bâts’ègúdáh and these variations are shown in the following pages.

Classifications related to niminh and to subsistence gathering:

*Niminh* ‘an individual who carries energy’: this energy, whether retained by a person, object, or place has an element of power which is sensed by animals and fish. If a prohibition is ignored by a niminh individual, the restricted action is described as a ritual act, because the contact and presence results either in a balance of energy or an imbalance. The ritual offence may not be a deliberate ritual perhaps, but as effective as if it were intended.

Èsqwàyàx ‘a state wherein objects used for hunting, trapping, and fishing are ritually marked by niminh energy, rendering them useless for hunting, trapping, and fishing because animals avoid them’. This also happens with ones who are not carrying niminh energy; if one clubs a fish, the offended fish species will thereafter evade the net; and, it is claimed that the fish net will still become èsqwàyàx and will from then on be sensed by all species of fish. This is also described as, nèlâghèmbínlh dé’ânènt’anx ‘you are
creating an obstacle against your fish net’. *Nímính* energy is visually undetectable by the human eye, and its not clearly known how animals and fish sense it and how they recognize it on nets or traps and avoid it. It has been noted that guns which are *èsqwàyàx géchùgh tétélh hélísh* ‘kick more’.

**Gùbàts’ègúdáh** ‘unsuccessful hunters; a state in which hunters are ritually marked by *nìmính* energy, therefore can be sensed by wildlife, thus are avoided’. *Nàts’ègúðâh* means you cannot kill a mammal because they run away from you even if you are a long distance away. It appears that mammals feel the gaze of ones who are *gùbàts’ègúdáh*. Ìnkél says, if you happen to see a mammal, *gàngú xúlé(ž)d gát’insh* ‘they react as if they have been scorched, and *xentsel niljúsh sàt’insh* ‘they are perhaps instantly struck by fear’, that is, *bini’iz bèlh* ‘as soon as your gaze falls on them’.

Ìnkél and others have sometimes used the terms *nìmính, bàts’ègúdáh, and èsqwàyàx* interchangeably. Misplacing of words is likely to happen especially in an oral setting. It is challenging to discuss *nìmính* and to instantly recall all its related terms. The human mind sometimes is not quick enough to discharge specific terms when there are too many choices of terms, especially in the case of advanced age, fatigue, or relaying information in the midst of a hectic day. *Bàts’ègúdáh* is sometimes used to refer to *nìmính* individuals as well; however, the three terms seem to be differentiated between animate-human and animate non-human. *Nìmính* and *bàts’ègúdáh* for animate-human (although sometimes used in reference to a dog and also for guns) and *èsqwàyàx* for animate-other (dogs, objects). Ìnkél used *èsqwàyàx* and *bàts’ègúdáh* to refer to a hunting dog which refused to
hunt after being beaten by a *niminh* individual, even though an implement was used as the weapon. To clear the dog, a gunny sack is placed over its body and it is brushed with a juniper bush, while saying, "Èsqwàyàx ṣinlín, nènch'âgwènùwèjùd" 'You have become èsqwàyàx, may you be cleared'. This is done four mornings in a row and the gear will no longer be èsqwàyàx.

In the following example, in explaining the effects of *niminh* energy and a method for clearing a gun, Ìnkél used both “èsqwàyàx” and “niminh”:

"Èsqwàyàx ṣinlín, nènch'âgwènùwèjùd" ‘You have become ritually marked you have become may you be cleared you say you do it this way then

xsùghènlhtšèš.

you whip it (more than once)

You say to it, “You have become èsqwàyàx, may you be cleared” then you brush it (lightly more than once with a smouldering juniper bough)

"Nènch'âgwènùwèjùd, *niminh* ṣinlín,“ ts'ediny; "Nènch'âgwènùwèjùd” may you be cleared you have become one says may you be cleared

ts'ediny ts'uílhtšish.

one says It is whipped

It is told, “May you be cleared, you have become *niminh*”; it is told, “May you be cleared,” and then it is brushed (lightly)

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43 *Niminh* individuals clear items and other life using positive words which may be called prayer and Kenneth Cohen (2003) stated that “breath is related to speech and prayer. To speak is to combine thoughts or feelings with sacred breath. When we think good thoughts and speak good words, we spread blessings into the wind” (228).
I give the translation for *nènch’ágwènúwéjúd* as ‘may you be cleared’, although the same root –*júd* in *gwèch’ànúghújúd* means ‘let’s chase it\him\her away from there’. Similarly, the root for both *xútåghènlhtšëš* and *ts'úlhtšish* is actually “whip” but the manner in which this ritual is done can only be described as “brushing”. “Brushing” is the term used by coastal peoples on Vancouver Island.

*Bighinlhghil ‘it sat overnight’*: Man-made subsistence gear become *èsqwàyàx* through a number of ways. Prior to the twenty-four hour waiting period, fresh blood is considered to be a living presence, even the blood from animals which one normally considers dead. An animal is not completely dead until a night has passed. One who is *nimính* cannot in any way touch fresh fish or meat, instead must wait until the following day after the fish or meat have been hanging overnight and have turned cold. Fresh meat or fish which is still warm is considered to retain its spirit and so are deemed to be still alive until their blood turns cold; *bedèl ch’áyádìt’ìnsh* lit. ‘their blood dies’. In regards to bones,

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44 Kwesi Baffoe (2005) documented some of the traditions of the Sayisi Dene and he explained that “since blood represents life force, it has to be handled very carefully and only the elderly are permitted to consume soup made from the blood. Women are never allowed to step over meat, blood or hunting gear and menstruating women and pubescent girls are prohibited from handling either meat or blood”. I have heard that among the Tsinlhqu’in, blood was consumed in times of famine.

Mary C. Wright (2003) in her article, “The Woman's Lodge: Constructing Gender on the Nineteenth-Century Pacific Northwest Plateau” paraphrased a passage relating to respect for blood as well. She noted that “among the Cherokee, argues historian Theda Perdue, blood was believed to contain a being’s life or spirit and demanded to be treated with the ritual care, whether in menstruation, or a childbirth, or, for men, in hunting and warfare. That many of the same rules—seclusion, purification, prayer—were followed by men during their blood-related war or hunting activities as by women during menstruation underscores that the blood was at issue, not the sex of the human interacting with it (4). This passage comes from Theda Perdue’s (1998) book, Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835.
this length of time is not long enough. Animals simply dislike their bones being sawed.\textsuperscript{45} \n
\textit{Ínkël} explains this further:

\begin{verbatim}
Ínlhéd tèz ghinli chùh gûntsén, bègwéd idints\textsuperscript{̀}iny.
\end{verbatim}

once night long too it is bad its bones you make noise upon

gúchúh, ñad tsíny ghinli egúchúh bègwéd

even then a long time (emph.) its bones even then its bones

\begin{verbatim}
idints\textsuperscript{̀}iny, gûntsén, jèdènish.
\end{verbatim}

you make noise upon it is bad they say

\textit{it is said that it is bad (disrespectful) to “clunk” upon bones whether bones have sat overnight or longer}

When animal bones are sawed by an individual, \textit{niminh} or not, the gun used to shoot the animal will become \textit{èsqwàwàx}. Disrespectful acts such as this or \textit{bet\textsuperscript{̀}èdè\textsuperscript{̀}ìnlt\textsuperscript{̀}i} ‘clubbing fresh catch on the head’ are expressed as \textit{ni’inltìn dé\textsuperscript{̀}ánènt\textsuperscript{̀}ánx} ‘you are (breaking a prohibition and) causing an obstruction against your gun’ and \textit{èsqwàwàx hèlàx} ‘will cause animals to sense your gun’.\textsuperscript{46}

\textit{Nich\textsuperscript{̀}an nánít\textsuperscript{̀}ish} lit. ‘(animals) will turn away from the hunter’ is discussed in chapter 7: \textit{Gùbàgùján} ‘successful hunters’. It is difficult for the hunter to find animals if s/he disregards hunting and trapping rules. There are respectful observations which are

\textsuperscript{45} Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant (1996:109) noted the phrase “bone of my bones” (Genesis 2:23). There is another curious section in the Judeo-Christian Bible, Leviticus 19:10-13, which refers to the eating of blood. Chevalier and Gheerbrant listed many traditions, unknown to me, which have customs regarding bones; some which are similar to \textit{Tsinlhqut\textsuperscript{̀}in} traditions on the respectful treatment of bones. They list: Finno-Ugrians, Karaga, Karghinz, Lapps, Mongolo-Turhic, Orok, Sagay, Soyot, Tubalar, Telingit, Tungus, and Yakut (109-110).

\textsuperscript{46} On treatment of mammals, Kwesi Baffoe (2005) indicated that “traditionally, the Dene believe that it is imperative an animal be killed with a single spear and under no circumstances should a wounded animal be clubbed to death”.

mentioned for trappers which are different than those for hunting and these rules are not necessarily confined to just *niminh* individuals.

*Del bìxágòsh* ‘blood will come out of (the gun)’: There is a phenomena of massive bruising on the flesh of game when a gun which is *èsqwàyàx* is used to kill game, and this happens quite often today because fast moving vehicles are used in hunting and it is easier to get close to game even though hunters carry rifles which have become *èsqwàyàx*. An animal shot with such a gun will have considerable bruising on the site of its wound. In some cases, a single bullet can cause massive damage, *bèch’èž gágúnlhchúgh xúlhdéllh šèllin* ‘causing the whole side of the animal to be blackened with clotted blood’, and what is originally flesh is soft, almost jelly-like. The damage is on the flesh around the entrance to the wound and *inlch’èś yàxághintsí ègwènz chùh k’èsél gágúnlhchúgh* ‘all around the exit as well’. There are two phrases for this occurrence: *del bìxágòsh* ‘blood will come out of the (gun)’ and *gágúnlhchúgh wélhdéllh* ‘it will have blood clots all over (its flesh)’. This phrase *del bìxágòsh* implies that the gun, which is *èsqwàyàx*, is believed to somehow have the capacity to inject blood via the bullet.
CHAPTER 10

BÉDÉTS’ÉLHTÌSH ‘ONE RITUALLY BLOCKS (HUNTING GEAR) BY RETRIEVING REMAINS OF (FISH\MAMMALS)’

As shown previously in Table III which shows the examples of the effects of nìmính on subsistence resources, the act of taking fish from a net, when done by one who is nìmính, sets off a series of events or circumstances:

1. Lhàghèmbínlh bèdé ’áts’èt’ínsh lhà jid binéts’údlósh gúláh hèlìsh
when one obstructs a fish net, one can no longer catch fish with it
   A. Lhàghèmbínlh nádísdzáy lit. ‘the net became dry’
   B. Èsqwàyàx ‘the net becomes ritually marked by nìmính energy, therefore can be sensed by fish; fish become afraid of a net’

2. Lhà lhàghèmbínlh qéx néts’étàšdláh, gú lhùy iyì nèntsél yáts’étálhtsilh
one who is nìmính cannot pull fish through the net (in the retrieval process) since this will cause fish to decrease in size
   A. lhùy ts’ağhínhtsén ‘one has ruined the fish’
   B. lhùy nèntsútsél yánátádláx ‘fish will become smaller’
   C. lhùy bèdàniŋgèn gánt’ìh yánátádláx ‘fish will become thin’
   D. qwès gánt’ìh hèlìsh the remaining fish in the lake ‘becomes like spawning fish’; becoming soft and thin
   E. Èqèx náts’élèx hán ts’ùghints’ád ‘one pulled (the fish) through the net, thereby performed a ritual on the fish’ refers to the actual retrieval of fish from a net, when done by nìmính. Yàghînjézą lâyàghínlh’in èqènàyé(ž)làh ‘she more or less twisted and pulled them through the nets’ and in this way caused the fish in the lake to become thin and flat, like those squeezed and compressed during the initial retrieval from the net. Ts’ülísh èqèx náts’élí såmqày gú lhàghèmbínlh såmqày bèghèdèts’èdèlhqéd tá’áts’èlh’in, gú bèdàgàns’h ‘when one catches (fish in a net) and pulls (the fish) through (the mesh) and with difficulty, forces (fish) out of the net, etc.; this causes (fish) to lose flesh’. In some cases, the remaining fish in the lake become smaller; becoming mature, but smaller in size.
Jetté and Jones (2000) offer very concise definitions and explanations in describing the Koyukon culture and the following sums up the restrictions for menstruants in regards to fishing:

During the fishing season, the woman in this condition is debarred from lifting her net, and some one else has to do it for her. She cannot pass in a boat or canoe near the place where the nets are set: this would stop the catch, probably through the action of the yege of the hutlaa. She may walk on the beach along the nets, or avoid these by making a circuit in her canoe, but she is not allowed to pass over them (563).

Ínkél gives several anecdotes of "lhùy nàghínlhtsén sàjágh" ‘she likely ruined the fish’ which I have summarized in the following. While fishing with nets, fat two-foot long rainbow trout were caught in a lake. Two catches in a row were so heavy that lhès lhàghèmbínlh lhùy dèzàn jíníl'ìn ‘really, the net emerged as fish’ when the nets were drawn out of the water. Unfortunately, these fish were íyédínlhtín ‘retrieved’ and yèchànts’ènínlht’à ‘gutted’ by a níminh individual. As a rule, almost immediately, fewer fish will be caught because fish will avoid the fish gear. The following day, no fish were caught using the same net and this occurrence is expressed as lhàghèmbínlh nádísdzáy ‘the net became dry’; and the net becomes èsqwàyàx. The fish in the lake thereafter became smaller and appear to become skinnier. Twins can fish but their hook nèntsèn tâlàx ‘will be ruined’; lhùy bìnîljèd tâlàx ‘fish will be afraid of it’; and if used again, fish will avoid the hook. Jèns dé’áts’èt’ình ‘one causes a ritual obstruction to the hook (by handling and eating the catch)’. After such obstructions, some families have continued to fish in the same lake for two years in a row in the spring, but have been unsuccessful, so
have abandoned the site. It is often said ofniminh individuals, "Lhuy nàghinlhtsén sàjâgh" 'she likely ruined the fish’ when these types of changes occur.

The effects ofniminh energy (ritual obstructions) on animals and fish are quite similar between animals and fish, but there are more expressions for fish as noted earlier. The fish net is described inTsinlhqúťín as becoming “dry” and there is the occurrence of fish decreasing in size; and the examples of the mere handling of their remains as being harmful; and in more drastic cases, the energy causing the extinction of fish. Animals escape such effects, but instead have the massive blood clotting. This could be explained as resulting from an impact of a bullet against a bone, but how does one account for the excessive bruising to a deer’s whole side?

There are four ceremonies for clearing nets and affected areas: smudging nets with juniper, leading fish upstream, blowing fish roe through nets, and expressing oil into the mouth of fish. K’ún bégx autobiography-nàts’èdèòsh ‘one blows fish roe through it’ is performed in the spring. The whole length of a fish net is stretched out, upright, and left to dry. A niminh individual (usually a menstruant or a twin) is to fast all night in preparation for the ceremony. The following procedure is repeated four mornings in a row. The niminh fills her mouth with fish roe, approaches the net, and k’ún yégx autobiography-nàdèžòsh ‘expels the fish roe and blows them through (the net)’. S/he does this four times, each time, stepping back and yèbèn nàlgish ‘going forward to the net’, èlhànx yégx autobiography nàyèdènàghinzhòsh ‘covering all angles’. Ègú nàyùts’âd ‘in this way, s/he is performing a ritual on it”; clearing the energy, as well as encouraging fish to imitate the manner in which the fish roe readily
move through the net. In the case where fish have lost physical condition, there is one other ceremony. A nímính individual tläh yish-đežòsh ‘expresses fish oil into the mouth (of a fish)’. This ritual serves to encourage fish to lhèk’ágh, nènchágh nàwèdlàx ‘become fat and grow large’. 47

47 Gabriel Horn (2000), a talented writer who wrote about Native ceremonies explained that ceremony is a way of life:

We enter into a ceremonial state of consciousness with respect for life, and for the purpose of well-being and balance, not only within our own lives, but for the Earth, our Mother, as well. A ceremony, even of one, than becomes an expression of gratitude and an acknowledgement and entreating the spirit. It is a way of living (8-9).
CHAPTER 11

BÈDÉTS'ÉT'ISH ‘ONE RITUALLY BLOCKS TOOLS BY CUTTING (FRESH MEAT AND FISH)’

The examples for bèdêts'êt'ish refer to nîmînh individuals in general, who by cutting fresh meat, cause traps and guns to become èsqwàyàx. Both bèdêts'êt'ish and èsqwàyàx refer to the effects of nîmînh energy on hunting gear. The former term is used to clearly specify the manner in which an item is obstructed [the root -t'ish means ‘cuts; slices; fillets’].

If one who is nîmînh happens to cut fresh meat or fish, it is said that s\'he yèdêtít'áž ‘is causing the specific gun used, to become èsqwàyàx’. Subsequently, a hunter cannot approach a mammal carrying that gun. The rifle ìnhêś lhàzôwh hêlish ‘becomes absolutely useless’; becomes èsqwàyàx; and mammals come to fear it. Mammals run from the hunter, yídédính ‘sensing (the gun)’ from a long distance. Mammals cannot simply stand and wait for the hunter to approach.

There are two methods of clearing guns. A strong concoction such as Absorbine Junior, Minard’s Liniment, or xîldîlh ‘Indian Hellebore’ (*Veratrum viride*) can be poured into the barrel of the gun, plugged, and left sitting in a vertical position overnight. The gun

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48 *Xîldîlh* ‘Indian Hellebore’ (also known as Indian Poke, False Hellebore, Green False Hellebore, etc.) is a highly toxic plant. A decoction of its roots is mainly used externally for a number of ailments and when used in the bath water, it is said to refresh the body physically and mentally. It is not recommended for internal use, although with proper preparation, *Tsinlhqût’în* have used it for expelling worms from the stomach. Warning: Do not attempt to use any part of this plant without consulting an herbalist or consulting your medical doctor. Even a small portion of the plant can cause death.
can also be smudged with a juniper bough. To clear guns, traps, or fish nets of ësqwàyàx using juniper, the item(s) are placed under a protective covering, usually a gunny sack, and brushed off with a juniper bush, while saying, "Ësqwàyàx šìnlín, nènc’hàgwènùwéjùd" 'You have become ësqwàyàx, may you be cleared'. This is done four mornings in a row and the gear will no longer be ësqwàyàx. This ritual treatment is also called bèch’ats’ègwènèlhtsish ‘one brushes (the energy) away from it’. 49

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49 In “The Book of Ceremonies: A Native Way of Honoring and Living the Sacred”, Gabriel Horn (2000), a writer and professor, wrote an inspiring book about ceremony. He said:

“…Not everyone can enter into a ceremonial state of consciousness. To do this one must be of good heart…. The purity of the heart and the sincerity of intentions are the master facts; they are essential. They are vital, as is a conscious awareness of one’s relationship to all the things within the ceremony – for we enter into a ceremonial state of consciousness out of love and reverence for the sacredness and the beauty and the power of life and life’s journey, no matter how grand or small that life may be, or how wonderful or difficult that road is to walk” (8).
CHAPTER 12

BÈDÁTS'ÉYÍNSH ‘ONE RITUALLY OBSTRUCTS SUBSISTENCE GEAR BY EATING FRESH FISH\MEAT’

The consumption of fresh meat or fish by nímính individuals, ruins guns, traps, and nets, causing guns to become èsqwàyàx and the remaining fish to decrease in size.\(^5\) If a gun is bèch’èts’ághinyán ‘blocked by eating’ it will become èsqwàyàx; and ts’èlhtsínsh ‘one ruins them’, similarly with traps, and fish nets. In regards to a girl’s puberty, Catharine McClellan noted “for at least six months all the [menstruating] girl’s meat had to be dried for at least a day or two so that it had no fresh blood on it” (2001:363); and Jules Jetté and Eliza Jones noted the period being only “five or six days” (2000:563).

Ìnkél mentions few restrictions for twins, although, restrictions for èyùwh-ájàghint’ì are likely the same as others who are nímính. I provide her discussion below regarding the restriction of the eating and retrieval of fresh fish:

Èyùwh-ájàghint’ì èsqàx iyèn chùh gàngù jénímính

twins; mother of twins children them too it seems that they are jénímính

hèlish jígúbàyàts’èlhtish.
	hey become it is said about them

It is said that twin children also become nímính.

\(^5\) Catharine McClellan (2001) noted another reason why eating fresh fish is forbidden: “widows had certain dietary restrictions that extended beyond the initial ritual isolation…. For example they could not eat fresh fish, so that people would go on living longer and not ‘leave quickly like a fish’” (376). There may be similar warnings among Tsínlhqú’t’in, although I have not heard this observance, but, this consequence may be connected to the belief that a widow or widower is “as if dead”.

"Dìdá jághinyán èyi nèntsél yánátádláx," güts'édénish,
whatever they ate it/them those small they will become it is said about them
èsqâx èyuwh-ájàghint'í in chùh hàh.
children twins; mother of twins them too (emph.)

It is told about that whatever they eat will become smaller, even (when eaten) by twin children.

Jàdèd èyuwh-ájàghint'í ègúh gèchùgh jìgwénijèd áh.
themselves twins; mother of twins that (state) it is too dangerous (emph.)

If they are themselves èyuwh-ájàghint'í, this (state) is especially dangerous.

Èyuwh-ájàghint'í lhùy jìyághiyán, èqèx-nájíyé(2)lágh,
twins; mother of twins fish they ate they retrieved it through (a net) it/them
nèntsútsèl yánátádláx jèdènísh.
small they will become they say

It is said that if èyuwh-ájàghint'í eat fish and have also retrieved them from a net, the (existing) fish will become smaller in size.

Bíghinlhghil gùnk'ân jìyèyàn güts'ìnlh'in án.
left overnight only then they eat it/them (emph.)

They are only allowed to eat (fish) which have been left overnight.

Èyuwh-ájàghint'í in gájàgh ghinìh.
twins; mother of twins them did that (past tense)
A certain èyuwh-ájàghint'í did this. [mother of twins?]

Nìmính ñèlín, güyi lhùy ninlhish nèntil, nènáž sìny yánlín
became that fish white wide long very they became fish?
èyi nèntsútsèl yánádlìn.
those small they became

Upon becoming nìmính s'he (caused) those (existing) mature white fish to become smaller in size.

Èyèd tèghinlá hágùjágh.
there where s'he set her nets that is where it happened

This happened in the place where s'he set her nets.
This happened in that area where she set her nets after a year had passed.

"Nèxwèlùy ghínlhtsén," tsʾèděnísh ghíni.
our fish s\he ruined it is said (past tense)
“S\he spoiled our fish,” it was said.

It is not definite whether Ḑínél is referring to a mother of twins or to twins in this conclusion. She begins by describing children eating fresh food, and then she says, “If they are themselves ʾëyuw-ájághint’, this (state) is especially dangerous.” One could assume from what follows that she is referring to a mother of twins, because she goes into describing the actual fishing activity which is usually carried out by mothers. In her second last line, she indicates the passing of one year before the consequences set in and she also mentions this time frame in the example of a widow berry-picking. As well, it appears that the change to the existing fish in this area was not immediate, contrary to the instantaneous effects on hunters, hunting equipment, and hunting dogs.
CHAPTER 13

_BÉDÁTS’ÉYÀSH_ ‘ONE RITUALLY BLOCKS (SUBSISTENCE TOOLS) BY WALKING NEAR OR STEPPING OVER THEM’

*Nímính* individuals are to avoid sites where fresh mammals or fish are being prepared, and if this is disregarded, the gun or fish net will become blocked because mammals and fish will avoid these items. One cannot walk *yáx díchén bénàdàs* ‘in front of (the barrel of a gun)’. The gun becomes *èsqwàyàx; bédáts’éyàsh*; sensed by mammals.

A hunter is not to leave a gun on the floor, but must *jiyéghénúwétán* ‘lean it against an upright surface’. A trapper must also be concerned about his traps and prevent them from becoming *èsqwàyàx*. ‘one must not place a sack full of traps in places where women walk. If a woman should step over the traps, mammals will thereafter know where the traps have been set. If traps become *èsqwàyàx*, when mammals approach such traps, *yà’èyùd gówh nàdèltálh* ‘they will step around it’, and be able to eat the bait. There seems to be a difference in the potency of *nimính* energy between traps and guns. Fur-bearing mammals come near traps which are *èsqwàyàx*, but game run from hunters who carry an affected gun. *Gú gágúnłhched jid égwihiyíñižèn hèlish* ‘that’s how aware (mammals) become’.

Ones who are *nimính* are told *lhà dèl ch’èd dájúságh* ‘not to walk on blood’; for the reason that *èlhtín i lházówh hèlish* ‘the gun becomes useless’. *Dèl ch’èd dányá ink’èd* ‘if you walk on blood’ *bàts’ègúdáh* táláx èlhtín, *lhà bínúlh ts’èn tézàghènyàlh* ‘the gun will become *bàts’ègúdáh* and you will not be able to come upon mammals. *Bígwénijèd hèlish ghíligwét’in* ‘it appears that (the gun) becomes dangerous’.
CHAPTER 14

GWÈDÁTS'ÉYÀSH ‘ONE RITUALLY OBSTRUCTS AN AREA (WATERWAY: RIVER OR STREAM) BY WALKING’

Assuming from the transcribed accounts under this heading, ritual blocking of an area may be brought about only by widows, widowers, and the transportation of corpses across waterways. In anecdotes regarding the handling of fish, a widow is said to be much more potent than a pallbearer. The niminh energy lingers in the area for one week egú gangú gwèch'igudizig gágwèt'ìnsh ‘before (the niminh energy) appears to dissipate’.

A widow or widower is not to go near an area where people are fishing, or walk over a bridge above a watercourse where salmon are running and corpses should not be carried across waterways on bridges, otherwise, fish will stop going upstream. Salmon will sense the lingering niminh energy and will not pass through on their way upstream, consequently, fishermen are forced to abandon their fishing. In some cases, it likely happens that a widow\widower comes upon fishermen fishing and takes part in the consumption of freshly caught fish, and egú jíd jégwèlhtsínsh ts'èdènish ‘in that way, it is said that they ruin the area’. Lhùy lhàn ts'iqásh ìd gájégwèlh'in ‘they do that in areas where lots of fish are caught (using a dip-net). Lhènèts'ùsqásh háy't'ìnsh jèdènish ‘it is said that (fishermen) stop catching fish’.

Of the categories of niminh, widows or widowers are said to be the most potent and are regarded as such for one year. It was investigated by Tsinlhqút'in, unknown to Ìnkél, as to

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51 In instances where gwèdáts'éinyàh ‘one blocked an area (river or stream)’, a twin may be asked to catch a fish and lead it up through the ritual barrier and upstream to open a path for the salmon.
which of the two *nimnh* carried the strongest energy; a pallbearer or a widow/widower. The pallbearer was asked to walk across a stream where fish were running and nothing happened; the fish kept running upstream. Then a widow or widower was asked to walk across and *lhà lhùy chùh ègùn téhtlād gwè(ž)lín* ‘the fish immediately stopped running’; *gàngù ch'ëts'ègwènìnt'âž gàgùjâgh* ‘it was as if (the stream) was severed’. Since then, in comparison to other *nimnh*, widows or widowers *gwèchùh gùbìgwènìjèd jègùnlh’ìn* ‘have been considered the most potent’. In observation of this fishing site for a longer period, the fish in this circumstance did not pass through until *gwèch’ìnàgùdíšdžèd ilìn gàgùjâgh* ‘it appeared as if the (energy) had dissipated’. From similar occurrences thereafter, it is said that it takes a week before fish *ègùn nàgùwèdîl gàt’ìnsh* ‘will continue upstream’. Fish will sense the presence of *nimnh* energy along the shore for up to a week and will avoid the area. *Gwèdāts’èyàsh* ‘one obstructs the area’ refers to sites where widows have caught fish using a dip-net or have crossed over a waterway on foot or by watercraft. A widow’s or widower’s presence at an active fishing site is enough to repel fish, whether s/he is within range of the waterway, consuming fish, handling fish, or simply walking across a stream.

The phrase “a widow or widower is as if s/he were dead” is significant in light of the fact that the same events outlined above were observed at several fishing sites near the river, after a corpse was brought across a bridge. After such an occurrence, the river below was observed closely. Fish were obviously visibly active: *gàngù tishyánish gàt’ìn, gàngù sùk’àn chòwh xàdèlh* ‘appearing to be flapping and surfacing frequently’. Similarly, the fish ceased moving upstream, and one week later, they continued upstream. Among the
Thompson people, James Alexander Teit (1900) documented that “when a corpse is taken across a river in a canoe, no fish will be caught for four days. When a person is drowned in the river during the salmon-run, the fish will cease to run for several days” (374). In one instance, Tsinlhqüt’in observed that when a corpse was taken across a river, the fish stopped moving, and it was commented:

“Ày jìgwénìjèd ágùnt’ih”
(interjection) it is dangerous (emph.) it is
this occurrence must be utterly dangerous

When nimính individuals have been near fishing stands, fish sense the presence of nimính energy along the shore for up to a week and they avoid running close to that part of the shore. Instead, fish are noted to run in the middle of a river to avoid these areas. Twins or a mother of twins are usually asked to lhùy xánátåjèdùlós ‘lead a live fish along the shore (and past the fishing stand and upriver along the fishing site)’ to restore the path for the fish. This is accomplished by catching a live fish and tying a twine to it and then throwing it back into the water and leading it upstream past the affected area. It is said that this clears the path for the fish.

The next section, Part 5: Súwh-tś ’éghèdúdính ‘preserving oneself; taking care of self (and others)’ while carrying the energy of nimính, is about observing Tsinlhqüt’in nimính traditions. The Tsinlhqüt’in term súwh-tś ’éghèdúdính ‘preventative self-care; self-preservation; abiding by ritual restrictions’ includes the care of the physical self, others, and food resources. This concept follows two of Ernesto Alvarado’s principles of three commandments in life which are essential to living a spiritual life (Freke 1999).
Alvarado, Gavilian Mexican-Apache, is a shaman and has a doctorate in Psychology. The first law, he says, is “to take care of Motherearth” [and its inhabitants]. The second, the prerequisite for physical health is “to take care of our bodies” (123). In a roundabout way, niminh and sùwh-tš’eghèdúdính are set out to preserve and protect all life. When life is held sacred and the principles of niminh are observed, the individual and collective rewards are youthfulness, good health, continuity, and balance.⁵²

⁵² There is a common saying among native people that ‘what you do affects others’ and this concept is applicable to ‘self-preservation’ as expressed in Tsínlhqút’in and basic to hunters and gatherers, the idea of following such cultural codes are not unique to Tsínlhqút’in.

Beck and Walters (1977) note that “Basic to the Pima and Navajo ways of life...is the idea that if you ‘live right,’ live according to certain ‘do’s’ and ‘don’t’s’ you will enjoy good health” (106). Beck and Walters take this discussion further (279):

It is important to know that the central Navajo’s (Diné) religious ideas are concerned with health and order...these two concepts are in fact inseparable. Moreover, the kind of order conceived of is primarily of ritual order, that is, order imposed by human religious action, and, for the Navajo (Diné) this is largely a matter of creating and maintaining health. Health, on its part, is seen as stretching far beyond the individual: it concerns his whole people as well as himself, and it is based in large part on a reciprocal relationship with the world of nature, mediated through ritual.

Similarly, among the !Kung as described by LornaMarshall (1999:93):

…the !Kung give visible expression and affirmation to three social ideals. One ideal is obedience to social law. A second ideal is self-control and restraint with respect to food. The third is to take care of oneself. ...one should do what one can to keep oneself strong and well. Any individual’s sickness, injury, or weakness weakens the group.
PART FIVE: SÚWH-TŠ’ÉGHÈDÚDÍNH ‘PRESERVING ONESELF; TAKING CARE OF SELF (AND OTHERS)’ WHILE CARRYING THE ENERGY OF NÍMÍNH
CHAPTER 15

SÚWH-TŠ’ÉGHÈDÚDÍNH ‘TAKING CARE OF SELF’ (AND OTHERS)

Niminh energy affects all things and one must remember always to be cautious of mixing energies. One must be constantly attentive to self, to fingers, hair, animals, fish, waterways, and harvests. Others take over the feeding of children, the harvests, and the fresh food preparation; even to combing one’s hair, and letting one grieve or rest as needed. Abiding by cultural constraints and having respect for self and others is called súwh-tš’éghèdúdính which entails numerous practices.

Súwh-tš’éghèdúdính is arranged collectively because it is difficult, at this point in the research, to separate out the observations for each category of niminh. At this point in my research, I suspect that most of the traditions apply to all niminh categories. As well, súwh-tš’éghèdúdính is likely part of a larger subject, covering other codes including ones for non-niminh individuals. Ones who are niminh are prohibited from touching themselves and touching others, (especially hunters and fishermen) and in some instances they are restricted from carrying children. They cannot touch their own hair or skin nor those of others; and individuals must avoid touching hunting and fishing tools, fresh fish and meat, and cannot cut or in any way harvest or prepare fresh food.

There are other Tsinlhqút’in prohibitions for non-niminh individuals. It is said lhà nîtès náts’èšàh ‘one must not step over people’, otherwise nîtès’en ch’édłhjig ‘one’s leg(s) will rot off’. This seems like a precautionary notation, where individuals are protected from possible harm. There are numerous other safety measures taken by women during
pregnancy. *Tsinlhqüt’in* mothers in general love babies and in the past, it was likely crucial to have descendants carry on cultural traditions and lineages. Another warning *Ìnkél* repeatedly gives to both non-\textit{nîmînh} and \textit{nîmînh} individuals is to be quiet and respectful around \textit{dìyèn}, otherwise one may bring on a harmful encounter with the \textit{dìyèn}’s spirit. A well known warning is \textit{lhà džínáš šádànx náts’égwèlni}g ‘no one tells stories in the afternoon.’ \textit{Èlh’è sèlin hínk’àn šádànx náts’égwèlnish} ‘one tells stories only after nightfall’.
Most individuals seek beauty, youth, and good health rather than their opposites: ugliness, old age, and poor health. Tsínlhqút’in had a preference for fair skin and thick black hair, and in some cases, the perception of beauty has changed from ages past in that people no longer practice face and body tattooing and they no longer wear labrets, although these could become fashionable again. Protection of the face, hair, and body is especially important if one wishes to remain youthful. Ínkél says that her great grandmother was not deeply wrinkled in her old age nor did she have much gray hair. In preserving one’s hair, nímính individuals, especially menstruating women, are not to touch their own hair. Menstruating women are able to maintain the colour and thickness of their hair through to old age by not combing their hair or touching their hair during their menses. Whatever parts of their hair they touch will turn gray before they reach old age and they may also experience rapid hair loss or baldness which is called ‘nèntsíghá gàtš’i hèlish’ lit. ‘your hair will vanish’ meaning ‘your hair will become thin’. The period during the first menses is a particular potent time and a girl’s hair is combed by others in the household; men or other women combed children’s hair.

_Ech’an nímính šínlin nigwenijed ‘you are most powerful in your first nímính state’_

_Nímính_ individuals cannot touch their own or anyone else’s hair and the first instance of _nímính_ is considered to be the most potent period. Ínkél told about a woman who prepared and dressed her deceased infant for burial and this woman was deemed to be
very dangerous because this was the first time she was niminh. She was not allowed to comb her existing child’s hair. This restriction regarding hair-grooming is the same for pallbearers who cannot comb their own hair or touch others’ hair. If they comb their hair after carrying a coffin, ãghál jédëntágish ‘their hair will gray quickly’.

Lhà gwèchùgh t’ágúltn jësdláx chù gútšighá lhèk’èl yátálàx ‘their hair will whiten before the onset of old age’. This occurrence is called nitšighá chûh gâts’i hëlìsh lit. ‘one’s hair thins (to the point of baldness)’; and this also means ãgwél’íny xàdádèdlád hëlìsh ‘your hair (becomes brittle) breaking off easily’.

If one should forget this tradition, or if there is no way to avoid combing one’s hair, one can perform a ritual called nitšighá nâts’ûts’àd53 ‘clearing one’s hair’. In many cases where there is no one around, women have no choice but to comb their own hair. The ritual can be carried out as frequently as one wishes. Women customarily collect their hair which fall out during combing, and occasionally burn it because there exists a belief that one will search for their hair after they die, so women in general keep their hair. No hair is to be left loose on the floor or left anywhere around the house. During the ritual,

53 There is nothing either absolutely good or absolutely bad in Tsínlhqút’in culture because there are some natural conditions which simply exist, and all the rest are situations in which one can choose resulting in good outcomes or resulting in negative outcomes. Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters (1977) also noted that “among the Native American sacred tradition, the idea of good and evil is not as important as the problem of balance and imbalance – or harmony and disharmony. Evil is essentially seen as excess or imbalance, and it can be adjusted and corrected through various means” (15). Among Tsínlhqút’in, it is known that what is good for one may be bad for another, but this can be a healer’s own choice. For example, 1) choosing to harm or to heal in the case of working as a shaman, or 2) working in other areas of èts’ûts’sàd ‘one performs a ritual’ as outlined in this thesis. 3) In the case of ceremonies for babies which are performed to heal a child from a previous trauma or to prepare a child for future success (also called èts’ûts’sàd); these are performed with utmost respect. 4) Choosing to use èts’ûts’sàd to cause negative outcomes was often used in warfare, either to protect families from enemies or to protect territories. Èts’ûts’sàd, in its all-encompassing form, serves both “good” or/and “bad” outcomes. They are simply methods to bring on psychological, physical, or spiritual healing or transformations. Magic and witchcraft also fall under the overall term èts’ûts’sàd and these types of rituals can be done by anyone. A ritualist has the choice to use ritual to cause positive results or negative results.
women roll their hair into a ball, singe it, and coat their hands with the char from the hair and apply this to their head, saying, "Lhàn sinsh nàghùndláx" ‘become thick again’ and this procedure is called nît'síghá nàhûnts'âd ‘clearing one’s hair’, a ceremonial prescription which prevents graying and thinning of hair. This ritual is also called nênch’înâts’èdèlk’ânsñ ‘clearing and smudging is done (with the hair)’ and it is carried out in the morning. Gú lhá nît'síghá gèchùgh xûhnàx ‘then nothing happens to one’s hair (aging very little)’.

Lhù géchùgh nènèn itèžâghènìsh ‘you are not to touch your face too often’

A nimính individual is not to touch her\'his or others face otherwise gûnín wîlhch’âh-gwèl yâgûlìsh ‘they will get wrinkled’ before old age. Tsinlhqût’ín elders tell women to sùwh-xèdündînh 'lit. preserve yourself' meaning: let someone else comb your hair and use a cloth to wash your face. Lhà gèchùgh gûnín ijètâšnìsh ‘they must not have a lot of physical contact with their faces’ and must not wash their faces too frequently.

On one’s first menstruation, one must not touch one’s face with bare hands. Never use the household sink to wash up, instead, wet a cloth by pouring a cup of water over it and use this to gently wipe your face. Gú nénàgh táh ts'é'n gûnzùn jèdènìsh lit. ‘they say this is good for the eyes’. Èlhghèn nîdîndîx gwânèš ághál nènèn t’âgûltìn hèlish jèdènìsh ‘they say your (face) ages quickly from washing too frequently’. Gâgûnìlhchêd jîd ts'égwènìlhmih jîd dêni ts’âghînlì ûndìdânh ‘that’s how dangerous this was considered during the lifestyles of those people of long ago’.
Menstruants are the only ones who deal with warts and to my knowledge, Tsilhqút’in women do this by blowing on one’s warts for four mornings in a row. It is said that this makes warts disappear. Ïnkél explains how the treatment is done:

Àbén bélh těshólh hěsts’éd, bélh těshólh. 
in the morning at it\ with I blow I scratch it\ them at it\ with I blow
I blow on (the warts) and scratch them in the morning

Gwèlàn tsínsh, din hást’ínsh yénéšèn, àbén. 
many times (emph.) four times I do this I think in the morning
I do this many times; I do it four mornings in a row

Gúchúh gáts’èlh’ínsh ts’èdènísh gwèch’èz ághèst’ín. 
even then this is done to it it is said for this reason I did this
It was said that this was done; that’s why I did this

Gángù lhà ègwinižinl gágújágh lhà 
it seems (neg) you weren’t aware of it happens (neg)
gájit’isch nágúbúghúlnsàx gáyèt’ínsh. 
they are no longer like that you will see them again that happens to them
(the warts) seem to disappear without one’s awareness and one day, you’ll realize there are (no warts) on them

Ày sè’ágwét’in yénéšính. 
(interjection) it is an odd occurrence I think
(interjection) I think this is an odd occurrence

This method of curing warts has been mentioned by many Tsilhqút’in. Curing warts is also described by Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters (1977:222-223) quoting from Vizenor (1970) regarding the Anishinabe. There, the procedure is also done by a menstruant. They quoted, “she wet her fingers with her saliva and touched all the warts on my hands. … In five days, all the warts on my hands disappeared” (223). Ïnkél said
that children who lived at the Residential School often returned home with many warts on their hands.

CHAPTER 17
FOOD

Exclusively, menstruants use special dishware (also in Beck and Walters 1977:221) which are stored apart from other tableware and these were called qùnlh tš’áy ‘… plate’, qùnlh bidágásh ‘… cup’ and qùnlh qánish ‘….spoon’. I do not know the meaning of the term qùnlh. A menstruant’s cup becomes lhàzówh hèlish ‘it becomes bad’ in the sense that lhà dèni èyùn yì’etàšdínlh ‘no one else can use it’;\(^{54}\) likewise with the spoons and plates. Sè’ánánènjàgh ègúh sùnínátàghènlìlh lit. ‘you put (your dishware) away when you get better (when your flow ceases)’. ...èyì niyèx gwèt'ágwèdèlt's'ig jìgwàdàmjèjèd ‘it is thought that (dishware) will impair the oesophagus’ of others who use them. The digestive system, according to this tradition, seems to be vulnerable to the effects of nìmính energy. There are more accounts of this occurrence below.

\(\text{Nilá nigwèdènètl’ig lit. ‘it stains the hands’}\)

Ìnkèl mentions a unique experience and ritual treatment for ones who have prepared dead bodies for burial. She says gùlá nigwèdènètl’ig ‘their hands get stained’ and these

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\(^{54}\) Lindsay McArthur (1999) noted among the Northern Athapaskan groups that funeral assistants… “drink only through a bird-bone tube… for at least ten days”. Tsínlhqút’in individuals must use a cloth or a glove to handle food while eating for one week. Tsínlhqút’in individuals who have prepared the dead for burial generally live in their own home. It is possible that these certain individuals offered to do this type of work only because they were childless. More research is required for more data on this. Drinking water through a tube is not mentioned as an observance by Ìnkèl. In fact, she says it is said tl’ùgh bíd èts’èdàn ‘drinking through a grass (straw)’ will cause lhà tìnàts’èdàsh lit. ‘one will never come out again; meaning ‘one’s urinary system will become obstructed.’ For this reason, and in addition to that, drinking through a hollow stem will cause pregnant women to have difficulty giving birth.
individuals must not eat food using their bare hands for one week. These individuals could use plastic gloves or a cloth so as not to touch food while eating. She heard one person who bathed dead bodies say, “Sègán gángú ch'édéné’idźún gát’ínsh” my arm begins to ache’. This painful condition is known to occur before the onset of old age in individuals who have frequently prepared dead bodies. She elaborates on this occurrence:

Dènì nánájélbísh, gùlá nígwédênètl'ig inlhéd-ch’ínhghílh
person they bathe their hand(s) becomes stained one week

lhà gùlá dézàn éjétàšín lhà
(neg) their hand(s) bare they must not eat

ones who bathe corpses do not eat using their bare hands for a week because it is said that their hands “get stained” (retain the energy from the corpse)

Néndíd nèlá lá gwètòwh nígwédènètl’ig,
this\these your hand(s) (emph.) something it \they become stained

... gù bédíldílh tâh.
and things like dye and that sort of thing

for example, when something is absorbed into your hands, like dye; that sort of thing’

Gúyì chûh gûh gát’ínsh â(n).
that too in that manner it does that (emph.)

‘that (which I’m speaking about) does that too

... nánágùbinl’híh tû nîžël bî nánágùbinl’híh
when you bathe them water hot with when you bathe them

when you are using hot water to bathe them

Gû lhà nèlá nèndùw’h gánt’îh
then (neg) your hand(s) around here like that

étéţaghényín lhà.
you cannot eat

then you cannot eat with your hands like this (using your bare hands)
There are those who have prepared corpses who treat their hands after touching a dead body. They do this by washing their hands in gasoline or smudging with juniper, to prevent the painful affliction also known as nilá t'ágwédëltš'ig ‘one’s hand becomes afflicted (with pain)’.

_Bád-yí èjùbásh ‘they pick berries while wearing gloves’_

Some women who were menstruating wear gloves while picking berries and also tie pinegrass to berry branches. These women likely thought gušt’èd-gwèsťūwélàx xájégúlíh ‘they fear that others may not want to eat their berries’. If they do not pick while wearing gloves dëni ijégútsid xát’ségúlíh ‘one’s afraid they may taint the digestive tracts of those who eat the berries’.

_Diet: Lhà lhàn ts’ètāšínlh ‘one is not to eat too much’_

At puberty, both boys and girls are told not to eat too much. Ênkél says, “Gwèch’èz sághít'i lhà gwèchùgh ts’iyàn húst’in dénì ghíli ‘that must be the reason I didn’t really like food during my lifetime’. Ts’iqi-nàsèsdlín dànkh lhà èzèsàn ‘I didn’t eat during my

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55 Certain plants are used to clear or balance the effects on objects, plantlife, and animal life which have come in contact with ones who are niminh. Dàtsán-k’áchih lit. ‘raven's arrow ; juniper’ is a common plant used in these and other purifications. To cleanse objects which are èsqwàyàx, the objects are brushed with a burning juniper bough. In addition, juniper is used to prevent illnesses and purify spaces. To ensure good health to occupants of a household and to purify a house from unwanted energy, a small juniper branch is often placed on a stove as a smudge for the entire house. For the same reasons, it is also placed on hot stones in sweatlodges.

56 Nûwîšht’ûgh also nûwîšht’ûgh 'lit. soapberry grass; pinegrass' is used by niminh individuals to ensure the preservation of existing berries on their branches and also to stimulate the plant to be fruitful in the upcoming years. The grass serves a practical purpose in the sweatlodge as well, as a scouring pad to scrub away dead skin. The soiled pinegrass is burned afterwards so that others cannot use them to harm the individuals who used them. Historically, pinegrass was used as stuffing for footwear as well as for stuffing the hollow in an individual's abdomen during severe famine. This stuffing was for physical support, allowing one to stand upright, rather than being stooped over.
period’. For girls, the first menstruation is considered to be one of the most potent periods in her life. The second most potent period is after the birth of her first baby. Menstruants are to only eat dried food. *Lhà ètşén lhish tš’èšàn* ‘one does not eat fresh meat’.

In addition to the fear of bears being a motivation to adhering to prohibitions, it seems that more recently, the traditions or cultural laws have been combined with other consequences which do not make sense. At some later point in time, when níminh and hunters may have voluntarily strayed from ritual restrictions, it may have become necessary to implement other ways to enforce traditional observances. As one example, Ínkél has often said that one must not eat meat during menses unless it’s dried meat, and if one disregards this, one’s flow will be continuous, causing death. It is more probable, these days with accessible health care, that one could become anaemic from losing an extensive amount of blood, but not to the point of death. Ínkél often gives the following warning to convince a menstruant not to eat fresh meat:

*Dèl gù’àt’ìn àhúts’étálht’ilh*  
one’s blood will always continue to flow

*Lhà t’áts’égúltin tš’èśdláx chù gùchànx*  
(neg) one is not old one has not become yet their internal organs

*gwèt’ágwédèltś’ig*  
is afflicted

before old age, one’s internal organs will become afflicted

*Gùchànx gwètatsánx*  
their internal organs (area) will spoil (degenerate)

one’s stomach will spoil (degenerate)
**Lhājid** chúh sà’ánats ‘udànx guyáh hēlish jēdînh
cannot (emph)? one (neg) improve cannot becomes they said

hāyāghínt’i.
they were that way
**they used to say that one would never get better**

Èsqì ts’èt’ínsh ègūh chúh ètśèn-śègèn sèbìz
infant\child one has\one gives birth to then too dried meat boiled
ts’ètàyínlh.
one will eat
**one must eat boiled dried meat after one has given birth to a child**

Ègū lhà gāts ‘it’ish šèlín hînk’àn ètśèn-lhish
then (neg) one is not like that she becomes then fresh meat
ts’ètàyínlh.
one will eat
**one can eat fresh meat only after one is no longer menstruating**

These extreme illustrations are the reasons why present youth choose not to abide by cultural traditions and elders often complain about this trend, and bemoan the lack of subsistence resources, blaming those who have abandoned traditional practices. The point about eating only dried food possibly has more significance, but little scientific research has been done in this area. Women generally require more iron than men and it is possible that dried meat contains more iron than cooked meat.
CHAPTER 18
FEEDING INFANTS AND CHILDREN

Under this section, niminh individuals mentioned are menstruants and one’s who have handled corpses. These individuals must refrain from cooking food, because it is said that děnì īsh-ts’égwetsig ‘they taint another’s digestive system; they transmit (negative) energy into one’s digestive system’. This provision is mainly noted for feeding infants, children, and the sick. There are more accounts of children being affected by niminh energy through food than any other age group. Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters (1977) state that “in the past of the North American Indian, a child was lavishly protected in order for that child to reach old age” (199) and this may explain much of the caution taken during pregnancy and childrearing. There are several Tsínlhqút’in accounts of children; gùchànŋ yăgünlhj̣ed ‘their digestive tracts degenerated’ as a result of being fed by niminh individuals. In particular, there is one ancient story of a man who killed his wife and later intentionally caused his children to die. After killing his wife and handling her body, and while his hands were still bloody, he prepared a meal and fed his children. As a result, the children gùchànŋ gâts’i yăgünlin lit. ‘their internal organs (stomach; digestive tract) were reduced to nothing; they had chronic diarrhea’ and eventually died. Guchanx yagunlhjed saghini ‘their digestive systems must have rotted (disintegrated)’.

The restriction for meal preparation is not noted in other documented sources. Ínkël explains more about děnì īsh-ts’égwetsig ‘one contaminates another’s digestive system’ below:
Gúlà  súxédündính  gú  ts'íqi-nàshindlin
for example  you preserve yourself  for instance  when you begin menstruating

*gúh  lhà  béd  énážánlílh  jédenish  ghinih.*
then  (neg)  meal  you cannot prepare  they say  (past tense)

when you begin menstruating, they say that you are not to cook meals

Lhà  nènqén  ghà  béd  énátéžànlílh,  dèni
(neg)  your husband  for  meal  you cannot prepare  person/people

*ish-ts'égwétsig.*
one contaminates the digestive tract

you must not cook for your husband; one contaminates another’s digestive system

Lhà  èjuyán  jégú’t’in  jétèláx,  jétèjùd
(neg)  they eat  they don’t want to  they will become  they will have diarrhea

jétèláx.
they will become

they will lose their appetite; they will have diarrhea

Dèni  inlhánxtäh  gúntsél-jid  dénidâh  in
person/people  one of them  somewhat  sick  him/her

someone who is somewhat ill

gánint’ih  béd  ánlágh  gúbish  nágwághintsèd
when you are like that  meal  you made  their digestive tract  you contaminated

that area

if you cook [for them] while you are in this condition, you will [intensify their condition] by way of their digestive tract

gù’en jid  lhà  éjéšán  jétèláx  jédènîsh.
more so  (neg) not eat  they will become  they say

and it is said that, [as a result of eating the meal you prepared] they will eat considerably less (or none) [aggravating their condition]

Ts'íqi-nàyèdlísh  lhà  béd  énájéšdlí  gú  gwinësên.
one who start menstruating  (neg) meal  not preparing that  I know

I know that menstruants do not cook meals

Ínájis  bid  lhíz  ts'énú’ásh  gúts’édènîsh  ghini.
dish cloth(s)  with  dough/bread  one will mix  they are told  (past tense)
they were told to use a dish cloth to mix bread with
One man known by Ìnkél used to cook for himself when his wife was menstruating and he cooked for everyone when he had visitors.

Long ago, mothers chewed food and gave these masticated pieces to infants and this was the common method of feeding small children. There is an example of a menstruant who gave chewed food to an infant. It was noted that for the baby jèd bèghàx xénínl'id lit ‘diarrhea passed through her\'him; s\'he had diarrhea’. Ìnkél refers to this particular menstruant as ts’iqí-šèlin lit. ‘became a woman; menstruant’ rather than ts’iqí-nàšdlin. The infant she fed did not want to eat and there was nothing anyone could do. Menstruants and ones who have handled corpses must not give children food by sharing the food in their mouth or by feeding with their bare fingers, but spoons may be used.

Xilhdilh candy nìghagwedetalhqelh ‘Indian Hellebore emptied one’s (digestive tract)’

The remedy for the above mentioned childhood affliction is to give a preparation called “xilhdilh candy” (also qìlhdilh) ‘Indian hellebore’ candy. Ìnkél says this highly toxic preparation was made only by her mother and she herself does not know how to prepare this. The combination is said to nìghàgwèdètalhqèlh ‘will expel all the contents from the bowel; will work as a laxative’. This treatment is also known to expel worms.
CHAPTER 19
SELF-CONDUCT AROUND OTHERS

The avoidance of children is included as part of *súwh-tš’égłèdúdính*. Pallbearers must refrain from touching or carrying infants and children, especially physical contact with the head. It is said that children lose their appetite and may become listless after such contacts. There is no way to undo the effects of this disability. Another child is said to have vastly deteriorated and became very thin and even had difficulty breathing. It is said that children become skinny after being carried, and this is called "guk’ex gát’sí hélísh" their body fat dissolves’.

*Gutsánx ts’enentedash* ‘you accidently walk behind them (walking behind diyèn)’

The avoidance of *diyèn* is included as part of *súwh-tš’égłèdúdính*. Menstuants must avoid *diyèn*. She must not walk near a *diyèn*, and above all, not walk behind a *diyèn*. This includes walking behind the bed of a sleeping *diyèn*. It is said, *gutsánx nèntéžìnja* ‘(if) you accidently walk behind them’ the following will happen to you:

*Nín nénchàn* gwèrt’ágwèdèttłš’èlh, *ts’dèn síh hàgúghínt’i*. you your internal organs will become afflicted it is said it used to be that way

*Jigwénjèd jègúnth’ìn ghini ündídásh déni.*

it is dangerous they deemed it to be (past tense) long ago person\people

the people of long ago deemed this to be dangerous
For good reason menstruants were secluded away from their village. Women, while menstruating, are purifying physically, mentally, and spiritually and carry energy considered so powerful that it must be contained by being separated from others (also in Beck and Walters 1977:221). As well, in some traditions, menstruants are not allowed to participate in ceremonies where men and women are gathered (also in Wright 2003:4), because of the likelihood that the energy may suppress or overpower others, and in some cases, this energy may cause the death of another. Kenneth Cohen (2003) noted that “the logic of these customs is increasingly acknowledged by Western scientists”. He added,
from a book written by Joan Borysenko (1996) *A Woman's Book of Life: the Biology, Psychology and Spirituality of the Feminine Life Cycle*, that moontime is “… a period of ‘expanded connection with universal energy…’ so powerful that it could effectively short-circuit a ceremony or affect the energy bodies of other people” (366). There are some individuals, primarily *diyèn* ‘shaman’, who feel *nimính* energy from menstruants and this awareness is usually physical in nature, i.e. pain in part of the body. These examples suggest that the energy from women can actually permeate a room, and likely for this reason, women are not allowed to walk about in public and definitely are not allowed in ceremonies. It is reasonable to assume that there is opposing energy or power between menstruating women and *diyèn*. One *Tsinlhqút’ìn* woman told me that when she was becoming a *diyèn*, “Young woman were not allowed to walk around me, or they could die, and I myself could die.” There is an ancient *Tsinlhqút’ìn* narrative about such an encounter, called *Ts’iqíh-tši* ‘Lady-Rock’. A menstruant in seclusion one day met a *diyèn* ‘shaman’ on her way back from the river carrying water. It is said that *diyèn yènàhtah nì’íz* ‘the shaman stared right through her’, and she immediately turned into stone. These references suggest that, among *nimính* individuals, only a menstruant is to keep her eyes shielded in case her gaze falls upon a *diyèn*. Today, *Ts’iqíh-tši* ‘Lady-Rock’ is considered to be very powerful and she gets frequent visitors who make prayer requests to her for healing and good luck. I have also heard that gamblers playing lehal (a bone game) or poker usually do not like women to be seated directly behind them for fear of losing the game. Women must sit to the side.
CHAPTER 20

NÁTS’ÙTS’ÀD ‘RITUALLY TREATING IT; SMUDGING IT; BRUSHING IT; CLEARING IT OF ENERGY’

The energy of niminh, although it is not referred to using this term in other traditions, can be used for intentional healing (for menstruants, see Starck 1993:38; and Beck and Walters 1977:221, 222) and the same energy can cause involuntary imbalances or act spontaneously to subdue other forms of power. Quoted by Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters (1977) in the section, “Girls’ Puberty Ceremonies”: “a Cibeque Apache explains how a pubescent girl ‘is just like a medicine man, only with that power she is holy’” and “she can make you well if you are sick even with no songs. Anyone who doesn’t feel good can come to her” (223).

Among Tsínlhqút’in, the energy of niminh is also known to have an effect on wild plants, berries, and garden vegetables; therefore, there are traditional rituals in place to prevent negative impacts on wild plant resources. There are additional expressions used to describe these effects. For one example for Saskatoon bushes, there is the phrase ch’in yáditsèz ‘the berry bushes withered’. For both Saskatoon bushes and soapberries, there are two terms: jélh’élhígwel’ínsh ‘(berries) duplicate (human actions)’ and nánátlig ‘(the

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^57 In “Lhíndesch’osh Said, ‘Become Spring Beauty and Yellow Glacier Lily’” (2004), I wrote about plant terms and noted for burning of fields. The Tsínlhqút’in cultivation on berry patches and gweziny ch’ed ‘root fields’ included extensive burning; some digging and turning of sod; reseeding and replanting; and ritual treatments. Burning was restricted to root fields and berry patches, while tillage was done on wild potato and yellow glacier lily crops. These activities were carried out during harvest to aerate and enrich the soils. Cultivation practices was believed to increase and optimize crop yields.

Soapberries are dried as cakes and were historically traded or sold to neighbouring nations. Several types of soapberries are known: nùwísh ‘soapberries' and nùwíshíbá ‘white soapberries' which are mature and edible. Nùwíshíbá is found in valleys and the mountains of Nemiah. The term t’ax ‘fresh or raw' is used to indicate uncooked berries. (Excerpt from my paper “Plants”, Linguistics 403, University of Victoria, 2006)
berries) fall off (the bush). Garden vegetables are said to lhà sù xênélhyàx ‘they do not grow well’ and this phrase could also be said of other wild roots and corms.

Tsìnlhqút' in menstruants, and nimính individuals in general, are required to tie pinegrass\(^{58}\) around four branches from the berry bush they gather berries from. The branches chosen must be laden with berries. This procedure ténêts'énélh’úsh ‘the (berry branches) are tied’ is a form of nàts’úts’ád ‘(berries) are ritually treated’. Berry branches are tied while one is presently picking berries. The treatment is done while saying to the berries, “Lhàn tsinsh nághùntlax” ‘become plentiful’ and it is said that the berries will dry on the branches and remain on the branches even through the winter. The berries will jélh’élhílyágh ‘they will imitate it’ and the berries on the tied branches will remain on the branches. Jélh 'élhigwel’insh ‘they copy’; ‘they repeat (human) actions’ is a term used to describe the imitative tendencies of berries. When nimính individuals pick berries, the unpicked berries will fall off the bushes within a week or so. This is referred to as j’élh’ílhigwel’insh ‘it copies; it mimics’. The act of taking berries off a plant causes the berries to nánánùtlùd ‘fall off the bush' shortly after the harvest, similar to the way they were hand-picked off the bush. In some cases, berry bushes will not grow as abundantly, become barren within the following year, or will wither and die, that is, without an immediate ritual treatment. In one case Ìnkél narrates that a more drastic change fell upon a berry patch. In fact, it is believed that ch’in yáditsèz ‘the berry bushes withered’ where a mother, who had handled the body of her recently deceased twins, gathered berries. Prior to gathering berries, she bathed and dressed the body of her

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\(^{58}\) The plants used to ritually treat plants, berry shrubs, subsistence gear, and humans affected by nimính energy are dâtsän-k’áchilh ‘juniper’, nívishılıl’ugh ‘Pinegrass’, and xilhdilh ‘Indian Hellebore’.
deceased twin child in preparation for burial. She did not believe in food harvesting prohibitions and during the same year that she buried her child, she gathered a large quantity of Saskatoon berries in a patch where it was abundant. She was forewarned about picking berries before she left and her reply was, “How could nature abide by such beliefs?” It is from her own confession that it is known that the following summer when she returned to the same patch, she found only withered Saskatoon bushes from the berry bushes she had gathered from the previous year. If she had known about the ritual treatment, she would have preserved the long-term fruitfulness of berry bushes.

Ìnkël recalls that in her youth, the Saskatoon bushes across the lake from T’èt’ághintil (a place along Konnie Lake, Xènì), used to get so heavy with berries that one could mistake the berry patches for black bears, and the flowers from the spring beauty patches appeared as if covered in snow. Now, there are many Saskatoon berry patches and spring beauty grounds in the Tsinlhqüt’in territory that are less productive and the plants in some areas have completely died out. Tsínlhqút’in elders often blame this scarcity on people who are niminh, saying they are ignoring traditional codes. There are many who are not receiving the essential cultural education and some simply do not believe in these cultural restrictions, therefore few practice it. Saskatoon and soapberries are two of the most common berries gathered, and Saskatoon berries were a popular trade item along with western spring beauty corms.

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60 Dig ‘Saskatoon berries’ were very important food sources for Tsinlhqút’in and they still remain the most widely picked berry among all age groups. Many people traveled long distances to gather them prizing them highly as a favorite trade item. Ìnkël’s mother-in-law who was from Stone remembered trading sùnt’îny 'spring beauty' and ėşghùnsh 'yellow glacier lily' in exchange for dig with the people of Tl’esqox.
After harvesting *súnt'íny* 'spring beauty corms', *èsghùnsh* 'yellow glacier lily', *sáchên* 'tiger lily', and *chinšdâd* 'silverweed roots', *niminh* individuals are to gather the plants and return a handful of the harvest back to the fields. The ones still attached to the plants are replanted and covered over with soil. The remaining plants are strewn about with their seeds intact, and are told, "*Lhàn tsínsh nàghùndláx* 'become plentiful.' These observances are called *nàts'ègùts'àd* 'the area is treated with a ritual' and this ensures (Toosey) at Farewell Canyon. The people traded at a place where the river flows through a narrow channel. The bagged trade products would be thrown across, and the people on the other side would throw something back in return". (Excerpt from my paper, Traditional and Modern Uses for Saskatoon Berries and Saskatoon Wood by Tsilhqut'in in British Columbia. Environmental Studies 416, University of Victoria, 2000.)

Five varieties of *dig* are known to *Tsilhqut’in: Súwh-dig* lit. 'real saskatoon-berry' are very sweet, have small and fewer seeds and can grow up to 8 to 10 meters tall usually found in clearings on higher slopes. *Tl’ùgh-igùt’in* lit. 'it looks like grass' can grow up to 2 meters tall and are like suwh-dig in that they have smaller seeds and are sweet and are also found on higher slopes in open areas. *Gwènènch’îndîg* lit. 'slope-saskatoon-berry' can grow very tall and are found growing in clumps below Riske Creek, along the Chilcotin and Fraser rivers and river benches. These berries ripen faster due to the warmer climate, and are reddish in color, seedy, and *ch’in zálqèn hát’înh* 'taste like the bark of the saskatoon bush'. *Gwènènch’înîchùgh* lit. 'large, slope-saskatoon-berry' are like suwh-dig in that they have smaller seeds and are sweet. *Gwèk’ènîd-dig* lit. 'fire-saskatoon-berry' grow after a wild fire. When speaking about saskatoon berries, Tsilhqut’in use the common term *dig* and the other names mentioned are generally not used. (Excerpt from my paper, Traditional and Modern Uses for Saskatoon Berries and Saskatoon Wood by *Tsilhqut’in* in British Columbia. Environmental Studies 416, University of Victoria, 2000.)

The *Tsilhqut’in* term *dig* 'Saskatoon berry' is similar to the Dene Sulhine word *di* 'prairie chicken', and I assume from the Kaska term *dihcho dzidée* 'blue grouse berry' that the former *Tsilhqut’in* term for berry (*dzidée*’jîje’gege) could have been *dînsîh-gîge* which has been contracted to its present term *dig*. *Tsilhqut’in* have developed specialized possessed terms for the parts of saskatoon bush. For example, *digîch’in* or simply *ch’in* 'saskatoon bush', *bèdànshùz* lit. 'its mouth'; *-nshùz* may refer to the tooth-like growth on the berry', *diglålgî* 'saskatoon berry bosoms', *digît’ân* 'saskatoon berry leaves', and *digîghèd* 'saskatoon berry roots'. (Excerpt from my paper, *Lhindesch’osh* Said, “Become Spring Beauty and Yellow Glacier Lily”, Linguistics 403, University of Victoria, 18 Dec. 2004).

*Sáchên* Tiger Lily (*Lilium columbianum* Hanson) lit. 'sun stick', sometimes called *tsáchên* lit. 'beaver stick'. *Sáchên* is only found in one location in the mountains towards Lillooet, a place known as *Sáchên Gànlín* 'Where There Are Tiger Lilies'. *Tsilhqut’in* spent every summer camping there and the surrounding sites to gather food, berries, and medicine, and to hunt. (Excerpt from my paper, *Lhindesch’osh* Said, “Become Spring Beauty and Yellow Glacier Lily”, Linguistics 403, University of Victoria, 18 Dec. 2004).
continuous plant yields. If these procedures are not followed by harvesters who are nímính, the plants will not grow well. There would be decreased yields and smaller bulbs, corms, and roots in the years following the harvest.

**Observances on the farm**

There are other limitations to some farming activities as well, which have been incorporated into the Tsinlhqüt’in concept of sùwh-tš’ēghèdúdính. Two activities banned exclusively for menstruants, for example, are horseback-riding and milking a cow.

*Tsinlhqüt’in* menstruants cannot ride on a horse. Menstruation is considered to be īnlhés gũntsën ‘very bad’ in regards to horeseback-riding. The horse gūdènètáh hélísh ‘will frequently stub its foot or stumble (while being ridden); will no longer be sure-footed’ and ètsènçèdínìñ chùh hélísh ‘it also becomes lazy; sluggish’. The horse’s limbs lhà gūžúh yálísh ‘become bad (defective)’. On this topic, Ênkél also mentioned that she experienced headaches while riding a horse which had been used for packing a corpse. This seems to suggest that the energy of corpses affect animals too, but, the dead are not specifically said to be nímính.

*Tsinlhqüt’in* menstruants cannot milk a cow. If she should express milk from a cow, t’ágúltìn ghèlísh ‘during its later years’ èsdán lhà bèts’úgh gúlísh tâlx ‘the (cow) will produce less and less milk’. Bèts’úgh lhàn éyì chùh gát’ínsh ‘this happens even to those (cows) which are heavy milkers’.
The third restriction under farming is walking on a vegetable garden and this is banned for menstruating women, widows and those who have handled dead bodies. These particular individuals cannot walk on or weed vegetable gardens. If they should, the garden vegetables will become stunted in growth and elders have said: *lhà jid sú xènúlhyàx gúyàh* ‘(the vegetables) cannot grow very well’. If one walks on a garden anyway, *gàngù ts'égûts'äd gâgûnt’ih* ‘it is as if one is performing a ritual on it’.

Berard Haile (1943), a priest, documented in “Soul Concepts of the Navaho” that agriculture “is a secondary culture trait and receives comparatively scant consideration in their ceremonialism or religious worship” (64) and this holds true for the *Tsinlhqút’in* as well. *Tsinlhqút’in* resource gathering and rituals from this research includes only fish, game, and plants. There is no ritual for horses, nor for gardens, and the ritual for a cow’s udder is transferred from the ritual women perform on themselves in the occasion they should express their breast milk while menstruating.

Kwesi Baffoe (2005) published an overview of Sayisi Dene traditional laws and in that, he noted, “from generation to generation the laws of the spirit and the land are passed down through oral traditions and ancient stories”. Cultural memory and ceremonies are important to *Tsinlhqút’in* who use their histories and personal experiences to balance, understand, and improve their own lives and their environment, and ceremonies which have been passed down from stories provide an ancient source of psychological and spiritual strength. If *Tsinlhqút’in* develop a strong sense of their language, culture, and world view, they will be more able to share their knowledge to the larger society. Many
people are in search of ceremonies and efficient ways to deal with present environmental problems and *Tsínlhqút'in* are among many who have in their care, significant data which have withstood the test of time.
PART SIX: CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY
CHAPTER 21
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERM “NÍMÍNH” AND ITS TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE

This study touches upon the thematic principles of nímín and self-care. These are several ancient Tsínhqút’in stories, the categories of nímín, nímín proscriptions for subsistence resources (hunting, fishing, and trapping resources and gear). Respect for wild animals, preserving one’s wellbeing, and ceremonies are mentioned. There are universal energies which we know little about and we can generalize and say that everything is energy and that life-forces are connected. Nímín individuals are highly respected because of their energy, and are recognized as healers, and also have the privilege of performing certain ceremonies. Kenneth Cohen (2003) defined energy stating that “in both Western and indigenous science, energy can be defined as (1) the capacity to act or to cause damage from one state to another and (2) usable power such as heat and electricity, or a feeling or perception of power in the body” (218). It is difficult to describe nímín by using categories because the energy affects a number of objects and other life forms in multiple ways.

Nímín and its surrounding concepts are significant in that they bring together ancient values, duality, and cultural traditions. Nímín is a term which is associated with spirituality, reciprocity, and respect and the continued knowledge and practice of these cultural elements are necessary for the preservation of all species and the environment. The specific terms related to nímín are not being learned among younger English
speaking generations, and Tsínlhqít’in-speaking elders who have this knowledge are dwindling in number, making this study all the more crucial.

The Tsínlhqít’in concept of nìmính, as I understand it, is comprised of six ritual states which can be further divided into at least ten distinct categories. There seems to be six transformational stages including birth, puberty, one has become a woman again, motherhood, widowhood, and death. The suggestions of duality or transformations are in the terms èyùwh-áts’ághint’i ‘one was different’ and in ts’iqí-nátś’èšdlín ‘one has become a woman again’. ‘One was different’ seems to indicate a distinctly different state of being, completely different from the average human being. The term èyùwh could also refer to the isolation from others, being set apart, but Ìnkél does not say this specifically.

I reflected on the differences of nìmính individuals as compared to non-nìmính individuals and thought: Although one is still living among others, it seems that a veil has somehow fallen, as if one has entered a different world; yet the world is as one has always known it to be. One is required to behave as if one is not a part of this world even though one is still in the physical body. However, these phases or time away allow one to contemplate, to be aware, to rest, to re-orient oneself. People often forget the most important things in life when possessed by hectic daily schedules – quality time for children, for others, for love, for sharing, and for helping. These often go by the wayside in the effort to simply survive. From this perspective, abiding by these ancient laws is a privilege.
One could speculate that the term *ts’iqí-nàts’èšdlin* ‘one has become a woman again’ implicates a reverting to another state - a cyclic transformation. This could also mean that the woman at the start of her menstrual cycle, whether at puberty or not, is actually believed to transform into *ts’iqih* ‘girl; woman; female’, possibly symbolizing the first woman. Is it then likely that *Ts’iqih* is the name of the first woman? Why else would a female ‘become a woman again’? I speculate now about the *Tsinlhqút’in* term for menstruant because I watched the video “Harmony and Balance: Working Towards Peace” produced by Signe Johansson (1991) in which Inés Talamantez, an Apache\Chicano woman, described the puberty ceremony and what she said really struck me. Inés is a professor of Religious and Women’s Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She said that the pubescent girl is believed to actually become *Isánàklésh*, the first woman, during her puberty ceremony. She is powerful and she has the ability to heal.

I found a term for menstruants which is inspiring. Mary Virginia Rojas (2003) used the Yurok (northwestern California) term for menstruant in her title, ‘she who bathes in a sacred place’ (130). In *Tsinlhqút’in*, ‘women become women again’ and it is absolutely odd that *Tsinlhqút’in* menopausal women are said to become the opposite sex, to ‘become men again’. Ênkél says, *ts’iqi-nàsindlin gwàntéžinyàh* ‘when you have passed the menstruation stage, *lhà ts’iqih nàsindlâx šélín* ‘when you no longer have periods’ *égúh dëyèn-z-nàts’èdlísh ts’égwédính* ‘this is called becoming a man again; “èsqi-ghà-ts’ètèyåsh” chùh jìd ts’égùzìh ‘and it is also called leaving a child behind’.
There are many transformations in sàdànxs stories as well. I provide lists of transformations and magical abilities from the two stories Lhìn Nits’én Nánàyídásh and Sès Ts’iqíh Ghàghìndá in the appendices. The idea of transformation seems to be central to the rites of passage; one is entering a new phase and is becoming new and different following the series of transformations or transitions from birth to death. At one spectrum, the spirit enters a physical body at birth, that is, a body is charged with energy, and at the other end, at death, the spirit departs from a body and temporarily leaves energy with the corpse. Death includes the ‘widow\widower’ who is ‘as if dead’; and those who have touched the dead; and those who have carried the dead. Among northern Dene, discussed in great detail by anthropologist Jean-Guy A. Goulet (1998) in Ways of Knowing: Experience, Knowledge, and Power Among the Dene Tha, is the belief in reincarnation after death. Peggy Beck and Anna L. Walters (1977) also referred to death as a transformation in documenting that “death was conceived to be more-or-less a state or time of transition” and they cite the famous words of Chief Seattle who said “There is no death. Only a change of worlds” (206).
CHAPTER 22
THE TRANSLATIONS INTO ENGLISH

Translations from Tsínlhqút’in to English are generally not exact in most instances, and one has to be satisfied with achieving only the gist of the meanings. The translations often lose special cultural elements, become merely outlines, repetitious, and disorganized, but this is not the case when told in the original language. Reflecting back, unlike any of my writing experiences involving incorporating data from my Tsínlhqút’in research notes, I felt wedged in-between the Tsínlhqút’in oral transcripts and academic expectations. The Tsínlhqút’in transcripts ruled out anything I attempted to do beyond translating excerpts. The English text format conflicted with the Tsínlhqút’in oral approach. What was superbly told in Tsínlhqút’in, in English, became cluttered, disorganized, confusing, and even unmanageable as preliminary data for this thesis. Even my translations seemed flawed. Older Tsínlhqút’in speakers are very expressive and creative in their language; an eloquence which my generation lacks. I found in several instances that providing tables served as an alternate solution to reduce repetition. I brought in quotations from other sources, and on the other hand, I was gripped with the feeling that I could not impose my own analyses upon my readers by adding my comments and even to provide text. Tsínlhqút’in elders normally respond through story and listeners must mull over what is offered and figure things out for themselves. Whatever conclusion listeners come up with is sufficient. What are suitable answers for one may be wrong for another. In addition to this cultural distress, reluctance, and uncertainty, it was very difficult to sort out níminh from unrelated data within the
transcripts, for example, the practices and observances for human burials, preventative health practices of pregnant women, and the safeguarding of infants from known age related occurrences. I made several close assessments, before I realized they did not relate to the topic, although, the dead may be to some extent connected to the topic of nimính.

There is an element of vagueness in the way Tsinlhqút’in elders express events beyond their own experiences and this is quite evident in the bear story and in general, in the recordings of nimính. There are terms like tesájágh ‘s/he may have’ and tèsánh ‘perhaps’ which indicate that the story is not the storyteller’s own experience. The expressions may normally create scepticism in English, but do not detract from the authenticity of the stories in Tsinlhqút’in. The terms are actually balanced out by the use of: ân ‘it is’, là ‘you know; it is obvious’, ts’èdènísh ‘it is said’, and ghîní ‘it happened’ (a marking for past tense). There is one general rule about making statements about events: One cannot state with certainty those things which one has not seen.

Occasionally, Ìnkél contradicted what she said previously. Slips of the tongue or partial utterances in initiating a sentence are actually quite common in storytelling and for people in general conversation, and rephrasing are actually part of "everyday oral communication." Saying, for example, “The arrow too, the arrow, that arrowhead” is not unusual in everyday speech. Words are limiting when contrasted with what normally flows in the mind. This imperfection of speech is most noticeable when converting

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62 There are a few sentences in the above text from my paper, Storytelling: The Power Of Voice In Lhin Nits’en Nanayidash, Linguistics 505, University of Victoria, 21 April 2005.
memories, or images into words, and worth mentioning is that *Tsínlhqút’in* stories are primarily based on verbs.

In studies like this, what comes across as lack of persuasion, periodic blunders, and the impossibility of translation could weaken the overall research outcomes, especially in the case with my research; the dependence on only one participant. Nevertheless, the education passed down by *Tsínlhqút’in* ancestors is based on systematic observations of the environment. The people had access to the most efficient laboratory: intact, and virtually untouched nature and specialized guides from the universe (nature spirits). The inherited assessments have been time-tested and re-experienced time and time again from generation to generation.
CHAPTER 23

THE VALUE OF THIS STUDY

The Tsínlhqút’in language has not been studied extensively, as other Native languages have been. The language is a living language that linguists can profitably study to aid in their studies of other Dene languages in which the languages are extinct or almost extinct. Ancient Tsínlhqút’in concepts and stories, in the original language, are of particular interest to linguistics. The languages used by the characters are archaic, unique, expressive, and often indirect. Ancient stories may reveal cultural borrowing, modern influences to the language, and changes to Tsínlhqút’in culture. Linguists can use such Tsínlhqút’in resources to study patterns in oral narratives, find derivation of words, preserve present unused terms, and compare similar terms and stories between Dene language communities. People in general, including linguists, can use these Tsínlhqút’in concepts of nimính to compare with terms from other cultures. Each generation borrows, adapts, and coins new words, and individual speakers make conscious decisions as to what terms to discontinue and how to pronounce every word used. Not having a comprehensive Tsínlhqút’in dictionary in addition to the fact that the language is not fully documented forces language learners to rely on oral communication to learn new vocabulary and to self-correct pronunciation differences.

It is unfortunate that the course of events since contact has had a huge impact on Tsínlhqút’in traditions, and the most detrimental change to Tsínlhqút’in culture has been the discontinued flow of knowledge from generation to generation. Tsínlhqút’in elders
often lament about the younger generations not adhering to *Tsínlhqút'in* traditions, thus, display a disrespect toward themselves and to other individuals and to their environment. Elders no longer tell ancient stories as they did previously. Charlie Quilt grew up in the days when stories were told for hours after dark, and at times, he said that stories were told until sunrise the following morning.

Regrettably, there has been no widespread research for the sole purpose of preserving the language and culture. This particular study will add to the pool of *Tsínlhqút'in* knowledge, and in the case that the *Tsínlhqút'in* language becomes extinct, all recordings and documentations will be crucial to maintaining, revitalizing, and preserving the language for future generations. Whether *Tsínlhqút'in* youth learn the language or not, documented studies on the culture will soon be the single most important link to the *Tsínlhqút'in* past. Înkél will benefit from the satisfaction of knowing that her knowledge of vocabulary relating to *nímính* and cultural ceremonies are documented, learned, and passed on to future generations, as well as to society, and to the state of knowledge. For these reasons, this study is a valuable contribution to *Tsínlhqút'in* communities and to their educational institutions. Every scrap of information on our culture, gleaned from our elders, is precious. So much needs to be collected, so little work has been done. The *Tsínlhqút'in* language is also in danger of extinction. The *Tsínlhqút'in* communities, for the most part, are not yet aware that their language is endangered, and there are *Tsínlhqút'in* speakers over the age of 25, yet English is the dominant language being spoken in the communities.
It seems apparent to me now that the knowledge concerning widows has not been given to me because I have not come upon that stage in life. Tsínlhqút’in parents are usually very busy and one cannot learn anything unless one helps with daily tasks and asks questions. Although asking questions is not customarily done, this was the only means which enabled me to learn about my culture. For more information on asking questions, see “Not Asking Why” in Beck and Walters (1977:50). Tsínlhqút’in people generally give information relevant to immediate tasks and this makes me think about the story, Lhìn Nìts’é’n Nànàyidásh ‘the dog who courted someone’, which actually contradicts what I just said about asking questions but confirms the relaying of knowledge at appropriate times.

Knowledge was shared in Lhìn Nìts’é’n Nànàyidásh not only when individuals asked, but when they were ready to carry out the tasks relevant to the information. When the boys asked their mother how certain animals were killed, she answered them immediately and told them where to find traps and made them hunting tools. When they wanted to know about how animals were transformed, she waited until spring, when they were ready to travel. It is interesting that the young woman in this story, who is said to be bèghèts’è’in ‘in puberty seclusion’, had so much knowledge at this early age. As the father and the young men traveled among the animals, it is her sons who recall what their mother said
about each creature, and they caution their father as they meet each task. The woman apparently possessed immense traditional knowledge about her environment. Unmistakably, it was only her knowledge which was received for the critical responsibilities ahead. This could be an indication of the benefits of early training.63

In present times, some of the Tsínlhqút’in ways of life is not being passed down to younger generations, and this can definitely change. Tsínlhqút’in do not like to predict future events. I will continue to do my part. It was after the death of my paternal grandfather that I realized our greatest loss. He was raised by his grandmother, and sadly, he chose not to pass her knowledge down to us. His life is an undocumented library and my grandmother’s teachings died with him. In my grief, I made a silent promise to preserve our history onto pages. I love the picturesque beauty of my first language. I am constantly amazed at the way Ìnkél seems to create concise visual “video-clips” with mere words. I have scrawled her words, phrases and stories while driving, sometimes on scraps of tissue paper, and on envelopes.64

Definitely, more participant interviews will be done on niminh among Tsínlhqút’in people in the near future, especially with elders. These studies on niminh could include additional šàdànx stories, historical accounts, personal experiences, and general discussions on the topic with small groups, as well as presentations at large gatherings.

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64 From A Silent Promise, a paper I wrote for Creative Writing 335, University of Victoria, 25 Sept. 2003.
I had originally prepared research questions (see appendices) prior to interviewing ìnkél and the following are ones she did not answer, so the suggestions below are offered for future research. Seek a clearer more concise definition of nîmînh energy. In the bear story, only women and infants are indirectly referred to as being nîmînh; men become gûbàts’ègûdâh as a result of being in the presence of women. Request information on the time periods, the source, and the method in which the other categories of nîmînh were initially transmitted. Determine if the principles of sůwh-tš’èghèdûdính pertain to all who are nîmînh. Obtain clarifications for duration of nîmînh carried by individuals and its presence in hunters, items, plants, and places. Document other observances and impact on additional objects, for example, war implements, medicine bundles, and dishes, in addition to the energy’s impact on people. If animals can sense the energy, then it is possible that some individuals can also sense nîmînh energy as well. Find connections between stories and twins and explain why twins are considered to be nîmînh. List more restrictions for twins. Explain how twin energy and nîmînh energy differ from diyên (shaman) power. Can non-nîmînh people walk on fresh blood and step over hunting or trapping tools? Search for linguistic features or terms present in other ancient Tsínlhqût’in stories which relate to nîmînh ceremonies and to transitional ceremonies. Determine if the infant is actually nîmînh. If the baby is accidently placed on hunting, fishing, or trapping items, would these items then become èsqwàyàx? Deer xûzîlêd lájâgh ‘deer reacted as if it was scorched’ - What do deer see? Request prescriptions on ways to subdue or lessen the energy carried by nîmînh individuals. Is there a ceremony to undo the energy transferred to hunters? What is a hunter to do in the case that he is a twin or becomes a widower? Can he lessen the impact or duration of the nîmînh energy? Can he
smudge with juniper? Actually, in *Lhin Nits’ën Nánâyidásh*, the main historical figures sweat-bathed all winter in preparation for their journey among the animals. There is no reason given in the story for this lengthy purification.

There are also a number of murky areas presented in the body of this thesis which need to be cleared up and expanded upon in future research. In regards to the story of the bear, translations of a few lines in the ancient bear story marked “unknown”, as well as the bear’s archaic comments about the woman’s brothers, and the bear-woman’s lullaby to the baby, could be extended. The bear song requires further clarification; and descriptions of other bear ceremonies could be added. Documentation of actual known instructions left by mammals or fish as to how to respectfully handle their remains is essential. Enquiries about possible ecological barriers or other deterrents to continuing *niminh* traditions today, would be very interesting. Another area of concern are questions such as, “What happens to the meat from animals which have been exposed to abuse or have been cooped up and are slaughtered in disrespectful ways?”

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65 A point mentioned by Andy Baggott (Celtic) in Timothy Freke’s (1999:86) *Shamanic Wisdomkeepers: Shamanism in the Modern World*, would be difficult to adapt. This is to revert to eating only home grown or local traditional foods to ensure that one’s vibration is in tune with one’s environment. He said:

> We are what we eat. ...whatever you find in creation that’s what you have to align yourself to. If you want to communicate with a tree, then you stand a much better chance of doing that if everything going into you is in harmony with the season. If you start eating citrus fruit, tropical fruits, sugars…and you go up to an oak tree in England – your whole vibration is completely different...We are not eating in harmony with our climate and the seasons...

*Tsínlhqút’in* are aware of other types of energies which vary according to seasons and places, for example, plants are harvested during different stages of growth, each depending on the plant species and their location. If a species grows everywhere, then, the higher up a mountain, the more powerful the plant is said to be.
There is much written about women and menstruation and there are a number of authors today who are interviewing women themselves on this topic. I found a very interesting article on just the scratching stick. The author searched out images of scratching sticks from all over and interviewed women from different cultures and compiled a fascinating piece of work. I was actually in awe because someone took the time to thoroughly research this single item which seems so insignificant to many. Mary Virginia Rojas (2003), the author of “She Bathes in a Sacred Place: Rites of Reciprocity, Power, and Prestige in Alta California”, brings the idea of scratching to a spiritual level. She noted that “once a participant has achieved a state of unusual mental calm, she would very consciously pick up the scratching stick and very consciously scratch that discomforting itch, remaining conscious of each moment and each movement. Generations of women perfected a methodology and a technology that would permit ritual participants to have a transcendental experience” (136). I had come close to the same realization when I reflected on how useful human hands are for so many tasks and how difficult it is to keep them still. An itchy scalp is a reminder of the energy, and it takes a lot of effort to be mindful.

There is much more to do on this topic and for the most part, due to the lack of space, I provided limited information for the knowledge and categories of niminh; with many of the Tsilhqut’in terms having the capacity of becoming a book. It was unfair to readers to exclude so much. These terms and segments could be considerably extended.66

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66 In my initial search for documentations on energies, I found some interesting studies on the internet (10 Feb 2007). Akhand-Jyoti (2006), Gloria Alvino (1996), Shawn-Thierry Brouwers, and Sivananda Math (1991) describe various energies, and in reading their articles, I decided that the additional data is fascinating, but beyond the purpose of my study. Hopefully, one day, someone will be inspired to carry on
such a study, and incorporate in their study the energy carried by niminh. There are many types of energies which have been studied and documented. The following are websites I searched out in my attempt to describe niminh energy:

1) Gloria Alvino (1996) in *The Human Energy Field in Relation to Science, Consciousness, and Health* referenced many studies on energy, which can be seen on her website under the title, *The Human Energy Field in Relation to Science, Consciousness, and Health*. She noted that “... there are references made to the phenomenon of the human energy field (HEF) or the aura of the body, in 97 different cultures, according to John White in his book "Future Science." She further summarized data on a range of energies, mentioning a “universal energy pervading all of nature [Pythagorean];” as well as, prana [India], Qi [China]; astral light (halo); human energy field (odic field) in which “the odic force, like poles attract”; yin and yang [female and male]; and somatid (a manifestation of cosmic energy). The most interesting study, Alvino included were about “static images of fingers or leaves... [said to be] flashing, sparkling, steadily glowing, or... diminishing particles of light [seen] with the use of a special optical instrument” and obvious differences were noted in the energy of people with diseases. She also described the work of Walter Kilner, a medical doctor:

"The Human Aura" published in New York, 1965, he states that the appearance of the aura differs from person to person, depending on their physical, mental, and emotional states. Kilner actually developed a system of diagnosis based on the consistent differences he found in persons suffering a particular disease. He successfully treated many conditions, including epilepsy, liver disease, tumors, appendicitis, and hysteria.

2) Sivananda Math (1991), in *Tuning Body and Mind*, stated that “man is not the isolated, separate individual body or person, as he likes to think himself to be. In fact, he is linked or connected to every other living being, animal and creature, down to the invisible microbe- from the grossest physical link of being a progenitor or a progeny to another human being, to the most subtle link of being part of the cosmic soul and the cosmic consciousness.”

3) Sivananda Math (1991) in *The Real Nature of our Body*, discussed Ki, chakra points, positive and negative energy, and in the earth’s electromagnetic energy, and noted:

Each pole attracts opposite and repels like electromagnetic particles, thus creating energy circuits around the terrestrial plane. The particular movements of these electromagnetic currents affect the energy balance in every form of life. Furthermore, the cycle of these currents greatly affects our entire being, and the particular nature of the charged particles influences the different mental and physical processes.

4) Akhand-Jyoti (2006), author of *Bio-Energy: Medical Imaging to Psychic Healing*, described an interesting energy which was given the terms, the X-energy or para-electricity, and these refer to “aura around the hands of a psychic healer.”
References Cited


Baffoe, Kwesi. Profile of the Sayisi Dene Nation of Tadoule Lake in Northern Manitoba.  


**APPENDICES:**

**APPENDIX A: PARADIGMS OF SIGNIFICANT TERMS**

*Bàts’ègúdáh* ‘s/he is an unsuccessful hunter’. The term is used to refer to hunters who are avoided by game animals, therefore cannot come upon animals. If by chance, these individuals lay their eyes on an animal, the animal will react as if it has been physically scorched by fire. The term is usually associated with animante-human but it is also used when speaking of a hunting dog. The expressions *nímính*, *bàts’ègúdáh*, and *èsqwāyāx* seem to have similar meanings and often *èsqwāyāx* is usually assigned to animate non-human. In addition to failing to observe hunting rules, a hunter becomes *bàts’ègúdáh* 'avoided by game' if s/he touches newborn babies, menstruating women, and dead bodies.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>past</th>
<th>present</th>
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<th>customary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>sàts’ègúwèdá</td>
<td>sàts’ègúdáh</td>
<td>sàts’ègútādálh</td>
<td>sàts’ègúdăsh</td>
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<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>nàts’ègúwèdá</td>
<td>nàts’ègúdáh</td>
<td>nàts’ègútādálh</td>
<td>nàts’ègúdăsh</td>
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<tr>
<td>S’he</td>
<td>bàts’ègúwèdá</td>
<td>bàts’ègúdáh</td>
<td>bàts’ègútādálh</td>
<td>bàts’ègúdăsh</td>
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<tr>
<td>You(pl)</td>
<td>nèxwàts’ègúwèdá</td>
<td>nèxwàts’ègúdáh</td>
<td>nèxwàts’ègútādálh</td>
<td>nèxwàts’ègúdăsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>nèxwàts’ègúwèdá</td>
<td>nèxwàts’ègúdáh</td>
<td>nèxwàts’ègútādálh</td>
<td>nèxwàts’ègúdăsh</td>
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<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>gùbàts’ègúwèdá</td>
<td>gùbàts’ègúdáh</td>
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<td>Someone</td>
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<td>bàts’ègútādálh</td>
<td>bàts’ègúdăsh</td>
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67 I am grateful that I had *Ìnkél* to help me do these paradigms, otherwise, some of them would have been impossible for me to create. *Nímính* and *bàts’ègúdáh* would have been especially difficult expressions to expand upon because the terms brought into the paradigms are not all used in normal everyday usage. In fact, even as a fluent speaker, some of the terms in the columns for *nímính* and *bàts’ègúdáh* look very odd. Writing out paradigms forces speakers to produce terms which are either never used or rarely used. In the introductory period of learning about and doing paradigms, the mental activity seems an artificial application of language, and is an awkward undertaking, but paradigms are useful.

68 There are two sets of headings used to separate paradigms within columns and I have used the terms which are not in brackets: past (perfective), present (imperfective), future (optative), and customary. There is an alternative way to represent pronouns as well: I (1sg), you (2sg), s/he/it (3sg), you (2du or 2pl), we (1du or 1pl), they (3du or 3pl), someone (3unspec).
**Bèdèts'èt'ish** ‘one ritually blocks (subsistence resources) by cutting fresh meat or fish’.

Ìnkèl says that even if a non-*niminh* hunter cuts fresh game meat that he has just killed, *bè'ìnlhtín dá’èt'ish* ‘he will cut (the meat) and in doing that will cause an obstruction to his gun’; his gun will become *esqwayax* and animals will thereafter avoid his gun. They cannot handle any fresh meat or fish still warm and they must wait until the following day when the meat or fish have turned cold. The reason is that the spirit of the game or fish depart only after their blood turns cold.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>bèdénit’ãž</td>
<td>bèdétéžit’ãž</td>
<td>bèdetašt’èš</td>
<td>bèdé’èst’ish^69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>bèdénint’ãž</td>
<td>bèdétéžint’ãž</td>
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<td>S’he</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>bèdétéžit’ãž</td>
<td>bèdétághat’èš</td>
<td>bèdè’t’ish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>jiyèdénint’ãž</td>
<td>jiyèdétížt’ãž</td>
<td>jiyèdétát’èš</td>
<td>jiyèdè’èt’ish</td>
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<td>bèdè’ts’étížt’ãž</td>
<td>bèdè’ts’étát’èš</td>
<td>bèdè’ts’èt’ish</td>
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^69 All the customary forms ending in *-ish* have high tone except for “we”
**Bèdáts’ëyàsh** ‘one ritually blocks it by walking’ and this could include blocking (subsistence) tools by walking near, in front of, or stepping over tools, or by walking on blood. There is also **gwèdáts’ëyàsh** ‘obstructing an area (waterways, fishing site, butchering site)’.

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<td>bèdátághényàh</td>
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<td>S’he</td>
<td>yèdámiyàh</td>
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<td>yèdátýàlìh</td>
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<td>bèdámi:’h:shàh</td>
<td>bèdátéží:shàh</td>
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</tr>
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<td>We</td>
<td>bèdáni:jìyàh</td>
<td>bèdátéží:jìyàh</td>
<td>bèdátághá:jìyàlìh</td>
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<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>jìyèdáni:yàh</td>
<td>jìyèdátízì:jìyàh</td>
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<td>bèdáts’ëyàsh</td>
</tr>
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Continuing from the above paradigm, there are other **Tsínlhqút’ìn** terms for walking shown below; one is dual, the other plural. 70

**Bèdáts’ë’ish (dual)**

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<tr>
<td>You(pl)</td>
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<td>bèdátéží:hz’az</td>
<td>bèdáta:’h:ez</td>
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<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>bèdáni:’az</td>
<td>bèdátéží:’az</td>
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<td>They</td>
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<td>jìyèdátá:’ez</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone</td>
<td>bèdáts’éní:’az</td>
<td>bèdáts’ètìzì:’az</td>
<td>bèdáts’ètá:’ez</td>
<td>bèdáts’ë:’ìsh</td>
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**Bèdáts’édílh (plural)**

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>past</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>future</th>
<th>customary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You(pl)</td>
<td>bèdámi:hdíl</td>
<td>bèdátéží:hdíl</td>
<td>bèdáta:’h:del</td>
<td>bèdá:’h:dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>bèdámi:díl</td>
<td>bèdátéží:díl</td>
<td>bèdátághá:díl</td>
<td>bèdá:díl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>jìyèdámi:ndíl</td>
<td>jìyèdátízì:ndíl</td>
<td>jìyèdátá:’délìh</td>
<td>jìyèdádíl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone</td>
<td>bèdáts’éní:díl</td>
<td>bèdáts’ètìzì:díl</td>
<td>bèdáts’ètá:díl</td>
<td>bèdáts’ë:díl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

70 I added the last two paradigms on this page by myself, and at this point, I am unsure whether the conjugations jìyèdáni:yàh, jìyèdátízì:jìyàh, jìyèdátáyàlìh, jìyèdáyàsh really exist. There seems to be three plural forms and –díl might be the proper form.

71 The customary forms bèdáh’ìsh, bèdàt’ìsh, and jìyèdá’ìsh, all end in falling tone except for bèdáts’ë’ìsh which ends in high tone. Although the first form bèdáh’ìsh is written as –a’h, the /a/ here is pronounced as /æ/; hereafter, I will write this as /a:/.
**bèdáts’éyínsh** ‘one ritually blocks (subsistence resources) by eating fresh fish or meat’.

The consumption of fresh meat or fish by nímh individuals, ruins guns, traps, and nets, causing guns to become èsqwàyàx and the remaining fish to decrease in size. If a gun is bèch ’èts’ághinyán ‘blocked by eating’ it will become èsqwàyàx; and ts’èlhtsính ‘one ruins them’, similarly with traps, and fish nets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>past</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>future</th>
<th>customary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>bèdáninyán</td>
<td>bèdâtéziyán</td>
<td>bèdátásinlh</td>
<td>bèdá’ésinsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>bèdáninyán</td>
<td>bèdâtéziyán</td>
<td>bèdátághènyínlh</td>
<td>bèdá’ínynsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S’he</td>
<td>yèdáninyán</td>
<td>yèdátiyán</td>
<td>yèdátáyínlh</td>
<td>yèdá’èyínsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You(pl)</td>
<td>bèdéná:hyán</td>
<td>bèdâtéziá:hyán</td>
<td>bèdátá:hyínlh</td>
<td>bèdá’a:hyínsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>bèdáninjàn</td>
<td>bèdâtézijàn</td>
<td>bèdátághédínlh</td>
<td>bèdá’íjínsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>jiyèdáninyán</td>
<td>jiyèdátiyán</td>
<td>jiyèdátáyínlh</td>
<td>jiyèdá’èyínsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone</td>
<td>bèdáts’éninyán</td>
<td>bèdêts’étizàn</td>
<td>bèdáts’étayínlh</td>
<td>bèdáts’èyínsh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bèdá’èshínsh** has another possible plural form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>past</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>future</th>
<th>customary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You(pl)</td>
<td>bèdénáshán</td>
<td>bèdâtéžáh-shán</td>
<td>bèdátá:h-shínlh</td>
<td>bèdá’èshínsh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ch'èts'ègwènínt'àż ‘one severed the area (stream, river, lake)’. Fish will avoid areas where widows have caught fish using a dip-net or have crossed over a waterway by foot or watercraft and this occurrence is called gwedats'eyash ‘someone obstructs an opening’. Transporting dead bodies across a waterway produces the same effects. If a widow walks across a river while fish are running, fish will stop going upstream. The expression for this occurrence is gangu ch'ets'egwenint'aż gagujagh ‘it was as if (the stream) was severed’. Fish in these circumstances do not pass through to go upstream until gwech'enagudišzed ilin gagujagh ‘the (energy) seems to have dissipated’. It takes a week before fish will move through an area which has been impacted by widows. A widow or widower’s presence at an active fishing site is enough to repel fish, whether s\he is within range of the waterway, consuming fish, handling fish, or simply walking across a stream.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>past</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>future</th>
<th>customary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>ch'ègwènit’aż</td>
<td>ch'ègwètéžít’aż</td>
<td>ch'ègwètást’ēs</td>
<td>ch’ègwèst’ish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>ch'ègwèni̱nt’aż</td>
<td>ch'ègwètéžít’aż</td>
<td>ch’ègwètágênt’ēs</td>
<td>ch’ègùnt’ish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S\he</td>
<td>ch'ègwèni̱nt’aż</td>
<td>ch'ègwètížít’aż</td>
<td>ch’ègwètát’ēs</td>
<td>ch’ègwèt’ish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S\he</td>
<td>ch'ègwèni̱nt’aż</td>
<td>ch'ègwètížít’aż</td>
<td>ch’ègwètát’ēs</td>
<td>ch’ègwèt’ish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You(pl)</td>
<td>ch’ègwènà:ht’aż</td>
<td>ch’ègwètéžà:ht’aż</td>
<td>ch’ègwètà:ht’ēs</td>
<td>ch’ègwà:ht’ish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>ch’ègwènit’aż</td>
<td>ch’ègwètéžít’aż</td>
<td>ch’ègwètág̤àt’ēs</td>
<td>ch’ègùt’ish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>ch’èjégwèni̱nt’aż</td>
<td>ch’èjégwètížít’aż</td>
<td>ch’èjégwètát’ēs</td>
<td>ch’èjégùt’ish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone</td>
<td>ch’èts’ègwèni̱nt’aż</td>
<td>ch’èts’ègwètížít’aż</td>
<td>ch’èts’ègwètát’ēs</td>
<td>ch’èts’ègwèt’ish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[72\] A slight change in the tone in the suffixes for the terms in the present forms, i.e. ch’ègwètížit’aż and ch’ègwètížít’aż possibly changes the meaning of the verb, but this change is difficult to explain.
**Bêdê’âts’êt’însh** ‘one ritually blocks it by doing’ and this is a general term and the activities vary. Generally, animals dislike their bones being sawed, even if their bones are left overnight or longer. If an animal’s bones are sawed by an individual who is *niminh*, the gun used to shoot it will become *ésqwàyàx* and animals *nîch’an nânît’îsh* lit. ‘they will turn away from hunters’ making it difficult to find animals because they will evade that hunter’s gun. When *niminh* individuals disregard any hunting or fishing observances this is known as *dé’âts’êt’însh* ‘one ritually obstructs’ fish and game, and hunting gear become *ésqwayax*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>past</th>
<th>past</th>
<th>future</th>
<th>customary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>bêdá’ásjágh</td>
<td>bêdá’ánèst’in</td>
<td>bêdê’âtàsnîlh</td>
<td>bêdê’âst’însh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>bêdá’ânjágh</td>
<td>bêdá’ânînt’in</td>
<td>bêdê’âtâghënînlh</td>
<td>bêdê’ânènt’însh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bêdá’ânènjágh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he</td>
<td>yêdá’ájágh</td>
<td>yêdá’ánt’in</td>
<td>yêdê’âtànîlh</td>
<td>yêdê’ât’însh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You(pl)</td>
<td>bêdá’â:h-jágh</td>
<td>bêdá’ânà:h-t’in</td>
<td>bêdê’âtà:h-nilh</td>
<td>bêdê’â:h-t’însh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>bêdá’ájágh</td>
<td>bêdá’ânît’in</td>
<td>bêdê’âtâghë́ðînlh</td>
<td>bêdê’ât’însh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>jiyêdá’ájágh</td>
<td>jiyêdê’ánt’in</td>
<td>jiyêdê’âtànîlh</td>
<td>jiyêdê’ât’însh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone</td>
<td>bêdá’âts’èjágh</td>
<td>bêdê’âts’ènt’in</td>
<td>bêdê’âts’etànîlh</td>
<td>bêdê’âts’èt’însh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Nàgúján* ‘you are a successful hunter, trapper, fisherman’. These individuals are said to approach fish and wildlife easily. As an example of one who is *bàgúján*, Ínkél tells about one man who she says, points in the direction in which he thinks he could find game and he always finds game and brings home game each time he hunts. Hunters maintain their success by *sùwh-jéghéddîñh* ‘taking care of themselves’; lit. ‘saving themselves’ and there are several precribed methods for becoming a successful: conditioning oneself in cold water during early training, avoiding menstruants and newborn infants, attracting fur-bearing animals in the subsistence field, and in general, treating animals with respect.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>future</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>sàgúján</td>
<td>sàgútájálh</td>
<td>sàgújásh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>nàgúghéján</td>
<td>nàgúján</td>
<td>nàgútájálh</td>
<td>nàgújásh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/he</td>
<td>bàgúghéján</td>
<td>bàgúján</td>
<td>bàgútájálh</td>
<td>bàgújásh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You(pl)</td>
<td>nèxwàgúghéján</td>
<td>nèxwàgúján</td>
<td>nèxwàgútájálh</td>
<td>nèxwàgújásh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>nèxwàgúghéján</td>
<td>nèxwàgúján</td>
<td>nèxwàgútájálh</td>
<td>nèxwàgújásh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>gùbàgúghéján</td>
<td>gùbàgúján</td>
<td>gùbàgútájálh</td>
<td>gùbàgújásh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone</td>
<td>bàts’ègúghéján</td>
<td>bàts’ègúján</td>
<td>bàts’ègútájálh</td>
<td>bàts’ègújásh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nàts’àghinlhtsén ‘one ruined it’. When a niminh individual (menstruant, Pallbearer,…)
lhàghèmbínlh édåghinlhtí ‘took fish from a net’, several things take place. Almost immediately, less and less fish will be caught in that net because fish will avoid the net. After such an occurrence, it has been noted that the fish will become smaller in that lake and this is referred to as lhùy nentsutsel yanadlin ‘fish became smaller’ or lhùy ts’àghinlhtsén ‘someone ruined the fish’. The remaining fish in the lake qwès gánt’ih hèlish ‘will become soft, lose flesh, and become thin’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>past</th>
<th>present</th>
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<th>customary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
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<td>nàtèžilhtsén</td>
<td>nàtásánx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s\he</td>
<td>yàghinlhtsén</td>
<td>nàyetilhtsén</td>
<td>nàyetálhtsánx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>nàghinlhtsén</td>
<td>nàtèžinlhtsén</td>
<td>nàtåghelhtsánx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You(pl)</td>
<td>nàghèlhtsén</td>
<td>nàtèžèlhtsén</td>
<td>nàtèlhtsánx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>nàghìltsén</td>
<td>nàtèžìltsén</td>
<td>nàtåghèltsánx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>nàjàghinlhtsén</td>
<td>nàjìyètilhtsén</td>
<td>nàjìyètálhtsánx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone</td>
<td>nàts’àghilhtsén</td>
<td>nàts’ètilhtsén</td>
<td>nàts’ètálhtsánx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tsˈèniminh** ‘one is carrying niminh energy’. *Niminh* is defined as ones who are *gubigwenijed* lit. ‘they are powerful; dangerous’. They are not dangerous in the sense that we normally use the term, but it is understood that their energy is avoided by certain people and by wildlife. This energy manifests within individuals who are passing through one of the major rites of passage and there are a number of categories of individuals who carry this energy: newborn infants, twins, mothers of twins, menstruating women, widows, and pallbearers and others who have come in physical contact with a dead body.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>present</th>
<th>future</th>
<th>customary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>nághiminh</td>
<td>nisminh</td>
<td>nentásmilh</td>
<td>nisminsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>nághiminh</td>
<td>niminh</td>
<td>nentághêmilh</td>
<td>niminsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sˈhe</td>
<td>nághiminh</td>
<td>niminh</td>
<td>nentámilh</td>
<td>niminsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You(pl)</td>
<td>nágháhmi</td>
<td>niːhminh</td>
<td>nentáːhmilh</td>
<td>niːhmínsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>nághibiny</td>
<td>nibính</td>
<td>nentághèbinlh</td>
<td>nibínsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>jènághimi</td>
<td>jèniminh</td>
<td>jènéntámilh</td>
<td>jèniminsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone</td>
<td>tsˈènághimi</td>
<td>tsˈèniminh</td>
<td>tsˈènéntámilh</td>
<td>tsˈènimínsh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I rephrased the questions in the Tsínhlhqút’in language. In English, the questions sound blunt and ask for specific information, but when rephrased and answered by a Tsínhlhqút’in speaker, however, each question invites a wide-ranging response.

1. Tell me about ceremonial requirements for ones who are nímính who wish to gather berries, or harvest other natural foods.
2. There are restrictions for menstruants. Are these restrictions applied to widows, twins, and pallbearers as well?
3. Can widows and pallbearers do ceremonies on wild potato fields?
4. Is there any other term for twin? Èyììwh-ájàghínt’i lit. ‘they were different; twins; mothers of twins’. Why are they called this?
5. Are there any ancient stories about the origin of the concept of nímính?
6. How does the energy carried by twins differ from medicine powers?
7. Elders tell men and women to sù xè dúndính lit. ‘preserve yourself; to maintain a youthful, healthy appearance’. What does this entail for men and women?
8. Are newborn infants also considered to be nímính?
9. Can you tell me why fathers cannot hold their newborn babies?
10. In traditional times, a mother and her baby were separated from their family and community for one month. How has this tradition changed among Tsínhlhqút’in?
### Appendix C: The Bear’s Intuitive Abilities and Transformational Powers in *Sèś Ts’iqí Ghaghíndá*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Out of the ordinary abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>“glows” in the dark, and provides nocturnal vision to the woman by rubbing her eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>always knows the woman’s thoughts, and also knows about her brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>makes woman’s skin impervious to rose prickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>produces spring beauty corms, yellow glacier lily bulbs; and saskatoon berries from his hip; and scratches the earth and produces spring water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>transforms into a bear by putting on bear skin twice and transforms herself by slipping into skin of dead hunter’s wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>places four tiger lily bulbs into her mouth and they become actual teeth but they break, so she replaces them with four yellow glacier lily bulbs and they become strong teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>places her heart in a tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>she comes to life quicker each time she is killed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excerpts from Williams (1982), Myers (1977), and Myers (1967).
## APPENDIX D: LHÌNDÈSCH’ÓSH’S INTUITIVE ABILITIES AND TRANSFORMATIONAL POWERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LHÌNĐÈSCH’ÓSH</td>
<td>transforms himself from a dog into a young man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>puppies</td>
<td>transform themselves from puppies into boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman</td>
<td>transforms human figure she created (known as K’úlébì) into a human being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHÌNĐÈSCH’ÓSH</td>
<td>rubs K’úlébì’s mouth to cure her dumb spell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHÌNĐÈSCH’ÓSH</td>
<td>creates birds from entire flesh of elk, a snake from the intestine, and a frog from the brain of the elk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHÌNĐÈSCH’ÓSH</td>
<td>creates an alternate childbirth method for women in substitution to cesarean operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHÌNĐÈSCH’ÓSH</td>
<td>breaks heron’s leg and tells it that it will now have one short leg and that it will be a harbinger of bad news (usually death)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHÌNĐÈSCH’ÓSH</td>
<td>curses rabbit to live in the bush and transforms its ribs turning it facing the opposite direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHÌNĐÈSCH’ÓSH</td>
<td>his fingers are severed by a sliding door and he declares that people's fingers should be of the same length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHÌNĐÈSCH’ÓSH</td>
<td>revives his sons from death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHÌNĐÈSCH’ÓSH</td>
<td>scratches chipmunk’s back and leaves permanent streaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHÌNĐÈSCH’ÓSH</td>
<td>throws cones to the mountains, creating spring beauty and throws twigs into the forest, creating yellow avalanche lily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excerpts from Williams (1982), Myers (1977), and Myers (1967).