ʕumtnaakšiƛ: To have a traditional name.

The importance of revitalizing traditional ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ names

By

ḥakaƛ (Christina John)

Bachelor of Education, University of Victoria, 2024

Diploma in Indigenous Language Revitalization, University of Victoria, 2020

Certificate in Indigenous Language Fluency, University of Victoria, 2019

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

Naming practices for ʔiiḥatisʔath people have changed over time due to the ongoing effects of colonization. We traditionally carried more than one name throughout our lives and through the devastating effects of colonization, our people have moved to a more standardized, Euro-western way of naming: one first name and one surname, which is used for an entire life time. This project focuses on reclaiming our ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ naming ceremonies which revitalizes a vital tradition for our people: Carrying more than one name based on milestones and achievements in life, resulting in multiple family names being used over the span of one lifetime. These aren't just names; our names give us identity, a sense of belonging, and a means of reconnecting us to our ancestors who had come before us.

Table of Contents

wawaačak (*Our words, our orthography*)

When possible, I have intentionally written our traditional place names and other Anglicized words using our nuučaaʔnuł orthography; this orthography has been standardized in our nuučaaʔnuł communities since the 1990's. I have chosen to use the proper nuučaaʔnuł spelling as a way to both honour the language revitalization efforts of those who came before me and as a strategy to further normalize the use of our language where English has fallen short. When these place and nation names are written in English, it diminishes our oral histories. When we use our own orthography, these names and other words in our language can be pronounced properly after generations of them being anglicized for the convenience of the oppressors who have documented and studied our people.

Here is a short story of the first language class I had participated in: When I began learning language, I was already raised to know where I was from, but learning the language was new. I knew I was an ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ woman, but because I was raised in a generation of English speakers, we were raised with the anglicized pronunciation of "Ehattesaht". When I first began learning with my mentor, čiiʔiłumqa, I quickly learned how to say where I was from in our language, but I will never forget her correction in that class. She told me, "We are not 'Ehattesaht', we are ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ". She emphasized that there is a distinct difference in the pronunciation and we must pronounce our nation name properly.

Although our orthography is not yet understood by others in the academic field, it is important for these places, names, and some other concepts to be written in our own orthography as a way to truly honour our language. We do not use capitalized letters in nuučaaʔnuł the way the English language does. This is why you will see people's names and place names written in lower case letters only. In contrast, some First Nations' orthographies are written in all capital letters. The linguistic term for the letter "h" with a dot underneath it is called a back-h or hard-h. This letter and the sound it makes are not found in English, and so it is not captured when written in English letters. This is why I have intentionally included words written in our own nuučaaʔnuł orthography, followed by the English translation or anglicized

version in brackets. This is a deliberate order with our language written first and the English spelling following second for readers who may not understand our nuučaaʔnuł language. Here are some examples of place names and other words readers will see in this publication:

ʔiiḥatis	(Ehatis, a traditional village site, also named Zeballos by colonizers)
ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ	(Ehattesaht, translated as People of Ehatis. The anglicized version is the official name recorded in English by Indian Agents and still used to this day for Indian Status Registration under the Indigenous Services of Canada.)
ʔačuu	(Tatchu, also called Tatchu Point)
nuučaaʔnuł	(Nuu-chah-nulth: A name chosen by our people to replace the name "Nootka Indians" given to our people at first European contact. Nuučaaʔnuł encompasses 14 remaining nations on the west coast of Vancouver Island.)
quuʔas	(A nuučaaʔnuł person, a person raised with a nuučaaʔnuł experience as opposed to an outsider or other person of colour)
neen	(Grandparent, a direct non-gendered term to address your grandparent in conversation, a respectful reference to their title as a grandparent, shortened from "naniiqsu" in our language and not in relation to the English word "nanny" though that is somewhat of a coincidence noticed by people today)

It is important to note that although personal names are not translated into English, they are used in this text to honour speakers who have used their names proudly throughout their lives as a form of resistance and resilience. **These names cannot be used or reproduced without explicit permission from the current owners.**

ʕatiʕaqƛs siiḥił ʼkatyiikckʷisuu hupii siičił
(*Acknowledgements*)

Every single day, the first thing we do before we even open our eyes is express gratitude for the day. This is a teaching my nan and language mentor čiiʔiłumqa, Fidelia Haiyupis, reiterated to me over the years of language learning. We know from our original stories that everything, even the light of day, is a gift from Creator. Gratitude from the deepest depths of my heart goes next to my mom, Agatha. Not only did she give me life, she also gave us, her children, something no money could buy today: lived experience on the land and waters our people were born to inherit from our ancestors who came before us. This is not an entitlement, but a responsibility to be raised to understand that we live in relation to all of these living things around us. By instilling these teachings in us, she connected us to something greater than ourselves. She gave us purpose by understanding that we are but one living being among many and that we have a responsibility to take care, not only of ourselves or our families, but to learn to properly take care of and live in relationship with the land, the waters, the wind, the animals, and those who came before. From childhood, I owe my grandpa Arnold a debt that I can never pay back to him directly. Through his use of fluent language to communicate with other quuʔas (Nuu-chah-nulth people) fishing in our territory, he had given my ears exposure to a language that would have been classified as "declining" or "near extinction" at the time. Through personal language learning and other language activism that I hope to achieve in my lifetime, I know I will be able to repay my family for their resilience in the face of colonization by following in their same footsteps. By following their lead to keep language alive despite the changing world around us, I know everything I have been able to achieve so far is only possible because of my family, my community, and the community of fluent speaking nuučaaṇuł Elders who have selflessly and generously shared their time, knowledge, and love with me over the years and throughout my ongoing language learning journey.

ʕatiʕaqƛs siiḥił ʔin hupiiyisuu huuḥtikšiiḥap ciiqciiqasa (*I give my deepest form of gratitude to you all for helping me and for teaching me our language*).

ʔuuʔatups ʔumʔiiqsakinqs (*Dedication*)

The language work I have been able to accomplish in my life so far, and the community-based project completed during this graduate degree, are dedicated to my late mom, Agatha John.

She was the pillar of strength in our family and never hesitated to help others. She always shared the knowledge and wealth of resources she had with those around her. My mom carried teachings deeply rooted in our culture every single day. She didn't just speak about these teachings that were passed to her intergenerationally from her parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents; she *lived* them. Every day she role-modelled the proper quuʔas way to be by living our way of life, modelling respect for all living and spiritual things, and loving others with kindness, empathy, and care. My focus on naming my own children and passing on traditional knowledge to them is a testament to the way she raised me.

In this photo, she and I are dancing together at the potlatch where I received my traditional name. This is one of many memories I treasure with her from the beginning of my language learning journey. Although she is gone from the physical world, her teachings and love live on through my family and me. I will owe her thanks for the rest of my life. This is the legacy of language and culture that she left us.

ʔiiḥmisuks suutiɬ ʔumʔii.

pikčas (*List of Figures***)**

ʔutwii (*What comes first, Introduction*)

Prior to European contact, our people were named more than one time in our lives. Our first language speakers still remember how traditional naming practices were before colonization began to impact our communities, including the decline in the use of traditional names. Our people carried many names throughout our lives on earth based on milestones. From infancy, to childhood, to adulthood, and even elderhood, individuals would be named in ceremony to mark the new phase of their lives. A naming ceremony takes place each time a new name is placed on an individual; this ceremony includes the name being announced, the history and origin of the name, its meaning, and witnesses of the ceremony would be identified for others to see. These witnesses are responsible for remembering the naming ceremony, including the name, the meaning, and it would be their responsibility to share this information when asked. Naming ceremonies could also be a part of other ceremonies. For example, when a couple marries, they would receive new names to symbolize the new milestone in their lives; this ceremony would be a brief ceremony as a part of the larger wedding ceremony. The oral histories we carry tell us about this history and my work to search for knowledge has motivated me to reclaim these traditional naming ceremonies.

This particular project is centred on holding a traditional naming ceremony for ʔiiḥatisʔath members. Holding a naming ceremony addresses a shift in nuučaanu̓ł language vitality that contributes to the identity of ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ people. The decline in the use of traditional names directly impacts identity, as our people are now using English names, and this is what I want to work on reversing. A necessary part of this work, articulated by Wesley Leonard (2023), is that this project will need to respond to the ongoing, underlying effects of colonialism that have changed nuučaanu̓ł naming practices, resulting in the decline of traditional names and the increasing use of a single English name used for our entire lives. This is important work to revitalize historic naming practices that is not only culturally relevant but that also builds a bridge to a means of regaining identity as ʔiiḥatisʔath people (Rosborough et al., 2017). As such this project is an example of the work of Indigenous Language Reclamation (Leonard, 2023). The

purpose of bringing attention to naming in my community at this time is to have long-term ripple effects on future generations, while increasing awareness within the Indigenous Language Revitalization and Reclamation fields of the importance of names to language and identity. By holding a naming ceremony in my community of ʔiiḥatis, this project will support my community's desire to decolonize naming practices by bringing back traditional ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ names and normalizing the use of our language through the use of names.

We come from a distinct territory spanning from Tatchu to Ceepeecee (see Figure 1) on the northern, west coast side of Vancouver Island. I belong to the ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ nation, one of fourteen nuučaaʕuł Nations remaining today. There are oral histories that identify 17 distinct nations before contact and before populations were diminished, became extinct, or amalgamated with another nation.

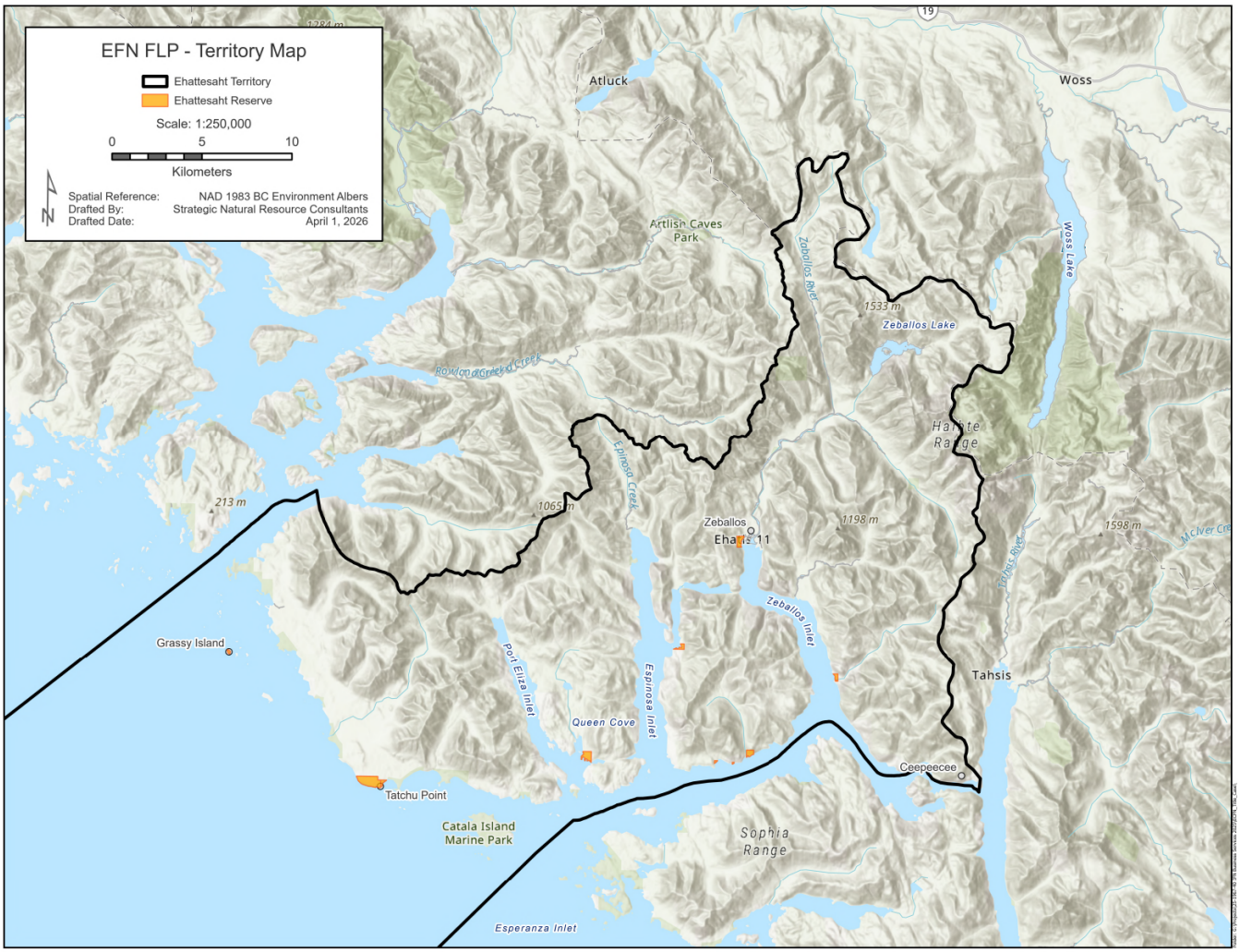

Figure 1. Traditional unceded territory of the ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ First Nation.

My project began to form when I first became a mother five years ago. Planning to name my children in our language was an intentional and necessary step to keep our language alive and to decolonize naming practices. Our people didn't use first and last names the way Euro-western culture does. Today, many of our people do not carry names in our language. Choosing to name my children in our language is one small step to reclaiming our traditional naming practices. An Elder spoke early on in my language classes about the sadness that is felt when a child does not have a name in our language (tupaat, Julia Lucas, personal communication, 2018). This had really guided my decision to take action and give my own daughters traditional names in our mother tongue. This was a calling I had heard and

listened to each day since. Revitalizing and reclaiming ceremonies is crucial to the vitality of our language and culture (Rosborough and Rorick, 2017), this is why I have focused my master's project on naming ceremonies. A name is not just a name; it is a significant part of the traditional experience as nuučaaʔnuɬʔath (people of the Nuu-chah-nulth Nations) and is connected deeply to the inherent rights we gain when born into our families, and by extension, into the community (Atleo, 2004). Names give us identity, and these names come with history, language, and connection to those before us. This is an important piece of work in the larger picture that needs to be done for my nation and is an opportunity to shine a light on the importance of traditional names and naming practices for our people.

ʔaʔaatałmis (*Research questions*)

1. What is the importance of using traditional ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ names?

2. What is the difference between modern naming practices in English in contrast to traditional ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ naming practices?

3. How can decolonization through revitalization of ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ names support reclamation of ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ identity?

siy̓aaqsiš (*This is me, Positioning myself*)

ʔukłaas ḥakaƛ ʔukłaayisƛa Chrissie. ʔiiḥatisʔaqsups t̓ačuuʔaqsupisƛa. ʔuḥukʷints ʔumʔiiqsu saʔaayaʔičɬ, t̓ačuuʔaqsup. hayumḥis ṅuẇiiqsakinqus. ʔuḥukʷints nananiqsakinqs ʔucuut ʔumʔiiqsakinqs ṁaṁaaḥt ʔuḥʔiš ḥakaƛ. t̓ačuuʔatḥint naniiqsakinqs ṁaṁaaḥt, ḥiškʷiiʔaqsupint naniiqsakinqs ḥakaƛ. ʔuušyuuyas wic̓ik ciiqciiqaƛqus, ʔaanaḥiyis ʔiiqḥii ʕaac̓ikšiƛaya ciiqciqasa. histaqšiƛuks quʔaciic ʕumtii naniiqsakinqs, ʔumʔiiqsakintʔi ʔumʔiiqsakinqs. y̓uqʷaaʔaks histaqšiƛ mamałṅiqiic ʕumtii, Chrissie. pawałšiƛint naniiqsakinqs ḥakaƛ wiky̓uuqus hiinumł. ʔiiḥmisukniš ʕaaʕumtakqin. ʔuḥintʔiš naʔiiqsakqs ḥiikuus waa, “huuḥtikšiḥʔi ciiqciqasa. ʔuʔumḥiʔic ƛiisƛiisaʕas ʔukʷink nuučaaṅułʔatḥ”. ʔayaqḥintʔiš nuučaaṅułʔatḥ ʔuƛʔucač ƛiisuwił hiłḥ c̓uumuʕaas. hišukniš ʔiiḥmisuk mamums ƛaḥ ʔuyi. ʔiiḥmisuks čamiḥtaqus ciiqciqasa. qac̓canakniš ḥaatḥaakʷaƛ, čakupukqs ʔuḥʔiš siy̓a. hišukʔał quʔaciicnak ʕaaʕumtii, ʔukłaaʔał ʔiicʔa, nuusči, ṁaayi. y̓uuqʷaaʔakʔiš quʔaciic ʕumtii čakupukqs. histaqšiƛuk ʕumtii may̓iixtukukʔi c̓išaaʔatḥ. ʕumtnaaksapẇit̓asnišƛa ḥaatḥaakʷaƛšiʔaƛquʔał. wikʔaqƛs qayaačiƛ ʔin ʔiiḥmisukʷin ciciqiʔakqin.’

‘*My traditional native name is ha-katl, my other name is Chrissie. I come from the Ehattesaht First Nation, originally from our old village Tatchu Point. My mom was Sa-aya-ichlth, she originally comes from our Ehatis community of Tatchu. I don’t know about the man who is my biological father. My grandparents on my mom’s side were Ma-maa-hht and ha-katl. My grandpa was the one from our old village Tatchu and my grandma was a woman from Heshquiaht. Sometimes I make mistakes when I am speaking my language, because I am still learning my traditional language. My traditional name is a name that comes from my grandma, my mom’s mom; So does my English name Chrissie. She had already passed on from the physical world when I was born. Our traditional names are vital to our people; they have true importance. It was my auntie Hey-koos who told me I should go to school and learn our language with other Nuu-chah-nulth people. There were a lot of Nuu-chah-nulth people who went to school in Port Alberni. Now we are all doing different forms of important language work for our people. It is important to me to learn my language properly. Now we have three daughters, my partner and I.*

They were each named traditional names after their birth. Their names are Eets-ah, Noos-chee, and Maw-yee. My partner also has a traditional name. His name comes from his family; they are of the Tseshaht First Nation. We will be naming our daughters again according to our own protocols when they grow. This is the work I am committed to doing because our language is of the utmost importance.'

A personal introduction not only puts my language first, it also follows the traditional protocol of our people to introduce who you are and where you're from. We don't usually need to articulate or clarify these protocols amongst ourselves (Atleo, 2004), but I will include some of the teachings here for the purpose of educating others on the process and emphasizing the importance throughout this research project. My mom's first language was our native language before she was taken away from home and forced to attend Christie Indian Residential School, like other nuučaaʔnuɬʔatḥ who recall the same experience (Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, 1996). She was forced to learn and use English exclusively and was violently punished for using her mother tongue. As the first generation to be raised with English, I often recall my mom telling us throughout our childhood about the ways her nan (grandma) would teach her language, care for her, and mentor her in plant medicines in our remote, home community maḥtiʕas (Queens Cove, BC). I didn't understand at the time that we had missed that opportunity to receive language and knowledge intergenerationally from first language speakers because the impacts of the Catholic Indian Residential Schools were already taking effect (i.e. we were becoming English-speaking people).

I am ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ; specifically, my family comes from our old village of taču, which was an older village occupied by ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ people before resources became limited and our people were forced to live on designated reserves instead of migrating throughout our territory based on seasons and resources available. Because of my family's resilience through ongoing colonial efforts to assimilate our people, my mom raised me to know who we are and where we come from. She always said to us, "We are from taču, we come from whalers". This is the way oral histories are passed on from generation to generation. Knowing we came from ancestors who hunted, processed, and ate whales was a part of the histories that

we keep alive by retelling these stories. Because our matrilineal lines both give life and are responsible for teaching the next generation, my mom raised us with the same beliefs her parents raised her with and often repeated them: this is known as ʔiʔiqwa. Tat Tatoosh mentions that ʔiʔiqwa is the way we say things repeatedly as a method of instilling the teachings (Dejerles, 2013). It is through my mom's father, Arnold John, and his father, Phillip John, that we have this connection to taču that my mom always mentioned. This ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ village site would be the origin of the language, our unique ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ pedagogy, and the epistemologies passed from generation to generation. Language comes from the land, which is why it is important to acknowledge our protocols by stating where we are from.

It is through this oral history instilled in me from my childhood and my connection to the land that I recognize my responsibility to do this work as a person my community chose as a leader of language activism (Cajete, 2016). O'Regan (2018) emphasizes that reclaiming language and culture can only be done by us, for us; this includes traditional naming ceremonies. As one of a few dedicated language learners and teachers for my nation, I need to bring this work back to my community; this is why I chose a community-based language project as opposed to only writing a thesis. My nan frequently said "What is the point of knowing something if you don't share it" (čiiʔiłumqa, Fidelia Haiyupis, personal communication 2020). Not only does this particular naming ceremony project align with our unique values of giving back something we are wealthy with to others, it also would be a living example of the generosity my nan has role modeled to me in our mentor/apprentice language sessions. Wealth is not defined by the modern currency we use in today's society, but can depend on the context. For example, it is often said that our large, healthy families are considered wealthy because these large families not only give us purpose, they give us connection, love, and a means of strengthening our community and ensuring the overall survival of our people and culture. It is my responsibility to live an ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ way by giving my language back to my home community; this reciprocity is a calling (Wall-Kimmerer, 2017). We have a much smaller nation and community in comparison to other nuučaan̓uł Nations. Because of this, we have fewer dedicated language activists doing good work to ensure our

language survives compared to some larger nations who are able to achieve more progress with language revitalization due to having larger teams of people and a greater number of living fluent first-language speakers. Other larger nations have more resources, infrastructure, and language activists revitalizing and reclaiming language through established language houses, nation-led language programs, and operating community-run schools with language and culture. Although other communities are at different stages of language revitalization work, there is still a need to highlight the ever-growing use of English names instead of our own. Reversing language shift, specifically centred around traditional naming, is what my project addresses for my own community and brings some insight to the significance of traditional names to the greater field of Indigenous Language Revitalization.

I see this project as a way for me to not only meet an urgent need in my community but also contribute to the resurgence of the language to accompany our living culture among all of the nuučaaʔuł communities. My nan tupaat explained to us that English often falls short when we use it to describe our ways of being. The English word 'practice' for example, just doesn't accurately describe our way of bringing culture into our daily lives. She said, "We don't practice our culture, we *live it*" (tupaat, Julia Lucas, personal communication, 2018). Language and culture cannot be separated. These two things are deeply interconnected and interdependent (Atleo, 2011; McIvor, 2018; Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, 1996; Rorick, 2018). This is why the revitalization of naming ceremonies and traditional naming practices not only reclaims names, it also helps our people decolonize by *living* our culture.

ʔuumaƛ̓uk (*Background*):

The idea of bringing back names has been on my mind for some time now. Since learning to honour and use the traditional name that I'm currently carrying, I have seen how deeply it can impact someone who notices they don't have a name in our language when I use my own. With the limited number of speakers, we can see how we continue to live in an English-dominant society; our language is becoming obsolete according to the existing vitality scales (Fishman, 2001). That is not to say or imply

that our language is not important or used in some settings. It means it is no longer necessary to use our own language to converse with one another when English is readily available and understood by all. Through generations of violent colonial efforts to assimilate our people into the dominant Euro-Western society, our people have become more familiar with English as a form not only of self-protection but of self-preservation. Some nuučaaʔnuł people recall never learning our language because their families wanted to protect them in the expanding Euro-dominant society, especially in preparation for Residential School, where English was required (Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, 1996). In the First Peoples Cultural Council's *Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages*, they identified only about 0.9% of fluent, first-language speakers remaining among the reporting nuučaaʔnuł communities (FPCC, 2022).

This project is not necessarily about the single naming ceremony that I facilitated; it is about helping to bring our people back to a place of true sovereignty through language reclamation (Tuhiwai, Linda Smith, 2021). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) identified the 17th Call to Action necessary for language revitalization and reclamation: "We call upon all levels of government to enable residential school Survivors and their families to reclaim names changed by the residential school system…" (page 2). The United Nations (2007) also outlines the importance and urgency of language reclamation work, including culture, and as we already know, language and culture are interconnected. "Our language itself holds a knowledge and understanding of the nuučaaʔnuł world, including how we approach relationships with others and with our environment." (Rorick, pg. 231, 2018).

As a young teen, I was one of approximately 50 students to receive a traditional name at the first formal School District 84 (SD84) Potlatch in Tahsis, territory of the muwaċaθ First Nation. Within this school district are the northern nuučaaʔnuł nations self-declared as the t̓ickaaʔiikʷink (the Thunderbird Brotherhood): qaayukʷaθ, čiiqƛisʔaθ, činiḥkint, ʔiihatisʔath, nučaaƛʔaθ, muwaċaθ, and mučłaaθ. In English, these nations are known today as Kyuquot/Checklisaht First Nation, Ehattesaht/Chinihkint First Nation, Nuchatlaht First Nation, and Muwachaht/Muchlaht First Nation. Throughout years of genocide and ongoing colonization, these individual nations became smaller nations, some of which amalgamated

due to colonial force, geographic location, and decreasing populations. This is important history to mention since collectively understanding history follows the protocols our people have always followed. Because the hosting school was in the traditional territory of the muwačaṯḥ Nation, they were invited to participate in the planning and preparation phase prior to the potlatch. Traditionally, ceremonies including potlatches were only hosted in one's own territory, so the school hosting a potlatch was a new concept.

Because a Euro-Western school could not possibly have the knowledge and tools to host a traditional potlatch, the quuʔas families who had children in the school worked alone side some relatives from muwačaṯḥ. This work was done in collaboration to prepare for this first SD84 potlatch. My family worked to not only host this potlatch as the only First Nations families attending the hosting school, but in the planning process, it was determined by my grandparents that it was necessary to name every student in our school. Thus, the potlatch became both a celebration of culture and a traditional naming ceremony. At that point my family initiated planning for the naming ceremony as an addition to the SD84 Potlatch, which was meant to celebrate our truest forms of wealth: Our children and culture. Mothers and aunties worked together with our fluent-speaking grandparents to find appropriate names for each child. This is exactly what tupaatmit (the late Julia Lucas) reiterated in our language class: every child should have a name. It is known in our culture that you cannot simply choose a name. One has to be sure to follow the proper protocol and steps within the ceremonies to do things in the right way. Generations of inherent teachings guided this process, and thanks to the living memory of oral histories, the fluent speakers and my grandparents, Earl Smith and Arnold John, managed to choose family names for those of us who come from their immediate families. To this day, I carry the same name that was chosen for me and placed on me at this potlatch. As young children learning language and culture, this event was a way to showcase the community's wealth: the children. By naming each child in the school, Elders were not only recognizing us as people of the nations we are tied to but they were also honouring and uplifting us by giving us names to carry.

The name given to me during that potalatch to carry into my adult life was a traditional adult name my grandma, my mom's mom, carried in her time on earth. My name ḥakaƛ translate roughly into English as a kind and gentle woman. These were qualities my grandma carried. She was a mother of 11 children. She sadly passed away in a house fire before I was born but because my family gave me her English name, told stories of her, and raised us with the same love and teachings she gave my mom, I knew I was connected in some way to her. When my family gave me her traditional name to carry into adulthood, I felt a deeper connection to her. She wasn't physically here, but through her name and her living spirit, I was connected more deeply to her since then. This name ḥakaƛ and the qualities it defines are also family teachings that guide me. The same qualities that my nan had that earned her that name are the same qualities the name nurtures and guides me to have. Gaining identity, feeling pride, and being motivated to both learn more about one's name and live a life that honours one's traditional name are experiences outlined in Hunter's (2023) research with fluent speaking Elders in her community. As I grew into adulthood and, more importantly, into motherhood, I have seen how choosing a name can influence not only one's identity but the characteristics they develop.

It is worth mentioning that I am not among the first to be named in my generation or to choose to give my own children traditional names. Many have been given traditional names before my siblings and me. Throughout the generations, some resilient families have kept naming traditions alive. There are Elders, adults, and even young children in other communities with traditional nuučaaɁuł names and I would like to acknowledge them and their role in language reclamation for all of nuučaaɁułʔatḥ. Their efforts also guide and motivate my work since we must still raise awareness amongst our own people on the importance of keeping these traditions alive. In this sense, my project is an attempt to lift up the knowledge that is still held amongst our people. Choosing a project like this also addresses a gap in the ILR research field since the significance of traditional names has not yet been widely identified as a key factor in language reclaimation and revitalization work. Some authors (Hunter, 2023; Meadows & McKenzie, 2026) do touch on traditional naming thanks to records and interviews with fluent speakers,

though the focus on nuučaaṇuł names and naming practices has not yet been recorded in writing. Hunter (2023) interviewed one Elder in particular, Norman, who shared that naming is important and that it offers individuals a true sense of belonging. Although there is little written literature, most if not all of this research I have covered on traditional names and naming ceremonies is knowledge that is still remembered by people all across the nuučaaṇuł territories to this day. Naming my children, naming members of my community, and sharing this project are small steps in supporting our communities to reclaim our old naming traditions, bring back pride in identifying as quuʔas, and move away from the common English names pushed on our people in order to document and classify each individual under the Indian Act.

ʔiiḥmisʔiš quuʔaciic ʕaaʕumti (*The importance of traditional names*)

Traditional naming practices and protocols

Traditional names are so much more than a way to identify and communicate with others. They are also a connection to those who came before us, the land we come from, and Creator. Our names are tied to our unique worldview, to our spirituality, and to a specific point in our lives. Traditionally, nuučaaʔnuł communities name their children throughout various stages of life, never carrying only one name in a lifetime. Through violent colonial impacts, nuučaaʔnuł language began to decline (Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, 1996). Though fluent spoken nuučaaʔnuł has been continually declining, it is not yet extinct, thanks to fluent speaking Elders who are passing on the language intergenerationally to new learners, documenting language, and supporting language resource creation (Little, 2003).

Reclaiming traditional names addresses a significant impact of colonialism. A part of the language shift taking place among nuučaaʔnuł is the use of traditional names; they are no longer being used by every person. This project brings names to those who don't have one and begins to reverse language shift for ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ. Some people have names living through oral history, but some do not. This calls for research and creativity during the research period. Throughout this process, protocol has to be honoured. It is worth noting that those who still have family names need to discuss among themselves who will carry the name, since this cannot be done without permission and agreement.

Relationality is essential in this process. If I did not come from my community, I could not begin to explore this work. It is a part of our culture to give back, reciprocity is a normal part of our way of life. After having received so much love and support through the journey of language learning, I know this project is a perfect way to give back. It honours my family who have fought from generation to generation to keep our language alive. Carrying a name can also bring those feelings of connection, spirituality, and identity to someone who has never had a name. This has been my personal experience.

The traditional name given to me when I was a teenager was my grandma's name. It reflects her kind and gentle personality. Although she passed before I was born, I have the privilege to carry her name and be connected to both her and have others tell me her qualities can be seen through me.

Traditional Name Examples

Traditional Family Names:

-ḥakaƛ̓, ṁaṁaaḥt, saʔaayaʔičɬ

Traditional Place Names:

-ʔiiḥatis, ḥuukḥ, ḥakumstis, maḥt̓iʕas, t̓ačuu

Traditional Stories and Oral Histories:

-Dr. Simon Lucas' story of Nuučaaʔnuɬ vs. Nootka (Desjarlais, 2024), Caroline Little's Nuu-chah-nulth (Ahousaht) texts (Nakayama, 2003), Story work (Archibald, 2008)

Traditional Animal Names:

-waaʕit, k̓aaʔin, t̓iick̓in

qʷaaʔapqin nuučaaʔnuɬm̓inḥqin (A nuučaaʔnuɬ Methodological approach**)**

After much reflection, I recognize the methodological approach that I have used is rooted in the ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ paradigm that I was born with rights to know and live by. This includes navigating this search for knowledge by honouring and uplifting traditional ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ epistemologies and ways of being. Throughout my own language learning journey, I have been mentored by relatives from other nations who have generously shared their own unique family teachings; some of which are similar or even universal

across the other nuučaaʔnuł Nations. This is important to mention since it means the knowledge that was passed down through the mentors' knowledge that they have gifted to me also influences the work completed in this project. It could be more accurate for me to call this a nuučaaʔnuł methodology because of the influence of Elders from other nations outside of my own. Through this reclamation work, a strategy to decolonize will have ripple effects into future generations. This is another guiding methodology that requires each individual to be aware that our actions impact future generations as well as honour those who came before us. When we are learning and using our mother tongue, one cannot simply learn words; it requires a shift in the mindset from the modern, predominantly Euro-Western perspective to a traditional ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ way of knowing and being.

By shifting how we think and what we know, only then can we learn to carry language forward. Our language is a vessel that carries our worldviews, our values, and our connection to family, the land we come from, and the Creator. By placing ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ names on members of the community, language will live on through them and the names they are bringing to life. This honours traditional naming protocols and reconnects people with our ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ ways of being. Through this connection, relationships and healing will evolve over time. Through traditional naming practices, a seed will be planted with members to learn more about their own name and to master pronunciation. These methodologies related to naming are stepping stones that promote belonging, future learning, healing, generosity, and mastery (Brokenleg, 2003). This reciprocity that is modelled demonstrates values that are tied to this reclamation work, which is essential to any language work.

ʕumtnaakšiƛapnišʔał (*The Naming Ceremony and Methods of delivery*)

Everything for this project is done in relation to my community. This includes my relationship with the territory I come from. The purpose of hosting a naming ceremony at home is to honour our traditional protocols at all times throughout the research project.

The naming ceremony took place in the traditional, unceded territory of ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ where our inherent right to use our language exists, where we can live our culture connected to our ancestors, and the place we have been in relationship with the land since time immemorial. The ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ Nation donated the local Health Wing venue and kitchen for this, with language tied to health and wellness for our community.

We opened the evening welcoming relatives to the space, using our traditional gratitude song for dinner, and serving traditional foods including halibut, fish soup, half-smoked salmon, smoked dried salmon, and herring roe on kelp. My older brother, who is the head of our house, and I both provided this traditional food that we processed and prepared ourselves for this ceremony. People ate according to our protocols, and this was a reminder of the cultural teachings that still exist despite ongoing colonization. Once we had eaten our meal, we invited everyone to take the remaining food, which is another protocol observed in our culture.

After meal time wrapped up naturally, not according to a colonial clock, we moved on to business. I opened with a monologue in my language and shared that sometimes translation is difficult into English but that it is important to use, hear, and have our language live in these spaces. Each time a group was named I enunciated the name slowly and clearly, along with repeating it 3 times. The community members present each repeated the names, and our cultural practices were apparent to me again in these moments. There were no reminders to be present or lower the volume in the room. Each person was present and engaged in the ceremony. This is another example of our living culture, since recording is often frowned upon because active listening and witnessing are our traditional ways of observing ceremonies.

As each name was placed on the individual, I could see their eyes light up. Suddenly, they were connected to something greater than they'd felt before. Each person chose their own witness. We used our protocol to thank them and request their role as a witness to the event. My brother was the one to do this

piece which is usually a male's role to run to each witness and shake their hand with a payment. Through this ceremony, family connections and history were also covered because names and language are handed down intergenerationally through each family. Some youth discovered new connections they had not known about before this ceremony.

At the end, I approached three members in the community to request their assistance as a formal witness to the ceremony, should they ever need to be called on to confirm. Each of the three members agreed, were thanked, and they were paid by gifting rather than modern currency.

With acknowledgements to the cooks, the guests, and my family for helping me host, the floor was opened. It wasn't something I expected but three members stood at this time and lifted me up both with their words and with gifts. Remarks about bringing language home, having community dinners, and continuing my own language learning were acknowledged by these members. This concludes the ceremony.

qʷisʔaƛʔitq (*Research project outcomes)*

This project has brought and will continue to bring traditional ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ names back to members of the community ʔiiḥatis. This is for children, young adults, and mature adults who have missed the naming opportunities; Elder members have names from family since adolescence, some younger generations have never received a name. A project like this directly benefits my home community after generations of colonial influence interrupted ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ naming practices. A name isn't just a way to refer to someone; it connects them to our worldview, our land, and those who came before us. As a strategy to further my community's decolonization through the revitalization of our traditional names, carrying a name can also bring healing and identity. A name provides more than just identity; it provides a connection to our family and the territory our language comes from. Personal reflection:

Initially, my research questions were based on what goes into planning a naming ceremony. However, I feel that focusing on what goes into the planning is not quite what I am after. This project focuses on the importance of bringing back names to people from my community. Through modern impacts of colonization, our members have moved from the traditional ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ naming practices of multiple names throughout one lifetime, limiting an individual to one single English first name accompanied by a family surname for their entire life. These surnames more often than not, were names chosen by Indian Agents documenting First Nations populations on the coast. Many nuučaaʕuɬʔatḥ can recall their ancestors being named, and on rare occasions, include anglicized versions of traditional nuučaaʕuɬ family names. This project explored the importance of our traditional naming practices by placing names back on our people, giving them a chance to feel that pride and belonging (Hunter, 2023), and bringing back our traditional naming ceremonies to highlight the importance of naming for our people.

ʔaḥʔaaʔaks ʔuʕa (*Conclusion*)

This project is just a starting point for the reclamation of ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ names and, therefore, ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ language. One community's success is the success of all the nuučaaʕuɬ relations. By bringing back names, language will live on through these individuals. Names not only heal, but they also address ongoing issues of ongoing colonization that are necessary for us to respond to (Leonard, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023). English names are one example of the language loss that has taken place but it does not define us. Our language lives on and our people are decolonizing through intentional healing. The names support this reclamation process and demonstrate the living language is still here.

This is one of many steps in the ʔiiḥatisʔatḥ revitalization field but it is vital. Use of our own nation's name, spelled correctly, which honours the proper pronunciation. The English spelling and subsequent pronunciation do not honour the true names and correct pronunciation. Names are tied to place, beliefs, and values of our people. It is a powerful strategy to bring back names which will provide

an opportunity for others to engage with our language when we use them. Names can connect us to those who are no longer here, to our history, or to traditional oral stories. There are so many meaningful naming protocols that this cannot be a one-time event. It calls for the tradition of naming at milestones in life to be considered.

There is simply not enough written literature to reflect the oral histories our people have had for generations. A large part of this work falls on First People who are taking strides in both worlds to revitalize and reclaim language and culture. We have been walking in two worlds for over 150 years; it is not new. It is still unsafe to be a quuʔas person in this modern society (Tuhiwai, 2021). However, we are in a place now where we need to decide what is appropriate to record in modern literature to educate others and what parts of our history are best left oral. The importance of reclaiming names is something to help living relatives now and those who have yet to come.

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